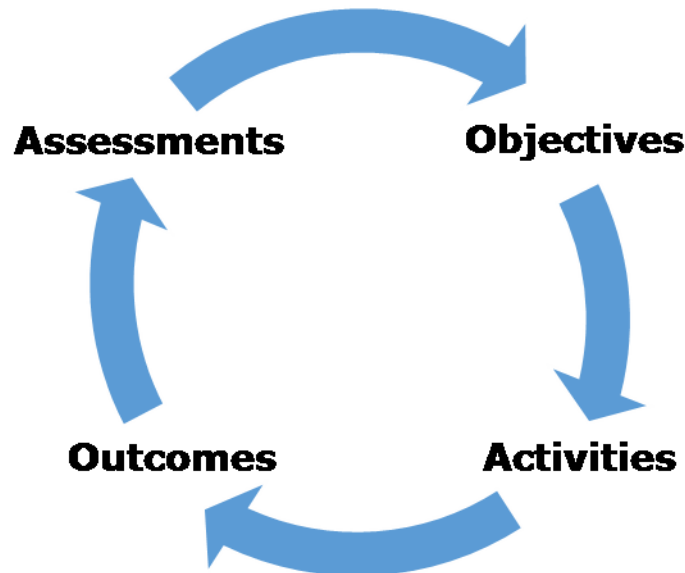


The Educational Process



Learning: Unless by accident, learning occurs in four stages: objectives, activities, outcomes, and assessments. This happens anywhere: on a personal basis, in a business, in marketing, and, most importantly, in education.

Objectives: Objectives are goals you want to get out of the process. They are dreams.

Activities: Activities are the individual steps required to achieve each objective. These require both input (direction) and output (results).

Outcomes: Outcomes are the measures of completion or competence of each activity. They are grades.

Assessments: Assessments are the comparison of the results of the outcomes to the original objectives. You can complete every activity but not obtain your objective. In this instance, either the objectives need to be changed or the activities.

This is the purpose of Accreditation, Self-Evaluation, Department Review, Program Review, Course Review, and Personnel Review.

How can we do better?

Better Objectives: Objectives are nouns and they need to be measurable. Learning is not an objective: it is not a noun nor is it measurable. A degree, an "A", a transfer, a job, or a promotion are all nouns, measurable, and objectives.

Objectives should also be obtainable. Any student enrolling in school to become rich is not a valid objective. Becoming rich is an activity that the individual has to take part in, although an education may provide the knowledge and opportunities to get there.

Focused Activities: Activities should be focused to either prepare or accomplish an activity. They should have results and be measurable in order to connect it to the objective. An example I give my students of a bad activity is where they are required to put something together and then take it apart. Sure, they learned how to make it and break it, but the result is the same as if they never did it; and took a lot longer.

Easily Measured and Obvious Outcomes: The results of the activities you use as outcomes should be recognizable by the people completing them, in order for them to know if they are doing them correctly and learn to make the proper changes. In addition, in order for multiple people to use the same activities and outcomes, the activities and outcomes have to be configured so that the results would be similar if measured by different people from the same input.

Simple, Fill-in-the-Blank Assessments: If the objectives are clear and measurable, the activities directly support the objectives and are measurable, and the outcomes are easily recognized and measured, the assessments become a checklist of Yes or No. The result is compilation of the number of participants that completed the acceptable number of objectives.

Changing the Process: If each step is obvious and measurable, it can be easy make changes and see results. I have had one test question that a significant number of student miss each semester. I have tried to change the question, to no avail. Finally, I asked the students why they missed the question. Their answer: "I did not read the entire question." It was not my fault, and I am not in a position to help them with it.