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ALTHUSSER'S IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUS AND FREIRE'S BANKING MODEL: A CRITIQUE OF OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION

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The shifting technological and socioeconomic paradigms of the 21st century propel educational systems to re-evaluate the structures of the learning process. The job market demands worker adaptability to contemporary skillsets. In turn, the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) system, developed by William Spady, became a key framework in aligning pedagogical content with labor-market needs. Though the OBE intends to elevate the opportunities of future graduates by making them globally competitive, the instrumentalization of pedagogy and labor, as this work argued, renders education as an apparatus of capitalism. Therefore, this work examines Jim McKernan's Procedural Learning Inquiry Model as a direct response to Spady's OBE. Moreover, Louis Althusser's Marxist critique of capitalism was explored to engage the intentions of the state to ideologically reproduce the modes and means of production. As is well known, Althusser's position on education highlights the role of the school in justifying the social and economic paradigm through ideology, which Paulo Freire believes to be achieved through the "banking model". This work argues that the OBE is inclined to engineer laborers who are competitive and employable, yet, given market demands, the educational system tends to create one-dimensional thinkers who are subjected to instrumentalized pedagogy for socioeconomic ends.

Keywords: Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), Outcomes-Based Education, Philippine education, Problem Posing Method, Procedural Inquiry Model

INTRODUCTION

In this work, I examine the direction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) of the Philippine educational system and its aims through the lens of Louis Althusser's *Ideology* and *Ideological State Apparatus* and Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy. In articulating the origins of the OBE, I draw on key points from William Spady's work, *Outcomes-Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers.* As is known, the traditional

educational system that developed at the dawn of the Industrial Age started to falter with the emerging need for technical and more flexible "know-how" in the Information Age. As Spady opines in his work, the occupations that are often rendered as 'lifetime careers' and 'steady jobs' are no longer the paradigm under which society functions. Society and, in turn, pedagogical demands are more complex, technological, and competitive (Spady 1994, 29). In this manner, there is a need to construct an educational system that is flexible, adaptive, and competitive, that would produce graduates who adhere to the demands of the industry. The pedagogical approach of the OBE aligns with the Information Age model of learning vis-à-vis the Industrial Age, which "emphasizes the learning of specific curriculum content at specific locations from specific people at specific points in time (Spady 1994, 31)." This is to say that the traditional pedagogical model is constrained by fixed learning objectives that require students to accumulate information. OBE emphasizes the training of students to hone a specific skill set and competencies that will ultimately make the graduates vital assets to the labor force. By identifying the "ends" and learning objectives, the curricula must be structured in such a way that ensures the student's completion and achievement of such outcomes. In other words, the process of learning is reverse-engineered to determine the modes and methods of instruction that can aid the students in accomplishing the learning outcomes.

Spady further shows that the OBE system is not a new pedagogical model as it has been based on much earlier forms of technical training, i.e., military programs, flight schools, ski schools, and the like (Spady 1994, 4). As can be seen, these programs bank on the criterion that must be met competitively by the students; otherwise, if not accomplished, the student would carry the risk of malpractice. Thus, for Spady, outcomes-based learning ensures two things: first, it ensures that "all students are equipped with the knowledge, competence, and qualities needed to be successful after they exit the educational system, and second, it aids the schools in the modification of the pedagogical methods in achieving the outcomes set for the students and maximizing their impact (Spady 1994, 9)." There is no doubt that the OBE is an integral aspect of the learning process in the 21st century, having been appropriated in the United States and the rest of the Western world in the 90s.

Without a doubt, OBE is an ideal methodology to accomplish expected results and competencies, most especially with professions that require rigid training, i.e., medical sciences, engineering, agriculture, and the like. Methodologically, the critique of OBE rests on potential limits it poses in the inquiry-capability of the individual, more often framed as their critical thinking skills. In this manner, Jim McKernan's Procedural Inquiry Model provides a practical viewpoint of how pedagogy could both achieve expected outcomes and potentially substantiate the students' procedural understanding of the learning contents through a careful dissection of ideas and concepts.

Criticisms towards the OBE, as I discuss later, would question the theoretical underpinnings and the methods it utilizes. In the same manner, from the vantage point of Marxist critique, i.e., Althusser, the traditional learning model and the OBE are manifestations of the operations of the ideological state apparatuses, and for Freire, it is a clear form of banking education that extinguishes the critical mind of the learner. For Althusser, education has been instrumentalized by bourgeois capitalism to

accurately engineer the labor force that the market requires – a description that best fits the direction of the OBE as a more efficient path towards technological domination. As this work argues, the OBE is primarily concerned with the objective of shaping and producing graduates who are suited and prepared for the labor force. Though the OBE system also claims to produce critical and ethical thinkers, its ultimate aim, I argue, is to advance the economic interest of bourgeois capitalism. Without a doubt, this agenda will bolster the country's economic capacities, which will then be translated into better living conditions for its people.

