

Open Book Examination Nature and Benefits

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Abstract

An "open book examination" is one in which examinees are allowed to consult their class notes, textbooks, and other approved material while answering questions. This practice is not uncommon in law examinations, but in other subjects, it is mostly unheard of. Radical and puzzling though the idea may sound to those who are used to conventional examinations, it is ideally suited to teaching programs that especially aim at developing the skills of critical and creative thinking.

Advanced countries are restructuring their educational systems and preparing to make changes in the human to intellectual capital for meeting the economic and manpower demands of the 21st century. Educationalist and academicians opined it is necessary to build a young community who are able to think independently and creatively and able to process the information analytically. Scholars opined that in order to develop creative and independent thinkers, more open-ended tasks that reflect real-life situations –questions involving problem-solving should be incorporated in examinations. It is generally accepted that open book examinations create an enriched environment, offering the student an opportunity to better understand and respond to a particular question.

Introduction

Under this system, students are allowed to refer to their class notes, textbooks, and other approved material while answering questions during examinations. Currently, students appear for exams without any piece of paper, electronic gadgets or reference materials inside the exam hall. But in an open-book system, students are allowed to use reference materials and books.

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Two Types of Open Book Examinations.

One may think of two kinds of open book examinations, say the restricted type and the unrestricted type. In the restricted type of open book examinations, students are permitted to bring into the examination room one or more specific documents approved by the course instructor. In the unrestricted type of open book examinations, students are free to bring whatever they like. In the restricted open book examination, students may be permitted to consult printed documents such as the logarithmic tables, dictionaries, or complete works of Shakespeare, but no handwritten material or printed documents which have not had prior approval. One may also need to make sure that the printed documents that students bring do not contain any scribbles on the margin. In this type of examination, the approved documents function more or less as appendices to the question paper itself.

These examinations are not radically different from closed book examinations. They do not present any special problems, irrespective of the nature of the course. As I said earlier, there are no restrictions on what the students can bring in an unrestricted open book examination. They may bring any books (with or without scribbles on the margin), lecture handouts of the course instructor, or their own handwritten notes. The use of such examinations presupposes certain teaching strategies and types of questions. In particular, it demands that the course focuses on a set of intellectual skills, rather than on the information content, and that no content based questions be asked in the examination. If the course instructor has concentrated on handing down currently available knowledge, and the question paper contains traditional content based questions like "Write an essay on the difference between British and American English", the use of the unrestricted open book examinations would be disastrous.

When used properly, it will be pointless for students taking the unrestricted open book examinations to consult any material they have brought, because the questions will be designed in such a way the answers will not be found in the textbooks, handouts or class notes. An intelligent student who has had the experience of such examinations once will not bother to bring anything for the next examination, since (s)he will know that no prepared material will be of any use. The use of these examinations then acts as symbolic gesture that makes the students realise the nature of the course and the examinations, and shocks them into a mode of studying that does not involve cramming. Impact on Learning Strategies A more important reason for using open book examinations is that they have a tremendous impact on promoting the right mental sets in both learning and teaching. The most immediate result on students will be that they will stop "mugging" or rote

learning. Most students used to conventional examinations think of "studying" as the mechanical memorisation of information in textbooks and class-notes in order to reproduce it in examinations. Open book examinations will effect a fundamental change in this attitude. If textbooks can be consulted in the examination rooms, why bother to memorise them?

Does this mean that students don't need to "study" for examinations? No. It implies that studying should not be equated with memorising; instead, it should be understanding concepts, and using these concepts (along with available information) to practise the skills of modifying and building knowledge, thinking critically, and solving problems. In acquiring the right strategies of studying, nothing is as effective as the shocking realization that mugging is of no use in the examinations. Given open book examinations, there will be no more mugging. Once the burden of mugging is taken away, education can be a pleasurable activity, not a painful drudgery. What is learnt with pleasure is learnt more effectively, and retained better. Impact on Teaching Strategies The effects of open book exams on teaching strategies will be equally profound. First, the nature of the examination questions will change. They cannot be of the form: "Write an essay on X", "Explain the term Y with examples", "Define the term Z", but will have to be designed carefully and intelligently to test the students' understanding, and the skills of applying that understanding. If the nature of the examination questions changes, strategies for preparing students to take those examinations will also have to change. It will no longer be enough to paraphrase or simplify the content of the text books in the classroom. Teachers will have to design tasks that will provide exercises for the appropriate mental skills required in each subject. Instead of the teacher talking all the time and students taking down notes, classes will have discussions, questions, and other

active processes. In other words, teaching will no longer be the transfer of information from the teacher to student: it will be the training of the mind in certain intellectual skills. Thus, open book examinations can restore the true meaning of the word education for both teachers and students. It is true that it will take some time and effort on the part of students and teachers to adapt themselves to the demands of open book examinations. But the changes will be inevitable. When combined with the mode of teaching that focusses on thinking skills, they will make education an exciting and enjoyable intellectual adventure, the beginning of a lifelong quest for knowledge

Examination and issues

Examination issues : Very sensitive, Confidential, Objective, Valid, Ethics, Comprehensive, ICT based.

Why Do People Prefer Open-Book Exams?

- most people find open-book tests less stressful than closed-book tests.
- open-book questions will emphasize problem solving, creativity, or deep knowledge rather than a simple recall of facts.
- open-book exams reflect real life more accurately than closed-book exams.
- open-book exam emphasize deep knowledge and mimic reality more closely than closed-book exams:
- Ei lertsen and Valdermo (2000) argued that an open-book exam encourages greater engagement and improves understanding of course material.
- Feller (1994) further suggested that the open-book exam is superior to closed-book exams as it is more realistic—similar to problem-solving situations.

