Staff conceptions of innovative teaching: a phenomenographic study

Josephine Nana Yakoba Van-Ess, BMS, MSc, CMBE, SFHEA

November 2025

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Department of Educational Research,

Lancaster University

UK

Author's declaration: This thesis is entirely my work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

The word count conforms to the permitted maximum.

Signed: Josephine N. Y. Van-Ess

Abstract

Universities increasingly rely on innovative teaching as part of their strategic objectives. Research on innovative teaching has provided insights into what innovative teaching entails, factors affecting staff engagement, and the purpose of innovative teaching within higher education. A key shortcoming of the literature is that it overemphasises singular meanings of what innovative teaching is. This overreliance reinforces the perception of a shared understanding of what innovative teaching entails, creating challenges for staff engagement with innovative teaching.

My thesis employs phenomenography to investigate the qualitatively different ways staff experience innovative teaching within a higher education context. The study draws on data from interviews with 16 participants from a research-intensive university, examining their experiences with innovative teaching. The study's findings are presented in an outcome space, which represents variation in understanding of innovative teaching.

This variation comprises four qualitatively different and hierarchically inclusive ways of experiencing innovative teaching referred to as the categories of description (referential aspect) and four dimensions of variation, which illustrate how the dimensions of variation are related along common themes (structural aspect).

The findings reveal variation in how participants experience innovative teaching, ranging from a conception that focuses on teaching methods to more inclusive conceptions that emphasise student development. For instance, in Category 1, innovative teaching is characterised by newness or difference, whereas in Category 4, innovative teaching focuses on student development. In addition, the categories of description vary across four dimensions of variation, including the role of the instructor. In Category 1, this role is primarily perceived as meeting institutional expectations, whereas in Category 4, the instructor's role is seen as encouraging lifelong learning.

My thesis makes a range of contributions to the literature on innovative teaching. For example, my analysis reveals the diverse interpretations of innovative

teaching held by participants, thereby highlighting the need for a shift away from singular understandings of this concept. Another contribution to the literature is to highlight how staff's expressed emotions influence their engagement with innovative teaching. This contribution demonstrates how the emotional resonances of staff experiences with innovative teaching influence their engagement with innovative teaching and student-staff relationships.

Acknowledgements

This PhD represents both an academic and profound personal journey, and I am deeply grateful for the support I received throughout.

First and foremost, thank you to my supervisor, Dr Brett Bligh, whose feedback, critique and unwavering guidance have been fundamental throughout my PhD journey. It has been a genuine pleasure to work alongside him; his immense knowledge, generosity with his time, patience and motivation have been a source of inspiration, and I will forever be appreciative of this.

I extend my sincere thanks to my examiners, Professor Paul Ashwin & Dr Mike Mimirinis, for agreeing to examine my thesis and for the opportunity to discuss my findings.

My gratitude goes to past and present colleagues at the University of Sussex Business School, especially Prof. Steve McGuire, Prof. Sue Newell, Prof. Susan Smith, Miss Alison Bailey, Miss Heather Kent, Dr Oluwaseun Osituyo and Mr Philip Jarman. Thank you for being supportive in various ways over the years.

I am grateful to all 16 participants of this study. Thank you for your time and for sharing your experiences and insights. Your contributions are fundamental to the findings of this study.

On a personal note, this journey would not have been possible without the love and support of my family and friends.

To my parents, Kwamina & Essie Van-Ess, thank you for being such wonderful parents. Your dedication, support and guidance over the years have shaped my academic journey. To my sisters Regina, Benedicta & Margaret, you are and will always be a blessing. To my nieces and nephews, the baton has been handed over to you.

To my amazing husband, Dr Siegfried Yeboah, thank you for your belief, critical comments, patience and encouragement. Thanks for holding the fort; you are a wonderful soul.

To all my friends, especially Adama Musa, Viva & Kofi Adams, Caius & Rose Kubah-Taylor, Victoria Awuni, Charles & Victoria Fiadzeawu, Ruth Fearon, Arlene Alexander-Price, Desiree Forde-Gaskin, Lily Quartey, Deborah Pinnock and Maeva Lawrence. Thank you for motivating me in various ways.

To my mother-in-law, Mrs Florence Casely-Hayford, thank you for the words of encouragement and your belief in me.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the cherished memories of family and friends who passed away during this PhD journey. Julian Botchway, Dzifa King-Arthur and my beloved Aunties Rachel Lokko & Bertha Quartey, I will always keep a candle burning for you.

