OTESSA JOURNAL

Exploring our Open Educational Practices in Support of Excellence in Graduate Education: A Collaborative Autoethnography

Pamela Walsh [iD]
Athabasca University

Cindy Ives [iD]
Athabasca University

Beth Perry [iD]
Athabasca University

Correspondence
Pamela Walsh
Athabasca University

Email: pamelaw [at] athabascau.ca

Abstract
This paper presents the findings of our exploration of our open educational practices (OEP) with graduate students. As reflective practitioners, we used a self-study methodology and collaborative autoethnographic methods to interrogate our open approaches to teaching and supervision. We draw on our developing competencies to support the wisdom, critical thinking, resilience, and adaptability of our graduate students. The article extends preliminary findings about graduate education and open practices in relation to and emerging from earlier work (Ives et al., 2022), which committed us to further exploration of our practices. Using our definition of OEP which expands on the work of several open scholars, we report new findings from our in-depth collaborative analysis of data collected over two years. We found a gap in the literature examining the use of OEP with graduate students. Findings include OEP and their alignment with our values and competencies, as well as OEP within our teaching, course design, and graduate supervisory practices. We offer insights into the outcomes of our practices for students and ourselves, and ways we can improve.

Keywords: open educational practices, OEP, graduate education, collaborative autoethnography, values, competencies, online teaching and learning, graduate supervision, learning design

Introduction

This paper reports an exploration of open educational practices (OEP) with graduate students. As reflective practitioners, we used collaborative autoethnographic methods (CAE) within a self-study methodology to interrogate our open approaches to teaching and supervision. In this research, we draw on developing competencies that support the wisdom, critical thinking, resilience, and adaptability of our graduate students. We report findings and insights from our in-depth collaborative analysis of data collected over two years. We used a critical approach to review our OEP, to consider the outcomes of using OEP, and to establish strategies for improving our practice.

Context

We are faculty members teaching and supervising online masters and doctoral students in Health Disciplines and Distance Education, at Athabasca University in Canada. We confirm that the notion of openness–an international and university priority–inspires our open educational practices. This research is related to teaching, course design, and graduate supervision. We use multiple asynchronous and synchronous tools to support students who are working professionals with experience, skills and expertise, and multiple obligations; many are leaders in their fields. In these respects, we see our work with graduate students as developing examples of OEP.

We are guided by our most recent conceptualization of OEP, which promotes and enables alternative forms of learning and assessment, while engaging and empowering our students and ourselves as co-creators of knowledge. The overarching concept for our study is openness. As academics we are informed and inspired by a historical commitment (Pulker & Papi, 2021) to open and distance learning and to student-focused values (Athabasca University, 2023). We are influenced by Holmberg (1994), and we align ourselves with Saba (2016) who describes distance education theorists as those who "see the world of learning and teaching from the point of view of the learner" (p. 22).

Literature Review

We organize this brief review of literature grounding our study into three categories of excellence that we believe can be enhanced using open educational practices: teaching and learning, supervision, and learning design. To begin, we provide a synopsis of the historical and emerging contexts of OEP.

Historical and Emerging Contexts of OEP

A common definition of open educational practices is still lacking, although discussion and debate around OEP and related concepts are growing. Initially OEP was considered in relation to open educational resources (OER). The Open Education Quality Initiative (Andrade et al., 2011) was important in shifting the focus beyond OER to OEP. Ehlers (2011) emphasized that OEP is process oriented, focusing on collaborative practice that provides freedom and choice for students, and that highlights the role social interaction plays in co-creation of knowledge. Hegarty (2015) also disputed a sole focus on OER, writing:

> There is a sense…that if it's not OER all the way, it's not good enough – a kind of moral imperative, which I find as limiting as a lack of openness to new ideas i.e., open processes are important, not just open products. (p. 1)

More recently, other scholars furthered the definition of OEP beyond OER (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018; Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018). Elias (2022) stressed that OEP is more than a product; rather OEP is about the *process* and *people* making OEP more pedagogically oriented.

Carey et al. (2015) highlighted the importance of an institutional strategy for teaching and learning that supports OEP, claiming that an institutional commitment to OEP (as part of developing excellence in teaching and learning) enhances pedagogy and processes. While Olivier et al. (2022) primarily focused on OEP as using OER, they also encouraged an institutional approach to the support and development of OEP, with one consequence being a positive impact locally and on education worldwide. They suggested that this institutional approach has the potential to enhance student agency and to further social justice.

Aligned with Bozkurt et al. (2019) we position ourselves in the tradition of OEP which includes specific pedagogical practices enabled by participatory technologies that facilitate collaboration with learners. Open educational practices prioritize knowledge co-creation, learner empowerment, and peer learning, and include a collection of attributes and principles of openness that emphasize collaboration (Conole, 2013). In the context of an open, distance university, these principles are foundational to our practice. Recognizing this was an essential first step in our exploration.

OEP in Teaching and Learning

We see connections between OEP and concepts of educator caring. Caring may be enacted by intentionally connecting with learners and creating a sense of community; mitigating hierarchical power structures and showing empathy and modeling openness to diversity of thoughts and ideas (Magnet et al., 2016). Relational pedagogy – defined as the practice of caring that involves instructors interacting with learners to foster and sustain relationships (Bell, 2022) – facilitates both student and faculty member cognitive and emotional engagement with learning, cultivating a common purpose, engaging in active listening, offering mutual support, and affirming feelings. The outcomes of relational pedagogy are a supportive interpersonal learning environment that facilitates "scholarly identity and…a healthy academic community" (Buirski, 2022, p.1387) and reflective practice leading to co-learning partnerships. We understand these perspectives to be aligned with OEP.

Earlier researchers on openness (e.g., Henard & Roseveare, 2012) concluded that open educational practitioners collaborate with students to make valuable contributions to scholarship in various ways including designing and modifying class syllabi, assignments, or assessments. Open practices help create mutually trusting teacher-student relationships that positively impact student outcomes including achievement of affective domain learning outcomes (Serbati et al., 2020). Some scholars suggest that OEP may be especially effective for distance education, where successful online instruction depends on teaching that supports active learning (Rieger et al., 2020). Skilled online educators adopt primarily student-centered and collaborative teaching approaches and address the unique needs of students learning at a distance (Bates, 2020). As distance educators, we subscribe to these beliefs.

