

Outcomes in South African Higher Education: Imagine that!

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ABSTRACT Constructivism reasserts the importance of ‘meaning making’ in the sense that it assists students to internalise, reshape or transform new information. From this teaching perspective, students should be able to construct knowledge for themselves through goal-orientated activity. In other words, they need to engage with content in such a manner that it becomes meaningful and useful to them within their own context. Furthermore, it is only when students can apply what they have learned, that knowledge becomes meaningful. The fundamental principle informing constructivist learning is not what students learn, but how they learn, whilst the skills they learn are more critical than the given content. With the acquisition of effective learning skills, such as found within project work, excursions, interviewing, group-work, fieldwork, simulations, role play, research and debates, learners place themselves in a position to learn whatever they wish to learn. The South African education system, including Higher Education (for consistency this term, Higher Education, is preferred throughout the article), is based on outcomes. Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) seems to be embedded within constructivist theory. However, the outcomes of OBE are predetermined and therefore seem to be behaviourist. Our contention is that predetermined outcomes that are seemingly behaviourist in nature, stunt critical and creative thinking and learning. The contention is that the critical outcomes should be re-conceptualised in terms of imagination. In this paper, we will explore outcomes reconceptualized in terms of imagination that can possibly break from behaviourist tendencies and thus open alternative possibilities to teaching and learning.