

Competency-Based Education: Reshaping Programs and Courses to Learning Outcomes

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Abstract (100 Words max)

Competency-Based Education (CBE) offers a glimpse of our capacity, amid rapidly-shifting environments and dynamics, to remap how management education can address the challenges ahead and thrive beyond them. This workshop will shine a light on what we have learned from the shift to CBE, examining CBE's potential. It offers exploration of the topic through an overview, multiple perspectives from CBE scholars and practitioners, and roundtable break-outs cohering around viewpoints discussed, culminating in an invitation for continued collaboration with the aim of contributing to best practices.

85 words

Three Keywords

Competency Based Education

Online Education

Authentic Assessment

Introduction

This workshop is focused on the ways competency-based education (CBE) is reshaping education to focus on learning outcomes. Irvine and Kavan ([2017, p. 2](#)) noted that recent developments in analytics and technology infrastructure have created new opportunities to implement CBE: “CBE is based on the idea that student progression is directly tied to evidence of skill mastery, including all of the learner-centric and individualized implications of that practice” (p. 2). With the growing emphasis on assessment in AACSB and ACBSP accredited business schools, many programs already have most of the first three components in place, but they lack the fourth and fifth. With the migration to online programs, the necessity for every student to be learning synchronously becomes less imperative. What would it take to move to a “mass customization approach” and add the last two components? This session will share with iMOBTS participants the ways in which CBE has been implemented in management education for higher ed.

Intended Outcome: The workshop will add value for participants through the following objectives:

- Offer a forum centered on the relevance of competency-based learning to management education
- Help participants understand impediments and drivers in the transition from seat-time learning to mastery-level learning approaches
- Illuminate a more complete picture of competency-based learning through those immersed in CBE
- Recognize conditions under which CBE may be most applicable (i.e. someone with professional experience in a field but lacking a degree may move faster through a list of competencies rather than a series of 15-week courses)
- Understand how CBE can fit with a traditional course design
- Initiate discussion and collaboration for future CBE best practices

In this workshop, the facilitators will speak briefly about their experience with the five components and the unique ways that their institutions have implemented them (or resisted implementation). In addition to all of the benefits above, workshop participants will benefit from the varied perspectives provided by the diverse group facilitators from the institutions represented.

Target Audience: Undergraduate and graduate faculty seeking to explore how competency-based education (CBE) can contribute to the rapidly-changing environment and its unfolding to management education and qualification.

Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications.

CBE has five essential components. These components are of great value to participants with no prior knowledge of CBE to show the different ways it can be implemented. Our workshop will not only provide information regarding these components, it will also provide a forum for thought-provoking discussion and understanding for CBE and its implementation. The session will add value in each of the five components as follows:

1) Measurement of learning outcomes

Although a few years ago, CBE programs may have been ahead of most institutions in their assurance of learning activities, with the increased emphasis on assessment at the regional level as well as within AACSB and ACBSP, assessment does not differ substantially from what most business schools already practice. What differs is how that assessment data is used in the operation of the program. Our workshop will provide participants with the understanding of these differences.

2) Explicit definition, measurement, and transferability of competencies

As with measurement of learning outcomes, current practice in CBE is similar to what is already practiced in many business schools but with an important difference: Learning outcomes are broken down into discrete units of competence that are easier to scaffold, allowing students to demonstrate their competence in stages from introductory, to developing, and finally to mastery in an intentional learning sequence. This division of content makes advancing through academic programs more accessible for those who have taken a break from their education or who may have mastered skills in non-school environments. Our session will aid participants in understanding this shift to competencies.

3) Rigorous assessment

One way in which CBE programs make assessment rigorous is by separating the assessment task from coaching and guiding students through material. The rubrics and tests have to be very robust but with independent, anonymous assessment processes, in which the reliability and validity of the assessments can be greatly enhanced. Interrater reliability through stronger norming of desired outcomes is much simpler. Additionally, designing assessments is particularly vital in the CBE environment, as the measurement tool is only designed to conclude that the work has or has not demonstrated competence. Our workshop provides experts who can shed light on these differences.

4) Personalized learning approaches

While many universities claim to offer personalized learning in their on-ground programs, what they usually mean is that they have low student-to-teacher ratios. In CBE, personalized learning means that students have the freedom to adjust the speed with which they

move through various competency areas depending on their level of prior skills and their motivation to learn. A common complaint among faculty teaching conventional quantitative courses, for example, is that many students cannot master the material in a single term. With CBE, students who need extra time are able to stretch their work in that area across as many terms as necessary. In other areas, they may be able to demonstrate competency in much less time. In addition, breaking courses into smaller modules could allow for more customization because not every student would necessarily have to take every part of a course if it did not meet their educational goals. Further, personalization allows students and universities to quickly customize programs by combining different competencies or even creating competencies towards a unique program. In this session, participants will benefit from thought-provoking discussion centering on how to make this shift as well as the different impediments and drivers for programs to achieve this aspect of CBE.

5) Advancement of students upon mastery rather than after a set number of classroom hours

The fifth component is the one that really distinguishes CBE from the conventional credit hour model. It is so radical that it requires an entirely new certification in the US in order to continue providing federally guaranteed financial aid under Title IV of the federal code (Source: <https://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN1310.html>). We anticipate that this component will provoke creative discussion as participants think about changing the programs at their home universities following Irvine and Kevan's (2017) CBE model.

Session Description

This 90 minute interactive workshop will focus on best practices for connecting new information to what attendees already know from their institutional experiences.

Length: 90 minutes

Workshop Plan:

Minutes 0-10	<i>Welcome and relevance of the topic.</i> Attendees will first participate in an overview (15 minutes) of the overall topics of competency-based education and learning, particularly the five key elements.
Minutes 10-40	<i>Presentations.</i> Next, attendees will engage in a panel discussion (30 minutes) with experts in the areas of competency-based education and learning to share ideas, thoughts, and questions.
Minutes 40-75	<i>Roundtable discussion.</i> Following the panel discussion, attendees will participate in a series of roundtable breakout sessions (including three topics with 15 minutes allotted to each topic for a total of 45 minutes participation) in which participants may discuss how CBE would look at their institution.
Minutes 75-90	<i>Final remarks and audience questions.</i> The workshop will conclude with a 15-minute debrief and application exercise.

References

Ehrenfeld, J. R., & Hoffman, A. J. (2013). *Flourishing: A frank conversation about sustainability*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Irvine, C. K. S., & Kevan, J. M. (2017). Competency-based education in higher education. In Rasmussen, Karen, Northrup, Pamela T., & R. Colson (Eds.), *Handbook of research on competency-based education in university settings* (pp. 1–27).

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