OEP in Supervision

Supervisory practices are influenced by internal and external contexts and evolutionary changes related to teaching, research, and leadership (Bengtsen & McAlpine, 2022). In our context, an increasing focus on openness in our university and beyond influences our supervisory and other academic practices.

The literature suggests effective graduate supervisory practices include providing balanced feedback that motivates and inspires hope (Chugh et al., 2022); creating an authentic and inclusive context for learning (Deshpande, 2017); aligning support with learner identified needs (Bosch, 2018); and supporting socio-emotional wellbeing through active listening, recognizing accomplishments, and providing advice (Johnson, 2008). Hegarty (2015) concluded that open educational practices result in community relationships and a sense of connectedness. Olmos-López and Sunderland (2017) found that doctoral supervisor and supervisee relationships resulted in new knowledge that comes from working in teams, including conflict resolution and negotiation skills. They advocated for "principled flexibility and sensitivity to individual needs…. [and that] each co-supervisory situation needs to be negotiated" (p. 737) among participants as appropriate to the context, research questions, and level of disciplinary and other expertise. Johnson (2008) concluded that since many graduate students often have other commitments (i.e., jobs, families), supervision approaches that increase accessibility and flexibility are essential. Many graduate students choose an open distance program because of these attributes that allow them to succeed academically while balancing other responsibilities. These findings are consistent with our OEP.

OEP in Learning Design

The *OPAL Report* (Andrade et al., 2011) provides some background linking open educational practices to excellence in learning design. Specifically, this report concluded that OEP are strategies that include building flexibility into course design and choice into assessment activities, using authentic artifacts (e.g., learning portfolios), and creating activities that focus on learners and on their individual experiences and learning needs. In other words, the report promotes student-centered learning design that aligns with the principles of OEP.

Palmgren-Neuvonen et al. (2021) pointed to the need for dialogic spaces in course design to facilitate divergent and convergent collaborative learning. These spaces create opportunities for problem solving, innovation, collaboration, diverse thinking, and co-creation of new knowledge. Paskevicius and Irvine (2021) proposed essential OEP design approaches including activities that promote critical reflection. Riva et al. (2022) recommended design that challenges and changes power imbalances, founded on activities that promote appreciation and empathy for others' experiences.

Pollard and Kumar (2021) identified design strategies that help overcome the unique challenges of online graduate learning. They recommended clear expectations and communication, collaborative group activities, and design that supports relationship development. Likewise, Bosch (2018) focused on relationships and communication emphasizing the value of design that helps create alliances between supervisors and students. Assignments and learning activities that encourage critical and big picture thinking, that are personalized to student's learning goals, and that have societal focused outcomes can be achieved through design that includes OEP.

In this literature review we offer a synopsis of research related to supporting our goal of excellence in learning through a review of the historical and emerging contexts of open educational practices and how they align with contemporary findings in teaching, supervision,

and design. Few sources explicitly referred to OEP as principles for effective practices or guidelines for specific strategies that support graduate education; the link between use of OEP and effective, supportive graduate supervision has not been fully explored.

Research Design

Methodology

We describe our self-study methodology (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022) as the collective, intentional, systematic critique of our academic practice to improve our teaching, learning, and supervision with graduate students within an open and distance education context. We chose this methodology because it aligns with our research questions (see Figure 1) and privileges qualitative research methods and practitioner collaboration leading to the co-creation of research-based knowledge about OEP that can contribute to the field (Hauge, 2021). Through collecting and analyzing qualitative data, we searched for links between our espoused values, beliefs, and identities as open and online distance educators and our actual practices with students. As reflexive researchers, we engaged in self-reflection and self-analysis to think through and evaluate our own experiences and cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes.
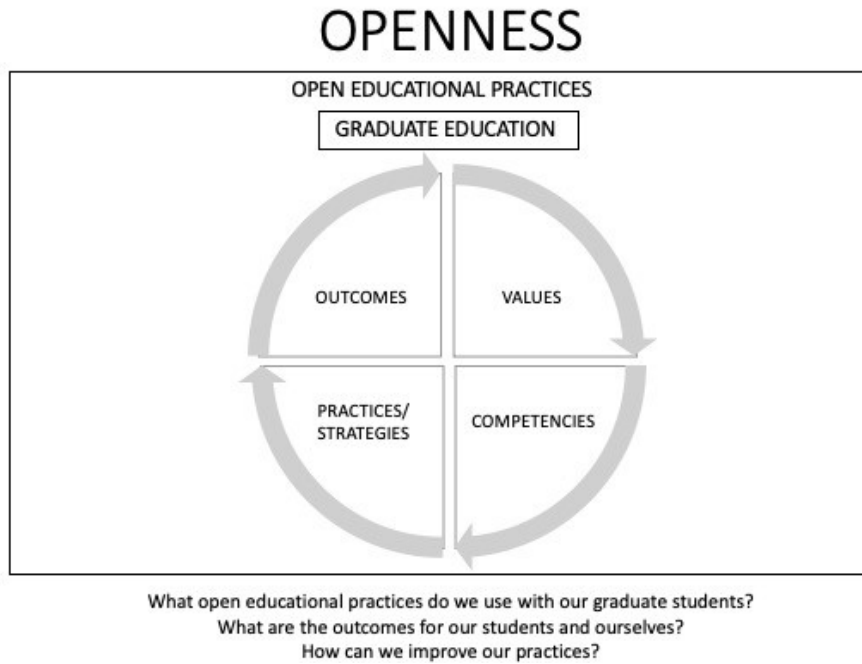
Method

Consistent with self-study, collaborative autoethnography (CAE) was our method (Chang, 2013) to interrogate individual and shared educational practices and strategies, using our experiences, archival materials, and other richly descriptive data as accessible and reliable primary sources for self-reflection. Not simply retelling our stories, CAE enlarged the sphere of our investigation from personal, reflexive narratives to an exploration of multiple experiences and perspectives aided by weekly dialogue. We carefully orchestrated our research design, process-oriented questions, and the intentional engagement of self (Holman Jones et al., 2013) while avoiding self-absorption; we worked together in the spirit of sharing, co-learning, and collaboration (Chang et al., 2016).