I argue further that though the OBE is a pragmatic model in producing future workers and professionals, its approach to learning is problematic as it is domesticating and restrictive. In Louis Althusser's critique of education, he renders the school as an "Ideological State Apparatus," that is, an instrument of the state in legitimizing the dominance of capitalism, which reproduces the means and relations of production. Learners and graduates are merely perceived as means to produce wealth for capitalists and corporations. Again, students are trained and engineered to become suitable for the labor force through pedagogy. This is exactly the position of Paulo Freire, one of the pillars of critical pedagogy, who contends that the educational system under the control of the bourgeois class works against the interests of the learners. Thus, a more student-centered pedagogical model is warranted, which this work also aims to reinforce – the procedural inquiry model, which echoes Freire's critical pedagogical model.

OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

As is known, the Outcomes-based Education model is the more recent revision of "evaluation" theorists like Ralph Tyler and Benjamin Bloom. In his work, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction,* Tyler introduced a systematic method of evaluating the way in which educational objectives are taught and delivered. The process and findings of these systematic evaluations become the basis of changes in methodology and policies concerning the method and content of pedagogy. Some of the key questions that his school of thought addressed concern the purpose of certain programs, their goals, and how such goals can be achieved effectively. Tyler, furthermore, emphasized the necessity of aligning the direction of objectives and assessments.[1] In relative parlance, Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* categorizes various skills and abilities as indicators for knowledge. The original taxonomy, for instance, includes these categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Armstrong 2010).

The most recent (2001) revision of this taxonomy converted objectives from nouns to verbs to represent observable and measurable learning objectives, which characterizes the nature of the cognitive process. Lorin Anderson and David Krathwohl revised the taxonomy to make it more reflective of the 21st-century learning paradigm, which prioritizes the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, including analysis, evaluation, and the creation of solutions (Anderson & Krathwohl 2001). The taxonomy was also ranked from the lowest to the highest form of cognitive process, i.e., Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing,

Evaluating, and Creating. In this manner, the way knowledge is delivered is not unidirectional; that is, pedagogy should not rely on a single method but rather utilize a variety of approaches that will help learners master each taxonomy. Instinctively, the increasing utilization of these pedagogical frameworks would reach the interest of the labor sector. Given the emerging need to improve the workforce, educational systems worldwide reconstructed the curriculum in order to elevate the standards of science, mathematics, history, literature, and other primary subjects (Ravitch 1990). Though the goal was to primarily improve the quality of education, a chief concern is the challenge of technological paradigm shifts. Thus, while the development of the job market is unstoppable, the learners who will then become future laborers would need to go through a shift in preparation as they enter the labor force. In this way, there is a gap in skills necessary to sustain the job market (Ravitch 1990). Given the direction of industries and later, the information age, learners would have to go through a rigorous evaluation to ensure the competitiveness of each graduate before they could enter the workforce.

Presently, the OBE thrust of most educational systems around the world, including the Philippines, does not shift away from the direction of Tyler and Bloom's. In practice, the principle is similar to Tyler and Bloom's, which, as mentioned above, emphasizes the mastery of the taxonomies. The earliest form of OBE could be traced back to the 1930s, when around 300 colleges and 30 high schools restructured the traditional curriculum to emphasize and detail the necessary skills and abilities necessary to master learning and ultimately become effective adults (Connecticut General Assembly 1994). The ultimate goal, therefore, is to equip the students with skills that the job market demands. This direction highlights the production of outcomes, that is, the learner becoming competitive and suitable for specific labor functions. In this manner, OBE plays a critical role in ensuring the efficacy of educational content, which, if implemented, will catapult the learner toward greater heights. In fact, studies show that through the implementation of OBE in higher educational institutions in recent years, there have been significant changes in the quality of human resources (Asim et al 2021). As is known, the OBE has already been in action in the West, in particular, the United States, since 1994 through the Educate America Act. Again, its thrust was to practically highlight the need for measurable objectives and learning outcomes, which ensure the competitiveness of the student. Though currently, the United States has not been using a centralized program that utilizes "OBE," the main direction remains – that is, to ensure student competitiveness through measurable evaluations. Given the demand of the global job market for competitiveness in various professions, OBE instinctively becomes the best shot to secure a country's economic progress.

In his work *Outcome-Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers,* William Spady defines OBE as a pedagogical model that aims to determine the necessary exit outcomes that the learner ought to absorb and accomplish at the end of a course or a program (Spady 1994, 1). Thus, the teacher and the framer of the curriculum must be able to establish a clear image of what the learner should become at the end of the program. From this point, the structure of the curriculum follows the trail that will lead to the outcome. In this manner, the design of instruction, content, and methodology of assessments and evaluations must point to the achievement of the outcomes. Spady

writes that the critical key to the efficacy of an OBE system hinges on two tasks: "1) Developing a clear set of learning outcomes around which all of the system's components can be focused, 2) Establishing the conditions and opportunities within the system that enable and encourage all students to achieve those essential outcomes (Spady 1994, 1)." Further, these outcomes are defined as the learning results that the teacher or the shapers of the curriculum would want the students to become. Spady characterizes these outcomes as "observable action verbs" that "describe, explain, design, produce" which are clear indicators of knowledge appropriation. In contrast to ambiguous learning expectations like the "beliefs, attitudes, or psychological states of mind" which could not be quantified and measured (Spady 1994, 2). In this manner, the result of the pedagogical process could be evaluated concretely and therefore, ensure the quality of educational experience. The critical contrast between the traditional evaluation model was that, in the case of the OBE, the methods of instruction and evaluation are more flexible. Utilizing Howard Gardner's theory of intelligence, the OBE considers the individual strengths of the learner, which, arguably, makes the model more inclusive (Spady 1994, 14).

