

Open Peer Review

Filiatreau, A. (2022, October). [Review of the article, Conversations with open textbook authors: The factors that help and hinder accessibility, by T. Schultz & E. Azadbakht]. Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education, 1(1), 236-239. doi:10.13001/joerhe.v1i1.7157

Reviewer: Amy Filiatreau

Recommendation: Revisions Required

Scope, Objectives, Content

Is the article in scope for Journal of Open Educational Resources in Higher Education? Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics? Is the topic an important one, or is it trivial or of low priority?

Yes, the article appears to be in-scope, and the topic is a high-priority one.

Organization

Does the article proceed logically? As applicable, does the article adhere to a recommended structure and the section guideline?

The article proceeds logically and the process is described quite well. It was a simple project (as far as the methodology) and based on previous research.

Methodology, Approach, Conclusions

The methodology for data gathering and analysis should be appropriate for the problem addressed. Inferences from data should be sound--the author should not reach unsupported conclusions. Not all papers will use a scientific research methodology, but all should employ sound reasoning and an adequate balance between description and critical analysis. Consider: Is the article factually accurate? Is it clear the author knows, or has investigated, previous work on the subject of the article? Has the author failed to reference recent or seminal work on the subject?

It appears obvious to ME that accessibility in OER is desirable and necessary, but that is assumed here, rather than proven. Some readers may ask why students with learning differences need accessible texts, or

might argue that if a student requires accommodations, that is the time to make the text accessible, rather than making it a default part of the writing process. Since the authors clearly state that MOST of the OERs they evaluated did not even have basic accessibility, that fact flies in the face of "all educational material must be made accessible to comply with existing laws and policies" - they apparently do not HAVE to be accessible. It would have been helpful to have included a reference that definitively makes the case for OER accessible texts. (For example, Section 508 refers to federal agencies only, and doesn't necessarily relate to HE institutions, even those who receive federal funds (to my knowledge anyway), so it is unclear why that is included here.)

The research process here is clear, and results are based on the experience of the interviewees. The literature review refers to many other similar recent studies.

I wish they had included a table(s) with more detail on the results; for example, which interviewees worked at large or small universities, because the availability of resources like instructional designers and funding varies so wildly based on what size/kind of institution it is. Something like:

Participant A - Large or small U - Public, private, community college - nonprofit or for-profit - Help from instructional designers or not - Help from student workers or not - University embraces/requires accessibility or not - Funding available or not - Which technologies/platforms used

I would like to have had some description of how they came up with their interview protocol - did they based it on protocols that are known to be sound? Did they have it evaluated to determine they were asking the right questions in the right way?

I also wish they had paired this with some interviews of authors who did not consider accessibility at all, but perhaps that will be a future study.

Writing Style, References

Please indicate whether there are problems with expression or flow, but do not comment about grammar or basic edits. Do NOT take the time to do copy editing - that will be handled later in the process. However, general comments pointing out problems with style or format are useful.

The writing style is clear and flows easily. All references match up with in-text citations.

It is unnecessary to name any of the interviewees, whether anonymous or not, in my opinion, and I find it distracting. It could just be "Participant A" or something.

The Rebus Foundation is name-dropped on page 5 without any indication of what it does. It would have been helpful to have a description, as well as a link. A link to the BCcampus Accessibility Toolkit and Affordable Learning Georgia. Yes, I can Google these, but direct links are always helpful.

Application:

Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

The contribution is not particularly original or groundbreaking. The literature review indicates that research has already been done that shows the same findings that they found. However, the findings may help bolster more resources for accessibility in OER.

Again, it would have been helpful to know where the respondents come from - large or small universities - because if I am from a small university trying to make the case to my boss that I need help and funding, but cannot show that other universities our size offer this kind of support, I have a losing argument.

There are not a lot of practical examples here about how these people improved their own situations, i.e., how they made the case that they need more resources and funding, more training etc.

If the tech and platforms tools need improvement and built-in accessibility features, how do we advocate for that?

I also think that having transcripts to all of the respondents' comments - perhaps edited for length or to protect privacy and be within the IRB - would have been helpful as an appendix or providing a link to these somewhere. I find myself wanting to know more about what they said.

What are the stronger points/qualities of the article?

Very clear, simple premise/research question, and clear results indicating that teamwork, time management, tech help, and funding are necessary to have good accessibility in OER. Having candid comments from those who have experienced this process is a good thing.

What are the weaker points/qualities of the article? How could they be strengthened?

Not a lot of new news here; it was already known that time, resources, and funding are important for accessibility in OER - and accessibility in general. Other ideas for strengthening the article are in the section above.

Peer Review Ranking: Scope

Does the topic discuss an element related to open education, open data, open access, or other open topics?

Highly Relevant

Peer Review Ranking: Clarity

Clarity of expression and flow? Does the article proceed logically?

Clear

Peer Review Ranking: Contribution

Contribution to Higher Education research and/or practice

Contributes

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate?

Appropriate

Peer Review Ranking: Research Assessment

If this is a research paper, is the methodology appropriate? Does the article contribute knowledge or practical examples that will inform/improve others' practice or education?

Sound

Overall Evaluation

2- Accept