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

List of abbreviations

CATE	Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence
CNL	Creating New Learning
DIUS	Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills
DTL	Director of Teaching and Learning
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HEREE	Higher Education, Research, Evaluation & Enhancement
HE	Higher Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development
OfS	Office for Students
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation

1 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching. While existing research on innovative teaching contributes to our understanding of its impact on student learning, there is an overreliance on singular understandings of what constitutes innovative teaching. This overreliance arises because the literature fails to account for the contextual nature of what constitutes innovative teaching. Additionally, some experts and scholars argue that there is a universal understanding of what constitutes innovative teaching. In contrast, others believe that practitioners already have a clear idea of what innovative teaching entails. These views suggest that innovative teaching is understood and interpreted uniformly by all individuals, thereby overlooking the existence of varied meanings and their potential influence on staff engagement with innovative teaching.

There have been calls for the use of innovative teaching and learning methods in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for the past three decades, with an increasing number of policy documents and research studies demonstrating its importance and impact on student learning (Lee, 2011; Naz & Murad, 2017; Atherton et al, 2024; EU Commission, 2020). One set of reasons put forward for driving innovative teaching is, for example, creating opportunities for students to apply the knowledge they have acquired and equipping them with transferable skills valuable for their future careers (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2005; Krišťák et al., 2014). Another set of reasons is, for example, addressing the perceived mismatch between the skills acquired by graduates from HEIs and the skills needed in industry, such as creativity, communication, analytical/critical thinking, and problem-solving (Teo & Wong, 2000; Tan, 2000). A third set of reasons for this drive is the belief that innovative teaching can be used to encourage students to learn through real-life problems (EEA, 2020), that innovative teaching practices can provide opportunities for personalised learning experiences and support a shift from teacher-centred to student-centred learning (Gunn, 2006; Njie–Carr et al., 2016). The use of innovative teaching has become key, especially as the relevance of traditional teaching (teacher–centred approaches, such as lectures) has become a constant debate (Struyven et al., 2010; Jones & McLean, 2018), with innovative

teaching seen as a necessity rather than a choice. Innovative teaching is therefore becoming increasingly popular in HEIs as a way to address the inadequacies of traditional teaching (Kember & Kwan, 2000; Wrenn & Wrenn, 2009; Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2014) as there is the belief that conventional teaching approaches fail to encourage students to question content to what or link it to what they already know (Teo & Wong, 2000).

To this end, there is a burgeoning literature on utilising innovative teaching. Various studies have explored ways innovative teaching can be utilised to equip students with these skills (Stern & Huber, 1997; Randi & Corno, 2000; Coates, 2006; Bryson & Hand, 2007). The strengths of these studies are that they have contributed to our understanding of innovative teaching by:

- Providing characteristics of innovative teaching (Hannan et al., 1999; Jaskyte et al., 2009; O'Banion et al., 2011; Walder, 2014; Chou et al., 2018; Kalyani & Rajasekaran, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2020; Stasewitsch et al., 2022).

- Identifying factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching (Feixas et al., 2018; Greener, 2018; Fraser, 2019; Blumenschein & Hannisdal, 2024) and

- Clarifying the purpose of innovative teaching (Schneckenberg, 2009; Towndrow et al., 2010; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021).

However, a significant shortcoming of these studies is that most (Jaskyte et al., 2009; O'Banion et al., 2011; Walder, 2014) perceive innovative teaching as being universal and singular in meaning or derive meanings from non-empirical studies (Hannan et al., 1999; Khurshid & Ansari, 2012; Kalyani & Rajasekaran, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2020; Stasewitsch et al., 2022). For example, in studies such as Khurshid & Ansari (2012), the authors do not provide meanings of innovative teaching but rather provide a list of methods they deem innovative. This approach suggests that the meaning of what constitutes innovative teaching is the same across all contexts. Similarly, studies such as Gilbert et al. (2020) focus on a singular meaning of innovative teaching.

While various studies identify ways in which innovative teaching might support student learning and skills acquisition (Schneckenberg, 2009; Towndrow et al., 2010; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021), they often fail to address the broader issue of its varied meanings. Smith (2011) highlights the importance of understanding what innovative teaching means. She calls for research that explores the understandings of innovative teaching, arguing that it is impossible to discuss innovation meaningfully without examining the term's meanings within the context of teaching, especially since definitions of what constitutes innovation are usually "diffuse and slippery" (Smith, 2011:435). Additionally, Johannessen et al. (2001) view the term "innovation" as contested due to the lack of a widely accepted definition. They suggest an overreliance on "newness" in defining innovation in the context of teaching. This overreliance on the element of "newness" is deemed problematic by Hannan (2005), who argues that practice hailed as new might actually be an established practice elsewhere. Although the literature discusses the challenges associated with the meanings of innovative teaching (Johannessen et al., 2001; Hannan, 2005; and Smith, 2011), these arguments do not extend to address ways of experiencing innovative teaching by practitioners who undertake the actual teaching. Exploring staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching is crucial because, as practitioners, they play a key role in the success or failure of innovative teaching (Serdyukov, 2017; Manalu et al., 2023).