The primary impetus behind the general interest in the OBE is linked to the potential of the learning model to meet the demands of a technologically dominated society (Spady 1994, 28). The curriculum ten years ago faded into obsolescence, which requires the educational system to revise its exit learning outcomes and the procedures through which this is achieved. OBE, apparently, is the path towards a more flexible and adaptive educational structure to ensure the relevance of the subject contents and other related elements of the pedagogical processes. In other words, this is the movement forward from the traditional educational system, which, for Spady, emphasizes the restrictive nature of cause and effect. Observably, modern society requires students to be multidimensional individuals to compete in the labor market and bring value to the industry in the long run. Insofar as the goal is to make graduates competitive at the theoretical and practical level, there are various factors that must be considered in its implementation if it were to be truly effective.

A review conducted in 2020 in Pakistan, for instance, highlights the importance of this thrust towards the economic development of countries implementing it (Asim et al 2021). The findings suggest that the OBE system addresses issues in student learning outcomes and what the student should have learned after a particular course. Though various points need to be improved, such as language competencies, the system itself shows a promising approach towards pedagogy. Another study in Papua New Guinea investigates student outcomes as the primary basis to "plan and prepare their programs and lessons (Contemporary PNG and Studies 2014)." However, given certain inadequacies with the way in which the program was implemented, the OBE did not achieve its perceived ends. For instance, the inadequate teacher and student awareness concerning its implementation and the methods of pedagogy inclined to it, as well as the vested interest of stakeholders towards the traditional educational setting, are some reasons. Yet, arguably, these are some of the challenges to the success of the OBE, which could be considered noncritical in the theoretical viability of the OBE.

THE OBE AND THE PHILIPPINE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Now, the Philippines' educational system has implemented the OBE when the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 was enacted, otherwise known as the K-12 program. A major shift from the traditional K-10 system. The Department of Education added two years to the traditional 10-year basic education, which aimed to decongest the curriculum and provide more practical and course-specific tracks to assist the students in transitioning to tertiary education. As is known, the K-12 program highlights various academic and technological-vocational tracks that train students with precision towards their potential college courses and professions. Moreover, the academic and non-academic tracks gave the students the choice to enter the workforce without a 4-year college degree. Intuitively, the direction of the shift was to make the Filipino graduates more competitive and employable globally. The ultimate goal was to match international standards by ensuring the number of years spent by graduates in school is uniform with the ASEAN and Western standards (Cruz 2015).

In relation to the demands for and of the workforce, students need to have certain competencies that will put them at a position of advantage in the labor market. In this manner, education becomes a means to economic development. This is not to say that the educational system solely focuses on the competitive advantage of enacting an OBE-based curriculum, but it appears that the main thrust of the program, like the K-12 program and the Outcomes-based Quality Assurance (OBQA) in the case of higher education, is to ensure that the student "becomes" what the learning objectives require. The CHED Memorandum No. 46, Series of 2012, identifies the major provisions and policies for quality assurance through the OBE. On the one hand, the document initially provides the rationale behind the measures of enhancing the quality assurance of higher educational institutions, which is mainly geared towards "human development, productivity and global competitiveness (CHED 2012)." Section 2, on the other hand, articulates the general mission of Philippine Higher education, which is cited verbatim to accurately describe its aims:

> A) To produce thoughtful graduates imbued with 1) values reflective of a humanist orientation (e.g. fundamental respect for others as human beings with intrinsic rights, cultural rootedness, an avocation to serve); 2) analytical and problem solving skills; 3) the ability to think through the ethical and social implications of a given course of action; and 4) the competency to learn continuously throughout life – that will enable them to live meaningfully in a complex, rapidly changing and globalized world while engaging their community and the nation's development issues and concerns.
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> B) To produce graduates with high levels of academic thinking, behavioral, and technical skills/competencies that are aligned with national academic and industry standards and needs and international standards, when applicable;

> C) To provide focused support to the research required for technological innovation, economic growth, and global competitiveness, on the one hand, and for crafting the country's strategic directions and policies, on the other, and
>
> D) To help improve the quality of human life of Filipinos, respond effectively to changing societal needs and conditions; and provide solutions to problems at the local community, regional, and national levels (CHED 2012).

