

Student and Faculty Perceptions of Quality and Utilization of Open Educational Resources in a Psychology Course

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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to research student and faculty perceptions of the quality and utilization of the Open Educational Resources used in the PSY 110HA class taught at the Saint Leo University continuing education centers. Most students indicated that having the textbook content fully online helped them in completing assignments on time, and most indicated that it was easy to access the content online. Most students reported that they would like to take another course that had all of the textbook material online; however, nearly one third of the students indicated that they would prefer to have taken this class with a paper textbook that they could purchase. The professors did not think that the OER helped these students in completing assignments on time, nor did the professors feel that the OER contributed to these students being better prepared for class. The professors also reported that some students said that they had technical difficulties in accessing the OER. Overall the professors were satisfied with the OER that were used as the textbooks for this course.

Keywords: Online Educational Resources, OER, etextbooks, electronic textbooks, commercial textbooks, psychology textbooks, faculty perceptions, student perceptions

Percepciones de la calidad y utilización de los recursos educativos abiertos en un curso de psicología

RESUMEN

Se realizó una encuesta para investigar las percepciones de estudiantes y profesores sobre la calidad y utilización de los recursos educativos abiertos utilizados en la clase PSY 110HA que se imparte en los centros de educación continua de la Universidad de Saint

Leo. La mayoría de los estudiantes indicaron que tener el contenido del libro de texto completamente en línea les ayudó a completar las tareas a tiempo, y la mayoría indicó que era fácil acceder al contenido en línea. La mayoría de los estudiantes informaron que les gustaría tomar otro curso que tuviera todo el material de los libros de texto en línea; sin embargo, casi un tercio de los estudiantes indicaron que preferirían haber tomado esta clase con un libro de texto en papel que tenían que comprar. Los profesores no pensaron que los REA ayudaron a estos estudiantes a completar las tareas a tiempo, ni los profesores sintieron que los REA contribuyeron a que estos estudiantes estuvieran mejor preparados para la clase. Los profesores también informaron que algunos estudiantes dijeron que tenían dificultades técnicas para acceder a los REA. En general, los profesores se mostraron satisfechos con los REA que se utilizaron como libros de texto para este curso.

Palabras clave: REA, libros de texto de psicología

一门心理课中开放教育资源的质量和使用情况感知

摘要

执行了一项调查, 研究圣里奥大学继续教育中心PSY 110HA课堂中学生和教师对开放教育资源(OER)的质量和使用时情况的感知。大多数学生表示, 完全使用网络课本内容帮助其按时完成作业, 并且获取网络内容并不困难。大多数学生报告称, 他们愿意参与另一门完全使用网络课本材料的课程; 不过, 近三分之一的学生认为, 他们更愿意参加使用纸质课本的课程, 尽管他们不得不购买课本。教授们认为OERs并没有帮助学生按时完成作业, 他们也不觉得OERs帮助学生为课堂作更好的准备。教授们还报告称, 一些学生表示他们在获取OERs一事中曾遭遇技术问题。整体而言, 教授们对OERs作为这门课的课本一事感到满意。

关键词: 开放教育资源(OERs), 心理学课本

Introduction

Over the past ten years open educational resources (OER) have been used in several Saint Leo University courses replacing commercial textbooks. Students and professors may access the open electronic course content linked in the syllabus contained in the learning management system. This study examines if continuing education center students, taking the course PSY 110HA – Psychological Well-Being, felt they were able to access the material, utilize it, and complete assignments on time. The study also asked professors if they thought students were able to complete assignments on time, and if having OER helped students be better prepared in comparison to classes that they had taught with a commercial textbook. Additional questions were posed to professors about the quality of the electronic content and the usability of the OER.

Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of the study was to find out if students liked utilizing the OER as much as they had liked utilizing commercial textbooks, if they would want to use more OER in the future, and if faculty perceived the OER as a good textbook source. The author of the study surmised that the continuing education center students would not like using the OER, and would not want to use OER in the future because of numerous comments made by the continuing education center students over the years to the author about utilizing online content and the

preference for print sources. This is significant in that most of the Saint Leo University library holdings are online and not held in paper format. Students are required to utilize the university online library materials, including eBooks and a psychology database, as part of this course. Students must be able and willing to utilize the OER to complete the course too.

The Appeal of OER - Monetary Value

Even though open online textbook content is relatively new in comparison to the paid print format, much has been researched and written about open electronic resources used as textbooks. Studies show the advantages to the cost-savings in replacing a traditional paper textbook with OER ([Bliss et al., 2013a](#); [Ikahihifo et al., 2017](#)). This savings lets students pay for other expenses and even continue their education without the burden of the cost of high-priced textbooks ([Ikahihifo et al., 2017](#)).

The Appeal of OER - Enhanced Learning Tools

The electronic format allows for enhanced audio and visual teaching tools to be embedded into the electronic course reading, such as videos and graphics, which students report aid in understanding the content ([Bliss et al., 2013b](#); [Cooney, 2017](#)). [Lindshield and Adhikari](#) note that in addition to OER videos and graphics, students appreciate embedded web links and searching features within the electronic “flexbook”

(2013). Cooney found that “all students who were interviewed mentioned their satisfaction with, and preference for having all the course materials in one place” when elaborating on the experiences using OER (2017).