Hence, given this shortfall coupled with the challenges and expectations facing universities, it seems imperative to explore in depth the meanings practitioners ascribe to innovative teaching. This exploration is a first step toward delivering teaching that supports student learning and skill acquisition. This thesis, therefore, aims to explore the variation in ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff within the context of a university. The various meanings ascribed to innovative teaching in the literature are explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

This project is based on the conviction that exploring staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching is necessary, given their role (Serdyukov, 2017; Manalu et al., 2023). This study, however, does not aim to provide a universal definition of

innovative teaching but instead seeks to identify the commonalities and variations in staff experiences; therefore, phenomenography is well-suited to this study. The findings of this project are intended to contribute to the literature on innovative teaching by examining staff experiences in this area.

Furthermore, although extensive research has been carried out on university staff conceptions of teaching (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001; Eley, 2006), which have helped identify a variety of ways university staff conceptualise teaching.

Kember (1997), however, argues that despite the variation in descriptions of what teaching means, there is a high level of commonality in these descriptions, especially as these descriptions can be placed under two main categories, "teacher-centred/content-oriented and student-centred/learning-oriented". Similarly, Samuelowicz & Bain (2001) also found that irrespective of the method used in studies that examine staff conceptions of teaching, the findings of these studies can be structured into two main categories, that is, "teaching–centred" and "learning-centred" that operate on a continuum. They argue that the descriptions that fall under the "teaching-centred" category tend to focus on conveying knowledge, whereas descriptions that fall under the "learning-centred" category tend to focus on enabling learning. Studies such as these have contributed to and shaped the narrative in the field of higher education on university staff conceptions of teaching (Eley, 2006; Entwistle et al, 2000) by highlighting the varied meanings ascribed to teaching.

While these studies on staff conceptions of teaching have paved the way for studies into staff understanding of other aspects of teaching, few studies have explored staff experiences of innovative teaching, and even fewer have examined differences in meaning (Denholm, 2023). Thus, the focus of this project is to explore staff members' experiences of innovative teaching, identifying disparate ways of experiencing it and any possible critical variations.

This study, therefore, employs phenomenography, a framework that provides opportunities to explore variations in how a given phenomenon, in this case, innovative teaching, is experienced by staff. Ontologically, this research adopts an interpretivist perspective, viewing reality as subjective, multifaceted, and socially constructed. Epistemologically, I align with Ashwin's assertion that the world is

not known directly but solely through our personal constructs and experiences (Ashwin, 2009). These "experiences" represent the essential and indivisible relationship between participants of this study and innovative teaching. This view of knowledge supports the use of phenomenography for this study. This approach will help describe and map the qualitatively distinct ways participants understand innovative teaching. In line with phenomenography, the findings of this study are presented as an outcome space made of a finite number of categories of description (Marton & Booth, 1997; Mimirinis, 2018; Mimirinis et al, 2024), which captures the collective meanings of innovative teaching as the focus of the study is on the variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching across the whole participant sample rather than the characteristics of individual responses (Tight, 2015; Mimirinis,2018).

The research site for this project is Southeast University (a pseudonym). This university provides an invaluable context for this study, as it describes itself as a university that leads and innovates (Southeast University, 2025). This implies that innovation is at the heart of the university's teaching, learning, and research. The participants in this study are university staff in various roles. These participants have been selected because their roles are crucial in shaping the narrative of innovative teaching at the university and the broader higher education sector. In this project, I will draw on in-depth interviews with participants to gain insight into their experiences of innovative teaching. My analysis of the data will use Åkerlind's (2025) 10-step process and Taylor-Beswick & Hornung's (2024) guidelines to construct an outcome space. In phenomenography, the outcome space represents a finite number of qualitatively distinct categories that collectively describe how a phenomenon is experienced (Marton & Booth, 1997; Mimirinis, 2018; Mimirinis et al, 2024). In this case, how innovative teaching is collectively experienced among participants.