Furthermore, Section 3 of the same document highlights the utmost and critical importance of the program to meet national and international standards for "disciplines/professions (e.g., engineering, information technology and computing; maritime education; accounting; nursing) with such widely accepted standards (CHED 2012)". These measures all contribute to the development of the country, economically and socially. Providing the means through which the learner could contribute to the economy and secure career paths. The ultimate rationale behind these advancements can be found in the fourth section of the same document, which states:

> Section 4. The importance of quality and quality assurance is highlighted by the urgent need to move significant populations of Filipinos out of poverty and to address local, regional, and national development concerns by educating quality leaders, thinkers, planners, researchers, technological innovators, entrepreneurs, and the much-needed workforce to launch the national economy (CHED 2012).

Notably, though the initial direction of the OBQA was to promote the human development and intellect of the learner, i.e., to become critical and ethical thinkers, the ultimate driving force of the OBE was to respond to global demands for competitive employment. This could be further identified in the last section of the first article:

> Section 5: The focus on quality and quality assurance is further underscored by the following:
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> 1) research findings suggesting that the lack of a critical pool of graduates with the necessary thinking, technical and behavioral competencies are among the factors constraining *the re-launching of the Philippine manufacturing sector and the achievement of the full potentials of the service sector*;
> 2) the reality of an ASEAN community by 2015, which facilitates the free flow of qualified labor in the region and either opens up for opportunities for graduates of Philippine HEIs or *threatens their employment even in their own country*;
> 3) *the commitment of the Philippine government to the evolving efforts to recognize and develop a system of comparable qualifications, degrees,*

> *and diplomas across the Asia-Pacific region under the auspices of UNESCO and other multilateral bodies* (e.g., ASEAN, APEC); and the acceptance of internationally-agreed-upon frameworks and mechanisms for the *global practice of professions* (CHED 2012). [Emphasis Added]

As shown, it is clear that a huge aspect of the OBE and, in fact, other related provisions under the Commission on Higher Education and the Department of Education, i.e., the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, was to keep the educational system on a par with international standards and demands for quality human resources, both foreign and domestic. Therefore, the direction appears to pragmatically strive towards economic development *via* global employability and competitiveness of the graduates.

Notably, various studies have proven the efficacy of the OBE cultivating skills in different fields that place the graduates in a favorable working condition. The aspect of "workplace communication" is examined by a study in 2019 among college students (Guangaya Zhang and Lingli Fan 2019). Research observed that the experimental group that underwent the OBE curriculum is significantly more competitive in terms of "workplace communication" than the control group (Guangya Zhang and Lingli Fan 2019). Utilizing the flexible and adaptive approach of the OBE, the course that trains students in workplace communication made use of various instructional methods, i.e., "scenario simulation, role-playing, group discussions, and self-presentation (Guangya Zhang and Lingli Fan 2019)." Other researchers also find OBE as a helpful tool in achieving concrete results, which could be important data for monitoring and assessment (Tungpalan and Mila 2021).

In this manner, the OBE, though it is focused on "results," is learner-centered. However, the implementation of the OBE may not necessarily have uniform outcomes, given the varying resources of school systems that applied the model. Several studies abroad account for the implementation of the OBE as an added workload to instructors, and others comment that, given the limited resources of the school, the OBE is a challenge to implement appropriately (Donnelly 2012; Lui and Shum 2012).

In the Philippine setting, the challenges vary from the way in which it is implemented in the entire programs of an institution, a course, or a subject (Pepito 2019). The difficulty mostly emanates from the depth of how the OBE system is understood and appropriated in various programs. Thus, resistance does not necessarily come from the level of ideological critique, but merely from the practical aspect of implementation and adaptation. A study by Teresa Pepito (2019) examines the perspective of faculty members concerning its implementation. Most of the comments and observations of the respondents regarding the OBE implementation emphasize the utmost necessity to benchmark the Philippine educational system to ASEAN standards (56, 59-61).

Most faculty members claim that though the students are intelligent and well-performing, they are not well-trained to produce tasks and output that the labor market requires (Pepito 2019). In fact, a yet emerging issue is the mismatch of learning competencies among various skills-based courses, i.e., culinary courses (chefs), tourism (flight attendants), and others, to also go through rigorous academic training,

for instance, research projects that may be unnecessary in the general practice of their professions. In one way or another, students who are subjected to these methodological-pedagogical practices resort to the deplorable practice of using ChatGPT in accomplishing academic tasks. This is a symptom of a bigger crisis in the educational system: the diminishing role of critical thinking in the learning process (Garcia 2025). Such a crisis is inevitable given the pragmatic turn of the educational system to outcomes, competitiveness, and employability. Nonetheless, this is a necessary move forward if the country is to improve its human resources. However, the educational system must strike a balance between the mastery of skills necessary for economic improvement and competitiveness in the global market, and the indispensable role of critical and moral thinking of graduates. Indeed, the OBE may be the best move forward in developing a better and more qualified labor force to take industries into greater heights. Its efficacy, however, remains in question across various disciplines.