Guided by these resources, we compiled our data through interactive and iterative data collection, analysis, and interpretation to support both individual and collective critique of our practice. We addressed the common challenges of CAE related to data quality in part through trust in each other. As participant-researchers we willingly reviewed and critiqued one another's work, regardless of real or perceived power differentials. As colleagues with common values and shared interests, despite disciplinary differences, we addressed logistical issues through frequent asynchronous and synchronous communication. We made room for multiple perspectives through systematic organization, analysis of multiple data sets, and a collaborative writing process. We followed CAE guidelines related to the interconnectedness of multiple data phases and focused on roles and responsibilities, data management, and processes that facilitated the inductive analytic process (Chang, 2016).

Figure 1 depicts our conceptual framework for this study, illustrating some relationships among the essential concepts of our research and practice. These concepts emerged through our self-reflections and our reading of the literature.

Figure 1

A Conceptual Framework Outlining the Relationships Between Elements

OPENNESS

OPEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES

| GRADUATE EDUCATION |

OUTCOMES · VALUES · PRACTICES/STRATEGIES · COMPETENCIES

What open educational practices do we use with our graduate students?
What are the outcomes for our students and ourselves?
How can we improve our practices?

Our focus is graduate education within open educational practices. The image depicts the dependencies among key foundational concepts demonstrating that each is connected to the others. For example, starting in the top right quadrant, values underpin development of competencies; competencies are needed to enact practices; and teaching and learning strategies lead to outcomes, both for us as educators and for our leaners. There is progression and interdependency from values through to outcomes. The model represents the final version of our thinking through successive refinements over time. At the bottom of the figure we present the research questions that were the focus of our investigation**.**

Literature as Provocation

Using scholarly work as "provocation" (Denshire & Lee, 2013. p. 233), we individually reviewed a wide variety of peer-reviewed publications and reports on OEP, higher education teaching and learning practices, graduate supervision, and authentic assessment, focusing on reflection and analysis of this literature. In response to our collaboratively developed writing prompts, we annotated the literature (with simple tools such as highlighting, commenting and Word documents) using the conceptual framework (Figure 1) and documented our insights in relation to our own experiences. The conceptual framework guided us to recall, interrogate, and legitimize our educational activities through the lens of OEP and helped us consider ideas for enhancing our practice. Each of us reviewed the annotations completed by the others, discussing in our meetings how the literature related to our practice. We organized our insights from the annotations using tables (see Appendix B) aligning them with the conceptual

framework as an approach to extract the themes and categories described in Findings and in the Discussion and Conclusion.

Data Collection

We collected data from four sources as shown in Table 1, beginning with individual self-reflection (1) and writing related to our teaching and graduate supervision practices, and our memories of experiences and behaviours. We each completed the Teaching Perspectives Inventory (Pratt & Collins, 2020), reflecting on our individual priorities and approaches to supporting student learning and identifying shared values. Through dialogic conversations (2) we explored perceptions and reflections during weekly synchronous sessions in Microsoft Teams that we recorded and transcribed for later review. We tracked our data collection progress for a year, interrogated each other's experiences, and focused on deriving meaning from current and emerging practices and new insights. Our individual written annotations (3) used the literature and selected prompt questions to stimulate consideration of our beliefs and practices. These prompts included: *How does our perspective on open educational practices align with and differ from the author(s)?* and *What new ideas arise from this article related to OEP that could improve our practice?* We also searched archival materials and artifacts (4) including assignments created and feedback received from learners in our courses and from students we mentored or supervised, as well as from previous research reports and papers co-published with students. These data not only provided tangible evidence of our use and non-use of OEP and suggested areas for improvement, but they led to insights about the outcomes of OEP for learners and ourselves. Guiding our thinking throughout the process was our commitment to openness, which served as the context for critical self-reflection and dialogue.

Table 1

Data Collection Sources and Timeline

Data Sources	Timeline
1) Individual reflection on values and practices	January 2022-December 2022
2) Dialogic conversations on practices	January 2022-January 2023
3) Reflections on literature annotations	May 2022-February 2023
4) Collection of individual archival material and artifacts	January 2022-February 2023

Analysis and Interpretation

Beginning with data selection, examination, and evaluation, our analysis and interpretation – both individual and collective – emerged over time as we worked together to make meaning from the data. Analysis began before data collection was completed allowing us to determine when we needed more information. Guided by a reflexive thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022), we coded data in relation to the conceptual framework. Our interpretive meaning making was ongoing and iterative throughout data collection and analysis, dialogue, and collaborative writing. We believe that our diverse perspectives, and willingness to challenge each other, added rigour to the process (Chang, et al., 2016).

Attention to Ethical Issues

We adhered to the ethical standards that inform research involving people, protecting each participant-researcher's right to privacy and confidentiality; while our names are public, we do not identify individual contributions to the data. Athabasca University Research Ethics Board approved our study.

Findings

We critically examined our data and engaged in discourse and reflection focusing on our three research questions. We categorize our findings under these questions, supported with evidence from artifacts. Additional artifacts are included in Appendix B. Findings describe what OEP we used with graduate students, our assessment of the outcomes of using OEP for students and for us, and our insights regarding how we can improve our use of OEP.

Our Open Educational Practices

Alignment of Values and Competencies

Our practice is founded on a shared set of values, identified inductively over time, that underpin core competencies essential to OEP. Values we share include respect, trust, care, empathy, inclusiveness, and student-centeredness. Competencies we identified fall in the categories of interpersonal/relational, political, cognitive, and social/emotional. These competencies support our teaching and supervisory practices and learning design approaches leading to positive outcomes for learners and for us. For example, interpersonal competencies foster authentic relationships students report experiencing as affirming and supportive. These relational competencies are necessary for practices that provide cognitive and emotional support for students. We identified political competencies including negotiation skills and facilitation of helpful alliances between students and between students and ourselves (Cronin & MacLaren, 2018). Cognitive competencies such as facilitating reflection and critical thinking, creating student-focused learning design, and the effective use of dialogic spaces emerged from and enhanced our OEP (Palmgren-Neuvonen, 2021). Our social/emotional competencies (e.g., being responsive, trustworthy, patient) align with interpersonal competencies that facilitate OEP (Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018).

