

# Book Review of "Outcome- Based Experiential Learning"

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## Abstract

This review examines Carolyn Hoessler and Lorraine Godden's *Outcome-Based Experiential Learning: Lets Talk About, Design For, and Inform Teaching, Learning, and Career Development*. Their work is a practical guide for post-secondary experiential learning and work-integrated learning academics, professionals, and practitioners to design or improve programs using outcome-based learning. Hoessler & Godden's OBEL framework they propose for programs is also used to structure the book, a task which it mostly succeeds at. The review evaluates the authors' effectiveness in proposing the framework and process for developing an outcome-based experiential learning program.

*Outcome-Based Experiential Learning: Lets Talk About, Design For, and Inform Teaching, Learning, and Career Development*. Higher Education & Beyond. Hoessler, Carolyn & Godden, Lorraine (2021).

Being able to explain and replicate success as well as being able to improve upon it is at the heart of program evaluation and assessment cycles in post-secondary. A key aspect of this is ensur-

ing that outcomes for programs are specific, measurable, and explainable. Often programs in post-secondary are run based on what has always been done, or based on governmental recommendations and requirements, this can lead to a lack of focus in the programs or ambiguity in knowing when the program has succeeded. When it comes to programs such as experiential learning and work-integrated learning that governments in Canada have been promoting as a way to improve students' skills development (Kalvapalle, 2019) it's important for post-secondary to be explicit about the purpose, goals, and outcomes, so that they do not become words-lacking-context applied to programs that don't have proper theoretical backing or support. Carolyn Hoessler and Lorraine Godden have put forward *Outcome-Based Experiential Learning: Let's Talk About, Design For, and Inform Teaching, Learning, and Career Development* into this context as a way for post-secondary institutions to improve experiential learning (EL) and work-integrated learning (WIL) by making it explicitly outcomes-based without losing the more holistic, intangible, or relational outcomes that are proven to improve their impact.

Carolyn Hoessler is a Learning and Faculty Development Coordinator at Thompson Rivers University and is an expert at curriculum development and researches the scholarship of teaching and learning. Lorraine Godden is a career development instructor at Carleton University and researches the intersection of career development and policy in both Canada and the UK. Their areas of expertise come together to produce this work.

*Outcome-Based Experiential Learning* is a short read, at fewer than 60 pages plus another 15 pages of templates, that gives a surprisingly in-depth overview of the concerns and methods for developing or improving a WIL or EL program in post-secondary education. Aimed at Canadian post-secondary professionals and academics involved in the design and implementation of WIL and EL programs it provides a framework that can be used by most institutions.

Broken into a simple four-part pathway and providing five "design factors" (Hoessler & Godden, 2021, p. 1) the framework provides a roadmap for practice that is scalable and robust. The book is laid out for the practitioner with the core questions of why, who, what, and how answered

early, followed by walking the reader through the framework in the same order a new program development process would follow, and the book is concluded with the research informing the design and development of the framework. Each section also provides helpful suggestions for how the same model can be used with remote work based on experiences during the pandemic. They refer to the use of the framework as a “scaffolded process” (p. 1) where three things need to be considered at all times, the stakeholders, the intended outcomes, and the context of the program.

The most striking thing about this book is how practical it is. Perhaps understanding that those who design and implement EL and WIL programs span a broad spectrum of post-secondary staff and faculty it takes little for granted and is very clear in its definitions. They are clear that WIL is a subset of EL that occurs “within the social context of an employment environment” (p.6) and also “includes escalating responsibility” (p. 6). It also embraces modern research on WIL by using as its definition of “career readiness” (p. 27) the gaining of broad skills and competencies including career development skills and embraces the use of EL and WIL to develop “transformational learning” (p. 35) opportunities.

The stakeholders chapter is clear, concise, and makes a strong case for who to involve and to what extent. It provides a good way of explaining stakeholders by categorizing them as direct, indi-

rect, or system stakeholders and does a good job of explaining the difference between the influences on various people involved in the EL or WIL experience. By using stakeholder identification as the starting point, the book attempts to move readers from thinking of from how EL and WIL have always been done at their institution and toward more specific goals that the specific stakeholders are looking for.

Instead of recommending a DACUM style competency analysis the book recommends that each program works with the stakeholders to determine the key outcomes and provides a menu of 55 potential outcomes to start from that were validated with many career development stakeholders across Canada. For technical competencies it recommends referring to “specific field/discipline competency checklists” (p54). This list of outcomes is broken into sixteen categories among three groupings: “learner development” (p. 16) outcomes, “relational outcomes” (p. 16), and “tangible outcomes” (p.16). The including of seven relational outcomes is helpful for the future directions in WIL and EL theory (Drewery & Pretti, 2021; Kennedy et al. 2020). By working with stakeholders to determine the outcomes a WIL or EL program is able to improve their planning and assessment cycle in a way that better supports students and their future plans. The book also provides a template for creating a card-sort for developing outcomes.

There is a helpful section on transferable skills aligning var-

ious skills and competency frameworks. Unfortunately, the book was published just before some major revisions to the skills frameworks being used, with NACE putting forward their revised framework and OECD moving to the next phase of their Social and Emotional Skills project in 2021 as well as the new Canadian Skills for Success replacing the prior Essential Skills Framework with one that better includes transferable skills. It is my hope that the next edition will be able to take advantage of these new publications.

The brief section on Aligned Design seems tacked on and doesn't seem as integrated into the rest of the book as some of the other topics. It also feels oddly out of place in the order as it breaks from the process of following the method of a practitioner moving through the organizing framework. It would be better as part of the orienting sections of the book rather than being a stand-alone section in the middle of the framework.

This section helps connect the theories that support WIL with the design of the WIL experience and with the potentially linked outcomes. It's an important part of the book that makes it very appropriate for use as a guide for those new to WIL, EL, or Outcomes Based learning, as it ensures an appropriate scaffolding for any readers regardless of how they came to EL and WIL. Based on core theorists from Vygotsky to Kolb to Lave & Wagner to Mezirow and Kegan this chapter serves as both an introduction to key concepts in EL and WIL and also as a practical

guide in developing and improving programs.

Although assessment and evaluation are separate parts of the model, they are dealt with together in the same chapter. The book divides them based on assessment being the measurement of outcomes and feedback for learners while evaluation is the measurement of outcomes and feedback regarding the program or process. It goes on to provide a brief overview of good assessment and evaluation and how to design them for an outcomes-based program including how to assess different types of outcomes.

The book's concluding chapter provides a literature review and method from the research that underpinned the model. It provides a brief overview of the theoretical backing of the work, showing that it is firmly grounded in Experiential Learning theory within the Constructivist paradigm. The method section helps answer any questions that may be lingering regarding how the model and its suggested outcomes were developed and tested.

This book provides a strong and succinct guide for the development and improvement of experiential learning and work-integrated learning programs. It is written in a way that academics, professionals, and practitioners of all types can understand and utilize. The navigation through the book could be improved by relying more on the layout of the framework itself as a navigation tool as well as moving required understandings such as aligned design

earlier in the book. Future editions will also likely take advantage of the recent research and publications on transferable or social and emotional skills. This book would be beneficial to all those overseeing, designing, or implementing experiential learning or work-integrated learning programs.

### References

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