Arguably, the OBE could be effective in honing skills-based professions, i.e., technical and vocational courses or highly technical courses, for instance, engineering, nursing, allied health science courses, and the like. The ultimate critique of OBE rests on the methodology itself, that is, whether it could be utilized as a blanket pedagogical model for all professions. For instance, it could be asked, could OBE be effective in the humanities and social sciences? Given OBE's focus on results, is it an ideal approach for the humanities and social sciences? Perhaps, there is a line to be drawn. OBE is effective in technical courses, but OBE must not be a fixed line that determines learning as a whole. It must only serve as a minimum baseline, most especially, with arts, humanities, and social sciences. The next section would provide an alternative to the OBE that expands the possibility of inquiry beyond expected outcomes.

CRITICISMS AGAINST THE OBE: THE PROCEDURAL INQUIRY MODEL ALTERNATIVE

One of the salient criticisms against the OBE is articulated by Jim McKernan (1993, 343-353) in his work entitled "Perspectives and Imperatives: Some Limitations of Outcomes-Based Education." He contends that OBE "reduces teaching and learning to human engineering," which could, in fact, be identified through the series of learning outcomes that the teacher should deliver through various pedagogical strategies and methodologies (McKernan 1993). For McKernan, knowledge could not be broken down and categorized, as it is an "open-ended" inquiry and not the mastery of facts. In this manner, the only way through which learning could be measured would be through outcomes and products, which misses completely the most important part of learning – the process of exploration and creativity. He contends further that through outcomes or objective-based evaluation, the "tests" become the measurement of what students know and do not know. In fact, most often, tests and examinations evaluate the students for what they do not know. One could discern this phenomenon when students fail exams – an implication that students "fail" to grasp the contents of the subject.

The critical point of McKernan's position was the proposition of an alternative to the OBE, which he calls the "Procedural Inquiry Model," consisting of three main

components. The first component is "the broad aim of advancing understanding of controversial issues." The second component include "the principles of procedure (which) rests on the assertion that discussion is the best strategy for meeting this aim, and that the teacher should function as a facilitator who remains neutral on 'values' issues." The last component is concerned with the assessment of student performance, which includes "indicators of how well students use concepts and knowledge to explore issues (McNeir 1993)." In this manner, McKernan's position shores up the idea that education should not be restricted to outcomes and objectives, as the process through which content and "knowledge" are acquired also plays a critical role in holistic education. This is also the position of Naskar & Kamakar (2023) in their work, "A Critical Analysis of Outcome-based Education." In the article, OBE is criticized for the instrumentalization of knowledge, which treats learning as a means to an end. For Naskar & Kamakar, "to treat knowledge as instrumental is to dismiss a most important possibility: that the justification for education lies within the process itself (Naskar and Kamakar 2024, 71)."

Banking on McKernan's "Procedural Inquiry Model," the article emphasizes the need to fortify the notion that knowledge is an open-ended inquiry. Such direction restricts the problem-solving skills of students and the creative thinking that results from methodic inquiry. In this way, the learner is not only taught what to think or how to think, but also to think for themselves. The Procedural Inquiry Model is further characterized this way: "1) Discussion is the best teaching strategy for enhancing strategy, 2) The teacher remains 'neutral' on moral value issues, 3) The teacher adopts a facilitator role and 'chairs' the discussion to ensure continuity, summary, and access to evidence (Naskar and Kamakar 2024, 73)." In this manner, contrary to OBE, which begins with outcomes and structures the curriculum based on the perceived results, the Procedural Inquiry Model proposed by McKernan and Naskar et al.(2024), does not "presuppose some lockstep, linear progression through a continuum of goals from the level of lesson on through unit, course, program, and finally, national agenda (73)." Rather, its approach, as mentioned earlier, begins with an inquiry which, as I will show later, has roots in the Freirean problem-posing method.

PAULO FREIRE AND LOUIS ALTHUSSER'S CRITIQUE OF EDUCATION

Now, Paulo Freire's critique of the banking method of education is a clear concurrence with McKernan's exploratory education. In his *magnum opus, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Freire (1970) problematizes the thrust of the traditional pedagogical system, which highlights the act of depositing information and content instead of training the learner to become a critical thinker. The banking method, which is implicit in the OBE, is a mechanism that inhibits the critical thinking and creativity of the learner. This is because the learner's knowledge is imposed, prescribed, and deposited (Freire 1970, 73). In Freire's critical pedagogy, it is understood that the root cause of *mutism or* often rendered as a *culture of silence* in the context of schooling, is the absence of dialogue in the learning process (Freire 1998, 58). In fact, Freire characterizes the banking method of education as monological in nature (Freire 2007, 24).[2] This is because the learner simply becomes a passive recipient of knowledge,

which Freire claims to be "detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance" (Freire 1970, 71). Here, the learner is alienated from the contents of the study, which sways them away from relevance. Though the OBE envisions a humanistic curriculum, that is, a student-centered development, it nonetheless carries the tendencies of engineering human capacities and social behavior best fitted to meet the standards of international human resources.

