

Executive Summary

by Christina Katopodis, PhD

This collection of resources, compiled by Drs. Sujung Kim and Jessie Fredlund in 2020-2021, surveys a wealth of references focused on open pedagogy and experiential learning in higher education, including foundational texts and an array of articles exploring implementation, as well as references related to the landscape of doctoral education issues in the humanities, such as articles that rethink doctoral education and professional development, and ones that focus on the experiences of BIPOC and first-generation doctoral students especially.

This bibliography is impressive in its magnitude and coverage, including over 150 references, and almost all accompanied by abstract summaries. The authors have chosen to include a range of genres—scholarly articles, published books, open educational resources such as blog posts, and more—that allow a reader access to various spaces of dialogue and metareflection in higher education discourse. This introduction offers a sweeping executive summary of the 64-page collection and, while much of the nuance and detail is lost in this generalizing mode, I hope it will tease the reader into exploring this treasure-trove of resources that Drs. Kim and Fredlund have compiled.

This collection, provided to the public by the [Humanities Alliance](#) at the City University of New York (CUNY), will be of interest to anyone seeking a broader understanding of shifts in teaching practices made by faculty, staff, and administrators (many of whom are collaborating with their students) who are working to establish more democratic models for higher education, and the issues many doctoral students face that have a wide-ranging impact on the shape of the professoriate.

Open Pedagogy and Experiential Learning in Higher Education

The first part of the bibliography features foundational articles on open education, examining its history and the relationship between open educational practices and issues of equity, especially equal access. Many of the articles introduce the concept of open pedagogy and explore the complementary shift in emphasis from providing open educational resources (OER) to using open educational *practices*, as well as existing tensions. The resources address transformation in learning paradigms from traditional models to more student-driven and collaborative approaches. The citations are organized into the following sections:

1. Open Pedagogy and Experiential Learning in Higher Education

2. Defining Open Pedagogy
3. Implementing Open Pedagogies: Challenges and Opportunities, Student Perceptions and Case Studies
4. Professional Development and Training in Open Pedagogies
5. Experiential Learning: Foundational Texts
6. Experiential Learning: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education Pedagogy

One of the main points to take away from this body of literature is that open education promotes innovative pedagogical practices that democratize the classroom and increase students' access to higher education. Some of the key findings and themes include but are not limited to:

Open Education as a Human Right: Open education is framed as an effort to democratize education by providing access, agency, ownership, participation, and experience to people around the world.

Open Educational Resources (OER) vs. Open Educational Practices (OEP): The open education movement encompasses a wide range of complementary tools and practices as well as persistent tensions between the adoption of OER tools and resources and, in teaching practices, embracing the powerful methodology of open pedagogy, where students actively participate in the construction of knowledge(s). One adoption (of a tool or practice) does not necessarily include the other. The sources included here argue for a shift in focus from tools to practices, arguing that open access is not the final destination, however this is just one strain of the wider discourse. The authors of the included studies generally promote student-driven and independent activity through open learning cultures that encourage peer-to-peer learning.

Openness as an Ecology (In and Outside the Classroom): There are different frameworks and terminology for open education, but the overarching themes include the shift from knowledge transfer (or the "banking model" that Paulo Freire protests against in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) to developing competencies and skills-based learning; and the importance of informal learning opportunities in a supportive, exploratory learning environment. Faculty communities that mutually support focus on learner agency and autonomy are critical for the success of open pedagogy initiatives.

Professional Development: Open educational practices can effectively contribute to students' career readiness by enhancing students' skills and technical knowledge. In addition to the resources provided in the bibliography, see [NACE career readiness competencies](#), which closely match the skills practiced in active learning classrooms.

Student Collaboration and Change in Higher Education: OER can be significant agents of change in teaching practice and can contribute to systemic change in higher education, having demonstrated an impact on student performance.

Experiential Learning: Experiential learning provides a structured approach to learning through concrete exposure and interaction, first-hand observation, reflection, and practical application. These experiences can happen through visits to other places and through project-based learning. Overall, experiential learning contributes to students' development, competencies, career readiness, memory and retention, and are equally important to undergraduate and doctoral students. Clear requirements and expectations, adequate financial support, and increased faculty-student interactions contribute to student success in experiential learning environments.

These sources also highlight challenges, such as the need for changes in institutional policies to foster openness effectively and consistently across classrooms and disciplines.

