

Where Destiny Meets Legacy

Open Educational Resource, OER Pilot Project in Introduction to Effective Oral Communication Course (General Education)

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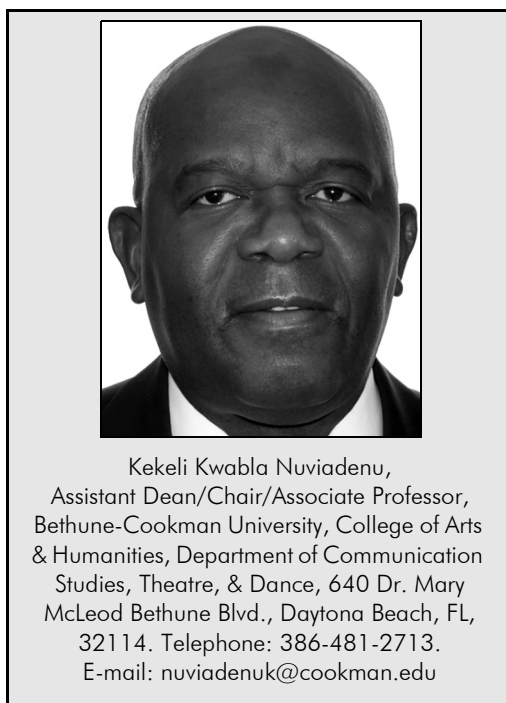
INTRODUCTION

This case study tackles an open educational resources (OER), OER pilot project in a general education course, namely Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230, offered by

the Department of Communication Studies, Theatre, & Dance, in the College of Arts & Humanities at the Bethune-Cookman University, (BCU) a historically Black college and university, 4-year private, not-for-profit type.

The study entails a comparative analysis of pre-OER and OER learning outcomes; research on OER and student success; teacher/student perceptions; general education public speaking course; pilot project in SC 230 course sections, both hybrid and online; timeline and redesign of SC 230 course; course schedule; and resources. Herein the pre-OER era of required text is considered “legacy,” and the era of utilizing OER is regarded as “destiny.”

The literature review considers pertinent educational ideas like current challenges of course completion, quality, and affordability regarding student learning outcomes and success; improvement in end-of-course grades; affordability and attainment gap concerns are addressed. Also examined are teachers’ and students’ perceptions of the cost, outcomes, quality, pedagogical, and learning impacts. Indeed this OER pilot project in a general education communication course bridges hybrid,



online, and traditional classroom teaching and learning.

The study utilizes triangulation or mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative approaches to answering the four main research questions related to the expected level of achievement assessed in the SC 230 course sections with a required textbook and compared to sections with OER material during the 2014–2022 academic years. There is a comparative analysis of the assessment data gathered in the findings or results and conclusions drawn from the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Colvard et al. (2018) study the challenges of completion, quality, and affordability related to students, student learning, and student success. Accordingly, open educational resources, OER improves end-of-course grades and decreases DFW (D, F, and withdrawal letter grades) rates for all students. OER addresses affordability, completion, attainment gap concerns, and learning.

Grewe and Davis (2017) analyze the effect enrollment in an OER course had on student academic achievement when controlling for prior academic achievement in an introductory online history course at a large community college. Correlation analysis and simple linear regression yield a significant positive moderate correlation between OER and student achievement. Also, the research provides a process by which future, more rigorous efficacy studies can be conducted.

Croteau (2017) examines the learning gains or losses pre- and posttransformation in Affordable Learning Georgia Round One courses where traditional resources were replaced with OER. It estimates differences between pre- and posttextbook transformation across the following outcomes: (1) drop fail withdraw (DFW) rates, (2) rates of completion, (3) numbers of students receiving a final grade of A or B, C,

and D, (4) numerical final grades as a percent, (5) final exam grades as a percent, and, (6) course-specific assessment grades measured in percent. Twenty-four data sets were analyzed for DFW rate, eight data sets for the completion rate, 14 data sets for grade distribution, three data sets for final exam grades, three data sets for course-specific assessment, and one data set for final grades. The null hypothesis that there would be no differences between pre- and posttransformation rates in these learning outcomes was supported. Thus, this study demonstrates that the University System of Georgia's Affordable Learning Georgia initiative helped students save money without negatively impacting learning outcomes. In addition, it is the first of its kind to measure some of these learning outcomes (e.g., final exam grade, assessment grade, and distribution of letter grades) at this scale.