For Freire, education should be seen as a practice of freedom where the teacher and student are mediated by the world in creating and recreating it. This means that education and the learning process as a whole are not driven by the demands of society alone, but a practice of autonomy that allows the students to self-critique and subject the world to the lenses of inquiry. As an alternative to the banking method, Freire proposes an exploratory model of pedagogy akin to McKernan's position. Freire calls this the *problem-posing method of education*. In the problem-posing method, students are not merely recipients of knowledge but contributors to its critique and transformation (Giroux 2011, 12). The educator and the contents prescribed by the curriculum are no longer the sole sources of knowledge, as the student, now, becomes a partner or a sojourner in the attempt to validate and transform knowledge. As Freire writes, "authentic education is not carried on by 'A' for 'B' or by 'A' about 'B,' rather 'A' with 'B,' mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it (Freire 1970, 93)."

Louis Althusser, a French Marxist philosopher, explains the justification behind this pedagogical practice. Identifying education as an apparatus of state control, Althusser contends that pedagogy is utilized by the bourgeois to normalize the conditions by which the mode of production is sustained. Through the lenses of Marxist political economy, capitalist social formation is perceived as an interplay of apparatuses that legitimizes the contradiction in the mode of production. Althusser posits that the superstructure is that which provides the ideological basis for the stability and reproduction of the material base or the infrastructure. The superstructure is divided into two aspects, the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The RSA refers to institutional mechanisms that carry and impose hardline measures – the government, the army, the police, the prisons, and the like. These institutions utilize violence and coercion, and their operability hinges on force and threats, while ideological state apparatuses operate insidiously through civic society. It is worth mentioning a few examples of the ideological state apparatuses, namely:

> …the religious ISA (the system of the different churches), the *educational* ISA (the system of the different public and private schools), the family ISA, the legal ISA, the political ISA (the political system, including the different parties), the trade-union ISA, the communications ISA (press radio and television, etc.), and the cultural ISA (literature, the arts, sports, etc.) (Althusser 2014, 15).[3] [Emphasis Added]

For Althusser, the task of the ideological state apparatuses is to reproduce the relations of production. Althusser puts into question which of these ideological state

apparatuses is most pervasive and influential. Contextualized in modern bourgeois hegemony and democratic republics, he contends that the schooling system is the most dominant ideological state apparatus against the old ISA, that is, the church, which in absolute monarchies is regarded as the educational ideological state apparatus (Althusser 2014, 22). This explains the disenchantment of society with the religious ideological dictates of dogmatism. One could argue, however, that it is not the educational state apparatus that is the dominant ideological apparatus, but the political ideological state apparatus. This is because no matter what political system is dominant, the bourgeoisie seems to have interfered with the traditional and revolutionary political system. Time and time again, it is the elite – the bourgeois that hold a seat in government. Yet, for Althusser, the educational ideological state apparatus remains the dominant ISA in capitalist social formations. For Althusser, the main reason the educational ideological state apparatus is the dominant ideological apparatus is precisely because of the exposure of the children to ideology from their formative years towards their training to become a part of the labor market. To quote Althusser (24):

> It takes children from every class at infant-school age, and then for years, the years in which the child is most 'vulnerable, squeezed between the Family State Apparatus and the Educational State Apparatus, it drums into them, whether it uses new or old methods, a certain amount of 'know-how' wrapped in the ruling ideology (French arithmetic, natural history, the sciences, literature) or simply the ruling ideology in its pure state (ethics, civic instruction, philosophy) (Althusser 2014, 24).

Being subjected to this socio-cultural paradigm, the children are exposed at an early age to the normative order expressed in school subjects that they are expected to master and, in fact, externalize, that is, to exercise and practice both in private and public existence. Thus, the consciousness of the individual has already been shaped in such a pattern that is favorable to the ruling social order. Furthermore, Althusser contends that while the disciplines mentioned above deliver the technicalities of grammar, arithmetic, and science, the succeeding contents of instructions are more specialized (filling the demand in the division of labor). For Althusser, "another portion of scholastically adapted youth carries on: and, for better or worse, it goes somewhat further, until it falls by the wayside and fills the posts of small and middle technicians, white-collar workers, small and middle executives, petty bourgeois of all kinds (24)." Moreover, he enumerates a hierarchy of social positions that reached a degree of dominance in the social formation:

> a last portion reaches the summit, either to fall into intellectual semi-employment, or to provide, as well as the 'intellectuals of the collective laborer', the agents of exploitation (capitalists, managers), the agents of repression (soldiers, policemen, politicians, administrators, etc.) and the professional ideologists (priests of all sorts, most of whom are convinced 'laymen') (Althusser 2014, 24).

