

[A Review of the Effectiveness & Perceptions of Open Educational Resources As Compared to Textbooks video transcript]

[Music]

[Citation: Hilton, J. (2016) Open educational resources and college textbook choices: A review of research on efficacy and perceptions. Educational Technology Research and Development, 64(4), 573-590.]

The use of textbooks in university courses is as common as ice cream on a hot summer day. On average, students in the US spend about \$600 per year on textbooks. Canadian students spend around \$385 per semester. Commercial textbooks are expensive and students report that these prices negatively impact their learning and time to graduation. But, as some professors have discovered, there is an alternative to the expensive textbooks that come from commercial publishers. These alternatives are called open educational resources, or OER.

OER are teaching and learning materials that are free and give students permissions to access, read, and share them. These resources come with licenses that allow instructors to revise or remix them to better fit with their courses. [The creative commons logo appears on screen, along with icons representing some of the different CC licence types.]

Some professors already use OER. [A professor shows his class a YouTube video.] Others have not even heard of them, but when they do, they wonder if these free resources are as effective, or of the same quality, as the textbooks they currently use.

Over the past few years, several researchers have been studying Open Educational Resources. Dr. John Hilton recently published a systematic analysis of how the effectiveness of these resources, and of the perceptions students and professors have about them. Based on the results of this research we think that open educational resources have the potential to make higher education more accessible to students.

Dr. Hilton's paper focused on the available literature. The literature consisted of 16 empirical studies that examined courses where OER had replaced traditional textbooks. Some of these studies looked at learning outcomes and student success rates to judge how effective these resources were.

Others looked at the perceptions students and professors had of open educational resources. Here's what the analysis of these studies showed. The studies that looked at the effectiveness of OER generally compared groups of students who had used the resources to groups that had used the textbook. Most of these studies found that students who used the OER had higher test scores, lower failure rates, or lower dropout rates than students who had used the traditional textbook. Only one study suggested that OER were connected with lower levels of success for some of the students.

The studies that looked at student and professor perceptions of OER revealed that the majority of students and professors viewed open educational resources positively. A sizeable majority felt that OER were of better quality than traditional textbooks; about half said they were of similar quality; and only a few thought the OER were inferior. Students liked OER because they were free. Professors liked the open content and up-to-date material.

In his paper, Dr. Hilton is careful to note that none of the studies he reviewed claimed that OER caused higher test scores or fewer drop outs. [Causality?] Many studies had design limitations that might have influenced their findings. For example, in a number of studies the open education resources were just one part of a larger course re-design such as flipping or blending. Full summaries and critiques of each of the studies are included in the paper, and can be found on the website of the Open Education Group: <http://openedgroup.org/review> which is constantly being updated to include new material.

To recap, there are two key findings in this work. First, using open educational resources does not decrease student learning. Students generally did better, not worse when using free OER compared to expensive textbooks. Second, OER are generally perceived to be as good as, if not better than, traditional textbooks. Students and professors both expressed that OER were of high quality, and, unlike printed textbooks, they offered flexibility. These findings should lead us to question the value of traditional textbooks. As Dr. Hilton asks: If the average college student spends so much money on textbooks and yet performs no better than the student who uses free OER, what exactly is being purchased with all that money?

A more detailed discussion of these significant implications can be found in the published paper.

Thanks a lot for tuning in.

If you liked the summary of this paper, please share it with your friends, colleagues, and students!

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