

## **Opening Doors to Knowledge**

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*Second Place Entry*

Access to knowledge that transforms learning is increased by the move to open educational resources (OERs) and zero-textbook-cost (ZTC) courses. Through KPU's ZTC program, I have gained accurate knowledge on how removing financial obstacles and usage restrictions encourages greater engagement, which raises academic performance. As a fourth-year marketing student juggling a part-time job, OER textbooks have improved my self-directed learning. Results and equity are significantly impacted by notable differences seen in privately published textbooks with limited access.

### **Immediate & Perpetual Access**

With open educational resources (OER) textbooks, all students can have instant, unlimited access to learning materials without having to pay the over \$200 textbook charges that prevent many from enrolling. Logged-in materials are always available whenever and wherever they are needed, free of DRM restrictions, expiration dates, or restrictive codes. Thanks to the BYOD (bring your own device) policy, students can engage completely in their education rather than being excluded until they have the income to do so. You can save a significant amount of money by saying goodbye to restrictive two-year access agreements and temporary workarounds. OER textbooks facilitate easier access to online and future-relevant knowledge.

### **Built-In Support Systems**

OER textbooks include helpful learning reinforcement strategies directly into the content, like knowledge checks, guided discussion questions, case studies, and chapter summaries. In my experience as a self-directed student with a part-time job, having content integrated with structured help increases the impact, engagement, and personalization of self-directed study. Compared to traditional textbooks, I have more discretion over when and how frequently I go back to completely learn subjects because OERs provide integrated formative assessment activities.

### **Eliminating Unnecessary Barriers**

Publication-specific textbooks impede learning precisely because of the same barriers that open educational resources (OERs) remove: restricted codes that limit access later, exorbitant textbook pricing that make materials unaffordable only weeks into a course, and DRM that prevents usage throughout all of my devices. These unjustified restrictions lead to financial stress and anxiety, which in turn lowers engagement, performance, and access to fundamental knowledge. OER

textbooks eliminated these profit-driven obstacles, enabling me to realize my full academic potential.

### **Excelling Through Open Access**

Full openness altered the book from being an obstacle to a utility that facilitates the students' progress. The absence of these financial obstacles would mean a boost in my enthusiasm, understanding, and mastering of the various lectures and marketing perspectives while instilling these practices for my future educational courses and career. This in turn, gave me a chance to exploit this feature by reorganizing the content as often as I needed in order to complete my assignments and attend subsequent classes. Firstly, the lack of educational constraints enabled me to succeed through hard work and perseverance, not through socioeconomic position, securing fairness in educational field.

### **Scaffolding Self-Directed Learning**

Structure receives utmost priority as lectures on their own are not efficient in ensuring that learners' competing agendas are suitably balanced with self-study. The educational textbook that is ensured by the Open Educational Resources is accompanied by the effective scaffolding here: it states the chapter objectives concisely, emphasizes the key points in the summaries, and in-between formative assessment exercises to check how students reteached themselves. This teaching scaffolding enabled me to carry reading through the textbook own pace and yet will satisfy my needs as non-traditional employed student. Integrated support made me channel my attention towards the lesson materials in a manner that the book I bought from this commercial publisher and which does not have this type of instructional design cannot.

### **Fundamental Shifts Towards Equity**

An old paradigm that highlights people's rights rather than business needs and provides educational materials to all the may be exemplified in the Open Educational Resource (OER) textbooks. Financial barriers are removed for learners who take up other responsibilities through the use of open educational resources, this is a significant contribution to creating equity and inclusiveness in education. Such little steps accumulate greatly, turning out to be the source of efforts we utilize here at KPU for the benefit of our communities and healthcare providers alike. The change to OER textbooks not only concerns the obvious cost saving, as there is an open door to knowledge transfer in which greater outcomes rely on.

In conclusion, these free OER textbooks of the same value with the prohibitively expensive ones break down the barriers for the deprived students. It helps more students reach their potential regardless of age, race, or income level. This leads to the formation of an educational system that is fairer and just.