Issues in Doctoral Education

The second part of the bibliography focuses on doctoral education. The collection focuses especially on the experiences of underrepresented doctoral students, shedding light on both the challenges and opportunities they encounter. The citations are organized into the following sections:

1. Contemporary Doctoral Education: Overview
2. Rethinking Doctoral Education
3. Pedagogy in Doctoral Education
4. Professional Development and Socialization in Doctoral Education
5. Doctoral Student Experiences: Relationships, Agency, and Well-Being
6. Underrepresented and First Generation Doctoral Students
7. Measuring Doctoral Success

These studies offer recommendations and identify challenges that can inform educational practices and policy development in higher education. The overview is helpful to a reader interested in the general shape of discourse on doctoral education from the last twenty years. For example, one study (Golde & Dore, 2001) highlights the mismatch between the purpose of doctoral education and career aspirations. In a meta-study examining 995 papers written on issues of doctoral studies from 1971 to 2012, Jones (2013) identifies six central themes in the management and training of doctoral students: teaching, doctoral program design, writing and research, employment and career, student-supervisor relationship, and the doctoral student experience.

Some common themes and insights from this large body of articles include:

- Doctoral student socialization as crucial to introducing students to the hidden curriculum, including academic norms, values, and practices that they may or may not be aware of;
- The concept of agency, or students' active participation, influence, and control over their own doctoral journeys;
- The unique challenges of underrepresented and first-generation students that require specific support mechanisms, systemic changes, and an asset-based mindset;
- The many challenges doctoral students face, including financial stress, emotional exhaustion and creative burnout, and issues related to race and ethnicity; and
- The quality of the supervisory relationship between students and their advisers, which influences students' emotional well-being and motivation to complete their studies.

Based on this body of findings, to improve the doctoral student experience and increase retention, authors of these studies recommend institutions and faculty advisors consider some of the following:

Support Student Agency: Encourage students to take an active role in shaping their doctoral journey, fostering a sense of ownership and autonomy.

Diversify Support Mechanisms: Recognize the diverse backgrounds of doctoral students and provide a range of tailored support(s) and resources to address their specific needs.

Improve Supervision and Mentorship: Invest in the quality of faculty-student relationships, focusing on open communication, emotional support, and promoting a growth mindset.

Facilitate Discussions on Race and Privilege: Encourage informed dialogues on race, ethnicity, and privilege within the academic community to foster greater awareness, promote inclusivity, and address issues that underrepresented students face.

Identify and Address Challenges: Proactively identify common challenges such as financial stress and emotional exhaustion and provide communal and institutional mechanisms to address these issues.

Foster Inclusivity and Cultural Sensitivity: Create an academic environment that values diversity and recognizes the valuable contributions of all students.

While challenges and disparities can feel insurmountable, these articles also highlight the agency and resilience of doctoral students. For more detailed recommendations, please take a moment to review the article abstracts. The collection emphasizes the experiences of BIPOC and first-generation students. Some of the common themes that emerge across studies that directly take up the challenges faced by these doctoral students:

Otherness and Identity: Many of these articles emphasize how students from underrepresented groups often feel marginalized in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and a range of academic environments. This sense of otherness impacts their confidence and ease within the academy, their sense of belonging, their health and wellness, and their motivation.

Faculty Mentorship: Effective faculty mentorship is consistently highlighted as a key factor in the success and persistence of underrepresented students. Positive mentoring relationships can provide crucial support and guidance throughout doctoral education. Many articles call attention to the need for greater diversity among faculty.

Intersectionality: The intersection of multiple identities, such as being both Black and female or an international student, introduces unique and often compounded challenges. These intersections influence students' support needs, showing, again, the importance of diversifying sources of support.

Community and Peer Networks: A supportive community of peers is important for doctoral students, and especially for underrepresented students. Effective socialization can contribute to a sense of community and belonging.

Asset-Based Approaches: Some articles advocate for [asset-based approaches](#), which means recognizing difference and diversity as a *strength*. The unique perspectives that underrepresented students bring to academia are respected as positive assets.

Evolution of Doctoral Education: Doctoral education is changing, and the authors of these articles emphasize the need for inclusive practices, policies, and a recognition of the changing academic landscape to meet changing student needs and job markets.

These articles collectively underscore the significance of faculty mentorship, peer- and near-peer networks and communities, diversity, and innovative, equitable, asset-based policies and practices in cultivating an environment of belonging for underrepresented students in doctoral education. Addressing the challenges and fostering a more inclusive and equitable academic environment is essential for the success and retention of diverse groups of doctoral students, and could help to contribute to a more diverse professoriate.

In addition to the bibliography below, you can find even more resources in this Zotero group, compiled by Futures Initiative Graduate Fellow Coline Chevrin:

https://www.zotero.org/groups/4633798/humanities_alliance?token=lmf7i6qk0ticq5c81yb6ln9wgdeght4071zqy3g4