Wiley et al. (2017) explored the relationship between OER created by students for use by other students, the long-term sustainability of the movement toward OER, and the success of students who use OER created by other students as part of their core curricular materials. There are definitions and a broader context for thinking about the possibility of student-created OER; a description of course context in which student-created OER have been slowly integrated into an online class over several years, and examine the impact on student learning associated with their introduction.

In a case study, Woodward (2017) examines the role of the library in OER through the lens of library value described in Megan Oakleaf's 2010 ACRL report. While librarians have traditionally not played a role in textbook adoptions, the campus academic goal to increase online, blended, and competency-based models is a strategic direction that intersects with the library's strategic vision to increase its contribution to online learning. Also, there is a description of the process of building a

partnership around OER with the campus center for excellence in teaching and Learning and articulating the impact of combined services on faculty adoption of OER and student success.

Salem (2017) explores the current state of OER, including notable library-lead and multi-institutional programs. The potential for OER and affordable course material creation and adoption programs to impact student retention and persistence is examined. Potential additional partnerships and future directions for library-lead programs are discussed and the framework necessary for assessing the impact of library-lead OER initiatives.

According to Hilton et al. (2016), OERs have the potential to replace traditional textbooks in higher education. Previous studies indicate that OER results in high student and faculty satisfaction, lower costs, and similar or better educational outcomes. In this case study, students using traditional textbooks were compared with those using OER at Tidewater Community College to compare their performance on course throughput rates, which is an aggregate of three variables-drop rates, withdrawal rates, and C or better rates. Two self-selecting cohorts were compared over four semesters, with statistically significant results. The study found that, subject to the limitations discussed, students who use OER perform significantly better on the course throughput rates than their peers who use traditional textbooks in both face-to-face and online courses that use OER. This finding suggests that OER is a promising avenue for reducing higher education costs while increasing academic success.

Pierce (2016) discusses aspects of adopting, adapting, and building OER that have the potential to influence student learning but are sometimes overlooked by OER advocates. The author makes recommendations for ensuring that OER initiatives positively impact student learning and argues that librarians can be effective

advocates for student learning by taking a leadership role in the OER discussion on campus.

Anderson et al. (2019) elaborate on S.R. Ramamrita Ranganathan's *Five Laws of Library Science* (1931) philosophy for the practice of librarianship. As new modes of information and access, as well as resources and technology, have come into existence, these laws have remained flexible and open to adaptation. Though library literature has not yet situated Ranganathan's five laws within the context of OER, freely accessible teaching and learning resources, OER reflects the core values of Ranganathan's five laws. The perspective of OER via Ranganathan's lens offers new opportunities for librarians to situate their OER work within one of the discipline's most foundational philosophies.

According to Baker and Sibona (2020), the Information Systems field has long been positioned globally as a particularly powerful instrument to promote social inclusion. While individual identity characteristics have been the primary focus of social inclusion, the research study directly investigates an external environmental influence on social inclusion, course materials cost, and its impact on learning outcomes. General theories of student motivation and cognition in educational outcomes and social inclusion theory were used as a starting point to identify a significant positive difference in the learning outcomes of students who used open-text materials contrasted with those who used proprietary text materials. The research with 198 participants found support for student motivation and open instructional materials as positive influences on student learning outcomes. Implications for theory and future research on social inclusion in education at the environmental level are recommended based on the results.

Grimaldi et al. (2019) state that OER have been lauded for their ability to reduce student costs and improve equity in higher education. Research examining whether

OER provides learning benefits has produced mixed results, with most studies showing null effects. The authors argue that the standard methods used to examine OER efficacy are unlikely to detect positive effects based on predictions of the access hypothesis. The access hypothesis states that OER benefits learning by providing access to critical course materials and therefore predicts that OER should only benefit students who would not otherwise have access to the materials. The authors, using simulation analysis, demonstrate that even if there is a learning benefit of OER, standard research methods are unlikely to detect it.

