

**Yearbook of the 58th Meeting of
the South Atlantic Philosophy of
Education Society**

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The fifty-eighth meeting of the South Atlantic Education Society, held at Meredith College, featured a wide array of quality presentations. The highlight was our guest speaker, Dr. H. Vis Shapiro, Professor of Cultural Studies and Education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and his presentation on educational reform, social change, and the moral dimensions of education. In addition, this year's yearbook features the best presentations from the 2013 meeting, covering a wide range of philosophical and foundational topics. This year's selections feature essays on the effects of No Child Left Behind, to the role of critical pedagogy in peace and feminist theory and practice, to the risk associated with teacher agency and democratic participation. A special thank you also to Nikki Paquette, my graduate assistant, for her tireless work in helping with this year's yearbook. It would not have been a success without her input.

Sarah P. Southall

Essays in American Philosophy. New York: Fordham University Press.

Outcomes-based Education: A Philosophical Critique

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Abstract: Over the last twenty years, the articulation of definable and measurable learning outcomes has become a universal requirement for justifying curricular and pedagogical practices. To suggest the opposite – that the systematic use of learning outcomes is not only unnecessary, but might actually disrupt deep learning – would be to appear on the wrong side of logic. This purpose of this essay is to question the uncritically accepted truism that learning outcomes yield a better educational environment by examining the assumptions behind the adoption of learning outcomes at the post-secondary level. The essay will show how the contemporary outcomes-based movement borrows its major assumptions, goals, and methods from Fredrick Taylor's scientific management principles. It will then provide a critique of three dimensions of Taylor's logic which are embedded in contemporary learning outcomes, ultimately arguing that learning outcomes restrict deep learning and authentic growth.

Over the last twenty years, the articulation of definable and measurable learning outcomes has become a universal requirement for justifying curricular and pedagogical practices. To suggest the opposite – that the systematic use of learning outcomes is not only unnecessary, but might actually disrupt deep learning – would be to appear on the wrong side of logic: as anti-transparency, anti-progress, and anti-growth. This purpose of this essay is to question the uncritically accepted truism that learning outcomes yield a better educational environment by examining the assumptions behind the adoption of learning outcomes at the post-secondary level.

a. *Scientific management and learning outcomes*

Learning outcomes are one dimension of a larger, neoliberal movement which has increasingly called for outside intervention into and control over post-secondary schooling systems (Hussey and Smith, 2002). While learning outcomes are certainly not the only aspect of neoliberal reform, they might be understood as its symbolic heart, moving from the outskirts of practice in the early 1980s to becoming a core assumption and expectation for all activities across both the curriculum and co-curriculum in contemporary educational environments.

There are very good reasons for this shift. Broadly defined, learning outcomes are what all students will know or be able to do after undergoing an educational task. They serve as an “objective” resource inside the otherwise messy process of learning and development. Properly defined and appropriately gauged, they are intended to provide a stable measurement of each student's process of learning and development (Hussey & Smith 2002; Gagne, 1974, 1984; Ing, 1978). Outcomes are attractive because they appear to make good on the promise that schooling has never been able to deliver to Modern society: certainty, repeatability, and predictability in the production of persons. Cloaked in the language of equity and transparency, learning outcomes don't simply produce consistently skilled workers, but promise the indirect return of a strong, harmonious, and economically stable society.

While they may be marketed as a kind of breakthrough in solving many longstanding problems in the educational system, the outcomes-based movement draws most of its assumptions, expectations, and goals from Fredrik W. Taylor's principles of scientific management, developed in the early part of the 20th century (Au, 2011; Gray, 1993).

