

## Outcomes Based Education vs. Outcomes Based Training and Education. Is There a Difference?

Major James J. Smith

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### **Introduction**

In recent years certain leaders in the United States Army recognized that the current training methodologies have become antiquated and are based on preparation of a different style of conflict than what have been experienced during the last six years in Iraq and Afghanistan. These leaders have begun to examine new training methodology that provides more emphasis on the outcomes as opposed to the more commonly accepted methodologies that focus on inputs or “tasks.” Outcomes Based Training and Education (OBTE) is the commonly referred name of this new methodology. Although, this is a relatively new teaching methodology in military circles, the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) debate has raged in education circles since the early 1990s. The aim of this essay is to examine the academic literature in both military and academic fields in order to find out whether this is a feasible methodology in unique environments like West Point, where military training and academic education is integrated. First however, OBE and OBTE need to be defined in order to provide a foundation for the respective literature review. Second, the similarities and differences will be analyzed. Third different military and academic schools of thought will be presented. This will provide a transparent understanding of the overall potential research question which posits whether OBTE and OBE are capable of being integrated in an environment like West Point which epitomizes academic and military synthesis.

## **OBTE and OBE Defined**

According to the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG), OBTE “seeks to merge the benefits of training and education to create thinking individuals and units that know what to do in the complex environment of Full Spectrum Operations.”<sup>1</sup> It is based on the asymmetrical complexities that require individual Soldiers to understand their environment and solve complex problems without waiting to be told what to do next. In order for the military to be successful, there is a need to mesh both training and education together that will result in a military unit capable of conducting Full-Spectrum Operations. The Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* defines Full Spectrum Operations as the combination of “offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations simultaneously as part of an interdependent joint force to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative, accepting prudent risk to create opportunities to achieve decisive results.”<sup>2</sup> Cognitive Soldier attributes such as confidence, awareness, initiative, and accountability are what the OBTE methodology hopes to gain in military training.

The civilian or academic variant, Outcome-Base Education is the civilian or academic variant, and is more focused on the cognitive levels of learning that are (or are not) occurring in the education system. Dr. William Spady, arguably the leading advocate for OBE believes that education should enable children to successfully function in “life-long roles such as being a consumer, a producer, a citizen, a family member, an intimate friend, and a lifelong learner.”<sup>3</sup> The same type of complex problems that people need to solve in life will need to be integrated in

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Shaw, "Outcome Based Training and Education (OBT&E)," *Asymmetric Warfare Group Newsletter* 1, no. 1 (2009), <http://army.daiis.mi.army.smil.mil/org/aawo/awg/default.aspx>. (accessed 25 June 2009).

<sup>2</sup> William Wallace, *FM 3-0, Operations*, ed. William Wallace, Supersedes FM 3-0 , 14 June 2001 ed. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, February 2008), 3-1, [www.us.army.mil](http://www.us.army.mil) (accessed May 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Bruno V. Manno, *Outcome-Based Education: Miracle Cure Or Plague?* (Washington D.C.: Thomas Fordham Institute, 1994), 6, [http://www.edexcellence.net/detail/news.cfm?news\\_id=215&id=](http://www.edexcellence.net/detail/news.cfm?news_id=215&id=) (accessed 25 June 2009).

the education system. Manno describes OBE as “the knowledge, competence, and orientations that you deem critical for assuring success.”(Manno 19946) Killen has a similar perspective says “the idea of success should be measured in terms of things that learners could demonstrate after their educational experiences were over (after...school), rather than by an accumulation or average of things that could be demonstrated during their educational experiences...”<sup>4</sup> Nearly seventeen years later Spady published another article in attempts to answer many of his critics and update the definition in more straightforward terms:

defining, designing, building, focusing, and organizing everything in an education system on the things of lasting significance that we ultimately want every learner to demonstrate successfully as the result of their learning experiences in that system.”<sup>5</sup>

OBE is commonly recognized to be a values-based style of education as opposed to a focus on knowledge and basic skills proficiency. Nevertheless, OBE attempts to create, plan, organize and design an educational curricula around “what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully” later in their life experiences. The similarity of definitions provided suggests that there is a common understanding of how to define OBE. However, the same amount of clarity is needed in order to be effectively implemented.