As can be seen here, there is a corresponding ideology behind each role in society. For instance, the ideology behind a soldier or a policeman is the imposition of the notion that they could give orders without the need for negotiation or discourse, or an agent of exploitation being able to give orders without using force, only utilizing soft-line measures in "human relations (Althusser 2014, 25)." These aptitudes are all taught in the educational sector, which subjects the individual to becoming what the curriculum intends, that is, the criteria for standardization and competitiveness, expects them to reach. Of course, other ideological state apparatuses like the church and family state apparatuses are also capable of inculcating such values of virtue, goodness, honesty, nationalism, and godliness, but the extent of ideological imposition is exponential under the educational ideological state apparatus (Althusser 2014, 26).[4] It follows, therefore, that the schooling system, though it appears neutral and apolitical, is the primary culprit of the reproduction of the relations in the material base. One could, then, infer that the agenda of the dominant class is translated into the content and performance standards of the schooling system (Udas and Stagg 2019, 66-79). As discussed earlier, an indisputable direction of the OBE is the production of learners that will be globally competitive and employable – best suited for the demands of the labor market.

I argue, however, that one could not fully ignore and reject the pragmatic aspects of this direction. After all, it is also through employment and economic development that the individual can realize his or her humanity. Thus, this appropriation of Louis Althusser's critique of education as an ISA is not to argue that the subject merely becomes slaves to capitalism; there remains a potential that the workers' critical consciousness and creativity could be cultivated. It is apparent that the OBE, as an ideological state apparatus, shapes learners to become an integral part of the labor force – the means of production. But the schooling system must not render itself as a factory assembly line, but an avenue to cultivate inquiry and critical thinking.

Arguably, as the learner begins to internalize the objective-driven attitude of OBE, which, again, for Althusser, renders education as a means towards an end. The problem is that, in this paradigm, results or outcomes in the classroom could take centrality in the dynamics of the pedagogy at the expense of the exploratory process and the expansion of one's critical consciousness. Why is this a problem? Though the OBE's deterministic pedagogical methodology could enable students to perform skills and tasks that are recognizable globally, the learning attitude, or what Freire calls "epistemic curiosity," is apparently nonexistent (Lamboloto 2025, 41-62). This curiosity and ability to inquire, question, and challenge dominant ideas are the cornerstone of total human development – not merely the acquisition of skills and technical knowledge. What is lost in the OBE is not competitiveness or economic success of the individual, but the potential of the learner to think outside the box (expected learning outcomes) and push forward innovative ideas that promote holistic development. As is shown by recent findings, critical thinking and analytical skills (which may be diminished in a closed-OBE system) are vital to global competitiveness.

Recent developments in international achievement rankings like the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2022 place the Philippines as the "sixth lowest among the 81 countries…in reading, math, and science (Ombay 2024)." In the

ranking, Filipino learners rank "second to the last in creative thinking (Ombay 2024)." This indicates that the Philippines is behind by at least five to six years (Ines 2023). It is critical to note, however, that the cause of such a phenomenon rests on a variety of factors. The findings of the ranking are that the country is behind in terms of the three main academic facets, i.e., reading, math, and science. The ranking, in the first place, is not to announce whether students from one country are smarter than those from another – the ranking was done to determine whether the system of education is effective and capable of training its students to reach international standards. Such a ranking would then translate into how educational systems react to make changes in policies, both at the level of the university or school and at the national level, concerning the structure and content of the curricula. Thus, the ultimate question that emerges from the recent PISA ranking would simply be: where did we go wrong, and what should be done?

I argue that the answer to this question revolves around the inherent problem of the OBE model, which, as discussed extensively earlier, operates by utilizing methods and approaches to accomplish pre-determined fixed points or end goals. Given the rigidity of teaching methodology and the demands of OBE, that is, the completion of performance tasks and the fixity of what outcomes must be achieved, may restrict the learner from fully grasping developmental stages in the learning process. The criticism of McKernan and Freire posits the idea that the OBE truncates creativity as the learners are subjected to a human manufacturing plant instead of being equipped with a consciousness that has the stamina to inquire and employ epistemological curiosity.

In fact, the PISA 2022 result shows that curiosity was closely linked to creative thinking performance (Chi 2024). Creative thinking, instinctively, is the autonomous capability of the learner to think for themselves and interpret concepts, ideas, phenomena through their own subjective lenses. In this manner, the fulfillment of tasks and learning competencies may serve as a mask to the true caliber of one's academic capacities. This means that for the Philippine educational system to improve its placement, the Filipino learner's curiosity to learn new things must gain traction and not simply memorize and accomplish performance tasks. This sentiment is clearly reflected in Fu-Lai Tony Yu's critique of OBE, which argues that the OBE is positivistic in nature. It converts all learning outcomes to measurable metrics (Yu 2019, 319-33).

He identifies four salient critiques of OBE as a positivistic pedagogical model: first, OBE as prescriptive and thus restrictive of the learner and teacher's autonomy and creativity; second, its evaluation and assessment methods are one-dimensional as it emphasizes performance rather than the rationality behind the performance; third, the tendency of the learning process to become mechanical given its cause-and-effect nature; and lastly, OBE as mechanism that could be instrumentalized by the state and policy makers to control and monitor pedagogical practices. For Yu, the learner is dehumanized once subjected to this learning process. Yu's alternative, linked to McKernan and Freire, utilizes a subjectivist method that focuses on the individual's own perspective, touching on "lived experience, knowledge, expectations, plans, experimenting, and errors (Yu 2019, 319-33)."