The Appeal of OER - Quality

Comparison studies of the content quality of OER versus commercial textbooks show that many students and faculty perceive the OER to be of equal or better quality when compared to commercial textbooks (Bliss et al., 2013b; Watson et al., 2017; Jaggars et al., 2017; Cooney, 2017; Piña & Moran, 2018).

The Appeal of OER - Grades

Studies have also shown that grades earned by students utilizing OER are similar or better than the grades of students who used commercial textbooks. Two terms after incorporating OER into select classes, Winitzky-Stephens & Pickavance noticed that grades, earned by students using OER, were higher than the grades earned by students using the commercial textbook in other sections of the course during the same time period (2017). In a similar study, Colvard et al. also found that grades were higher in the OER sections when compared to the other sections of the course taught with a commercial textbook (2018). In a single course of college algebra taught with a commercial textbook, then taught with OER for one term, then taught with a commercial textbook the next term after the OER, Chiorescu discovered that students’ grades were higher the term that

the OER was used (2017). In an introductory sociology course, Medley-Rath found that students, taking her class online with OER and students taking that same class with her in one section face to face with a commercial textbook during the same time period, did not have significant differences in grades earned (2018). Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. reported that grades, earned by students using OER, were similar to grades of their classmates who opted to use commercial textbooks enrolled in the same courses in the same time period (2012). Hilton and Laman were able to show that “students who used the open textbooks in the fall of 2011 had better overall outcomes than those who used traditional textbooks in spring of 2011” (2012).

The Appeal of OER - Perception & Attitude

Perception and attitude seem to play a role in successful utilization of OER. Rockinson-Szapkiw et al. discovered that “students who chose e-textbooks for their education courses had significantly higher perceived affective learning and psychomotor learning than students who chose to use traditional print textbooks” (2012). Afolabi found that when students have a “positive perception of OER”, they “performed very well in the achievement test administered” (2017).

Preference for Paper

So, with all of the favorable aspects of OER, would students prefer to continue using OER? Medley-Rath discovered

that despite all of the benefits reported, students still preferred the commercial (paper) format (2018). Ikahihifo et al. also found that some of their student survey respondents preferred the commercial textbook over the open electronic texts (2017). In a study conducted by Watson et al., one student indicated a preference for commercial (paper) textbooks because it was not possible to “physically highlight and make notes directly on the page” of OER, and because utilizing electronic texts caused “eyestrain” (2017). Cooney found that students who utilized OER had printed pages out of it so that they could “take notes on the page” or simply because they had a “preference for paper” (2017).

Electronic Challenges

Besides the lingering preference for paper, some students reported shortcomings when utilizing the electronic format. Two separate studies in two different states showed that students encountered similar challenges with OER. Kinskey et al. (2018) in Minnesota and Ikahihifo et al. (2017) in Virginia reported that students surveyed told that accessing the internet, reading online, and scrolling online vs. flipping paper pages, was difficult for them. Additionally, the students in Minnesota stated that there were “broken web links and information that was inaccurate in the OER textbook about a subject with which they were familiar” (2018). In contrast, Hilton and Laman reported that in regards to utilizing OER, “42% said that it was easy, 28% said that it was

moderately easy, 24% said that it was neither hard nor easy, and 8% said that it was moderately difficult” (2012). No student thought that it was significantly difficult to use (2012).

Method

So, would Saint Leo University continuing education center students appreciate using OER? Four OER are used for this course including the [Open Stax Psychology](#) OER. [Positive psychology in a nutshell](#) by Ilona Boniwell and [Social psychology](#) by John DeLamater are two eBooks from the Saint Leo Cannon Memorial Library catalog, accessible with a student login, used in this course. [The seven challenges workbook: Cooperative communication skills for success at home and at work](#), published by The New Conversations Initiative, available as OER, was also used. A student survey (see Appendix A) was constructed to ascertain reception and utilization of the OER in PSY 110 HA (Psychological Well-Being) taught at the regional education centers. A separate faculty survey (see Appendix B) was administered to gauge faculty perception of the utilization of the OER. The author asked permission from each professor to distribute the survey to their class. Professors were also asked to take the faculty survey.

Testing

Students taking and faculty teaching the PSY 110HA course at Saint Leo University education centers were asked to complete the surveys vol-

untarily during the 2018-2019 school year. Since class sizes were small and the course was not offered every term, an extension from the university IRB was requested and granted to gather more responses through September 2020. No incentive was provided, and all responses were kept anonymous.

