Learning Outcome vs. Learning Objective

A *learning outcome* describes the overall purpose or goal from participation in an educational activity. Courses should be planned with a **measurable learning outcome** in mind. *Objectives* are used to organize specific topics or individual learning activities to achieve the overall *learning outcome*. The learning outcome is identified from the gap analysis. The learning outcome is a reflection of the desired state.

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
What is currently happening?	What should be happening?	Difference between what is and what should be.	Why do you think the current state exists? What is the underlying or root cause?	What evidence do you have to validate the gap exists?	What do you want learners to be able to do as a result of participating in this activity?	How are you going to measure that change?

*See page 3 for examples of gap analyses with corresponding learning outcomes and evaluation methods.

<u>Objective</u>: Statements that define the expected goal(s) of an educational activity. Learning objectives can be used to structure the content of an educational activity. Objectives may include tasks such as "list", "discuss" or "state."

<u>Outcome:</u> A written statement that reflects what the learner will be able to do as a result of participating in the educational activity. The outcome addresses the educational needs (knowledge, skills, and/or practices) that contribute to the professional practice gap and achieving the learning outcome results in narrowing or closing that gap. The learning outcome can assess the overall impact of multiple objectives.

	Learning Outcomes							
•	Are measurable and capable of being assessed	•	Must be based on the desired outcome of the educational activity					
•	Are an outcomes-based approach Are Learner-centric	•	Frame the context for objectives (why is it important to "list", "discuss" or "state" information?)					
•	Are explicit descriptions of what a learner should know, be able to apply and/or be able to do as a result of participating in the educational activity	•	Provide <u>measurable evidence</u> of progress in closing the practice gap					

Learning outcomes connect the identified practice gap with the related educational need, while objectives are written as tasks:

Learning Outcome	Learning Objective
Knowledge: Demonstrate knowledge of evidence- based treatment for hypertensive patients by passing post-test with score of \ge 80%.	List 5 side effects of anti-hypertensive agents.
Competence/Skill: Correctly identify required actions to manage patients in hypertensive crisis by analyzing a case study.	Discuss risks associated with untreated hypertension.
Performance: Utilize an evidence-based protocol.	State normal range for blood pressure.

The learning outcome demonstrates the behavior the learner will exhibit at the conclusion of the educational activity:

Learning Outcome	Learning Objective
Knowledge: At conclusion of the educational activity, participants will self-report knowledge gain of effective communication styles using a 5 point Likert scale.	Describe characteristics of effective communication styles.
Competence/Skill: At conclusion of the educational activity, participants will self-report an intent to change practice by applying evidence-based communication strategies.	List 5 methods of creating a safe environment for holding a confidential conversation.
Performance: At 6 month post-program evaluation, participants will self-report using SBAR for safe patient hand-off communication.	Define the components of the SBAR patient hand- off tool.

Gap Analysis with corresponding Learning Outcome and Evaluation Method

Example 1

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
New monitors have been purchased for the ICU.	Nurses know how to set up and use the monitors accurately and safely.	Nurses currently do not know how to use the new monitors.	Knowledge- have not had exposure to new monitor; do not know basic features of monitor system Skill- don't know how to use the new monitor Practice- have not used the new monitor in patient care	The majority of nurses in the ICU have no experience with the new monitors; new technology	Nurses will successfully demonstrate knowledge related to use of new monitoring system.	Nurses will pass post-test with a score of 90% or greater with content focused on safe use of new monitoring system.

Example 2

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
Pediatric patients in respiratory distress	Pediatric patients in respiratory distress	Frequent	Lack of skill in	Direct observation by Clinical Nurse	Registered Nurses in the	Successful
are placed on a non-rebreather	are placed on a non-rebreather	inappropriate non- rebreather facemask	correctly applying facemask to pediatric patients in	Specialist; comments from	Emergency Department	return demonstration of application
facemask within 5 minutes of	facemask <u>applied</u> correctly within 5	application for pediatric patients in	respiratory distress.	respiratory therapist in ED; comments	will apply a non-	of a non- rebreather
presentation to the Emergency	minutes of presentation to the	respiratory distress.		from ED medical staff	rebreather facemask	facemask for pediatric
Department 100% of the time, but	Emergency Department 100%				correctly to all pediatric	patients in respiratory
frequently the	of the time.				patients in	distress.
facemask is not applied correctly.					respiratory distress.	

Example 3

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
40% of patients 65 and older in our community health clinic are receiving the pneumococcal vaccine consistent with national guidelines.	100% of patients 65 and older in our community health clinic receive the pneumococcal vaccine consistent with national guidelines.	60% of patients 65 and older in our community health clinic are not receiving the pneumococcal vaccine consistent with national guidelines.	Knowledge – unaware of updated guidelines.	Chart audit; 75% of nurses report they are not familiar with updated national guidelines and therefore were not providing information about the vaccine	Registered nurses will demonstrate they know the updated vaccine recommendations for all patients 65 and older	Complete post-test with passing rate of 80% or greater

Example 4

Current State	Desired State	Identified Gap	Gap due to knowledge, skill and/or practice	Methods used to Identify Professional Practice Gap	Learning Outcome	Method of Evaluation
Nurses are	Nurses are aware	Nurses have not	Knowledge- nurses	Needs assessment	Nurses have	Nurses will
unfamiliar with the	with the process of	been educated	do not know the	showed that 70% of	increased	self-report
process of	scholarly	about the steps for	steps for manuscript	nurses reported low	knowledge	increased
scholarly	publication.	manuscript	development and	levels of knowledge	and	knowledge
publication.		development and	submission.	and confidence with	confidence of	and
		submission.		writing and	the publication	confidence of
			Skill- nurses do not	publication process;	process and	the publication
			know how to submit	Number of nursing	submit	process on
			a manuscript to a	publications are	manuscripts	post course
			journal for	below organizational	for	evaluation.
			publication.	target.	publication.	

References:

- 1. 2015 ANCC Primary Accreditation Provider Application Manual.
- 2. California Board of Registered Nursing, Title 16.
- 3. Keating, S. (2011). Curriculum development and evaluation in nursing. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company.