In the academic field there are two basic schools of thought towards OBE. One is supportive while the other is vehemently opposed. From the military prospective OBTE might seem like a revolutionary perspective, however this essay will highlight otherwise. Bill Lind’s book, *Maneuver Warfare Theory* published during a period of warfare antithetical to the decentralized, irregular environment of today suggests otherwise. The fundamentals of Lind’s

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>5</sup> Roy Killen, *WILLIAM SPADY: A PARADIGM PIONEER*, <http://teacher.acer.edu.au/> ed. (Camberwell, Vic 3124 Australia: Teacher- The National Education Magazine, 2009), 2, <http://www.learningtolearn.sa.edu.au/Colleagues/pages/default/spady/?reFlag=1>; <http://teacher.acer.edu.au/> (accessed July 17, 2009).

theory and how it relates to OBTE will be highlighted later. First, it is necessary to examine the different literary schools of thought in the academic environment since there has been a more thorough debate regarding this respective model.

### **Academic Proponents for OBE**

During the early 1990s, OBE gained overwhelming support by many educators, politicians, and academics. Authors such as William Spady, David Hornbeck, Roy Killen, Theodore Sizer, Mureil Bebeau and John Goodlad have argued for the implementation of OBE that many consider as radical reform of the education system. The leading proponent for OBE is Dr. William Spady. A sociologist by trade, Spady argued in the 1990s that the current education system was outdated and ineffectual, and that was not prepared for the realistic challenges that children would face as adults. During the late 60's and early 70s he served in such roles as the Senior Research Sociologist at the National Institute of Education, Associate Executive Director of the American Association for School Administrators and lastly, as the Director of the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. By examining the education through a sociologist's perspective, he formulated his core foundation for OBE based on two concerns:



Figure 1- Dr. William "Bill" Spady

1. The future that school children were facing
2. The fundamental character of the education system that was preparing these children for their future.<sup>6</sup>

Spady argues that “educentric<sup>7</sup> reformers” believe the education system has created academically challenging, specifically designed measures that are entrenched in an outmoded, dogmatic

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<sup>6</sup> William G. Spady, "It's Time to End the Decade of Confusion about OBE in South Africa," University of Pretoria, <http://edulibpretoria.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/spadyobeconfusionpaper.pdf> (accessed July 18, 2009, 2009).

strategy unable to prepare children for future challenges. Phrases such as “Bureaucratic Age Culture, Industrial Age Delivery System, Agrarian Age Calendar, Feudal Age Agenda”, are used by Spady to describe their model.<sup>8</sup> Designed to meet Industrial Age challenges this argument suggests that contemporary doctrine is based on policies created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For example, the nine month school calendar was designed around yearly harvesting needs. Another example suggests that the Feudal Age Agenda, as displayed through the use of excessive “grades, labels and ranks,” has informally developed a caste system of haves and have-nots.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Spady highlights how these out-dated changes were reinforced nearly a century later when the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) published the widely acclaimed report, *A Nation at Risk*. Their recommendations included “four years of English [and] three years of mathematics” which were mirror-image proposals from last century’s policies. Changes were still focused on inputs, specified subject areas, while making made no adjustments to the calendar year.(Gardner 1983, 1-19) A follow-on study, *A Nation Accountable, Twenty-Five Years after “A Nation at Risk”* made similar observations when they said that the current high school curriculum is diluted with a “smorgasbord” of different easy courses that hide behind “inflated course names.”<sup>10</sup>

### **The Foundation for OBE (Spady 200957-58)**

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<sup>7</sup> The term “educentric” means the education system was created based on the way things have always been and not necessarily on the way they should be.

<sup>8</sup> Killen, *WILLIAM SPADY: A PARADIGM PIONEER*, 1

<sup>9</sup> William G. Spady, "Re-Forming the Reforms: How Total Leaders Face Education's Biggest Challenge," Government of South Australia, <http://www.learningtolearn.sa.edu.au/Colleagues/pages/default/spady/?reFlag=1> (accessed July 17, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

One of the key criticisms of the traditional learning model is that it doesn't apply to the real life challenges. Thus, Spady argues that the successful implementation of OBE in academic curriculum must be based on four basic principles.