For Freire, this refers to the thematics or the limit-situations that characterize the individual's phenomenon here and now. Yu contends that for the learner to truly make sense of the world and its dynamicity, the OBE should not be "taken too far" in the

learning process (Yu 2019, 330). Though the OBE may reach its ends of manufacturing competitive workers and thus, alleviate the socioeconomic standing of the country, its limits in making critically conscious individuals must be recognized. At the end of the day, creativity and problem-solving skills are not realizable if the educational system merely deposits information and evaluates whether knowledge is absorbed in its entirety. This is perhaps the reason why the Filipino learner is behind in creative thinking, as he has been conditioned to think like a sponge, trained to absorb and perform. Yet, the Filipino learner suffers from indigestion – the incapacity to create new ideas and challenge the status quo, that is, to solve problems and create meaningful solutions.

CONCLUSION

The pursuit of socioeconomic development through the production of globally competitive and employable graduates is undeniably strategic and practical. At the end of the day, substantial economic compensation contributes significantly to human development and thus national development. In this way, the quality of graduates' skills and honing of technical expertise must be prioritized in achieving competitive industries and human resources – this is the vision of the OBE. Though the ultimate ends of the OBE are to sufficiently equip the learner to become an effective member of the labor force, there are various issues in its implementation. For one, the resources of institutions may be limited in ensuring full appropriation of OBE goals in various disciplines, i.e., the insufficient training of instructors who, in fact, perceive it as an additional workload, the intricacy of each discipline, which entails specialized adaptation of OBE, and, as other scholars suggest, the mismatch of learning competencies among skills-based disciplines.

The point is that OBE may be applicable for some disciplines, while others are compelled to produce "results" and outcomes as the OBE implementation became focused on the accomplishment of performance and academic tasks. The educational system, as can be seen, has been focused on the goals; the processes through which such goals were achieved were overlooked. Instinctively, the overwhelming prominence of ChatGPT and other generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in educational institutions is evidence of society's obsession with results and outcomes. Jim McKernan's Procedural Inquiry Model provides a direct response to Spady's OBE, arguing that learning happens when the individual acquires the skill of inquiry – asking critical questions, which entails the participation of learners in open-ended discussions. Such a pedagogical model was also explored by Freire through his problem-posing method. Opposed to the banking model, Freire contends that authentic learning occurs through the active participation of both teachers and students in subjecting the world to critique, indicating the cultivation of the learner's critical thought. As argued, the OBE may envision a human-centric curriculum and a critically conscious individual, but its tendencies to engineer human capacities, skills, and social behavior to sustain dominant paradigms of international competitiveness and employability. Moreover, Althusser's critique of education pessimistically renders schooling as an ideological apparatus that ensures the reproduction of the dominant

social system. As an ideological instrument, the school system is perceived as a reproductive apparatus – it aims to ensure the continuity, in this case, of the labor market and maintain the dominance of capitalist interest. The OBE, despite its humanistic intentions, elicits the purpose of merely cultivating a valuable skillset, technical expertise, and human resources that may be economically beneficial. This could be seen in recent attempts in the educational sector, particularly the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd), to diminish, if not remove, subjects that cultivate critical thinking, i.e., Ethics, The Contemporary World, and Art Appreciation (Escollada et al. 2025). In one way or another, this remains consistent with the vision of globally competitive and employable individuals, but a docile labor force that may lack intellectual and critical skills in criticizing and questioning hegemonic narratives. Ultimately, the goal of learning transcends instrumental rationality; it is not limited to the pursuit of economic progress through competitiveness and employability, but the humanization and empowerment of the human consciousness, to transform the world.

NOTES

1. Hogan, R. 2007. "The Historical Development of Program Development of Program Evaluation: Exploring the Past and Present." *Online Journal of Workforce Education and Development* II (4): 4. Accessed November 3, 2025.https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1056&context=ojwed.

2. See also: F.G. Cortez, The Prospect of Liberation Pedagogy in the Thoughts of Amable G. Tuibeo." *The Mabini Review. Polytechnic University of the Philippines*, Vol. 3, No. 1. (2014), 20.

3. Althusser provides a parallel analysis of political authority as in the case of an absolute monarchy. Here, one asks the question of what the ideological state apparatuses are if there is a singularity of legitimate authority. Unlike republics and parliamentary democracies, which held pluralistic repressive state apparatuses and ideological state apparatuses. In the case of absolute monarchies, Althusser opines that it is the religious ISA that stands as the main legitimating institution that justifies the "divine right of kings." At the same time, taking on the task of educational ISA, the church ISA was also the academic and scientific authority. One could, therefore, understand the role of the church in political affairs, for instance, during the Crusades of the Holy Land. However, in the capitalist era, the bourgeois hegemony shifted to the schooling system to ensure the stability of the social order.

4. Althusser contends further that the school appears to be neutral, that is, its only goal is humanization and development of the individual. The reality, however, is that it is an apparatus that ensures the continuity of the relations of production.

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