The study by Belikov and Bodily (2016) tackles 218 US faculty responses regarding Open Educational Resources (OER) in qualitative analysis. Ten categories emerged in the coding process. The top three categories that indicated barriers to adopting OER were that faculty wanted more information before they would be willing to adopt OER, faculty wanted to be able to find repositories of OER easily, and faculty were unaware of the difference between digital resources and OER. The top incentives identified to overcome these barriers include student cost benefits, student pedagogical benefits (faculty being able to make changes to OER to improve course content and instruction), and institutional support for the adoption of OER, whether in the form of course load reduction, curricular research assistance, or library support for finding and adopting OER. Future research is needed to understand how to address and overcome these barriers to OER adoption.

Bliss et al. (2013) investigate teachers' perceptions of the cost, outcomes, and quality of the OER used in their courses. Findings show significant cost savings and various pedagogical and learning impacts from implementing OER in the classroom. Thus, most teachers perceived their OER to be at least equal in quality to traditional textbooks they had used in the past.

Engler and Shedlosky-Shoemaker (2019) state that OER removes barriers to accessing instructional material. In light of their increased availability and use, a body of research has emerged to examine the impact of OER on college student success. While many of these studies have broadly examined efficacy across a variety of disciplines, the current study specifically examined the impact of the type of textbook (commercial vs. OER) on course content mastery within an undergraduate sample of introductory psychology students ($N = 63$) while controlling for instructor and student differences. Results indicated no significant differences in content mastery between those students in introductory psychology courses who were assigned a traditional commercial textbook and those who were assigned an OER textbook. These results support that OER can be equally effective as traditional, commercial textbooks and have implications for course material selections that help ensure access for all students.

Zhang and Li (2017) investigated the impact of online teaching experience on faculty members' perceptions of attributes of OER. Rogers' (2003) attributes of innovation theory were adopted as the theoretical base in this study. A questionnaire survey was carried out at Zhejiang University (ZJU) in China, where 360 faculty members were randomly invited to participate. The results of data analysis found that (1) only a small portion of surveyed faculty members had online teaching experience, while there were large portions of participants indicated that they would be willing to share their educational resources on the ZJU website or outside websites; (2) the majority of the participants tended to agree that there is a relative advantage and compatibility of OER, though they were more neutral regarding the complexity, trialability, and observability of OER; (3) online teaching experiences significantly impacted faculty members' perceived trialability and observability of

OER. Based on the finding, the study suggested that universities may carry out more initiatives to increase faculty members' online teaching experience and to improve faculty members' perceived attributes of OER.

Vojtech and Grissett's (2017) research indicates that students find OER favorable, but there is no research regarding students' perceptions of faculty who use open textbooks. The study examined this topic experimentally with two undergraduate psychology courses at a small public university. Participants read two passages, one about an instructor using an open textbook and another using a traditional copyrighted textbook, and rated each instructor on a range of characteristics through closed and open-ended questions. Participants rated faculty using an open textbook higher on kindness, encouragement, and creativity than faculty using a traditionally copyrighted textbook. They were more likely to want to take a class with faculty using an open textbook. Also, participants frequently mentioned textbook costs in their justifications.

Bliss et al. (2013) studied students' perceptions of the cost, outcomes, and quality of the OER used in their courses. The results show significant cost savings and various pedagogical and learning impacts from implementing OER in the classroom. Several students perceived their OER to be at least equal in quality to traditional textbooks they had used in the past.

Read et al. (2020) measure the efficacy of OER on student academic achievement and perceptions and use of OER, specifically among students of low socioeconomic status (SES). The authors of this study collected achievement and demographic data from students enrolled in 10 sections of an undergraduate course at a private, 4-year not-for-profit institution in the Pacific Northwest. Students in earlier class sections of the course used non-OER materials, and those in later sections used

materials developed from OER. An online survey including questions on socioeconomic status, perceived achievement and motivation, experience in the course, textbook-buying habits, and preferences in textbook formats was distributed to the participants in both the OER and non-OER sections. Data were analyzed using a random effects model design. No significant difference in academic achievement between the OER and non-OER courses was found. Survey responses indicated that students perceived their motivation and achievement to be improved with OER. Additionally, students with self-reported low SES indicators perceived they worked significantly more than high SES students, and working more is slightly positively correlated to the perceived impact of OER on achievement and motivation. The results from this study may inform further research on the impact of SES and employment on student perceptions and use of OER.

Stoner (2014), in the Introduction to Public Speaking Course, states OER's relevance to the theory and technique of public speaking. There is an emphasis on organizing, supporting, and clearly stating ideas; practice in informative and persuasive speaking; and meeting the general education requirement for oral communication, Area A-1.