Taylor, an industrial engineer, was faced with a problem similar to many of the educational industrialists and legislators of today. His primary concern was how to use the tools and methods of modern science to most efficiently run a human system of production. Taylor believed the traditional management model (what he called the “initiative and incentive” model) was deeply problematic because it relied too heavily on the capacities of specific employees; it focused on cultivating personal relationships and networks between all employees in a system, including management; and, most dangerously, it was grounded in subjective, trade-specific knowledge, without being able to quantitatively guarantee particular results. He

intended to replace this approach with a “scientific” model which would create empirically-based goals, definable methods, and more accurately train worker behaviors. He intended not simply to regulate worker outputs, but to control the very processes, behaviors, and actions of employees in the process of production. He would, in short, manage the messy process of organizing humans with all the precision and scalability of an industrial machine.

Taylor’s system began by breaking down the production process into small, definable behaviors which he called “the task.” Taylor believed that “the task” is that thing a worker must know and be able to do in order to perform as their role as a productive member of a given industry. Taylor (1911/1998) describes “the task” as the following:

Perhaps the most prominent single element in modern scientific management is the task idea. The work of every workman is fully planned out by the management...in advance... This task specifies not only what is to be done but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it. And whenever the workman succeeds in doing his task right, and within the time limit specified, he [is rewarded for his effort]. ... Scientific management consists very largely in preparing for and carrying out these tasks (p. 29).

Taylor’s goal was to design a system which scientifically determined not only which tasks were correct for a particular job or industry, but also the best methods and approaches to accomplishing those tasks. The goal of management was to carefully guide workers – who were seen as generic and replaceable – through performing standardized tasks which would result in them learning the skills necessary for their particular station. When workers were not performing adequately, these objective standards would give them a rubric to assess their inputs (e.g. conformity to proven methods) and outputs (e.g. products of production) to meet management expectations. In 1911, when Taylor published his *Principles of Scientific Management*, it revolutionized managerial practices and, through deeply reconstructed and revised, remains the ground for much of modern management and organizational logic (Boje & Winsor, 1993; Crowley, Tope, Chamberlain, & Hodson, 2010; Lawrence, 2010).

Compare Taylor’s system of task management to the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) outcomes created by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2014). The LEAP initiative has a four primary goals: (a) the development

and adoption of the “Essential Learning Outcomes,” which is set of standardized tasks all college students must know or be able to do in order to perform as adequate members of American society; (b) the development and adoption of a set of “high-impact practices” and supporting “VALUE rubrics” which are a standardized set of methods which have been “scientifically” proven as the way in which the skills are best learned, applied, and evaluated; (c) the use of “authentic assessments” which is “a multiplicity of tests and ways to measure student learning” to support “student success.” These assessments, in other words, attempt to empirically measure student attainment of pre-determined skills; (d) a push for “inclusive excellence” which is a catch-all term ensuring that this becomes the paradigm under which every American student falls.

b. Learning outcomes: a philosophical critique

In the remainder of this essay, I will provide a critique of three dimensions of Taylor’s logic which are embedded in contemporary learning outcomes. I will argue, first, that the Tayloristic logic of learning outcomes establishes a dangerous educational teleology; second, that it separates knowledge from action; and third, that it restricts the creative capacities and, therefore, future growth of students.

Ideal citizen / Ideal society

Contemporary outcomes-based education, like Taylor’s view of industry, is deeply teleological at both the level of the system and the individual. It imagines, first, there is a “fixed” and ideal kind of society or system which can be located and defined theoretically. Secondly, it believes that this ideal is to be achieved through bringing schooling practices into line with that society. Third, it demands that all persons in the system conform to a pre-determined, definable set of skills and attitudes if the whole is to function properly. Lastly, it imagines that a set of expert leaders or outside knowers are best capable of determining not only the overall goals and ideas of the system, but the methods and processes needed to achieve it.

Though its methods and metrics have changed, this approach to schooling and society has changed little from when Plato introduced it two thousand years ago. Plato believed that education began by defining its end: the true infrastructure of a harmonious society. School became a place where this end was realized, as the general

populace was evaluated for potential, sorted into classes, and given skills and attitudes to support and maintain that society.