1. Clarity of Focus on Outcomes of Significance. Making sure that you continuously align your instruction and assessments with what your desired end state.
2. Designing Down from your Ultimate Outcomes. Work your way back from your desired end state; establishing the resources and skills needed to achieve this end state.
3. High Expectations for High Level of Success. Achieving a greater level of success for every student while ensuring that all students will achieve a higher level of success, and eliminating the idea that select students are unable to achieve this success.
4. Expanded Opportunities and Support. Time is the most critical aspect of this idea. It is considered a resource that enables students to achieve their goals as opposed to a limiting constraint in the educational process.<sup>11</sup>

Given these principles, advocates suggest that standards and expectations will rise because emphasis is now on what the learner (student) can successfully achieve in life. Brun and Alexander presents an informative comparison which highlights the key differences between traditional forms of education (as encouraged by the Department of Education's 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*) and Transformational OBE as highlighted by Brun's analysis of Spady's vision.

<b><u>Traditional Education Model</u></b>	<b><u>Outcomes-Based Model (Transformational Model)</u></b>
Inputs such as number of books and computers available, student to teacher ratio, etc	Engender the competent citizen prepared for the nebulous challenges of the future
Courses are academically structured and designed around hours available to teach	The "outcome" or result is most important
All students move through the subject material at the same pace like a cohort	Outcomes are developed first and then the course is structured with the flexible of time, resources, and space
Teachers are given specific subjects that they	Learners move through the subject material at

<sup>11</sup> David Gardner, *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education,[1983]), <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html> (accessed July 21, 2009).

prepare for, teach, and then evaluate students	their own pace using methods that best suit their style
Evaluation criteria is based on tests and/or papers that are graded by the teacher	Teachers have holistic role; they are responsible for the outcomes that is related to a course
Learners (students) amass enough classes over a specific time period which leads to recognized credentialing by a governing body	Learners demonstrate mastery of material through practical application such as projects, products and performances. <sup>12</sup>

Supporters of OBE have highlighted a number of different reasons why OBE will better suit preparing our children for future challenges. In 1995, the Education Commission of the States published a report that highlighted for primary reasons that support OBE. They include:

1. Promotes high expectations and greater learning for ALL students
2. Prepares students for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
3. Fosters more authentic forms of assessment (i.e. writing papers to demonstrate mastery of English, solving real world problems in math class)
4. Encourages decision-making at all levels including: curriculum, teaching methods, school structure and management at each school/district level.<sup>13</sup>

Given this explanation, many consider OBE to be just another form of “mastery learning” which was introduced Benjamin Bloom decades earlier.<sup>14</sup> Although OBE was influenced by Bloom, Mastery Learning is different because it is focused on “organizing everything in an educational system around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences.”<sup>15</sup> For example, Bloom is less concerned with the life role of a student and more concerned with assessing the cognitive abilities based on “his classic taxonomy

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<sup>12</sup> Margret Spellings, *A Nation Accountable; Twenty Five Years After "A Nation Accountable"* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Education,[2008]), <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/accountable/accountable.pdf> (accessed July 21, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Killen, *WILLIAM SPADY: A PARADIGM PIONEER*, 2; William G. Spady, *Paradigm Lost: Reclaiming America's Educational Future* (Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1997), 158.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Brun, "The ABCs of OBE," <http://bcbruns.tripod.com/obe.htm> (accessed June 25, 2009, 2009).; Linda Alexander, "OUTCOMES-BASED EDUCATION," *Didache- Faithful Teaching* 2, no. 1 (2009), [http://didache.nts.edu/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=38](http://didache.nts.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=38) (accessed July 21, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Education Commission of the States, ""Outcome-Based" Education: An Overview," Education Commission of the States Clearinghouse, <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/go/go4outcm.htm> (accessed June 24, 2009, 2009).

of educational goals.” Bloom’s taxonomy aims to measure a student’s ability to “analyze and integrate facts, to apply them to new situations, and to evaluate them critically within the broad context...”(Lowman 1995) Lastly, Bloom’s taxonomy fails to address aspects of communication and problem-solving skills that have been addressed in modern debates on critical analysis.<sup>16</sup>

