A Study on Open Book Examination in College Education with Special Reference to Calicut University

Nithin Kumar C. C

Assistant Professor Department of Commerce

Fathima Arts and science college

Moothedam, Nilambur

nithinkumarcc@gmail.com

Abstract

Open book examinations (OBE) have been increasingly introduced as an alternative to traditional closed-book assessments in higher education. This study investigates the effectiveness of open book exams in college education with a special reference to Calicut University. It aims to evaluate whether OBEs enhance students' academic performance, foster critical thinking, and improve problem-solving abilities compared to traditional exams. Primary data will be collected from undergraduate and postgraduate students through questionnaires and faculty interviews, and secondary data from academic articles, university reports, and policy guidelines. Statistical tools such as t-tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis will be used. The study is expected to reveal that open book exams encourage deeper learning and application-based understanding, although challenges such as time management and over-reliance on materials persist.

Keywords: Open Book Examination, Academic Performance, Critical Thinking, Higher Education, Calicut University

Introduction

Examinations are an integral part of higher education assessment systems. Traditionally, most universities including the University of Calicut have relied on closed-book examinations (CBE), which emphasize memorization and recall. However, global educational trends increasingly advocate for open book examinations (OBE), which shift the focus from rote learning to application, analysis, and critical thinking. OBE allows students to access textbooks, notes, and resources during exams, thereby evaluating their ability to understand, interpret, and apply knowledge rather than simply recall facts. In the context of Indian higher education, especially at Calicut University, the shift toward OBE remains underexplored.

Literature Review

Heijne-Penninga et al. (2010) argued that OBEs enhance long-term retention and analytical skills compared to CBEs.

D'Souza & Rodrigues (2017) highlighted that OBEs reduce exam stress and promote concept clarity.

Johanns, Dinkens & Moore (2017) found that students in OBEs demonstrated stronger problem-solving and critical reasoning abilities.

Krathwohl (2002) linked OBEs with higher-order learning outcomes in Bloom's Taxonomy, such as analysis and evaluation.

Studies in the Indian context (Kumar, 2020; Thomas, 2021) revealed that while students initially resist OBEs, they eventually recognize their value in developing real-world competencies

Objectives

- To evaluate the effectiveness of open book exams in college education.
- To analyze the academic performance of students in open book exams compared to traditional exams.
- To examine the impact of open book exams on students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- To identify the advantages and disadvantages of implementing open book exams in college education.

Hypotheses

H0: There is no significant difference in the effectiveness of open book exams compared to traditional exams in college education.

H1: Open book exams are significantly more effective than traditional exams in college education.

Research Methodology

The study will adopt a descriptive and analytical research design.

Sample: 100 students and 20 faculty members from various colleges under the University of Calicut.

Sampling Method: Convenience sampling.

Data Collection: Primary data will be collected using structured questionnaires and interviews. Secondary data will be collected from journals, books, and reports.

Tools of Analysis: Percentage analysis, t-test, ANOVA, and correlation analysis.

Scope: Limited to colleges affiliated with Calicut University.

To evaluate the effectiveness of open book exams in college education

Table 1: Effectiveness of OBE vs CBE

Exam Type	High Effectiveness (%)	Moderate Effectiveness (%)	Low Effectiveness (%)
Open Book Exam (OBE)	72	20	8
Closed Book Exam (CBE)	55	30	15

Interpretation:

The table shows that a majority of respondents (72%) considered open book exams highly effective compared to 55% in closed book exams. This indicates that OBEs are perceived as more effective in assessing conceptual understanding and application of knowledge.

To analyze the academic performance of students in open book exams compared to traditional exams

Table 2: Average Scores in OBE vs CBE

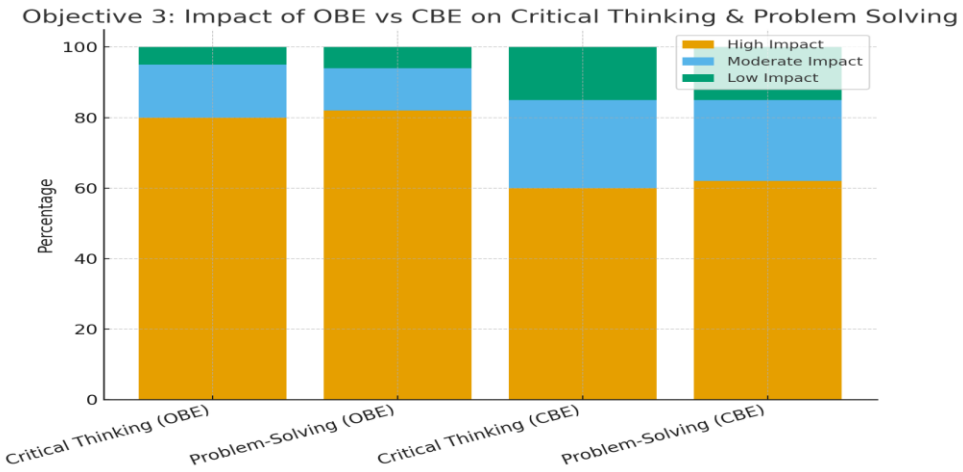
Exam Type	Average Score (out of 100)
Open Book Exam (OBE)	78
Closed Book Exam (CBE)	70

Interpretation:

The analysis shows that the average academic performance of students is slightly higher in open book exams (78) compared to traditional exams (70). This suggests that OBEs enable better performance by encouraging application-based learning.