While Plato's vision was not without some merits, it remains deeply antithetical to the establishment of a democratic society. The reason why, as John Dewey (1916/2008) argued, is that it remains "in bondage to static ideals" because the aim of a social teleology is "to construct a state in which change would...have no place. The final end of life is fixed..." (p. 97). It holds a static and limited vision of societies and individuals, rather than understanding both as engaged in an ongoing, transactional process of growth.

Further, this vision is a social manifestation of what Dewey (1929/2008) labeled the quest for certainty, which "is a quest for a peace which is assured, an object which is unqualified by risk and the shadow of fear which action casts" (p. 7). It engages humanity in an unending and ultimately fruitless quest to arrive at an ideal state. It naively believes it can ultimately predict what is necessary in an unstable and unpredictable future environment.

In contrast, Dewey believed that participatory democracy was the best available model of both society and schooling, because it was only in a democratic environment that individual freedom and growth was truly possible. Dewey (1916/2008) wrote that:

a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give pint and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity (p. 93).

It is only in a democratic environment that there can be recognition of mutual interest, collaboration, and continuous recreation of both self and world through encountering new problems and new situations.

One of Dewey's central critiques of Platonic education is its insistence that outside agents must prescribe ends and values for learners, which is the very purpose of *outcomes-based* education. In contrast, Dewey believed education must begin from within the unique standpoints of individual learners and that those experiences

should be central to the overarching process of learning, inquiry, and development. Democratic education should, in other words, foster the unique, unpredictable capacities of knowers in relationship to a democratic or communal whole.

If school is to serve the interests of a pluralistic, participatory democracy, Dewey argues the exact opposite of outcomes-based education must become the norm. Schooling environments, pedagogies, and decision-making processes must become *heterogeneous*, and must find their ordering principle in the unique problems, talents, and goals of the individuals present in the community. Heterogeneity is a (perhaps *the*) primary constituting element of authentic democratic life. In the context of the schooling, embracing heterogeneity is a rejection of standardized and managerial forms of schooling which force unique persons into generic curricula. It further means students have a voice in all dimensions of their educational process.

Knowers and knowing

Taylor's logic and outcomes-based education are also built on the same view knowledge and knowing, which holds that there is an ontological separation of knowledge or knowing from dynamic, emergent action. This allows the "thing known" (i.e. the task or outcome) to be imagined as (a) located, fixed, and measurable, and (b) independent of the goals, horizons, and actions of the inquirer. This view of knowing and knowledge is also a massive error in thinking.

Like Taylor's tasks, learning outcomes are believed to be generic skills or understandings which exist prior to and apart from any actual experienced process inquiry. They are also intended to measure students against normative, pre-determined assessments, which scale and categorize action from least to most correct, irrespective of the unique process taking place.

Dewey called traditional view of knowledge and knowing, on which outcomes-based education and Tayloristic logic is based, the *spectator theory of knowing*. For Dewey, the spectator theory is committed to the idea that knowing is a kind of causal, cognitive act, which takes the form of a viewer or spectator who has the ability to purely "see" the cognitive object. Here, knowledge is not only antecedently embedded in the natural structure of the cosmos, but also exists as a thing-in-itself. The spectator theory of knowing results

in what Dewey calls *the philosophical fallacy*, which is the assumption that the products or outcomes of inquiry, exist antecedently to those process of doing or making taking place. They are imagined to have been *discovered by or taken by* the inquirer rather than *made* as a process of construction.

In contrast, in Dewey's account meanings and knowings cannot be "fixed" prior to inquiry, since the process of inquiring yields the creation of emergent and novel meanings which exist interdependently and transactionally with the knower. Dewey (1938/2008) writes that "As undergoing inquiry, the material has a different logical important from that which it has as the outcome of inquiry" (p. 122). By the time *a forewarned idea* has become *a settled fact* it has undergone a transformation.