**“A Catch-all Phrase Describing a Good Idea Gone Wrong.”<sup>17</sup>**

Given the pragmatic approach that OBE uses towards education, it would seem difficult to imagine why so many oppose this model. Authors such as Manno, Weatherly, Tancredo, Williams, and Lederman argue that OBE is not only a poor substitution for the current input-centric system, but has resulted in “dumbing-down” education standards. The traditionalist’s philosophy consists of the idea that specific content will provide the foundation for the student to “develop the skills necessary for a career” and a starting point for lifetime learning.<sup>18</sup>

Bruno Manno, one of the architects who has vehemently opposed OBE argues that the model is “nebulous, hard to measure” and pay more attention to “attitudes, values, beliefs, and emotions rather than academic achievement.”<sup>19</sup> He argues that schools need a two-fold strategy. Uniform and academic standards for all children are the first measure. This will enable the education administration to account for results of success and failure result. Second, he believes that school diversity is achieved by families having the authority to pick and choose what school best meets their individual needs. This suggests that accounting for students and maintaining a rigorous academic focus will lead to improved student output. His perspective was reinforced in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> William G. Spady, *Outcome-Based Education: Critical Issues and Answers* (Arlington, Va.: American Association of School Administrators, 1994), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Lowman, *Mastering the Techniques of Teaching*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995), 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 196

November 1993 when a bipartisan group known as The National Education Goals Panel published a report approving five points that support the adoption of national standards for education. The second point specifically strikes at the heart of OBE by stating that academic “standards should address core academic areas. They should not deal with nonacademic concerns such as students’ values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.” He concludes by stating that uniform standards and testing is inherent in a successful and modern education system.<sup>20</sup>

Other academics have taken issue with OBE’s ability to properly assess students. Weatherly argues that the assessment structure places too much emphasis preparing our children for employment and not enough the education of school children. She goes as far as to compare OBE assessments with the communist signs posted throughout Grenada prior to the U.S. invasion in 1983. The concept that businesses and government have as much influence on the academic curriculum as educators leads Weatherly to believe that the ability to properly assess a child’s academic performance to be skewed. This also suggests that OBE curriculum would actually move away from the education sector into the industry and business sector and create academic standards as part of *their* vision.<sup>21</sup>

Iserbyt, the author of *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America* is so opposed to OBE that she relates it to the policies of socialist countries that she lived in previously. Her research consists of a compiled list of facts and figures that attempts to document everything that is wrong and dangerous about OBE. However, Iserbyt chooses not to debate the success or failure of OBE in hopes that the reader will be overwhelmed with factual data points that attempt to

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<sup>20</sup> Manno, *Outcome-Based Education: Miracle Cure Or Plague?*, 10

<sup>21</sup> Edward Lederman and Dwight Williams, "The ABCs of OBE: What's Wrong with 'Outcome Based Education'," Independence Institute, [http://www.i2i.org/main/article.php?article\\_id=631](http://www.i2i.org/main/article.php?article_id=631) (accessed July 21, 2009, 2009).

engender the feeling that our children will become robots, and “cannot make connections, repeat an act, nor recall a fact unless provided the necessary stimuli and environment.”<sup>22</sup>

Another criticism of OBE is that local authority will be usurped by federalized (or socialist policies). However, this view point is not shared by all politicians. Tom Tancredo, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and former 2008 presidential candidate believes that OBE is supported by many “who may be unaware...of its ‘globalist’ world view...that recognizes that the present government education system is corrupt and dysfunctional.”<sup>23</sup> Tancredo argues that OBE supporters try to take advantage of this disenfranchised group by promising change that seems “reasonable, rational, and compelling.”<sup>24</sup>

Williams and Lederman take offense to the idea that no one will fail in OBE curriculum since students are given as much time to learn the subject matter as required. Williams suggests that it will create a watered-down curriculum that results in a “skills demonstration lenient enough that everyone can eventually succeed...It’s the first requirement of the plan.”<sup>25</sup> He continues to echo many other critic sentiments that critics have recognized the denial of greater opportunities for gifted students because other students have not mastered the particular skill. He suggests that OBE is focused on producing entry-level business employees, has moved away from teaching math and science, focused on the use of “whole language” instead of phonics, testing with an emphasis on memorization, and the inability of the OBE evaluation portfolio being accepted, or even understood by collegiate admissions departments.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Manno, *Outcome-Based Education: Miracle Cure Or Plague?*, 5