I make use of textbooks as the basic source of content and use class time for activities that apply the content and practice skills. Therefore, I felt it was imperative that students had no excuse for not reading the course text.

Further, I appreciated the fact that I didn't feel compelled to use every chapter to justify the high cost of a typical textbook. While I did end up using all the chapters, uses came organically from the course design, not a sense of compulsion. I value OERs for the freedom of choice, usability, adaptability, accessibility and convenience they provide.

METHODOLOGY

The research approach applied in this study is triangulation, combining qualitative and quantitative data gathering and analysis at Bethune-Cookman University, BCU, historically Black college and universities. BCU is a private university founded by Mary McLeod Bethune in 1904 in Daytona Beach, Florida, and is affiliated with the United Methodist Church (Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.-a).

The OER pilot project started in the spring of 2018 via the Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Teaching Online (MERLOT) grant; then course redesign of the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication SC 230 general education course with the OER material Public Speaking: The Virtual Text in summer 2018; followed by hybrid course implementation in fall 2018; piloted in four online course sections in spring 2019; and in fall 2019 adopted OER material public speaking: the virtual text for all SC 230 courses both online and traditional classroom. Indeed, this is a clear representation of building bridges between the legacy of required text and destiny by piloting OER material in a hybrid course; second piloting OER material in online courses and adopting the OER material in both online and traditional classroom sections of the course.

The SC 230 course is a general education GE course required for all students in undergraduate programs at the BCU; and offered during fall, spring, and summer semesters (Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.-c). Each course section has a cap of 25 students and is taught by full-time faculty and adjuncts in both the traditional classroom and online. During an academic year, 12 sections of the SC 230 course are offered in the fall, 10 in the spring, and 2 in the summer. The required text (legacy) utilized about two decades prior to OER is Public Speaking: An Audience-Centered Approach by Beebe and Beebe (2015) at about \$90.

The study gathered and analyzed data from the annual planning, budgeting, and assessment reports for academic programs by the department of Communication Studies, Theatre, & Dance on the expected level of achievements in the SC 230 course sections assessed beginning in 2014, prior to the OER pilot project in fall 2018, and compared with data after the implementation of OER (2018–2022) in the SC 230 course (Bethune-Cookman University, n.d.-b).

The four main research questions are:

RQ. 1 What is the expected student learning outcome achievement level in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course sections with a required textbook during 2014–2017?

RQ. 2 What is the expected level of student learning outcome achievement in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course section with open educational resources, OER during the pilot project fall of 2018?

RQ. 3 What is the expected level of student learning outcome achievement in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course online sections with open educational resources, OER during the pilot in spring 2019?

RQ. 4 What is the expected student learning outcome achievement level in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course sections with open educational resources, OER during 2018–2022?

The Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course studies the fundamentals of oral communication, including theory, application, organizing, and delivering effective oral messages in various settings, as well as pronunciation, articulation, and diction. The goals of the

course are to improve the student's ability to speak before an audience, to listen and analyze speeches, to interact more effectively interpersonally, and to increase awareness of the role of communication in the traditional and online environment.

The program learning outcome assessed in the course is the learners' ability to use technology to gather and evaluate information to interpret and communicate complex ideas using written, oral, and visual media and digital environments to communicate and work collaboratively.

Also, through the attainment of the course student learning objectives, students acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies outlined in the Institutional student learning outcomes and program student learning outcomes. The course student learning objectives adhere to the Bethune-Cookman University mission and core values, as well as the College of Arts and Humanities and School of Performing Arts & Communication goals.

Thus, upon successful completion of the SC 230 course, students can explain the communication process and barriers that inhibit effective communication; discuss the importance of ethics, listening, audience analysis, and critical thinking in public speaking; explain what items of information a researcher can apply as supporting material for a speech; describe why speakers sometimes feel nervous about speaking in public; list and describe five patterns for organizing the main ideas of a speech; critically analyze and evaluate speakers during communication interactions; discuss why introductions and conclusions are essential to the overall success of a speech; explain guidelines and demonstrate standard speech outline form and effective delivery; explain differences between informative and persuasive speech, and develop and use presentation aids to help communicate effectively to an audience; in verbal communication, essay writing, and presentation at 70% accuracy level.