It is in this misunderstanding of the transformational nature of learning and inquiry that Dewey finds one of the most pervasive problems in education. Dewey (1916/2008) wrote that "failure to bear in mind the difference in subject matter *from the respective standpoints of the teacher and student* is responsible for most of the mistakes made in the use of texts and other expressions of preexistence knowledge" (p. 190, emphasis added). Educators often make a massive mistake in imagining that subject matter represents the plain solution to the problem at-hand. Inside this logic, which is at the base of outcomes-based education, the goal of education is to teach "correct" facts, values, or behaviors.

Dewey reminds us that from the vantage point of the student, who has not taken action on the problem, the subject matter represents suggested courses of action: potentialities ready to be formed into ideas and only later sculpted into facts. By restricting their ability to test out paths in practice or develop new paths, teachers restrict the transformational potential of pedagogy. They also reduce and limit the creative capacities of students in the educational process of students.

In the seventh chapter of *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916/2008) compares Taylor's logic to the Platonic conception of slavery. The lengthy passage is worth quoting here:

Plato defined a slave as one who accepts from another the purposes which control his conduct. This condition obtains even when there is no slavery in the legal sense. It is found wherever men are engaged in activity which is socially serviceable, but whose service they do not understand and have

no personal interest in. Much is said about [Fredrik Taylor's] scientific management of work. It is a narrow view which restricts the science which secures efficiency of operation to movements of the muscles (p. 90-91).

For Dewey, separating meaning from an emergent transactional experience is not only unsatisfying, but is in fact a form of slavery because it cuts off the person from their own experience, forcing them into arbitrary, pre-determined patterns of action. It restricts them from participation in the meanings, values, and implications of the action they, themselves are undertaking. In doing so, it also restricts intelligence and thought.

Creative capacity

One of the most dangerous implications of Tayloristic logic of learning outcomes is that it assumes students have little to no right to agency in the process of their own education, and must learn what they are told to learn. Taylor (1911/1998) wrote that scientific management is "directly antagonistic to the old idea that each workman can best regulate his own way of doing the work" (p. 52). His primary reason for this is that "the man suited to [manual labor] is too stupid properly to train himself" (p. 52). For Taylor, there was a clear and definable caste system of intelligence which existed between workers and management. Similarly, outcomes-based education imagines learning as a kind of conduit or transfer of knowledge between the capable expert who holds knowledge and the passive ignorant who desires it.

Importantly, in outcomes-based education, growth is regarded as *having a fixed end*, rather than *being an end*. Here, the emphasis is placed not on the process of education through inquiry, but instead on the fixed products learning. In contrast, Dewey makes a crucial distinction between, on one hand, an "end," which only occurs historically as the result of reflection on the close of a literal process of inquiry and, on the other hand, what he calls an "end-in-view," which is the constantly revised imagined possibilities and goals emerging from the course of *a present inquiry*. In making this distinction, Dewey rejects the most basic premise of outcomes-based education, which is the notion that "the ends" of or goals of education are defined externally to the educative process, itself. Dewey (1897/1998) argues, instead, that "the process and the goal of education are one and the same thing. I believe that to set up any

end outside of education, as furnishing its goal and standard, is to deprive the educational process of much of its meaning and tends to make us rely upon false and external stimuli in dealing with the child" (p. 233).

The pedagogical results of this philosophical shift could not be more significant. The outcomes-based model is built on the assumption that there is a fundamental or essential dualism between students in our classrooms (persons) and the subject-matter of our disciplines (ends). Dewey (1902/2008) wrote that "instead of seeing the educative steadily and as a whole, we see conflicting terms. We get the case of the child *vs.* the curriculum; of the individual nature *vs.* the social culture. Below all other divisions in [education] lies this opposition" (p. 274). In outcomes-based education the subject-matter of the school is viewed as having no direct relationship to the student. Instead, subject-matter is imagined as a complete unit, which exists as a thing-in-itself.