Teaching and Supervisory Practices as OEP

As graduate student educators, we see commonalities in our OEP teaching and supervisory practices. We emphasize learner-centeredness (Visser & Flynn, 2018), flexibility, choice, equity, and flattened relationship structures (Baran & AlZoubi, 2020; Noone et al., 2020). We engage in mentorship and strive to provide formative feedback. As distance educators, our practices are supported by frequent technology-enabled communication. In addition to using email and other technologies for asynchronous communication, we provide time for one-on-one synchronous conversations. In our courses we offer regular synchronous group sessions using Teams; recordings and transcriptions are shared with all students in the group so those who cannot attend are not unduly disadvantaged. These sessions provide flexibility while allowing for real-time discussion and the facilitation of community building. Students may lead these discussions in alignment with power-sharing and flattened hierarchy in learning environments.

Respecting adult students' knowledge and skills attained from their experiences and prior learning, we intentionally position ourselves as co-learners rather than as subject matter experts. In our courses we try to create opportunities for collaboration among learners–and between learners and ourselves–fostering student and instructor engagement, good relations, and inclusive learning opportunities (Gunawardena, 2020). Our collaborative practices with learners include co-presenting at conferences, research, co-construction of knowledge, and joint authorship. As one student said, "Now I am really excited about doing more research." Admitting that the number of students we collaborated with is small, we asked ourselves, how can we engage more students in these ways.

In keeping with foundational principles of distance education and open learning, including accessibility and flexibility, we employ course-based practices that support learner choice and authentic assessment. For example, we may offer students the opportunity to personalize or modify assignments to align with their contexts and interests. We verify that using authentic assessment supports student inclusion and enhances learning experiences (Ives et al., 2022). Referencing an assignment tailored to professional interests, one student stated:

> Enclosed is a personal case-study of my experiences in moving international students online. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. Thank you for having offered the opportunity to personalize this assignment and for the extension.

Specific to our supervisory practices, we attempt to engage with students early and throughout their learning journey. We aim to foster supportive and trusting relationships with frequent conversations about academic progress, shared interests, and personal challenges. We recognize that our relationships with learners thrive in interpersonal environments where each person values collaboration, collegiality, and reciprocity (Buirski, 2020). Therefore, we provide opportunities for dialogic conversation (Janssen et al., 2021) aimed at addressing challenges in progress, often leading to new perceptions and learning for students and ourselves. We understand that to practice mentorship and open education effectively, we should provide "big-picture" feedback and "emotional and moral encouragement" (Chugh et al., 2022 p. 687). Further we try to offer feedback that is actionable and explicit. Students have expressed gratitude for comprehensive formative feedback that allowed them to move forward with their thesis or dissertation. Reflecting the impact of OEP and authentic quality feedback, one student commented that they received "some of the best feedback in the program."

Our co-supervision experiences include two supervisors working as a team with a learner. We support a model that acknowledges the value of different intellectual perspectives especially when undertaking interdisciplinary research (Canadian Council of Academics, 2021). Each co-supervisor offers unique skills based on their expertise, providing students with a breadth and depth of knowledge to draw from. While there are potential issues for students and for supervisors in co-supervisory relationships, our experiences have been mostly positive. We recognize that each co-supervisory situation needs to be negotiated among the participants as appropriate to the context and level of disciplinary expertise of participants. This requires negotiation skills, patience and sometimes tolerance. Doctoral students that we co-supervise have taken the responsibility for managing us in terms of sequencing feedback and scheduling meetings (Olmos- López & Sunderland, 2017), perhaps a reflection of our OEP of deliberately reducing the power-differential in learner-teacher relationships.

Our supervisory practices (whether as a solo or co-supervisor) also include discussions and negotiations with students about choosing supervisory committee members and examiners. We reflected on experiences from other contexts that were not positive and agreed that individuals who are unduly and unfairly critical or disrespectful can traumatize even well-prepared students. Given our commitment to student care we consider personal characteristics such as openness, respect, and "intellectual generosity" (Kiley, 2009, p. 899) when choosing supervisory committee members and examiners with our students.

Learning Design as OEP

Purposeful learning design creates and structures learning activities that align with OEP. In our practice, we make design choices that encourage student involvement in all aspects of a course, including helping set learning outcomes, choosing OER and other resources, creating activities and assignments, and selecting assessment methods. In other words, we support design that invites learners to actively shape their learning journey.

One example from our practice is involving students in developing course syllabi. Through this strategy, students collaborate with one another, and with the instructor, to set the tone for the course and to focus on accessible and meaningful learning activities and outcomes from a student perspective. Offering students the opportunity to collaborate on crafting a course syllabus can also create some anxiety for learners, but in our experience, with a grounding of supportive relational pedagogy, having students share in the design of their own learning can build trust and leadership skills, and lead to authentic learning.

A principle of OEP is equity. Intentional design choices can enhance equity if those choices encourage learners to build new learning onto their own previous knowledge, abilities, and interests. Such design choices offer learning activities that open opportunities for students to share examples from their work or life experience and to voice their ideas. One example learning activity is the arts-based approach of photovoice. Students share an image depicting a concept or theory from the course, explaining why they selected that image. The ensuing discussion allows them to lead the conversation. There are no right or wrong interpretations. This activity also indirectly conveys some personal details; as a result, learners become acquainted, and connections are made, thus enhancing community.

Choice, another principle of OEP can be operationalized in all aspects of course design including options for choosing which learning activities to engage in, which learning resources to review, and how to demonstrate learning. Choice means that the needs, concerns, and motivations of students are at the forefront. Student-centered design increases student ownership of their learning, helps create authentic learning, and enhances self-confidence and learner agency (Gu, 2021).

Outcomes of OEP

Our analysis points to positive outcomes of OEP for students and for us. Our findings related to outcomes are primarily based on our analysis tables (Appendix A) and selected artifacts (Appendix B)

Outcomes for Students

We see indications that OEP facilitates achievement of affective and higher order cognitive domain learning outcomes. Students suggested that making choices and engaging with content, instructors, and peers fostered critical thinking and creativity. Students described building on what they already knew and reflected on how they applied theory and course-based learning to their workplace practices, while others described transformational learning experiences. One student commented: "I now have the confidence to adapt to most situations because I can draw upon the foundations of motivation and learning theories. While I had some pretty high goals starting out, I believe I met and surpassed those goals."