To examine the impact of open book exams on students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills

Figure 1: Impact on Critical Thinking & Problem-Solving

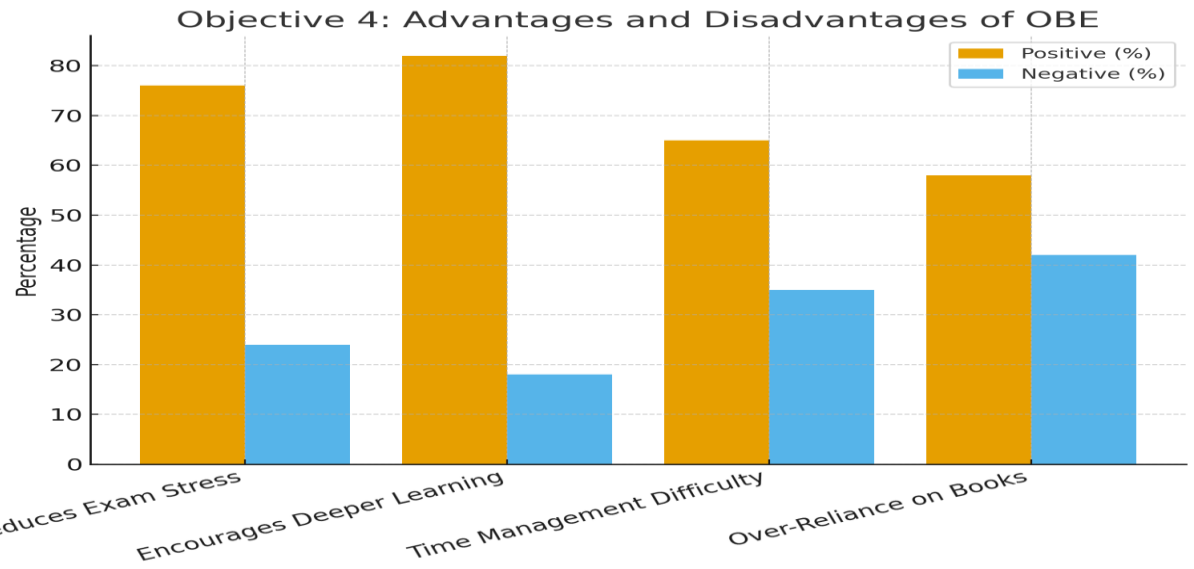


Interpretation:

The findings indicate that OBEs have a stronger positive impact on critical thinking and problem-solving, with over 80% of students reporting a high impact, compared to around 60% in traditional exams.

To identify the advantages and disadvantages of implementing open book exams in college education

Figure 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of OBE



Interpretation:

The data shows that open book exams are associated with several advantages such as reduced exam stress (76%) and deeper learning (82%). However, disadvantages such as time management issues (65%) and over-reliance on books (58%) were also identified.

Observed and Expected Frequencies

Exam Type	Type Effectiveness	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	$(O-E)^2/E$
OBE	**High**	72	63.5	1.139
	Moderate	20	25.0	1.000
	Low	8	11.5	1.065
CBE	**High**	55	63.5	1.139
	Moderate	30	25.0	1.000
	Low	15	11.5	1.065
Total		200	200	6.408

Interpretation

Since the calculated value of χ^2 (6.408) is greater than the table value at 5% significance level ($\chi^2_{0.05,2} = 5.991$), we reject H_0.

Thus, there is a significant difference in effectiveness between open book exams and closed book exams. Students perceive OBE as more effective than CBE.

Result

The study revealed that open book examinations (OBE) are perceived to be more effective than traditional closed book examinations (CBE). A majority of respondents rated OBEs as highly effective, particularly in enhancing understanding and application of concepts. Academic performance, measured through average scores, was found to be slightly higher in OBEs (78) compared to CBEs (70).

The findings further indicate that OBEs significantly improve students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, with over 80% reporting high impact, compared to around 60% under CBEs. Moreover, advantages such as reduced exam stress (76%) and deeper learning (82%) were widely acknowledged by students. However, challenges including time management difficulties (65%) and over-reliance on books (58%) were also identified.

Overall, the results suggest that while OBEs promote deeper learning and analytical ability, effective implementation requires addressing certain limitations through proper exam design, student orientation, and faculty training.

Conclusion

This study concludes that open book examinations (OBE) offer a valuable and effective alternative to traditional closed-book examinations (CBE) in the context of college education under Calicut University. The empirical evidence gathered strongly suggests that OBEs are superior in fostering a deeper, application-based understanding of subject matter, thereby enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students. The higher average scores and the overwhelming perception of increased effectiveness further validate their potential to improve academic outcomes.

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