

# Open Pedagogy and a Very Brief History of the Concept

Tannis Morgan

## Editor's Note

This was originally posted to [Tannis Morgan's blog](#) [<https://edtechbooks.org/-vpo>] on December 21, 2016.

The good folks at [#OER17](#) [<https://edtechbooks.org/-pqr>] have accepted my conference proposal on our [University of Guadalajara faculty development program](#) [<http://udg.theagoraonline.net>], which I positioned in the proposal as an example of an open pedagogy approach to faculty development. However the proposal acceptance is contingent on one thing: it was noted that I don't define or link to any scholarly resources on open pedagogy, a very fair point and very useful feedback. And a bit sloppy on my part, if I'm quite honest.

This led me down a rabbit hole this week, digging around for scholarly work on open pedagogy. The big surprise - although

probably not to Vivian Rolfe who [did a masterful job of a presentation at OpenEd16 \[https://edtechbooks.org/-fii\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-fii) this year [digging into some history of open \[https://edtechbooks.org/-mpB\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-mpB) - is that the term open pedagogy dates back to the early 1970s, where it was actually quite a thing in Quebec and France. But does it mean what we think it means?

One of the oldest references comes from Canada's own Claude Paquette, [who in this article from 1979 \[https://edtechbooks.org/-BSt\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-BSt) states that open pedagogy has already been in place for almost 10 years, and lays out some foundational principles in his paper as well as this one [from 2005 \[https://edtechbooks.org/-HZN\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-HZN). His 1995 paper talks about open pedagogy with a historical distance that can only be appreciated if you've embraced a novel idea and watched it succeed and fail simultaneously. Consider this passage for example:

La nécessité d'une rupture avec la pédagogie encyclopédique charmait les plus progressistes et les plus innovateurs d'entre nous, alors que les tenants de la rénovation pédagogique ne cherchaient que quelques nouveaux trucs pour enjoliver la pédagogie de la bonne réponse sans en questionner les fondements et les pratiques.

The necessary rupture with textbook pedagogy charmed the most progressive and most innovative of us, while those for pedagogical renewal were only looking for new techniques to liven things up

without questioning the foundation and practices.  
(my translation)

Paquette outlines 3 sets of foundational values of open pedagogy, namely: autonomy and interdependence; freedom and responsibility; democracy and participation. He goes into some detail about these, but us ed tech folks will recognize some of the themes - individualized learning, learner choice, self-direction, - to name a few. He even talks about “open activities” as the big innovation in open pedagogy, whereby students simultaneously use their multiple talents in learning situations, and this process of learning is “interactional” (aka social and connected). For Paquette, open is very much about learner choice, (albeit for him this is really about creating a classroom environment where this can be optimized). Good stuff right?

Of course, this becomes much more fascinating if you consider the sociopolitical context in which these ideas were playing out. [Quebec had just experienced a cultural revolution \[https://edtechbooks.org/-CJp\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-CJp) which led to a rupture of the stronghold of the Catholic church on pretty much all of Quebec society, and from which emerged, among other things, an educational reform and [establishment of a CEGEP system in Quebec \[https://edtechbooks.org/-vpr\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-vpr) (tuition free post secondary colleges). This is significant in that prior to this rupture, post secondary education was largely accessible only to the (English) elite, and public education pretty much ended at age 14.

Meanwhile in Europe, there were [similar educational reform ambitions \[https://edtechbooks.org/-qgA\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-qgA) and the language education world had embraced ideas of autonomy and self-direction in reaction to a number of sociocultural currents, which are nicely wrapped up for us in [this 1995 article by Gremmo and Riley \[https://edtechbooks.org/-ccAZ\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-ccAZ). There are quite a few gems to consider in here in the context of how we talk about open and open pedagogy currently. For example, the abstract starts us off with a bang in situating autonomy and self direction against a backdrop of:

minority rights movements, shifts in educational philosophy, reactions against behaviourism, linguistic pragmatism, wider access to education, increased internationalism, the commercialization of language provision and easier availability of educational technology (p.151)

Plus ca change...