FINDINGS

In the general education assessment of the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course, the expected level of achievement is that at least 90% of students assessed will meet the standard at 70% or higher. The activity and tools for the measurement are Group Speech and Group Speech Rubric-Competency 3, respectively. Learners in a course section are to collaborate in groups of a minimum of three on either an informative or persuasive topic, plan, research, and deliver a message utilizing a visual aid. The grading rubric adheres to the National Communication Association and the Association of American Colleges VALUE Rubrics guidelines. It has eight categories of group and individual presentational competencies assessed at excellent, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory levels Morreale et al. (2007).

RQ. 1 What is the expected level of student learning outcome achievement in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course sections with a required textbook during 2014–2017?

During 2014–2015, 519 out of 769 enrolled were assessed, of which 500 students (96%) completed group speech and received passing grades of satisfactory and excellent; while 19 students (4%) received unsatisfactory.

In the 2015–2016 academic year, 165 of 289 total enrollment were assessed, of which 162 students (98%) completed group speech and received passing grades of satisfactory and excellent, while three students (2%) received unsatisfactory.

By 2016–2017, 397 of 438 students (91%) completed group speech and received passing grades satisfactory and excellent; 438 were assessed out of 609 total enrollment.

In 2017–2018, 480 of 510 students (94%) completed group speech and received passing grades satisfactory and excellent; while 30 students (6%) received unsatisfac-

Table 1. ELOA Pre-OER 2014–2017

Academic Year	Enrolled	Students	ELOA	ELOA%	Met or Unmet
2017–2018	644	510	480	94%	Met
2016–2017	609	438	397	91%	Met
2015–2016	289	165	162	98%	Met
2014–2015	769	519	500	96%	Met

Table 2. ELOA OER Pilot Project Fall 2018

Academic Year	Enrolled	Assessed	ELOA	ELOA%	Met or Unmet
Fall 2018	5	5	5	100%	Met

tory grades; 510 out of 644 total enrollment were assessed.

Table 1 ELOA Pre-OER 2014–2017 shows that the results met the expected level of achievement measures during the four academic years.

RQ. 2 What is the expected level of student learning outcome achievement in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course section with open educational resources, OER, during the pilot project fall of 2018?

The pilot project in one of the introduction to effective oral communication, SC 230 courses utilizing OER material in fall 2018 yielded 100% completion of group speech with a passing grade satisfactory; 5 of 5 students were assessed.

Accordingly, Table 2 ELOA OER fall 2018 shows that the results met the expected level of achievement during the semester of the pilot project. The pilot project was conducted at Bethune-Cookman University's Miller Center, an off-campus instructional site located in Hastings, FL. The Miller Center provides access to undergraduate academic degree programs and courses through weekend and evening classes designed to meet the needs of non-traditional adult learners, primarily in the

surrounding tricounty area (Putnam, St. Johns, and Flagler Counties).

According to one of the students in the fall 2018 pilot project, the OER material

helped me overcome my fear of public speaking. This textbook has been instrumental, insightful and gives the finest tips on how to be a better speaker. I also enjoyed learning about the history of public speaking as well. The cost of the textbook is an economic blessing. As a single mother of two, money is always high commodity in my household. So, when my professor, Dr. Nuviadenu told our class that we were switching to Public Speaking: The Virtual Text, and the textbook was free, I was extremely overjoyed. The textbook has print resources, it is easy to access from the website, and the cost is 100% effective. (E. Jackson, personal communication, November 7, 2018).

RQ. 3 What is the expected level of student learning outcome achievement in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course online sections with open educational resources, OER during the pilot in spring 2019?

When the pilot project was conducted in four SC 230 online courses, 46 (100%) of 46 completed the group speech and

Table 3. ELOA OER Pilot Project Online Sections Spring 2019

Academic Year	Enrolled	Students	ELOA	ELOA%	Met or Unmet
Spring 2019	69	46	46	100%	Met

Table 4. ELOA OER All Sections 2018–2022

Academic Year	Enrolled	Assessed	ELOA	ELOA%	Met or Unmet
2021–2022	430	370	353	95%	Met
2020–2021	480	371	328	88%	Unmet
2019–2020	559	502	440	88%	Unmet
2018–2019	668	483	434	90%	Met

received passing grades satisfactory and excellent during spring 2019; 46 of 69 were assessed. The SC 230 online sections started in the spring of 2016.