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17

<sup>24</sup> Cynthia Weatherly, "When is Assessment REALLY Assessment?" *The Christian Conscience* 1, no. 9 (1995), 29-30 (accessed [http://www.deliberatedumbingdown.com/OtherPDFs/Weatherly\\_When\\_is\\_Assessmentpdf.pdf](http://www.deliberatedumbingdown.com/OtherPDFs/Weatherly_When_is_Assessmentpdf.pdf)).

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Thomson Iserbyt, *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America: A Chronological Paper Trail* (Ravenna, Ohio: Conscience Press, 1999), xxvi, <http://www.deliberatedumbingdown.com/MomsPDFs/DDDoA.sml.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Lederman and Williams, *The ABCs of OBE: What's Wrong with 'Outcome Based Education'*, 2

Lederman echoes William's sentiments regarding OBE subjectivity, lack of credits, and failure to standardize grades so they apply to college related curricula. He highlights multiple cases that integrated Theodore Sizer's conceptual OBE program known as the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) and subsequent knock-off programs as an example an OBE program with substandard results. Their program's success is limited to a reduction in drop-out rates, and can nothing else. His research also suggests that an increasing number of non-profit organizations have taken advantage of OBE in order to further their own agendas. For example the CES is supported financially by a corporate grant. If the state adopts the program then another phase of costs primarily driven by the need for OBE consultants are added to the overall price tag. Many of these OBE consultants promoted the program as a grass roots movement, i.e. teachers in the classroom as the primary advocates, when in reality OBE has started through lobbyists at the state level and subsequently instituted from the top-down.<sup>27</sup>

The critiques of OBE can be summarized by a January 1995 report submitted by the Education Commission of the States:

1. Conflicts with the admission requirements and practices of most colleges and universities, which rely on credit hours and standardized test scores
2. Outcomes focus too much on feelings, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and not enough on the attainment of factual knowledge.
3. Relies on subjective evaluation, rather than objective tests and measurements.
4. Undermines local control (through nationally standardizing outcomes)<sup>28</sup>

The arguments for Outcome Based Education have been shared and reveal some interesting evidence. Proponents for this model believe that the current education model is grossly outdated and requires a major overhaul that requires a change in how students learn, teachers prepare and administrators support the education system. The current model is based on the industrial age which required a large proportion of individuals that can work in unison to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

ensure the successful synchronization of major plants and factories. Rote memorization, standardized test measures and time limits describe the current “educentric” system. However, many suggest that the integration of OBE in the classroom causes the pendulum to swing too far to the other side by focusing too little on the basic education principles such as math, science, English and while placing too much emphasis on life-skills. The question still remains whether some of the concepts of OBE can be integrated into other learning environments that go beyond just the classroom, i.e. the military training environment. The next section will examine the perspectives of how OBE, known as Outcome Based Training and Education (OBTE) in the military, and how it compares to the current training methodology that consists of “Task, Condition, Standard.”

### **Outcomes Based Training *and* Education (OBTE)-Can it Work in the Military Domain?**

The next section will examine the impact that OBTE has on the military environment and compare it to the current military training pedagogy known as “Task, Condition, and Standard”. The academic and military findings will be used to answer the question of whether OBTE should be used in conjunction with other methodologies at West Point and in military education system.