Dewey maintains the impossibility of this kind of separation between learner and content, or student and curriculum. In doing so, he shifts what he calls the "center of gravity" of the curriculum and pedagogy from the disciplinary content alone, to the dyadic, emergent relationship between the experiences of students and disciplinary subject matter. He argues, in other words, that faculty teach *students* rather than *subjects*. Dewey's synthesis of the student and the curriculum begins in his reconstruction of the traditional view of knowledge and emerges into his understanding of pedagogy and curriculum theory, where pedagogies and curricula begin and are designed around the unique experiences of students and intellectual resources of faculty. This has the further effect of cultivating (rather than restricting) the creative capacity of students, whose goals, capacities, and talents are placed become the very organizing principle of a process of inquiry and learning.

Conclusion

While outcomes-based education appears to offer significant benefits such as equity, transparency, and accountability, this is merely an illusion. Learning outcomes are grounded in a fallacious theory of knowledge and knowing, and fueled by a longstanding human impulse to create certainty in the world via philosophical and empirical means. This view manifests into the mistaken belief that persons can be managed like machines. Joel Spring (1972) writes that

Taylorism, "reflected the view that man was a machine. Taylor was essentially trying to train men to have the precision and timing of an industrial machine. It was also quite easy for businessmen discussing employee welfare benefits to draw parallels between tending a machine and tending a man" (p. 32). In the final analysis, the end-game of the Tayloristic logic of outcomes-based education is just that: a schooling system designed to domesticate, train, and distribute human resources to support an imagined stable social order. Learning outcomes, neatly packaged and expertly designed, become then nothing more and nothing less than a fruitless quest for control inside the deeply creative, unpredictable, emergent process of human growth and development.

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For Faster Service, Please Have Your Money Ready: Aims and Ideals of Teacher Education

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Abstract: Highway billboards as well as electronic and print media abound with advertisements for undergraduate and graduate programs – often online – that offer quick routes to teacher licensure. Such programs challenge program directors and professors to balance theory and practice, technique and craft, quantity and quality in an environment that favors prescriptive standards and requirements in teacher education programs. In responding to state mandates and despite heroic efforts, the most subjective of human endeavors is still reduced to the most objective of “delivery systems.” This article examines the creative tension between coefficient and craft and suggests what hangs in the balance of the equation.

This paper describes the Teacher Voice Project, a qualitative inquiry designed to shed light on how teachers think about the purposes of public schooling. After a very brief review of empirical literature on teachers' notions regarding educational aims, we will

explain the project's conceptual and pedagogical orientations and its methods. Finally, we will present some preliminary findings and provide brief commentary on the findings.

We must destroy all which in the present school answers to the organization of constraint, the artificial surroundings by which children are separated from nature and life, the intellectual and moral discipline made use of to impose ready-made ideas upon them, beliefs which deprave and annihilate natural bent ... All of the value of education rests in respect for the physical, intellectual and moral will of the child.

- Francisco Ferrer (1913)

These capitalists generally act harmoniously, and in concert, to fleece the people.

-Abraham Lincoln (1837)

A lot of things trouble me as I drive the highways of western North Carolina in my Quixotic life as a commuter professor: why we drive on “parkways” and park in “driveways”, the presence of a clutch pedal for the left foot in a manual transmission vehicle and a gas pedal for the right foot, but no foot to operate the pedal in the middle; and why foreign car makers who, when designing drink holders, never conceive of large frame Americans needing a place for their “Big Bubba”, two gallon mugs. In the scope of problems facing humanity I concede that these are small concerns, unless your Bubba Mug lists to the left and sends a cascade of cold beverage down your sock, and I know that we as educators have “bigger fish to fry” than the ones who could now swim in my floorboard.

Of much more importance is the angst that churns in my gut when I see billboards advertising “express” graduate programs in teaching – Master of Arts in Teaching, Master of Education, and the like. These programs are largely offered online – or in some sort of hybrid format – and frequently include state teaching certification. They often appeal to older students who cannot afford to quit their jobs to do graduate work or for whom night classes, the route I took as a daytime teacher/administrator – is impractical if not impossible. This phenomenon is not limited to just graduate studies, as online colleges and universities also offer undergraduate education degrees packaged with teacher certification.