
SECTION 2.3.3

OPEN PEDAGOGY

SUBSECTION 2.3.3.1

DEFINING OPEN AND OER-ENABLED PEDAGOGY

Robin DeRosa and Rajiv Jhangiani

The essay below by Dr. Robin DeRosa and Dr. Rajiv Jhangiani is adapted from their chapter, “Open Pedagogy,” in *A Guide to Making Open Textbooks with Students*, a resource compiled and published under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License by the Rebus Community.¹ Robin and Rajiv are highly visible and accomplished advocates for open pedagogy and have helped that developing community consider its shape, benefits, risks, and practices. They wrote this for educators and allies, but it’s a great introduction to the topic, so it is included here for that purpose.

There are many ways to begin a discussion of open pedagogy. Although providing a framing definition might be the obvious place to start, we want to resist that for just a moment to ask a set of related questions: What are your hopes for education, particularly for higher education? How do you see the roles of the learner and the teacher? What challenges do you face in your learning environments, and how does pedagogy address (or not address) them?

Open pedagogy, as we engage with it, is a site of praxis, a place where theories about learning, teaching, technology, and social justice enter into a conversation with each other and inform the development of educational practices and structures. This site is dynamic, contested, constantly under revision, and resists static definitional claims. But it is not a site vacant of meaning or political conviction. In this brief introduction, we offer a pathway for engaging with the current conversations around open pedagogy; some ideas about its philosophical foundation, investments, and its utility; and some concrete ways that students and teachers—all of us learners—can “open” education. We

hope that this chapter will inspire those of us in education to focus our critical and aspirational lenses on larger questions about the ideology embedded within our educational systems and the ways in which pedagogy impacts these systems. At the same time we hope to provide some tools and techniques to those who want to build a more empowering, collaborative, and just architecture for learning.

Open pedagogy as a named approach to teaching is nothing new. Scholars such as Catherine Cronin, Katy Jordan, Vivien Rolfe, and Tannis Morgan have traced the term back to early etymologies.² Morgan cites a 1979 article by the Canadian Claude Paquette: “Paquette outlines three sets of foundational values of Open Pedagogy, namely: autonomy and interdependence; freedom and responsibility; democracy and participation.”³

Many people who work with open pedagogy today have come into the conversations not only through an interest in the historical arc of the scholarship of teaching and learning, but also by way of open education, and specifically by way of open educational resources [OER]. As conversations about teaching and learning developed around the experience of adopting and adapting OER, the phrase *open pedagogy* began to reemerge, this time crucially inflected with the same *open* that inflects the phrase *open license*.

In this way, we can think about *open pedagogy* as a term that is connected to many teaching and learning theories that predate open education, but also as a term that is newly energized by its relationship to OER and the broader ecosystem of open (open education, yes, but also open access, open science, open data, open source, open government, etc.). David Wiley wrote in 2013 about the tragedy of “disposable assignments” that “actually suck value out of the world,”⁴ and he postulated not only that OER offer a free alternative to high-priced commercial textbooks, but also that the open license would allow students (and teaching faculty) to contribute to the knowledge commons, not just consume from it, in meaningful and lasting ways. Wiley has since revised his language to focus on “OER-enabled pedagogy,” with an explicit commitment to foregrounding the 5R permissions and the ways that they transform teaching and learning.⁵

As Wiley has focused on students-as-contributors and the role of OER in education, other open pedagogues have widened the lens through which open pedagogy refracts. Mike Caulfield, for example, has argued that while OER have been driving the car for a while, open pedagogy is in the back seat ready to hop over into the front.⁶ Caulfield sees the replacement of the proprietary textbook by OER as a necessary step in enabling widespread institutional open learning practice. In that post, Caulfield shorthands open pedagogy: “student blogs, wikis, etc.” But beyond participating in the creation of OER via the 5 *Rs*, what exactly does it mean to engage in open pedagogy

Open pedagogy sees access as fundamental to learning and to teaching and agency as an important way of broadening that access. Embedded in the social justice commitment to making education affordable for all students is a related belief that knowledge

should not be an elite domain. Knowledge consumption and knowledge creation are not separate but parallel processes, as knowledge is co-constructed, contextualized, cumulative, iterative, and recursive. In this way, open pedagogy invites us to focus on how we can increase access to higher education and how we can increase access to knowledge—both its reception and its creation. This is, fundamentally, about the dream of a public learning commons, where learners are empowered to shape the world as they encounter it. With the open license at the heart of the work, open pedagogy seeks to engage both with “free” and about “freedom,” with resources and practices, with access and about accessibility, with content and contribution.

To summarize, we might think about open pedagogy as an access-oriented commitment to learner-driven education AND as a process of designing architectures and using tools for learning that enable students to shape the public knowledge commons of which they are a part. We might insist on the centrality of the 5 *Rs* to this work, and we might foreground the investments that open pedagogy shares with other learner-centered approaches to education. We might reconstitute open pedagogy continually, as our contexts shift and change and demand new, site-specific articulations. But if we want to begin “open” courses, programs, or institutions, what practical steps can we take to get started?