Many scholar-leaders in the military have recognized the potential benefit of OBTE. Leaders such as Haskins, Foster, the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG), Wong and Vandergriff have either published articles on its importance or institutionalized the methodology at both military and collegiate levels.(Cicotte 2009, 2; Foster 2009, 1-6; Haskins 2009, 1-6; McDaniel 2009, 1-26; Ferguson 2008, 19-23; Vandergriff 2006; Vandergriff 2006, 31-39; Wong 2004, 29) The first measure is to provide a common definition. The Asymmetric Warfare Group defines OBTE a methodology that “allows training and education to move beyond the minimalist

approach of standards-based training and achieve the desired excellence and mastery that the Army's training doctrine envisions."<sup>29</sup> Haskins provides a similar viewpoint by stating that

OBTE

is an approach to planning, managing, and delivering training and education. It results in the attainment of a set of holistic, observable, and measurable skills and behavioral traits (outcomes) in individuals and units. It does so by requiring a thorough understanding of the underlying principles and increasing mastery of the fundamentals, gained while progressing through a series of increasingly challenging scenarios. These scenarios at all times require the trainer and student to think and solve problems in context.<sup>30</sup>

Foster agrees with this definition by similarly arguing that "OBTE focuses on achieving a desired outcome that more closely resembles the goal of every commander: excellence or mastery."<sup>31</sup> Vandergriff uses his Adaptive Leaders Model (ALM) as a catalyst to promote the employment of OBTE in the military. ALM is an education and training methodology this shaped by characteristics such as intuition, critical analysis skills, creativity of thought, self-aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses, and having the skills to adapt socially; the same traits that OBTE aims to develop.<sup>32</sup> Tactical Decision Games (TDG) is a primary teaching

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Education Commission of the States, "*Outcome-Based Education: An Overview*, 1

<sup>32</sup> Don Cicotte, "Total Impact: Leaders Gather for Outcome Based Training Workshop," United States Army, <http://www.army.mil/-news/2009/03/18/18399-total-impact-leaders-gather-for-outcome-based-training-workshop/> (accessed June 25, 2009).; Chad Foster, The Case for Outcomes-Based Training and Education, May 2009, 2009 (accessed June 21, 2009).; Casey Haskins, Outcomes-Based Training and Education, 2009 (accessed June 29, 2009).; W. R. McDaniel, *Outcome-Based Training and Education (OBTE) Integration Workshop--Final Report* (Laurel, Maryland: National Security Analysis Department, John Hopkins University, [2009]), [https://portal.awg.army.mil/portal/server.pt/search?in\\_hi\\_opt\\_comm\\_community=446&in\\_se\\_sel\\_1=everything&q=outcome-based+training+and+education](https://portal.awg.army.mil/portal/server.pt/search?in_hi_opt_comm_community=446&in_se_sel_1=everything&q=outcome-based+training+and+education) (accessed July 30, 2009).; Mary E. Ferguson, "Outcome-Based Training and Education," *The NCO Journal* 17, no. 3 (Summer 2008, 2008), 19-23 (accessed 25 June 2009).; Donald E. Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War* (Washington D.C.: Center for Defense Information, 2006).; Donald E. Vandergriff, "From Swift to Swiss," *Performance Improvement* 45, no. 2 (2006), 31-39, <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/112752446/issue> (accessed June 21, 2009).; Leonard Wong, *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 29, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/people.cfm?authorID=1> (accessed July 30, 2009).

technique that Vandergriff uses to develop adaptive leaders. This forces cadets to develop their own plans and orders for how they would approach the problem versus the more common military method centered on rote memorization- The Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP). Tactical decision games are a common technique utilized in OBTE.<sup>33</sup> It was formally adopted by Major Foster and approved by Colonel Haskins as the primary method for teaching Military Science (MS) at the United States Military Academy, West Point. Initial feedback acquired from cadets during informal sensing sessions has been extremely positive. The overlying theme by many of the respondents is that they understand *why* one of their plans would succeed...or fail. Wong's echoes this sentiment by suggesting that many of the officers returning for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) have developed an "adaptive capacity," the ability to respond quickly and effectively in a stressful situation. This has resulted in a wealth of creativity, innovation, and confidence that can be utilized in a complex and chaotic combat environment.(Wong 20042) These are the same characteristics that OBTE aims to develop and refine in academic education and military training.