The rest of the chapter is structured as follows: Section 1.2 focuses on my motivation for this study. Section 1.3 outlines the policy context for this study, while Section 1.4 addresses the research context. In Section 1.5, I present the practice context, and in Section 1.6, I summarise the thesis structure.

1.2 Motivation for this study

My motivation for this research stems from both my passion for teaching and my current role. This passion led me to seize the opportunity to start a career in teaching in 2010 and has consistently influenced the approaches I adopt in my teaching practice, as I believe there is no singular approach to teaching and learning. This belief and passion have always driven me to explore ways to make teaching engaging and supportive for learners.

At my previous institution, where I worked from 2010 to 2016, staff were expected to be innovative in their teaching, despite the institution's status as a research-intensive institution and its membership in the Russell Group in the UK and the Universitas 21 network. To meet this expectation, I adopted various instructional methods to help my students become more effective learners. For example, in the business ethics and sustainability module I taught to final-year undergraduate students, I used experiential learning through role-play to help students engage with the various theories covered. As part of the process, students were presented with a business ethics-related news item every fortnight. They were required to identify the different stakeholders, the ethical framework they think had been violated or upheld in the given case, and to propose alternative solutions from a critical perspective. This process allowed students to connect their learning to the real world and develop a critical perspective on business ethics. This approach was well received by students as the module received one of the highest scores in the department in the end-of-semester student teaching evaluations. Also, the module's mean mark improved from 58% in previous years to 60% and above in subsequent years. Additionally, students provided positive feedback during the department's student-staff liaison meetings, and my Head of Department always commended me.

However, when a new Dean arrived, he challenged our teaching methods and called for greater staff innovation. After attending various mandatory workshops, most staff felt we had learnt nothing new because the methods covered were methods, we were already familiar with, had used in our teaching, or were currently using. This experience taught me that "innovative teaching" was undoubtedly crucial within the institution. However, the challenge was that what

innovative teaching meant was not clearly defined on my former university's website; its meaning was elusive, especially as the university website states:

"We use innovative ways of teaching to help students develop skills and experience relevant for the future careers. We use relevant case studies and assessment methods that ensure students are exposed to the issues that businesses are faced with and also give them an opportunity to develop their own thinking and solutions that they deem fit."

(University website, 2025)

This dilemma prompted me to ponder and reflect on what constitutes innovative teaching. In 2012, I began reading the literature on innovative teaching to find answers to my burning question, "What does innovative teaching mean?" This dilemma motivated my enrolment in the PhD in Higher Education, Research, Evaluation & Enhancement (HEREE) at Lancaster University, UK. As part of the programme, I took compulsory modules in Part One, such as "Connecting research and practice", "Researching Higher Education" and "Enhancing Learning, Teaching & Assessment at University". These modules, among others, helped narrow my focus on the problem I wanted to address and the kind of project I wanted to undertake. For example, the assessment for the module "Enhancing, Learning, Teaching and Assessment at University, required that we examine a contextual teaching practice. In this assessment, I focused on a new form of assessment, labelled as innovative, that had been introduced in my previous institution. This assessment, although new contextually, was a practice I had encountered in the past as a student. This piqued my interest in examining what innovative teaching meant among staff and students. I, however, chose to narrow the focus to meanings held by staff, as I believe it would be worthwhile to know what meanings staff, as practitioners, ascribe to innovative teaching.

During the programme, I had the opportunity to engage in various conversations with other students about their experiences in teaching, learning, and assessments, and to undertake primary research as part of the programme's assessment structure. Some of these conversations and assessments motivated me to explore these subjects within my institution. This exploration encouraged me to read articles on teaching, learning, and assessment and to engage in

discussions with colleagues. For example, in a conversation with colleagues about using experiential learning in my business ethics class, some colleagues perceived the approach as innovative. In contrast, others did not think it was innovative, as they believed it was just using case studies to teach, which, to them, had been around for a while. From these conversations, I realised that there was no unified answer to what innovative teaching meant. This kept me pondering what the expectations were for staff regarding innovative teaching. This unanswered question sparked my curiosity about what innovative teaching meant.

After moving to my current institution in 2016 and assuming the role of Director of Teaching and Learning (2021-2025) for the Business School, where I oversaw all postgraduate taught courses, I encountered various policy documents, marketing, and course materials that referenced the term "innovative teaching." As part of the role, I was expected to lead teaching-related development workshops to promote innovative teaching practices among staff. I discovered that colleagues had different meanings of what innovative teaching entailed. For example, coming from a management discipline background, I realised that what colleagues perceived as innovative in the Accounting & Finance department was not the same as what was perceived as innovative in my department. This lack of shared understanding made it challenging to decide among the various ways of experiencing innovative teaching, or whether there was a "correct" way of experiencing innovative teaching.