Results

Fifty-three student responses were gathered. Most students, forty-five (84.9%) indicated that when compared with a course that has a commercial textbook, having the textbook content fully online helped them in completing assignments on time. Seven students (13.2%) did not think that the OER aided in completing assignments on time, and one student did not answer. When asked if it was easy to access the online content, thirty-four (64.1%) said yes, sixteen (30.18%) stated somewhat, and three (5.66%) said no. When asked if they would want to take another class that had all of the textbook material online forty-six (86.7%) said yes and seven (13.2%) said no. Students were asked if they would prefer to have taken the class with a paper textbook that they had to purchase. Seventeen (32.07%) said yes and thirty-six (67.9%) said no. All but one student indicated that they had home internet access and cell phone internet access. When asked if they utilized a Saint Leo Center computer lab to access the textbook content for the course, seventeen (32.07%) stated yes, and thirty-six (67.9%) said no.

Six Professors agreed to take the survey designed for them. They were

asked if they felt having OER improved student ability to complete assignments that involved utilization of the texts when compared to classes that they have taught from a commercial textbook in the past. Four (66.6%) of the respondents said no and two (33.3%) said yes. Professors were also asked if they felt their students were better prepared for class discussions on assigned readings when compared to classes that they have taught from a commercial textbook in the past. Five (83.3%) professors indicated that it was about the same and one (16.6%) professor said no. When asked if any student had related to the professor that they had no internet access, two professors (33.3%) said yes and four (66.6%) professors said no. It should be noted, though, that all Saint Leo centers contain computers for students to use and/or a computer lab, as well as wireless internet access for students to utilize. This information is made known to students at their orientations and posted at the centers. Professors were asked if any student reported that they had any technical difficulties while accessing the OER. Three (50%) professors said yes and three (50%) said no. The ones who indicated that there was a problem stated, "they couldn't get to the textbook at all", "some were unable to locate them [the OER] even though we had gone over this in class", and "content would not open". When asked if they felt it was easy to access the OER, three (50%) professors said yes and three (50%) said somewhat. All (100%) of the professors felt that the OER content was comprehensive in scope of the subject of psy-

chological well-being. All professors thought that the OER were well written, and that the content was arranged in a logical way for student understanding of the subject. Overall, five (83.3%) professors indicated that they were satisfied and one (16.6%) professor said that they were somewhat satisfied with the OER.

Discussion

With the majority of the student respondents (86.7%) indicating that they would want to take another course with an OER; and with the majority (84.9%) stating that having an OER aided in completing assignments on time when compared to a class with a paper textbook, it would seem that most students liked using OER without any reservations. Since seventeen (32.07%) students indicated that they would be willing to pay for a paper textbook for this course, it gives some pause to the

complete acceptance and liking of OER. Unfortunately, no follow-up question was included in this survey to discover the reason or reasons why so many would prefer that option. Perhaps an open-ended question would have shed light on this. Even though the professors did not see a significant difference in the preparedness for class and completion of assignments from students, professors were impressed by the quality of the collection of OER for this course.

Limitations

This study was limited by the number of responses received. Participation was voluntary, and no incentive was given. Only faculty currently teaching the course and students currently enrolled in the course were allowed to take the survey. Students who had taken the course in the past were not surveyed.

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APPENDIX A

Student Survey

1. When compared with a course that has a traditional paper textbook, did having the textbook content online for this course help you complete your assigned readings on time?

Yes_____ OR No_____

2. Was it easy to access the online textbooks to finish your assignments?

Yes_____ Somewhat_____ No_____

3. If you answered “no” to #3, what would have made it easier to access?_____

4. Would you want to take another class that had all of the textbook material online? Yes_____ OR No_____

5. Would you prefer to have taken this class with a paper textbook that you purchase? Yes_____ OR No_____

6. Do you have home internet access? Yes_____ OR No_____

7. Do you have cell phone internet access? Yes_____ OR No_____

8. Did you utilize a Saint Leo Center Computer or Computer Lab to access the textbook content for this course?

Yes_____ OR No_____

APPENDIX B

Professor Survey

1. When compared to classes, where you have taught from a traditional paper textbook, and the purely online textbook content available for this course: Do you feel that having the textbook content already online improved student ability to complete assignments that involved utilization of the texts?

Yes_____ About the Same_____ No_____

2. When compared to classes, where you have taught from a traditional paper textbook, and the purely online textbook content available for this course: Were students better prepared for class discussions on assigned readings each week in this course?

Yes_____ About the Same_____ No_____

3. Did any student relay to you that they had no access to the internet? Yes_____ OR No_____

4. Did any student relay to you that they had any other technical difficulties accessing the online texts? Yes_____ OR No_____

5. If you answered "yes" to #4, what were the technical difficulties they encountered?_____

6. Do you feel it is easy to access the online textbook content? Yes_____ Somewhat_____ No_____

7. Do you feel that the online textbook content was comprehensive in the scope of the subject? Yes_____ Somewhat_____ No_____

8. Do you feel that the online textbook content was written well?

Yes_____ Somewhat_____ No_____

9. Do you feel that the online textbook content presented was arranged in a logical way for student understanding of the subject? Yes_____ OR No_____

10. Overall, what is your satisfaction with the online textbook content?
Very Satisfied_____ Satisfied_____ Somewhat dissatisfied_____ Very
Dissatisfied_____