The debate to use OBTE methodologies in military training might seem like a nascent concept but has roots in a widely acclaimed theory written during the height of a style of warfare that seems antithetical to what our Soldiers have experienced since 2003. Bill Lind's widely acclaimed book, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*, was published in 1985 when military training and doctrine was devoted to defeating the Soviet Army on the plains of Europe. Although this training was focused on synchronization and strategies that involved redundant practice to achieve success, Lind argued the opposite with compelling examples. Simply stated, Lind believed that success on the battlefield is won by Soldiers making a good decision faster than his enemy which results in the enemy making a decision based on an action that is no longer

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<sup>33</sup> McDaniel, *Outcome-Based Training and Education (OBTE) Integration Workshop--Final Report*, 1

relevant. The irony of this theory is that successful employment of this theory can be found throughout histories conventional battlefields such as the Battle of Leuctra in 371 B.C. or the use of Blitzkrieg during WWII. The key to success of Maneuver Warfare specifically relates to the principles of OBTE. As stated by Lind, “only a decentralized military can have a fast” decision-making cycle. This cycle is better known as the Boyd Cycle or OODA loop- being able to Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act, the OODA Loop.<sup>34</sup> OBTE is the training tool needed to train Soldiers to achieve a faster OODA loop. Developing “confidence, awareness, initiative, accountability and the ability to think and solve problems...are the intangible attributes” that describe both OBTE and Maneuver Warfare.<sup>35</sup> The intent is that Soldiers “will not only accept confusion and disorder and operate successfully within it” but that they “will also generate confusion and disorder” for the enemy.<sup>36</sup> Lastly, Vandergriff’s emphasis on Soldiers and cadets conducting tactical decision games is a classic example of OBTE and Maneuver Warfare training (Lind 1985)that has excellent results.

Typical military training and education places the emphasis on *what* to do and not *why*. Thus, Soldiers become proficient at memorizing a task and executing that task. This has naturally led Army training and evaluation to focus on whether Soldiers know the specific steps embedded in the task (whether they still apply to the situation or not) as opposed to evaluating their understanding of the task. The critical measure is whether the Soldier understands why certain steps of a task are important because this will result in greater confidence and memory in conducting the task. OBTE methodology is similar to the OBE because it allows the Soldier to truly understand the fundamental principles which will allow them to build in these lessons with

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<sup>34</sup> Haskins, *Outcomes-Based Training and Education*, 1

<sup>35</sup> Foster, *The Case for Outcomes-Based Training and Education*, 3

<sup>36</sup> Vandergriff, *Raising the Bar: Creating and Nurturing Adaptability to Deal with the Changing Face of War*, 33-34

other training. Just as math requires a fundamental understanding of addition before you can teach subtraction, OBTE teaches the basic principles of a task before increasing the difficulty. For example, a Soldier learns the basic principles of marksmanship. Once the Soldier has gained confidence in these basics, conditions can gradually become more difficult until it replicates the complexities of a combat environment. This allows the Soldier to build on the skills recently learned that will allow the Soldier to make informed decisions that make sense in future situations because he or she has absorbed the basic principles. This is especially imperative in today's complex military environment that requires decisions (sometimes strategic) throughout every level of command.

The evidence presented here suggests that OBTE can continue a successful integration of military training and education unlike the integration of OBE in grade school for a number of reasons. As Spady suggested in his article, *It's Time to End the Decade of Confusion about OBE in South Africa*, OBE has a legacy of success in many forms such as apprenticeship programs, martial arts schools, pilot training, merit and honor badges for scouting, SCUBA training, snow skiing, *and* military training.<sup>37</sup> What do all of these forms of training have in common? They have thrived for decades because they have positive results, pragmatic application and primarily apply to adult-oriented education. Spady highlights four criteria that are also found in the principals of OBTE. First, the criteria are clear and tangible. In Haskin's report on OBTE he uses school as an example and states that the outcomes must "specify what each graduate should be *and* be able to accomplish."<sup>38</sup> These outcomes also required more than a book test to ensure mastery. Second, the outcomes shape three points: 1) the credentials or license if they were successful in their demonstrating their mastery, 2) the tools that would be used to assess

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<sup>37</sup> Vandergriff, *From Swift to Swiss*, 31-32

<sup>38</sup> Wong, *Developing Adaptive Leaders: The Crucible Experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 2