Open book exams places the focus on higher level learning.

Because open book exams don't have the same emphasis on memorization, questions can move up Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, and ask students to analyze, evaluate, or synthesize knowledge rather than just remember it. According to Chan, 2009.

- Students are allowed to review reference material during the examination
- Exam questions are distributed to students in advance of the exam, allowing students to prepare resources for use in the exam.
- Students are allowed to take home their exams to complete at home within a specified time period.

Types of Open Book Examinations

Restricted Type and Unrestricted Type

Restricted type:

1. Students are permitted to bring into the examination room one or more specific documents approved by the course instructor.
2. Students may be permitted to consult printed documents such as the logarithmic tables, dictionaries, or complete works of Shakespeare, but no handwritten material or printed documents which have not had prior approval.
3. The approved documents function more or less as appendices to the question paper itself.
4. These examinations are not radically different from closed book examinations. They do not present any special problems, irrespective of the nature of the course.

Unrestricted Type

- Students are free to bring whatever they like lecture handouts of the course instructor, or their own handwritten notes.

- The use of such examinations presumes certain teaching strategies and types of questions.
- In particular, it demands that the course focuses on a set of intellectual skills, rather than on the information content, and that no content based questions be asked in the examination.

Why are some exams 'open book'?

- Because they test for more than just rote-learning. At university, simply memorising and repeating information is not enough to get you a good mark.
- Higher education is supposed to equip you with intellectual abilities and skills.
- Open Book exams test your ability to quickly find relevant information and then to understand, analyse, apply knowledge and think critically.

What kinds of questions will an open book exam have?

- Open Book Exams don't test your memory. They test your ability to find and use information for problem solving, and to deliver well-structured and well-presented arguments and solutions.
- Open Book exam questions usually require you to apply knowledge, and they may be essay-style questions or involve problem solving or delivering solutions. The style of question depends on the faculty or school setting the exam. For example in Law, the questions may set up a hypothetical fact situation that you will need to discuss.

Misconceptions about open book exams

- 1) Open Book exams are a breeze
- Open Book exams are not an easy option. Answering the questions well requires more than just copying information straight from texts.

- 2) You don't have to study • Probably the biggest misconception about Open Book exams is that there is no need to study anything. However, you should study just as you would for any other exam. • This means you must fully understand and be familiar with the content and materials of your course so you can find and use the appropriate information.

- In Open Book exams, you need to quickly find the relevant information in the resources you have. If you don't study you won't be able to—you won't know where it is.

An open book examination is where a student can take his or her lecture notes, books, copies and other study material. This exam mainly takes place in the US. Open book examination has some advantages and disadvantages which are listed below -:

ADVANTAGES

1. Not needing to memorize things.
2. Being able to refer the text when stuck somewhere.
3. Requires less studying.
4. Can get extra marks or achieve the highest marks in class.
5. No tension or fear of forgetting answers.
6. Makes the knowledge more impressive.
7. Can passingly review the notes and books.
8. Less burden is there.
9. Helps in using common sense and logic when practical questions are asked.
10. Helps average students to score well.

DISADVANTAGES

1. Students go unprepared and then run out of time.
2. Become overconfident.
3. Students take the exam lightly.
4. It becomes time consuming when one searches the answers to a particular question.

5. Students do not listen or pay attention during the class.
6. Have insufficient knowledge.
7. Is some what useless as students do not use their brains to answer the questions given.
8. Can lead the student nowhere in life when he or she is searching for a job.
9. Prevents students to think and analyse.
10. Is harmful for development.

The objective of an examination is to assess in a limited time what students have learned. Ideally, this should be based on critical thinking, not an opportunity to simply churn out definitions. A closed book examination encourages students to read and learn about the topics to be assessed. An open book exam discourages such learning, and leads to time being wasted during the exam looking up things which ought to be already known.

There are other forms of assessment which can cater to the use of books and other sources: term papers, projects, research papers, etc. Depending on the subject matter, a range of assessments ought to be employed to bring out the best in students

Nature of Open Book Examination

- Open book exams and closed book exams have different pedagogical ends.
- This practice is not uncommon in many examinations, it is ideally suited to programmes that especially aim at developing the skills of critical and creative thinking.
- In the broadest sense, an open book exam allows students to consult some form of reference material in the course of completing the exam.
- Examinees are allowed to consult their class notes, textbooks, and other approved material while answering questions.

- While a closed book exam “places a premium on accurate and extensive recall, and its assessment of students’ knowledge is likely to be dominated by that ability”.

Conclusion

The Open Book Examination is a new tool for assessment and it is the revolution in the field of evaluation against Closed Book Examination. Thus, open book examinations can restore the true meaning of the word education for both teachers and students. It is true that it will take some time and effort on the part of students and teachers to adapt themselves to the demands of open book examinations. But the changes will be inevitable. When combined with the mode of teaching that focusses on thinking skills, they will make education an exciting and enjoyable intellectual adventure, the beginning of a lifelong quest for knowledge. Enhances information retrieval skills of students through finding the efficient ways to get the necessary information and data from books and various resources

Enhances the comprehension and synthesizing skills of students because they need to reduce the content of books and other study materials into simple and handy notes for examination.

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