This study is therefore based on my interest in exploring the various meanings of innovative teaching, the different modules I took as part of the HEREE programme, and discussions with others on the subject. The findings from this project offer an opportunity to explore ways of experiencing innovative teaching and the critical variations in those experiences, thereby contributing to the literature on innovative teaching. Additionally, given my role in various teaching-related activities at the university, these findings can be utilised to develop strategies and activities that support staff in their pursuit of innovative teaching.

1.3 Research context

My research is situated within the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education, with a specific focus on innovative teaching. Research on innovative teaching aims to highlight its benefits to student learning by exploring the practice of innovative teaching and its perceived impact on student learning (Naz & Murad, 2017; Kalyani & Rajasekaran, 2018; Subramani et al., 2018; Maaß et al., 2019). While earlier research primarily focused on teaching methods deemed innovative and their effects on student learning, most of these studies have focused on specific teaching methods, their implementation and benefits (Khurshid & Ansari, 2012; Nurutdinova et al, 2016; Adedeji & Rahman, 2018; Puranik, 2020). There has been a progression in research from a methods-only perspective of innovative teaching to research that explores what innovative teaching entails. For this reason, several studies have identified characteristics of innovative teaching and innovative teachers that contribute to our understanding of innovative teaching (Fatt, 1998; Cachia et al, 2010; Zhu et al, 2013; Walder, 2014). However, there are calls for studies exploring innovative teaching to conceptualise the diverse faculty experiences of innovative teaching (Smith, 2011; Kopcha et al., 2016). Smith (2011) argues that this approach is vital for discussing teaching innovations meaningfully. My research, therefore, seeks to explore the diverse ways of experiencing innovative teaching among university staff.

As I elaborate in Chapter 2, my review of the literature on innovative teaching identified three key themes. The first theme, which focuses on understanding innovative teaching, examines three ways it is understood in the literature. My observation of the literature reviewed under this theme shows that several studies (Hannan et al., 1999; Kalyani & Rajasekaran, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2020; Stasewitsch et al., 2022) on what innovative teaching means stem from non-empirical data, that is the meanings ascribed to innovative teaching are based on personal views held by the authors or provide descriptions/concepts of what innovative teaching means. Meanwhile, studies that use empirical data tend to focus on singular meanings (Jaskyte et al., 2009; O'Banion et al., 2011; Walder, 2014; Chou et al., 2018). This shortcoming calls for more empirical studies that explore the ways of experiencing innovative teaching, with a focus on the differences in experiences.

The second theme identified from the literature is factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching. This theme identified collaboration, self-efficacy and context, which are discussed as the main factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching. The literature reviewed demonstrated how staff navigate the challenges posed by the research-teaching divide in HEIs. The literature suggests that these factors strengthen the relationship between teaching and research networks, as they serve as hubs for discussion of both research and teaching (Feixas et al., 2018; Greener, 2018; Fraser, 2019; Blumenschein & Hannisdal, 2024). A significant strength of this reviewed literature is that it highlights ways to create opportunities that foster staff engagement with innovative teaching. However, a notable deficit that remains is the extent to which the staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence their engagement. This shortcoming calls for studies that explore staff understanding of innovative teaching, so that activities aimed at improving engagement with innovative teaching are fit for purpose.

The third theme identified from my literature analysis is the purpose of innovative teaching. From the literature, three primary purposes of innovative teaching were identified, along with their potential to achieve various objectives in higher education institutions (Schneckenberg, 2009; Towndrow et al., 2010; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021). This literature demonstrates how HEIs leverage innovative teaching to enhance institutional reputation. Despite these key findings, a significant shortcoming identified in this literature is the lack of clarity about how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence the purpose they hope to achieve. Understanding these ways of experiencing is fundamental in identifying opportunities for HEIs to reap institutional benefits from staff innovative teaching practice.

In summary, by addressing the three themes identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the shortcomings, my study aims to explore how university staff understand the term "innovative teaching" using phenomenography. This approach will help uncover variations in ways of experiencing —an underexplored perspective. Adopting this approach also addresses Smith's (2011) call to contextualise the meaning of innovative teaching, as the social and geographical

context is crucial in determining what constitutes innovative teaching, especially as what is innovative in one discipline might be the norm in another.

