



Open book exams – Pros, Cons & Challenges

Description

Theme:

- Delhi University conducted online open-book exams in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- In open-book exams, students are allowed to have their textbooks and other approved reference materials. They can check the material while writing their answers. The ability to find, analyse and apply the information will be tested through this type of exams.
- The United States and some other countries have already implemented open-book exams in higher education. In India, the concept of open-book exams is being discussed in the past few years. Some experts are recommending these exams to reform the Indian education system. And some others are against this alternative to normal exams.
- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has also tested open-book exams from 2014 to 2018 to make the exams suitable for all the students, who have different abilities & strengths.
- Karnataka state too tried implementing open-book exams.

Pros:

- Open-book exams can eliminate rote learning, which is deeply ingrained in the Indian education system. As they will analytical skills, students will be encouraged to be analytical & creative.
- Memory-based exams often award the students that have better memory and are a cause of worry to students, who can understand the concepts but cannot memorize. Open-book exams can be a boon for the students, who have different learning abilities.
- Without the fear of memory-based tests, students can peacefully learn concepts. At present, students are concentrating more on preparing themselves for exams rather than on conceptual understanding.
- Open-book exams can reform the method of teaching and can improve the quality of education.
- It can also eliminate cheating & copying.
- Many are of the opinion that students will just copy the content from the textbook. But the

questions in open-book exams are formulated in such a way that analysing the content is required.

Cons:

- Fear of exams encourages many students to study. With open-book exams, students may not focus much on their studies.
- In India, there are many coaching centres that prepare students for various exams. They may provide model answers for all the concepts, which can be memorized. This can dilute the purpose of open-book exams.
- Memory training is also important, especially for children. Open-book exams may discourage students in memorizing even the basic things.
- As the evaluation in open-book exams will be tough, it may put even more pressure on students.
- Fear of forgetting the content will be eliminated.

Challenges:

- If students are not guided well to give open-book exams, they may just copy what is in the textbook. And it will not serve the purpose for which the exams are held.
- Training a large number of evaluators in the new evaluation method is also a challenge.
- The lack of quality teachers in India will be a serious challenge in implementing the new way of teaching. Students in some high-quality schools will be at an advantage over other students.

Conclusion:

Open-book exams can bring a revolutionary change in the Indian education system by reforming the method of teaching. But it may not be suitable for primary education and will be useful in higher education. Not just open-book exams, but testing different kinds of exams as an alternative to memory-based exams is much needed to improve the quality of our education system.

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Your Turn...

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