

## OPEN BOOK TEST: A TOOL TO ANALYZE DIVERSE LEARNERS IN A CLASS ROOM

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### Abstract

*This paper aims to analyze open book examinations as a tool to understand the learning behavior, attitude and motivation level of students in achieving academic integrity. Open book test was conducted in different levels to bring maximum score and the results indicated a better performance with each trial but complete success was not obtained. This indicates lack of motivation among students and the attitude of hard work diminishing among the student community. Comparison of open book test with traditional test showed better results because it required less memorization and left more room for logical thinking. Implementation of open book test in colleges can change students' learning attitudes and make the learning process more active.*

**Key words:** Open book test, Traditional test, Learning attitude, Motivation

Teaching is a profession where the faculties are given a group of learners and it becomes necessary to know the skills and potentials within them. Each learner develops the fundamental cognitive skills like memory, attention, processing and sequencing which when developed together improves learning and reading. An overachiever learner has the ability to memorize and get good grades. A sound learner is motivated to go an extra mile and get solid grades where as an unmotivated learner feels uninterested and unchallenged by the learning process. Concerns over the role of faculty in effective communication with students, motivation and assuring learning outcomes are growing (Yang and Cornelius, 2005). A variety of performance assessments including examinations are employed to assure quality in education. According to Olt (2002), one way to ensure academic integrity is through

the use of open book test. Open book testing promotes realistic learning opportunities that emphasize higher order thinking skills. Feller (1994) believed that closed book exam test only what student can memorize while open book have the potential to measure higher level thinking skills. He believed that open book exam was one method of incorporating realistic, open ended task into higher education. Research findings demonstrate that students perform better on open book test than traditional testing (Liu, 2005). Francis (1982) investigated open book test in a University English literature course observed that students who took open book test earned higher scores than peers who took traditional test. Pauker (1974) found that over all scores were not different between two groups, but the below average student scores were lower on open book exam. Thus open book test helps us to

understand the reading and logical reasoning of a student, their motivation to achieve higher and the role of the faculty in making the classroom environment stimulating and interactive. Hence the present study aims to analyze the student performance, based on open book test and further to understand the cognitive skills and level of motivation to reach academic success.

#### Methodology

The study compares the effect of open book testing with that of traditional test on student learning based on their performance in multiple choice questions. The students assessed were enrolled in the II UG program of Zoology course and were handled by two instructors for the subject they took the test. The participants completed the test within the stipulated time limit. The first open book test was conducted using a power point where the student was expected to answer the MCQ of 50 questions where each question was given a time limit.

Based on their performance the students were asked to prepare on the same questions and once again assessed using a printed question paper. A score of 100 % was expected, so the students were provided opportunity to take the test four times to achieve the required score. The results obtained were compared with the traditional testing like written quiz test and online quiz.

#### Results

The data obtained was analyzed and the results reveal that in trial one of open book testing the score was maximum between 0 -10 marks with 75% students falling in this range. In trial 2, 3 and 4 after thorough preparation the students scored between 10 to 20 marks but

25 out of 38 students were not able to achieve 100% even in the 4<sup>th</sup> trial. In traditional and online test the range of marks scored was higher between 5 and 25 marks (Table-1).

Table-1

Performance of students in a MCQ test assessed through open book and traditional test

Marks	Success rate of students (%)					
	Open book test				Traditional test	
	Trial 1	Trial 2	Trial 3	Trial 4	Test	Test
0-5	75	26	42	32	13	21
5-10	26	21	34	32	88	79
10-15	16	27	26	29	13	17
15-20	2	46	74	77	17	12

#### Discussion

An open book examination is one in which the students are allowed to use their book or reference material for answering their questions. In the current scenario teaching is just thought as dissemination of knowledge and teacher's role is viewed as facilitating the transfer of information from test book to students mind (Mishra, 1997). Most conventional examinations test the memorizing ability of the student and in spite of the demand the student memorize the text book and transfer it to answer books in the form of examination, success depends on the quantity of information and the efficiency with which it is reproduced. In the present study it was found that the students were from rural background with poor efficiency in understanding the concepts in English and were not capable of memorizing the concepts and reproducing the traditional testing showed poor results when compared to open book testing in trial 1, but in the other hand the open book test results were very poor in the first trial and the open book testing to be better. Required preparation of

students to achieve better score and helping them to understand the mechanism behind open book test helped them to achieve better in further tests. The reason behind the low achievement could be attributed to the lack of understanding between the two tests, motivation to achieve higher score and the organizational and logical reasoning of the student. One key factor behind low success rate is lack of motivation. Motivation is of two types –intrinsic motivation which arises from a desire to learn a topic due to inherent interest, self fulfillment and to achieve a mastery over the subject while extrinsic motivation performs for the sake of accomplishing a specific outcome. When students take up a test for the sake of just passing out they are least motivated and the learning outcome is not achieved. Studies have demonstrated that a lack of preparation for open book test exists on the part of some students (Brightwell *et al.*, 2004). It is related to the fact that anxiety is reduced when taking open book test and students believe no preparation is required to perform well (Theophilides and Dionysiou, 1996). Open book examination, if properly implemented, promotes the ability to think rather than to memorize, reduce stress for the examinees and encourage students to self monitor their own learning (Theophilides *et al.*, 1996). Together with appropriate changes to teaching methods, it could well be the most effective way to improve our education system and make it one for the 21st century (Feller, 1994).

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