1.4 International and national policy context

This project engages with global, national, and institutional policy domains that seek to address the need for innovative teaching. Within the field of education, there has been a growing global interest in teaching policies, as policymakers recognise the potential of innovative teaching to address the needs of a rapidly changing world (Ferrari et al., 2009). Adding to this interest are the calls from organisations such as UNESCO and the OECD for education to be adaptable. For example, one of the key focus areas at the 2025 World Summit on Teachers, organised by UNESCO, was innovation and inclusion, that is, "exploring new ways to approach education" (UNESCO,2025). Again, the OECD argues that today's graduates are entering a highly dynamic job market, marked by increasing uncertainty, accelerated change, greater risk, and a fundamental shift towards interdisciplinary working. Therefore, it calls for university education to provide the skills needed to succeed in this dynamic environment (Hoidn and Kärkkäinen, 2014).

Within the EU (European Union), education and training are regarded as essential for member states to enhance their competitiveness in economic and social terms (EC, 2008). Discussions among member states recognise the potential of innovative teaching to achieve these goals. As part of this process, member states are encouraged to develop evidence-based education policies that promote innovative teaching approaches to support the development of learners' skills. Various government initiatives encourage teachers to adopt and share innovative teaching methods that prepare students for modern challenges (Peterson et al., 2018) and ensure inclusive education (UNESCO, 2020). As this sentence suggests, innovative teaching is often tied to other agendas and phrases, in this case, including "inclusive education," as indicated by UNESCO (2020). An example of such an EU-supported initiative is Creating New Learning (CNL), which aims to "encourage the development, implementation and dissemination of innovative teaching and learning practices in the EU's neighbouring countries" (ETF, 2025).

In its 2009 policy document on innovation and creativity among member states, the EU defines innovative teaching as

"… the process leading to creative learning, the implementation of new methods, tools and contents which could benefit learners and their creative potential."

A strength of such work is establishing a definition of innovative teaching and recognising an outcome for learners. Yet such work assumes that implementing something new is automatically beneficial for learners and equates innovative teaching with "newness", thereby overlooking other aspects of innovative teaching that might exist.

Additionally, various policy documents highlight the value of innovative teaching, leading to a surge in governments and governing bodies investing in teaching-related projects to enable it. For example, within the EU, funding is available for various education projects through schemes such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, ESF+, and the Digital Education Action Plan (EU Commission, 2025). As part of this drive, the EU offers an innovative teaching award that celebrates the transformative teaching practices of staff and institutions, aimed at building a brighter European education for its citizens (EEA, 2025).

Furthermore, various countries have policies encouraging higher education institutions to innovate in their teaching, viewing this as a way to equip graduates with the skills needed to address the new challenges facing societies. For example, in countries such as Finland, Sweden, and Denmark, as part of government policy, universities are expected to revamp curricula, teaching methods, and learning environments through teaching innovations supported by digitalisation. For example, the Danish policy document on education states,

"*Working with innovation in teaching poses demands on pedagogical practice – a practice incorporating the concepts of creativity and innovation. Innovative teaching demands new modes of thinking. Learning related to the development of competencies for innovation draws on many well-known methods and forms of work, for instance, brainstorming, feedback, reflection, casework and project work. What is new is that these types of work are organised in a systematic structure directing the processes of learning*"
(Ministry of Education 2011, section 3)

The strengths of such work include recognising the various activities that constitute innovative teaching and acknowledging the need to transition from ad hoc use of innovative teaching to deliberate, cohesive teaching. Additionally, it establishes the need for a shift in mindset, recognising that innovative teaching involves more than just the tools the teacher uses; it encompasses how they think and teach. Yet such work tends to overlook the changes that may occur during the process, as well as their outcomes, such as shifts in staff roles and disciplinary norms.

Similarly, in the UK, which is the setting for this project and will therefore be covered in more detail, the language of innovation is becoming increasingly influential in educational policy (Universities UK, 2023). This trend gained significant traction in the UK following the 2008 'Innovation Nation' report from the then Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). The report argued that for the UK to thrive, it must become more innovative, positioning education as central to this shift. Specifically, it asserted that learners need to cultivate a more enterprising and innovative mindset (DUIS, 2008). Also, policies calling for higher education institutions to equip graduates with key employability skills that employers deem lacking, as well as the establishment of the Office for Students (OfS) in 2018, following the passage of the Higher Education and Research Act (2017), have contributed to this heightened interest. It must be noted that the jurisdiction of the OfS is, to some extent, limited to English universities, as other universities registered in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have their own governing bodies.