Soldier/student performance, 3) how the teacher/trainer would design the instruction to ensure that the outcomes were understood and mastered. Third, practical, authentic, or live demonstrations versus a paper test were used to demonstrate that the Soldier/student could demonstrate mastery of the outcome. Unlike most academic evaluations, the “evaluatee” is not penalized for making mistakes. The intent is for the Soldier/student to become confident. Lastly Soldiers/students are encouraged to move at a speed that best suited the individual. Training events are driven by mastery of the particular skill and not blocks of time.<sup>39</sup>

### **OBTE and West Point**

Unlike the typical university, West Point presents a unique opportunity that challenges every cadet to succeed in both classroom and field. This raises the question whether the two methodologies presented above could be integrated in any of the curricula at West Point. This question was partially answered in the 2009 academic year. In both military science courses and field training, the principles of OBTE were introduced. Military Science classes have exchanged dry, ineffective PowerPoint briefings with Vandergriff’s TDG model. Weapons ranges, medical training, and land navigation have all replaced the old methods that focused heavily on procedures and minimally on training with the Asymmetric Warfare Groups OBTE model known as Combat Applications Training Course (CATC). The CATC model “expresses the goals of the training as the desired outcome, allowing a [cadet] to learn by doing, supporting the [cadets] with timely and specific coaching and creating a learning environment where small initial successes are used to build fundamental skills.”(McDaniel 20094) While all empirical data has not been collected, initial results have been impressive. Multiple cadet companies have

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<sup>39</sup> William S. Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), 5-6, <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0833/84020934-d.html>.

all tested the old qualification standards and have achieved either the same or better results. Residual benefits have included a much greater confidence with handling their personal weapon in training that closely resembles a combat environment. Additionally the CATC model requires that the senior cadets plan, coordinate, and execute the training. No longer are cadets in “receive-mode”. The OBTE model utilized at West Point has resulted in cadets with more confidence, responsibility, accountability and initiative; all critical attributes needed to serve as future leaders in the Army.

The Outcomes based model is also used by West Point’s Academic Affairs Division to develop objective measures of effectiveness designed to “produce graduates who can anticipate and respond effectively to the uncertainties of a changing technological, social, political, and economic world.”<sup>40</sup> The academic outcomes ensure they have developed necessary cognitive skills required for their assignment as a junior officer immediately following graduation while also taking creating a solid foundation for success as a Captain and Major in the next five years. Although it remains to be seen if OBTE model is utilized by the instructors in the classroom, the evidences suggests that this model can be used effectively in unique environments such as West Point.<sup>41</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This essay has attempted to answer a number of questions on Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Outcome-Based Training and Education (OBTE). First, it provided a framework for OBE and then examined the literature published. OBE as understood by Spady and his supporters has a checkered past when used in grade school. The concept that all students can

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<sup>40</sup> Educating Future Army Officers for a Changing World, 2002

<sup>41</sup> Interview conducted on July 28, 2009 with Dr. Bruce Keith, Academic Affairs Division Director and lead proponent for developing West Point’s academic outcomes.

succeed while developing a curriculum that will prepare them for future challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was implemented at the macro-level in numerous states with little success. Spady's model was also adopted at the K-12 grade level in other countries such as South Africa, New Zealand and Australia and has been vehemently opposed by a majority of the educators. The rebuttals against OBE center around the argument that it moves away from teaching children the basic fundamentals of math, science, English, and towards unnecessary intangibles such as feelings, emotions, and sentiments. Parents, teachers, and administrators have all come to view OBE as fad that ran its course without ever examining some of the positive aspects that could improve student's ability to retain information through an increased use of practical application.

This essay also reviewed the literature on OBTE and its resultant effects in military training. Although a relatively nascent movement, the evidence presented above suggests that OBTE has a positive impact on military training and a bright future ahead. The question remains whether it will be adopted by an organization known for institutional lag.

The last element of this essay questioned whether OBE or OBTE could be adopted by a unique institution like West Point that equally stresses academic and military training. Over the course of 2009, West Point has integrated the principles of OBTE in both military science classes and field training. Although the empirical data is still being collected, the initial reports from cadets have been positive. Academically, outcomes have continually been refined and updated since 1989 which resulted in goals that positively recognized by the Middle States Commission, West Point's accrediting source. Although more research and empirical data is needed, OBE/OBTE when properly understood has the potential to serve as a model at the university level, in particular, institutions that require their students to excel in more than just academics.

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