We found evidence that collaboration enhances learner engagement and satisfaction. For example, during oral presentations at the end of a graduate capstone course, students described how working together during online interactions (providing and receiving peer-feedback) helped them create their projects. We understand that learners and ourselves are contributors and "co-creators and disseminators of knowledge" in a community of learners (Zuba Prokopetz, 2022, p.8). We agree that community is enabled by instructors and students who are partners in learning and facilitators of an OEP guided learning process.

Student collaborators on research and co-authorship projects shared that they enjoyed the process and the new knowledge acquired. Throughout these experiential learning opportunities, we emphasized that as co-creators we also learn from them. We observed that learners are empowered by their experiences, gain confidence in their abilities, and can identify enhanced competencies.

Outcomes for Us

As educators striving to employ open educational practices, we learn from and with students. For example, supervising graduate learners using a collaborative approach facilitates mutual learning. Receiving positive feedback from learners provides affirmation of our competencies and builds our confidence as open educational practitioners. Constructive feedback encourages us to reflect on our practices and, if necessary, to adjust. We are now more intentional about our work with students: how we communicate and build interpersonal relations, and about decisions we make about course design including resources, learning activities, and learner feedback and assessments. As we journeyed together over two years, we shared experiences and ideas, acquired new knowledge and competencies, and integrated more OEP in our teaching and supervisory practices with students across two different disciplines. Our awareness of OEP commits us to improving our graduate students' experiences and success.

Strategies for Improving our Open Educational Practice

We believe that being more explicit about our openness and OEP with students is in their interests as well as ours. For example, talking with students about co-mentoring and collaborative relationships may lessen student anxieties and build confidence. Understanding the significant place of dialogue and social interaction in meaningful learning encourages us to make more room for these in our relationships with students. We expect that ongoing critical reflection on our teaching, learning, and supervisory approaches, and their relationship to OEP, will continue to inspire new practices over time. We know from our self-study that engagement with colleagues and scholars of open education and open learning will contribute to our continued professional and personal growth, as we are still learning about research and

practice in OEP. Our continued practice of OEP includes a commitment to developing students' research based-skills, improving the quality of our formative feedback, and seeking opportunities for peer engagement and learning in our online supervisory practices.

Discussion and Conclusion

We collaborated on this project because we shared a common experience of working with graduate learners in an online university. Already committed to life-long learning and enhancement of our competencies as educators, we reflected "both critically and positively on our supervision" and teaching practices leading to heightened awareness of the specific needs of our individual students (Jacobsen et al. 2021). What we discovered through engaging in self-study is that our values are aligned with those attributed to open practices (Werth & Williams, 2022) and that there are benefits to shared dialogue, academic discourse, and respectful debate that go beyond answering specific research questions. We learned from and with each other, as each of us has different strengths. This co-mentorship goes beyond sharing to modeling and mutual learning through active and ongoing reflection, together and individually.

We designed our self-study to answer our research questions directly. As we committed to meaningful engagement throughout the research process, participating in dialogic conversations, we discovered the power of interthinking (Mercer, 2001)–interpreting, reinterpreting, and co-constructing meaning. The process of CAE also provided an avenue for our own professional development as online educators. The product of our study also offers several relevant practice- and theory-oriented contributions to scholarship. As Boskurt et al. (2019) advised, we attended to our actual experiences in relation to OEP. Our study reports on approaches we have found effective. We suggest that these examples may provide educators with ideas they can integrate in their own practice. We observed that OEP are not well documented in the literature and definitions continue to evolve.

Our findings reveal that the enactment of OEP is complex. A course featuring OEP needs to be designed in a way to facilitate openness, choice (i.e., a variety of assessment strategies or learning activities), collaboration (i.e., opportunities for group work), and power-sharing (i.e., student-led activities). But design alone does not result in open educational practice. The personal approach (humanity) of the educator must be such that mutual trust, respect, vulnerability (openness to co-mentorship), and optimism fuel the learning experience. We believe that we have the potential to be effective at OEP because of the human elements we identified in our analysis and reflections. However, as we continue to employ OEP we are still learning.

Our memories of personal experiences, supported by artifacts, allowed us to illuminate and interrogate longstanding cultural beliefs and practices, revealing enhanced understanding and opportunities for personal and professional growth. Before and during our study, we observed that engaging with students and enacting values that underpin OEP enhanced learner engagement and created a positive online environment, leading to achievement of learning outcomes. As we worked together and with our students, we became more aware of our strategies, intentionally examining them "in action" (Schön, 1991). Later, individually, we reflected on our actions and behaviours. A necessary precursor to "reflection-in-action is

experimentation or change in the teaching and learning environment (Schön, 1983) that for us meant engaging learners in different ways.

Paskevicius and Irvine (2021) suggested that researchers acknowledge current and evolving educational theory "to explain open education phenomenon" (p. 13). Our work was grounded in theoretical perspectives that include social constructivism, distance education theories and models, and relational pedagogy. Our conceptualization of OEP, focused more on process than the procurement or creation of open resources, continues to evolve over time. Our current definition expands on the existing work of several open scholars and uses many of their words (Andrade et al., 2011; Bozkurt et al., 2019; Campbell, 2022; Cronin & McLaren, 2018; Elias, 2022; Paskevicius, 2018) but is contextualized to our study. Thus, our definition goes beyond notions of open educational resources to encompass the *explicit and intentional use* of collaborative teaching and learning designs and academic practices that *embrace and utilize* multiple open technologies and pedagogies, to facilitate collaborative*, inclusive,* and flexible learning (italics reflect our changes to the Campbell definition). In line with Elias' (2022) recommendations, we state unambiguously here that our context is personal and small-scale, not intended to change a broad range of educational practices beyond our own learning environment.

As open and distance educators we have attempted to focus on student-centered learning activities. The outcomes of our small, localized study suggest a connection between our use of OEP and student engagement and satisfaction, as inferred from our artifacts and reflections. We continue to evolve our understanding of the benefits, challenges, and outcomes of our open practices and their impact on students. We assert that more research is needed including student and faculty perspectives on the benefits and challenges of OEP. We are aware of few studies other than Brown et al. (2022) that explicitly explore the impacts of OEP in graduate supervision, despite calls for improving supervisory mentorship.