During the spring 2019 pilot, Table 3 ELOA OER Pilot Project Online Sections indicates that the results met the expected level of achievement.

RQ. 4 What is the expected level of student learning outcome achievement in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication, SC 230 course sections with open educational resources, OER during 2018–2022?

The data for 2018–2019 shows that 434 of 483 students (90%) completed group speech and received passing grades of satisfactory and excellent; while 49 students (10%) received an unsatisfactory grade; 483 of 668 total enrollment were assessed.

By 2019–2020, 440 of 502 students (88%) completed group speech and received passing grades satisfactory and excellent; while 62 students (12%) received unsatisfactory grades; 502 of 559 total enrollment were assessed.

In 2020–2021, 371 of 480 were assessed. 328 (88%) of 371 received satisfactory and excellent, while 43 (12%) received unsatisfactory. During the 2021–2022 academic year, 370 of 430 were assessed, where 353

(95%) of 370 received satisfactory and excellent 14 (4%) received unsatisfactory.

Table 4 ELOA OER All Sections 2018–2022 shows that during the initial academic year 2018–2019 of full implementation of OER in all the SC 230 sections assessed, the results met the expected level of achievement. However, during the subsequent academic years, 2019–2020 and 2020–2021, the expected level of achievement was not met. Nevertheless, the recent 2021–2022 show that the results met the expected level of achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

Figure 1 represents the results or findings from 2014 to 2022. There is evidence that the use of OER in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication SC 230 general education course yields about the same expected level of achievement in comparison with the use of a required textbook.

Generally, the OER adoption at the Bethune-Cookman University level led to financial benefits for students enrolled in the Introduction to Effective Oral Communication SC 230 course by eliminating the cost of about \$90 for the required text in the general education course. This cost alleviation is confirmed by a student in the fall 2018 pilot project via feedback that the

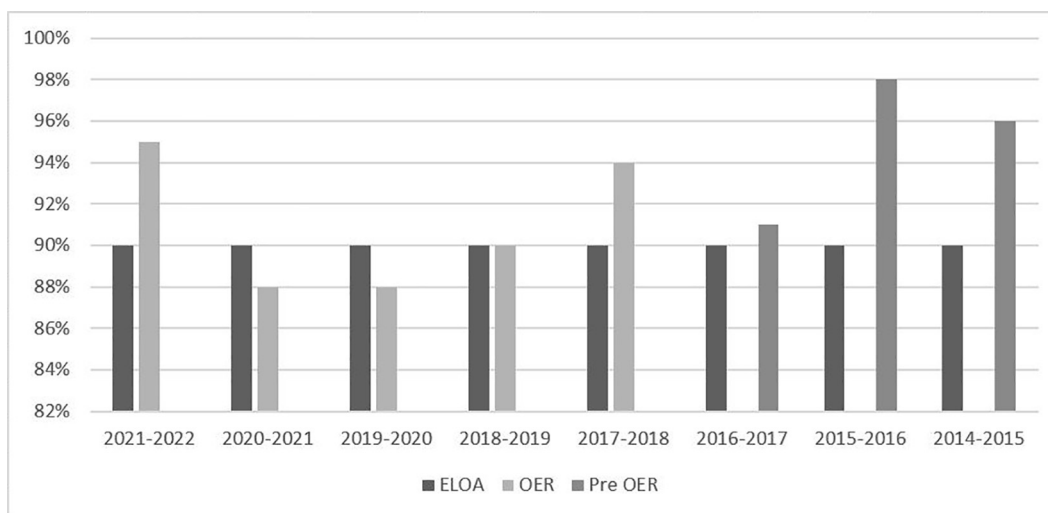


Figure 1. ELOA pre- and post-OER 2014–2022.

OER is an economic blessing. Also, there is evidence of more equitable access to education, serving a broader base of learners than traditional education.

It is evident that students met the expected level of achievement during the fall 2018 semester of the pilot project. This finding affirms Bliss et al. (2013) study, which found significant cost savings and various pedagogical and learning impacts due to the implementation of OER in the classroom.

As part of the campuswide general education project, the pilot ultimately led to the policy of utilizing OER for all general education courses at the BCU. The use of OER entails critical reflection by various BCU educators to redesign courses and improve their practice.

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