The OfS, supported by government policy, acts as a regulator of English universities. Their primary objectives include helping students access, succeed in, and progress from higher education; ensuring students receive a positive learning experience; enabling them to progress into employment or further education; and providing students with value for money (OfS, 2022). Additionally, the responsibilities of the OfS include administering the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), introduced in 2017/2018, as well as ensuring that universities in England meet the B3 conditions (a requirement for English higher education providers to deliver successful student outcomes that employers recognise or enable further study). Failure to meet these conditions may result in financial

penalties or deregistration. Additionally, the OfS also funds various initiatives that inspire new practices and innovations, providing opportunities to learn and share good practice (OfS, 2022).

In its policy documents, the OfS suggests that it supports innovative teaching through a principles-based approach, allowing English universities to innovate freely while meeting minimum regulatory requirements (OfS, 2022; Fleming, 2025). As part of this approach, the focus is on using innovative teaching as a means to achieve successful outcomes for all students. The key strengths of this perspective are that it encourages experimentation by not being prescriptive, whilst focusing on student outcomes and allowing institutions to focus on context-driven practice. Despite these strengths, a significant weakness lies in the ambiguity and uncertainty for practitioners. This lack of guidance leaves institutions and practitioners burdened with interpreting which principles are accepted within the regulatory requirements, resulting in differing interpretations and uncertainty.

Furthermore, various UK HEIs have their own policies governing the use of innovative teaching to achieve successful outcomes. Some of these policy documents state:

"Innovation is one of the key pillars that support our teaching and learning. We're applying it to our pedagogy, in our approach to scholarship, in the policies that shape our work and in the technology that we implement. We are embedding innovation across all subject areas. The University nurtures and fulfils ambitions and prepares our students for an ever-evolving world. We design innovative pedagogies and curricula underpinned by technology, widen access locally and globally and eradicate achievement gaps."
(University of York, 2025)

"We will review our curriculum and create more space for innovation in education, for multidisciplinary activities and for students' engagement with teachers, with each other, and with the world outside. We will create opportunities for students to actively shape innovation in learning and teaching, also putting them at the heart of our strategy. We will develop novel ways to work in partnership with students, enable them to co-create innovative teaching practices, and employ them as teaching assistants in classrooms and in online and digital education communities."
(Imperial College London, 2017)

These excerpts demonstrate a shift in policy by many HEIs towards highlighting the role of innovative teaching in their strategic objectives and meeting the expectations set by the OfS regarding student outcomes. Also, these policies provide opportunities for HEIs to produce graduates who are creative and can think critically, analytically and solve problems, as knowledge is no longer seen as an end but a means to creating better problem solvers and encouraging lifelong learning (Neo & Neo, 2001; Töytäri et al, 2016; Universities UK, 2023). Although various initiatives and policy documents aim to bolster opportunities for innovative teaching in higher education institutions, one area where such policies are lacking is a clear understanding of what constitutes innovative teaching, particularly one that considers how ways of experiencing innovation are often context-dependent. ETF (2025) acknowledge this view by stating that "*context is essential. What is common practice in one country might be innovative in another*." With this in mind, it seems appropriate to explore the ways of experiencing innovative teaching to deepen our understanding of what it entails.

This project is therefore apt because it explores how innovative teaching is experienced within the university context from the perspectives of those who teach (practitioners) and those who influence teaching policy (policymakers). This choice of participants is appropriate because their insights are expected to significantly contribute to the practical and strategic policy context of teaching in general, and particularly to innovative teaching. Additionally, this project responds to UNESCO's call for discussions and dialogue on policy alignment and the advancement of pedagogical practices (UNESCO, 2025).

1.5 Institutional policy and practice context

The practice context for this study is the entire institution of a research-intensive university, referred to as Southeast University (a pseudonym for the research site). It was founded in 1961, following the granting of a Royal Charter. The institution comprises four faculties, each consisting of a mix of schools, departments, and subject areas. This approach is viewed as offering opportunities for interdisciplinary learning and development in both research and teaching. The University has 17,765 students (2023-24 full-time equivalent figures), of whom around 22% are postgraduates. The student population is split: 69% are home students and 31% are international students.

Southeast University positions itself as being innovative and a leader. As part of its positioning and mission to address global issues, Southeast University seeks to foster a culture of innovation and leadership through its courses. The courses offered by Southeast University place a high level of importance on nurturing innovation through exciting and challenging teaching approaches, as outlined in Southeast's teaching and learning policy statements. However, a challenge for staff is the lack of clarity on the relationship between innovation and teaching, nor how Southeast University interprets innovation or how it should be evidenced in staff's teaching practice. Additionally, such policy statements do not define what constitutes innovative teaching, which could be a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it encourages flexibility for individual interpretation and contextual relevance. Still, it also suggests the problematic assumption that innovative teaching is universally defined, which may lead to confusion and ambiguity among staff.