We believe our study is relevant for several reasons. Open educational practices in teaching, learning and supervisory environments positively impact learner outcomes such student engagement and development of critical thinking skills. Practical applications, as described in this study, have lagged behind open pedagogy's conceptual development (Werth & Willams, 2022). OEP grounds our approach to teaching and learning now, going beyond design and supporting practices. Finally, we see alignment between our conceptions of OEP with the literature on as students-as-partners (Cook-Sather, 2023) within the scholarship of teaching and learning.

While collaborative autoethnography requires researcher commitment and considerable time, it can lead to personal and professional growth. We have learned to think about our practices more critically because of our conversations and interrogation of our strategies and methods in greater depth. As illustrated, CAE methods within a self-study methodology may be appropriate to the examination of other questions related to educator development.

Authors' Contributions

The authors contributed equally to the research design, conduct of the study, analysis and interpretation of data, and the writing of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Open Researcher and Contributor Identifier (ORCID)

Pamela Walsh https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8152-5524 iD
Cindy Ives https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9430-8430 iD
Beth Perry https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3805-857X iD

Acknowledgements

Funding

Ethics Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this research through Athabasca University's Research Ethics Board.

Conflict of Interest

The authors do not declare any conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The research methodology (self-study using collaborative autoethnographic methods) cautions against revealing the identities and contexts of implicated third parties. Data are provided within the manuscript and its appendices. Additional data requiring de-identification are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

References

Andrade, A., Ehlers, U. D., Caine, A., Carneiro, R., Conole, G., Kairamo, A.-K., Koskinen, T., Kretschmer, . . . Holmberg, C. (2011). Beyond OER: Shifting focus to open educational practices (OPAL Report 2011). Open Educational Quality Initiative. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:464-20110208-115314-6

Athabasca University (2023, November 7). *Governance: Our I-CARE values*. https://www.athabascau.ca/about-au/governing.html#icarevalues

Baran, E., & AlZoubi, D. (2020). Affordances, challenges, and impact of open pedagogy: Examining students' voices. *Distance Education, 41*(2), 230-244. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757409

Bates, A. W. (2020, March 9)). *Advice to those about to teach online because of the corona-virus*. Online Learning and Distant Education Resources. https://www.tonybates.ca/2020/03/09/advice-to-those-about-to-teach-online-because-of-the-corona-virus/

Bell, K. (2022). Increasing undergraduate student satisfaction in higher education: The importance of relational pedagogy. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 46*(4), 490-503. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1985980

Bengtsen, S.S., & McAlpine, L. (2022). A novel perspective on doctoral supervision: Interaction of time, academic work, institutional policies and lifecourse. *Learning and Teaching, 15*(1), 21-45. https://doi.org/10.3167/latiss.2022.150103

Bosch, G. (2018). Train PhD students to be thinkers not just specialists. *Nature* (54), 277. https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-018-01853-1

Bozkurt, A., Koseoglu, S., & Singh, L. (2019). An analysis of peer reviewed publications on openness in education in half a century: Trends and patterns in the open hemisphere. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 35*(4), 78-97. https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.4252

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Thematic analysis: A practical guide (1st ed.) [e-book]. Sage.

Brown, B., Jacobsen, M., Roberts, V., Hurrell, C., Neutzling, N., & Travers-Hayward, M. (2022). Open Educational Practices (OEP) create conditions for learning in a graduate school. In M. Jacobsen, & C. Smith (Eds.), *Online learning and teaching from kindergarten to graduate school* (pp. 457-483). Canadian Association for Teacher Education. http://dx.doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/40509

Buirski, N. (2022). Ways of being: A model for supportive doctoral supervisory relationships and supervision. *Higher Education Research & Development, 41*(5), 1387-1401. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1910209

Campbell, L. (2022). *What is open educational practice?* https://open.ed.ac.uk/what-is-open-education-practice/

Carey, T., Davis, A., Ferreras, S., & Porter, D. (2015). Using open educational practices to support institutional strategic excellence in teaching, learning & scholarship. *Open Praxis, 7*(2), 161-171. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1075354

Chang, H., Ngunjiri, F., & Hernandez, K.C. (2016). *Collaborative autoethnography*. Routledge.

Chang, H. (2013). Individual and collaborative autoethnography as method: A social scientist's perspective. In S. Holman Jones, T.E. Adams, & C. Ellis (Eds.), *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Routledge.

Chugh, R., Macht, S., & Harreveld, B. (2022). Supervisory feedback to postgraduate research students: A literature review. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 47*(5), 683-697. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1955241

Conole, G. (2018). Frameworks for learning design. In H. Beetham & R. Sharpe (Eds.), *Rethinking pedagogy for a digital age*, (3rd ed.) Routledge.

Cook-Sather, A. (2023). Three models for embracing student expertise in the development of pedagogical partnership programs. *International Journal for Students as Partners, 7*(2), 181–191. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i2.5416

Cronin, C., & MacLaren, I. (2018). Conceptualising OEP: A review of theoretical and empirical literature in Open Educational Practices. *Open Praxis, 10*(2), 127–143. https://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.10.2.825

Denshire, S., & Lee, A. (2013). Conceptualizing autoethnography as assemblage: Accounts of occupational therapy practice. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 12*, 221-236. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940691301200110

Deshpande, A. (2017). Faculty best practices to support students in the "virtual doctoral land." *Higher Education for the Future, 4*(1), 12-30. https://doi.org/10.1177/2347631116681211

Ehlers, U. D. (2011). Extending the territory: From open educational resources to open educational practices. *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning, 15*(2), 1–10. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1079969.pdf

Elias, T. (2022). Considering the implications and mechanisms of scale within open education [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Calgary http://hdl.handle.net/1880/115046

Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 733-768). Sage.