Another gem discusses the role of technology in facilitating autonomy:

(4) Developments in technology have made an undeniable contribution to the spread of autonomy and self-success. The tape-recorder, the fast-copier, TV and the video-recorder, the computer, the photocopier, magazines, newspapers, fax and e-mail, all provide a rich variety of tools and techniques for the implementation of self-directed

learning. In institutional terms, the facilities have been gathered together to form the resource centres (mediatheques, sound libraries, etc.) which will be discussed below. However, experience shows that the price of autonomy is eternal vigilance: there is a strong and repeated tendency for the introduction of some new technology by enthusiastic “technicians” to be accompanied by a retrograde and unreflecting pedagogy. A grammar drill on a computer is still a grammar drill and if learners are given little choice (or no training, which comes to the same thing) then it is a travesty to call their programmes “self-directed”. (p. 153)

Again, some familiar themes are discussed in this article: flexible learning, vast increases in university population, wider access to education, internationalism, commercialization.

So how does this compare to the foundational principles on which the current open pedagogy movement rests? At the moment, the current strand of open pedagogy seems to be defined by its use and creation of open materials. Consider for example [this description from the OE consortium \[https://edtechbooks.org/-hRhD\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-hRhD).

Or this poster for an event at CUNY.

# OPEN PEDAGOGY ON THE OPENLAB SPRING'16



The Open Pedagogy group provides a forum to ask questions, generate discussion, share instructional materials and resources, and collaborate on ideas about teaching and learning in open digital spaces generally and on the OpenLab specifically. Please join us for our Spring events!

## Knowing Brooklyn through Place-Based Open Digital Pedagogy

Interested in using the OpenLab to engage with the college's current City Tech GenEdge theme, *Knowing Brooklyn*? A companion event to this college-wide effort, this session takes a place-based approach to open digital pedagogy. Together we will think through ways to integrate place-based learning around City Tech's Brooklyn location with open pedagogy on the OpenLab, as we design our courses, activities, and assignments. In partnership with the Brooklyn Waterfront Research Center.

**Thursday, February 18, 5:00 - 6:30pm (N227)**

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## Exploring Research Projects on the OpenLab

Interested in learning more about how the OpenLab can support your research? Previous events have focused on courses, but we're seeing more research projects appear on the OpenLab. This session showcases this exciting work happening at City Tech, and explores some of the ways faculty and staff are using the OpenLab to collaborate with colleagues and students on research projects.

**Thursday, March 17, 5:00 - 6:30pm (N227)**

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## Getting Hands-On with Research Projects on the OpenLab

Interested in building a space for your research on the OpenLab? Bring your own laptop or device to this follow-up working session on research projects on the OpenLab, where we will explore and build projects on the OpenLab centered on specific research questions. Participants will leave with a collaborative space on the OpenLab for organizing, archiving, and publicly displaying their research.

**Thursday, April 7, 5:00 - 6:30pm (N227)**

Open Pedagogy events are open to all City Tech faculty and staff.

Part-time faculty are eligible to receive a stipend for participation. Refreshments will be served at all events.

Find Open Pedagogy on the OpenLab at [openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/groups/open-pedagogy-on-the-openlab/](http://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/groups/open-pedagogy-on-the-openlab/)

What is the OpenLab? Check it out at [openlab.citytech.cuny.edu](http://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu)

For more information, contact our friendly Community Team at [openlab@citytech.cuny.edu](mailto:openlab@citytech.cuny.edu)



WHERE CAN TECHNOLOGY TAKE YOU?



Or this blog post [from David Wiley](https://edtechbooks.org/-FrX).  
[\[https://edtechbooks.org/-FrX\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-FrX) where he discusses the disposable assignment.

In other words, open pedagogy is currently a sort of proxy for the use and creation of open educational resources as opposed to being tied to a broader pedagogical objective. Of course, this isn't to say that the OER movement lacks foundational values and broader objectives - if anything, so much of the 1970s open pedagogy and autonomy world seems to resonate. In fact, I find it quite fascinating that [the authors of this post on the 8 qualities of open pedagogy](https://edtechbooks.org/-sob) [\[https://edtechbooks.org/-sob\]](https://edtechbooks.org/-sob) seem to arrive at a similar place as our 1970s counterparts. But it does raise the question as to whether we are being ambitious enough in our articulations and aspirations for open pedagogy. And to Vivian Rolfe's point made at OpenEd 16, are we paying enough attention to voices of the past?

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