OEP, or open educational practices, can be defined as the set of practices that accompany either the use of OER or, more to our point, the adoption of open pedagogy. Here are some simple but profoundly transformative examples of OEP:

- Adapt or remix OER with students. Even the simple act of adding problem sets or discussion questions to an existing open textbook will help contribute to knowledge, to the quality of available OER, and to your students' sense of doing work that matters. The adaptation of the open textbook *Project Management for Instructional Designers* by successive cohorts of graduate students at Brigham Young University provides an excellent example of this approach.⁷
- Build OER with students. Though students may be beginners with most of the content in a course, they are often more adept than instructors at understanding what beginning students need in order to understand the material. Asking students to help reframe and re-present course content in new and inventive ways can add valuable OER to the commons while also allowing for the work that students do in courses to go on to have meaningful impact once the course ends. Consider the examples of the open textbook *Environmental ScienceBites* written by undergraduate students at the Ohio State University or the brief explainer videos created by psychology students around the world and curated by the Noba Project.⁸
- Teach students how to edit Wikipedia articles. By adding new content, revising existing content, adding citations, or adding images, students can (with the support of the Wiki Education Foundation) make direct contributions to one of the most popular public repositories for information.⁹ Indeed, more than 22,000 students already have, including medical students at the University of California

San Francisco.¹⁰ More than developing digital literacy and learning how to synthesize, articulate, and share information, students engage with and understand the politics of editing, including how “truth” is negotiated by those who have access to the tools that shape it.

- Facilitate student-created and student-controlled learning environments. The learning management system (e.g., Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard, etc.) generally locks students into closed environments that prevent sharing and collaboration outside of the class unit; it perpetuates a surveillance model of education in which the instructor is able to consider metrics that students are not given access to; and it presupposes that all student work is disposable (as all of it will be deleted when the new course shell is imported for the next semester). Initiatives such as Domain of One’s Own enable students to build “personal cyberinfrastructures”¹¹ where they can manage their own learning, control their own data, and design home ports that can serve as sites for collaboration and conversation about their work. Students can choose to openly license the work that they post on these sites, thereby contributing OER to the commons; they can also choose not to openly license their work, which is an exercising of their rights and perfectly in keeping with the ethos of open pedagogy. If students create their own learning architectures, they can (and should) control how public or private they wish to be, how and when to share or license their work, and what kinds of design, tools, and plug-ins will enhance their learning. It is important to point out here that open is not the opposite of private.
- Encourage students to apply their expertise to serve their community. Partner with nonprofit organizations to create opportunities for students to apply their research or marketing skills.¹² Or ask them to write (and submit for publication) op-ed pieces to share evidence-based approaches to tackling a local social problem.¹³ Demonstrate the value of both knowledge application and service by scaffolding their entry into public scholarship.
- Engage students in public chats with authors or experts. Platforms such as Twitter can help engage students in scholarly and professional conversations with practitioners in their fields. This is another way that students can contribute to—not just consume—knowledge, and it shifts learning into a dialogic experience. In addition, if students are sharing work publicly, they can also use social media channels to drive mentors, teachers, peers, critics, experts, friends, family, and the public to their work for comment. Opening conversations about academic and transdisciplinary work—both student work and the work of established scholars and practitioners—is, like contributing to OER, a way to grow a thriving knowledge commons.
- Build course policies, outcomes, assignments, rubrics, and schedules of work collaboratively with students. Once we involve students in creating or revising OERs or in shaping learning architectures, we can begin to see the syllabus as more of a collaborative document, co-generated at least in part with our students. Can students help craft course policies that would support their learning, that they feel

more ownership over? Can they add or revise course learning outcomes in order to ensure the relevancy of the course to their future paths? Can they develop assignments for themselves or their classmates and craft rubrics to accompany them to guide an evaluative process? Can they shape the course schedule according to rhythms that will help maximize their efforts and success?

- Let students curate course content. Your course is likely split into a predictable number of units (fourteen, for example) to conform to the academic calendar of the institution within which the course is offered. We would probably all agree that such segmenting of our fields is somewhat arbitrary; there is nothing ontological about Introduction to Psychology being fourteen weeks long (or spanning twenty-eight textbook chapters, etc.). And when we select a novel for a course on post-colonial literature or a lab exercise for Anatomy and Physiology, we are aware that there are a multitude of other good options for each that we could have chosen. We can involve students in the process of curating content for courses, either by offering them limited choices between different texts or by offering them solid time to curate a future unit more or less on their own (or in a group) as a research project. The content of a course may be somewhat prescribed by accreditation or field standards, but within those confines, we can involve students in the curation process, increasing the level of investment they have in the content while helping them acquire a key twenty-first-century skill.
- Ask critical questions about “open.” When you develop new pathways based on open pedagogy, pay special attention to the barriers, challenges, and problems that emerge. Be explicit about them, honest about them, and share them widely with others working in open education so that we can work together to make improvements. Being an open educator in this fashion is especially crucial if we wish to avoid digital redlining, creating inequities (however unintentionally) through the use of technology.¹⁴ Ask yourself: Do your students have access to broadband at home? Do they have the laptops or tablets they need to easily access and engage with OER? Do they have the support they need to experiment creatively, often for the first time, with technology tools? Do they have the digital literacies they need to ensure as much as is possible their safety and privacy online? Do you have a full understanding of the terms of service of the edtech tools you are using in your courses? As you work to increase the accessibility of your own course, are you also evaluating the tools and technologies you are using to ask how they help or hinder your larger vision for higher education?¹⁵

Open pedagogy is not a magical panacea for the crises that currently challenge higher ed. That being said, we both feel that open pedagogy offers a set of dynamic commitments that could help faculty and students articulate a sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive future for our educational institutions. By focusing on access, agency, and a commons-oriented approach to education, we can clarify our challenges and firmly assert a learner-centered vision for higher education.

As can be inferred from the essay above, open pedagogy is an actively evolving space that will continue to take shape and refine and challenge itself. In the subsection 2.3.3.2, “Critical Information Literacy and Open Pedagogy,” we’ll explore further the relationship between open pedagogy and librarianship and seek to unpack how and when scholarly communication librarians engage with faculty and students to support open and OER-enabled pedagogy.

NOTES

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