The cost and quality of online open textbooks: Perceptions of community college faculty and students

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Abstract

Proponents of open educational resources (OER) claim that significant cost savings are possible when open textbooks displace traditional textbooks in the college classroom. We investigated student and faculty perceptions of OER used in a community college context. Over 125 students and 11 faculty from seven colleges responded to an online questionnaire about the cost and quality of the open textbooks used in their classrooms. Results showed that the majority of students and faculty had a positive experience using the open textbooks, appreciated the lower costs, and perceived the texts as being of high quality. The potential implications for OER initiatives at the college level seem large. If primary instructional materials can in fact be made available to students at no or very low cost, without harming learning outcomes, there appears to be a significant opportunity for disruption and innovation in higher education.

Keywords

open educational resources (OER); higher education; textbook quality

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