Open Peer Review

Reviewer: Nancy Remler

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?

This manuscript's topic is definitely related to the purpose of JOERHE. In fact, an examination of the research will be helpful in encouraging further research in the use of OER. While the topic is appropriate, I find that it misses a few opportunities, which I elaborate on in the other sections of this form. If you choose to take up some of those opportunities, the article will more strongly demonstrate its importance in this body of knowledge of OER.

Organization

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

The article takes the customary organization of a research article. For the most part, its content is logical. In other sections of this form, I point to strengths related to organization. At the same time, I found myself asking a few questions:

1. There seems to be a logical gap in the opening paragraphs. They lead with a point that OER reduce costs and enhance equity. The next sentences follow with a "therefore" statement that you conducted your bibliometric study. Isn't your study about more than cost and equity? Please take another look at the opening of the lit review, which reads like a suitable lead for the article. Would you consider weaving this content into your introduction?

2. If you decide to revisit your opening, you might also consider another question I found myself asking: What was your research question? And how did this bibliometric study stand to answer that research question?

3. Were there any limitations to your study? If so, what were they?

4. It seems that your study focused on journal articles and not books. Am I correct? If so, should you mention that in this manuscript and explain why?

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?

The methodology is specifically explained, which results in a clear, logical conceptual framework for this study.

To me the most compelling segment of your findings was the section on the most highly cited articles about OER. That paragraph points to the content of articles, not key words, authors or topics. Because I am interested not only on OER's impact on the cost of education but also impact on learning, impact on faculty development and impact on faculty advancement, this was the information I was most interested to find.

The observation above leads me to ask more questions: I wonder why you didn't examine the patterns/trends in the purposes of the body of research. Your opening points to cost and equity for students, but the keywords you found identify a broader range of research purposes: OER's impact on learning, its role in distance learning, its influence on developing pedagogies. Were there any assessments/ evaluations of OER and their rigor? If not, have you identified a gap in the research?

Your discussion observes that publications in OER have decreased in the past few years and it follows through with possible reasons for that decline. I appreciated the logic there and I think it points to a need for further 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 appropriate for an academic journal; no egregious stylistic issues hindered my reading. Neither did I notice any issues with references.

Within the body of your article, the graphs and charts are logical, appropriate illustrations of your findings. While I appreciate the additional charts and tables included in the appendix, I notice that you have eight pages of them and wonder if you need so many. If you choose to keep them, I agree that an appendix is an appropriate place to present them.

Application:

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

I point to this matter under the methods/conclusions section above. I do think this article is applicable to the study of OER, and it will inform others' knowledge of it and encourage others to conduct future research. My main recommendation here is that you identify as many literature gaps as you can to point readers more directly to research needs.

What are the stronger points/qualities of the article?

The lit review gives an appropriate outline of the research on OER and its varied angles. A strong aspect of the lit review is the last section in which it identifies clear gaps in the bibliometric research. It also states clearly the purpose of this study and how it bears significance to the growing body of knowledge in OER.

This article also taught me something new. I had not been aware of Bradford's Law or Lotka's Law (maybe I learned about them in grad school and forgot). Your article inspired me to dig a little deeper into those concepts, and I enjoyed my side trip to learn more about them.

I also appreciate the purpose of your research because it will springboard others to conduct studies of their own; your investigation will make others' research more efficient.

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

See the questions I asked under the methodology/conclusions section as those questions are applicable here.

While your discussion examines some patterns in your data and draws some reasonable conclusions about those patterns, I wonder if you might explore a little more. For instance, why are so many authors in the field of computer science? Is there something about the cost of textbooks in that field that necessitates significant cost reduction? Is there a need for more diversity in that field which OER can facilitate?

You also notice that the field of education (I take that to mean teacher education) is another discipline highly represented in publications. Is there something about that field that warrants much research? Is the cost of becoming a teacher such that a reduction in textbook costs is especially necessary? Is there a connection between development of OER and an effort to mitigate the teacher shortage?

Peer Review Ranking: Scope

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

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

1- Weak Accept