Gu, X. (2021). Response to "A design framework for enhancing engagement in student-centered learning: own it, learn it, and share it": a design perspective. *Educational Technology Research & Development, 69*(1), 101–104. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-020-09896-w

Gunawardena,C. N. (2020). Culturally inclusive online learning for capacity development projects in international contexts. *Journal of Learning for Development, 7*(1), 5-30. https://doi.org/10.56059/jl4d.v7i1.403

Hauge, K. (2021). Self-study research: Challenges and opportunities. In M.J. Hernández-Serrano (Ed.). *Teacher education in the 21st century – Emerging skills for a changing world*. IntechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.96252

Hegarty, B. (2015). Attributes of open pedagogy: A model for using open educational resources, Educational Technology, 55(4), 3-13. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44430383

Henard, F., & Roseveare, D. (2012). *Fostering quality teaching in higher education: Policies and practices*. OECD. https://www.oecd.org/education/imhe/QT%20policies%20and%20practices.pdf

Holman Jones S., Adams, T., Ellis, C. (2013). Introduction: Coming to know autoethnography as more than method. In *Handbook of Autoethnography*. Routledge.

Holmberg, B. (1994). *Theory and practice of distance education* (2nd ed.). Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Theory-and-Practice-of-Distance-Education-2nd-Edition/Holmberg/p/book/9780415112925

Ives, C., Perry, B., Walsh, P., & Kier, C. (2022, December 2). *Integrity matters: Using open educational practices to address online integrity*. UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning. https://etico.iiep.unesco.org/en/integrity-matters-using-open-educational-practices-address-online-integrity

Ives, C. Perry, B., Walsh, P. (2022). Incorporating open educational practices in graduate education: A collaborative autoethnographic study. *Open/Technology in Education, Society, and Scholarship Association Conference Research Paper, 2*(1) 1-7. https://doi.org/10.18357/otessac.2022.2.1.101

Jacobsen, M., Alharbi, H., Taylor, L., Bairstow, L., & Roberts, V. (2021). The design and evaluation of online faculty development for effective graduate supervision. *The Open/Technology in Education, Society, and Scholarship Association Journal, 1*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.18357/otessaj.2021.1.1.3

Janssen, S., van Vuuren, M., & de Jong, M.D.T. (2021). Sensemaking in supervisor-doctoral student relationships: Revealing schemas on the fulfillment of basic psychological needs. *Studies in Higher Education, 46*(12), 2738-2750. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2020.1804850

Johnson, W. B. (2008). Are advocacy, mutuality, and evaluation incompatible mentoring functions? *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 16*, 31- 44. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611260701800942

Kiley, M. (2009). 'You don't want a smart Alec': selecting examiners to assess doctoral dissertations. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*(8), 889-903. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802713112

Koseoglu, S., & Bozkurt, A. (2018). An exploratory literature review on open educational practices. *Distance Education, 39*(4), 441-461 https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2018.1520042

Magnet, S., Mason, C., & Trevenen, K. (2014). Feminism, pedagogy, and the politics of kindness. *Feminist Teacher, 25*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.5406/femteacher.25.1.0001

Mercer, N. (2001). Why I study… interthinking. *The Psychologist, 14*(12), 648-649.

Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education* (2nd ed.). University of California Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt7zw1nb

Noone, J., Najjar R., & Quintana, A.D., Koithan, M., & Vaughn, S. (2020). Nursing workforce diversity: Promising educational practices. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 36*(5), 386–394. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2020.02.011

Olivier, J., Toit-Brits, C., Bunt, B.J., & Dhakulkar, A. (Eds.) (2022). *Contextualized open educational practices: Toward student agency and self-directed learning*. AOSIS Scholarly Books. https://books.aosis.co.za/index.php/ob/catalog/book/345

Olmos-López, P., & Sunderland, J. (2017). Doctoral supervisors' and supervisees' responses to co-supervision. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 41*(6), 727-740. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2016.1177166

Palmgren-Neuvonen, L., Littleton, K., & Hirvonen, N. (2021). Dialogic spaces in divergent and convergent collaborative learning tasks. *Information and Learning Sciences, 122*(5-6), 409-431. https://doi.org/10.1108/ILS-02-2020-0043

Paskevicius, M. (2018). *Exploring educators experiences implementing open educational practices* [Doctoral Dissertation, University of Victoria]. UVicSpace. https://doi.org/10.5683/SP2/CA77BB

Paskevicius, M., & Irvine, V. (2021). Theoretical and methodological approaches for investigating open educational practices. *Open/Technology in Education, Society, and Scholarship Association Journal, 1*(2), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.18357/otessaj.2021.1.2.11

Pollard, R., & Kumar, S. (2021). Mentoring graduate students online: Strategies and challenges. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 22*(2), 267–284. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v22i2.5093

Pithouse-Morgan, K. (2022). Self-study in teaching and teacher education: Characteristics and contributions. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 119*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103880

Pratt, D.D., & Collins, J.B. (2020). *Teaching Perspectives Inventory*. http://www.teachingperspectives.com/tpi/

Prokopetz Zuba, R. (2022). ePortfolio Pedagogy: Stimulating a shift in mindset. The Open/Technology in Education, *Society, and Scholarship Association Journal, 2*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.18357/otessaj.2022.2.1.27

Pulker, H., & Papi, C. (2021). The history of an English-speaking university: Athabasca University: An interview with Nancy K. Parker. *Médiations & médiatisations – Revue internationale sur le numérique en éducation et communication, 6*. https://revue-mediations.teluq.ca/index.php/Distances/article/view/194/155

Rieger, K. L., Chernomas, W. M., McMillan, D. E., & Morin, F. L. (2020). Navigating creativity within arts-based pedagogy: Implications of a constructivist grounded theory study. *Nurse Education Today, 91*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104465

Riva, E., Gracia, L., & Limb, R. (2022). Using co-creation to facilitate PhD supervisory relationships. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 46*(7), 913-930. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.2021158

Saba, F. (2016). Theories of distance education: Why they matter. In Issues in Distance Education. *New Directions for Higher Education, 2016*(173). https://doi.org/10.1002/he.20176

Schon, D. (1984). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.

Schon, D. (1991). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think and act*. Avebury.

Serbati, A., Aquario, D., Da Re, L., Paccagnella, O., & Felisatti, E. (2020). Exploring good teaching practices and needs for improvement: Implications for staff development. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies (ECPS Journal), 21*, 43-64. https://doi.org/10.7358/ecps-2020-021-serb

Visser, R., &. Flynn, A.B. (2018). What are students' learning and experiences in an online learning tool designed for cognitive and metacognitive skill development? *Collected Essays on Learning and Teaching, 11*. https://doi.org/10.22329/celt.v11i0.5039

Werth, E., & Williams, K. (2022). The why of open pedagogy: A value-first conceptualization for enhancing instructor praxis. *Smart Learning Environments, 9*(1), 10. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-022-00191-0

Zuba, Prokepetz, R. (2022). ePortfolio pedagogy: Stimulating a shift in mindset. The *Open/Technology in Education, Society, and Scholarship Association Journal, 2*(1), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.18357/otessaj.2022.2.1.27

Appendix A

Instructor Artifacts (Data file)

Artifacts	Description	Examples
Authentic and collaborative learning opportunities	Invitations and opportunities to participate in collaborative research, conference presentations, and publications	Invited four international students: Three MEd graduates and one doctoral student to collaborate on a research paper and two conferences presentations with two instructors, order of authorship favoured the students Example 1: https://oasis.col.org/items/132ced6a-ae67-41cf-84c4-306dc2f5d9e9 Example 2 -The Journal of International… acknowledged receipt of our full paper in October 2023 (alphabetical order of authorship)
Invitations to former students to participate in authentic learning activity	Learner- centered, authentic, and collaborative learning opportunities, international contexts	**Instructor:** I hope you are well! I am teaching a graduate course in the winter semester and would love it if you would be able to give about an hour of your time to the class... Questions will include the barriers that you faced and recommendations you can offer based on your overall experiences as international students at the university. (September 2020) **Response:** Thank you for your invitation, we are really honored to share our experiences as international students. (September 2020)
Supervisory member feedback on dissertation by publication	Formative feedback: student manuscript	I have reviewed your draft manuscript and agree that your approach offers a new perspective. Your paper is well structured and presented…targeted to readers who are familiar with the literature and includes a few terms that might need elaboration along with other suggestions for your consideration (see my notes). Consider offering a few more details that may help readers understand your analytic processes. This might make it easier for them to interpret your findings from contexts with which they are familiar. I hope these thoughts are helpful. Let me know…, and congratulations on an excellent first draft! (April 2022)
Student thanks for assignment flexibility	A personal case-study of learner experiences: moving international students online.	I hope you enjoyed reading my personal case study as much as I enjoyed writing it. Thank you for the opportunity to personalize this assignment and for the extension. (Winter 2021)

| Student card received by mail sent after end of program | Instructor values: kindness, caring, empathizing, supporting | Student 1: Thank you again for being so understanding and amazing. It was greatly appreciated during a particularly dark time for me. I appreciate that you shared a similar experience with me. I hope to meet you in person one day and to thank you for all that you did. (Fall 2019)

Student 2: I attended my [virtual] convocation yesterday. Thank you so much for your support, help, and understanding, I will always remember your kindness. (Summer/Fall 2021) |
| Thesis student: card of thanks | Note of appreciation: supervisor-student relationship. | I always felt like we were a team (Winter 2022) |

Appendix B

Analysis data table

Values	Competencies	Practice and Strategies	Outcomes for Students and Faculty	Insights
Authenticity, inclusivity, respect	Cognitive and social: course (and program) design Ability to tell the difference between authentic learning vs. authentic context for learning	Providing an authentic context for learning Providing choice and optional activities such as working in groups or individually Use of rubrics	Knowledge transfer of study to practice/ and of practice to study Ability to work effectively in groups, as per the profession's requirement Rubrics: guide student learning and provide consistency in assessing learning	Curriculum change that is designed to focus on the application of scientific knowledge is learner- and learning-focused, challenging, and I think, worth the effort While we are working mostly at individual, not program levels, we hope to influence others with our findings, but our CAE and OEP are not attempting to draw in others now.

Note. Bosch, G. (2018). Train PhD students to be thinkers not just specialists. *Nature* (54), 277. http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/d41586-018-01853-1

Values	Competencies	Practice and Strategies	Outcomes for Students and Faculty	Insights
Student centeredness	Cognitive and social domains including, for example, the design of courses and related activities that focus on learners' experiences and needs	Using OEP as a practice and strategy distinct from OER. This includes building flexibility into course design and choice into assessment activities, Providing authentic learning activities	Authentic learning Student satisfaction	Interdependence and potential for innovation as the focus from OER is extended to OEP New definition of OEP provided was a move the right direction, however, we suggest that OEP does not require OER Our definition of (Open Educational Practices builds on new definitions provided in the report. We hope our efforts will influence others as we continue to publish our work on OEP, we can use our thinking here to offer conclusions in other publications. We need to think about other ways to disseminate our findings e.g., blog

Note. Open Education Quality Initiative (OPAL). (2011). *Beyond OER: Shifting focus to open educational practices*. OPAL Report 2011. https://www.oerknowledgecloud.org/record36

Values	Competencies	Practice and Strategies	Outcomes for Students and Faculty	Insights
Openness, diversity, student centredness	Cognitive including meta cognitive (as required for critical refection)	Refection and critical reflection	Faculty: new insights into our practices and ideas for improvement	We shall explicitly share that our work is grounded in theoretical perspectives that include social constructivism, distance education, ethic /pedagogy of care, relational pedagogy, and experiential learning. Consider situating critical reflection in a self-study framework. We have each identified examples of our attention to openness and diversity, enacting beliefs, and values in our teaching and (co)supervision).

Note. Paskevicius, M., & Irvine, V. (2021). Theoretical and methodological approaches for investigating open educational practices. *Open/Technology in Education, Society, and Scholarship Association Journal, 1*(2), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.18357/otessaj.2021.1.2.11

Values	Competencies	Practice and Strategies	Outcomes for Students and Faculty	Insights
Compassion, approachability, empathy	Social – communication, interpersonal skills Cognitive – skills with coaching, motivation Emotional – support and counselling	Interactions – backbone of successful doctoral experience Coaching - questions (about the person and their goals) Fostering increased student responsibility Supervision as an intentionally purposeful process Encouraging student leadership	Positive learning environment	Relationship/ connection matters Supervision is skill set how do we best learn to supervise? Educational environment matters - gentle, safe, invitational (to create this you need values, competencies, and intentional practices)

Note. Wilson, J., & James, W. (2022). Ph.D. partnership: Effective doctoral supervision using a coaching stance, *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 46*(3), 341-353. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1945555