This stance, therefore, requires that staff are equipped with the requisite skills needed to deliver teaching that is exciting and challenging to students. Hence, the University offers multiple teaching-focused development opportunities to staff. For example, within three years of joining Southeast University, staff are required to enrol in one of two Advance HE accredited courses. These courses aim to enhance the teaching delivered by staff and to promote innovative teaching practices, as outlined in the grade descriptor below. On successful completion, staff on the 15-credit programme achieve Associate Fellowship status with Advance HE, and those on the 60-credit programme achieve Fellow status.

> ***"Distinction:*** *Work exhibits excellent levels of knowledge and understanding with an extensive range of critical reading and engagement with the UKPSF embedded throughout. Often including original insights that are likely to be useful if disseminated to others as examples of good practice or teaching innovations."*
>
> (Southeast University PGCertHE Handbook, 2018)

Again, although staff are expected to be innovative in their teaching to be awarded a distinction, as per the descriptor above, the course handbook does not provide a definition or guidance on what constitutes an example of teaching innovations. This lack of definition could lead to uncertainty and confusion among colleagues enrolled in the course, as a practice perceived as innovative in one department or faculty might be the norm in others.

Additionally, although Southeast University has an Education Enhancement unit whose remit is to disseminate and embed best practice in all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, it does not have any guidance on what constitutes innovative teaching. The unit also works to deliver web-based guidance, workshops, and seminars to foster a range of University-wide networks and initiatives that support pedagogical practice, professional recognition, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. It also provides one-to-one guidance, bespoke workshops, and staff training.

Furthermore, each faculty is assigned a dedicated Academic Developer whose role is to provide guidance and support to staff on the following:

- Pedagogic advice and support for curriculum design, best practice and innovation in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Support for the development of Scholarship of Teaching & Learning across the university.
- Lead on institution-wide projects for educational enhancement.

Southeast University also offers various funding and award schemes designed to foster innovation through teaching. For example, one of such schemes awards successful projects a sum of £ 5,000 to be used towards a teaching/learning/assessment initiative.

Despite these efforts, during my term as Director of Teaching and Learning, I realised a relatively lower uptake among staff in voluntary teaching-related activities. Conversations with colleagues made it apparent that some of the teaching-related workshops were not seen as value-adding to staff. In some of these conversations, colleagues mentioned that when sessions are advertised as supporting staff to be innovative in their teaching, some have not been useful. These views motivated me to explore what innovative teaching meant to staff. This approach would foster shared understandings of innovative teaching within the university context and support the development of workshops to nurture it. Again, this approach seems key, as although the university has resources designed to help staff's innovative teaching practices, most policy documents and

developmental initiatives do not provide guiding principles on how the university perceives innovative teaching, which could lead to widespread apathy among staff.

1.6 Research question

As discussed above, my aim in this project is to explore participants' collective ways of experiencing innovative teaching. The motivation for this study stems from my experience that staff are encouraged to pursue innovative teaching, yet their understanding of what this entails remains unsatisfactory. This dilemma led me to explore the concept of innovative teaching in the literature, as discussed in Section 1.2. Although my reading of various literature provided some understanding of what innovative teaching means, a significant shortcoming of these studies is that most (Jaskyte et al., 2009; O'Banion et al., 2011; Walder, 2014) provide meanings that focus on singular meanings of innovative teaching and others such as Khurshid & Ansari, (2012), Kalyani & Rajasekaran (2018), Gilbert et al., (2020) provide meanings of innovative teaching based on personal judgements or concepts that they believe depict innovative teaching. Additionally, given the contextual nature of innovative teaching (Smith, 2011), it is appropriate to explore ways of experiencing it in a university context.

To achieve this, I have chosen phenomenography, a methodology explicitly suited for investigating the qualitative variation in how a phenomenon is experienced collectively within a group (e.g., Åkerlind, 2005; Denholm, 2023; and Mimirinis & Ahlberg, 2021).

Phenomenography has been used extensively to explore staff conceptions of teaching, as this approach provides an avenue for participants to reflect on their experiences (Ramsden, 2003; Eley, 2006) as well as provide opportunities to uncover a "*hierarchy of expanding awareness of the range of aspects which constitute university teaching*" (Åkerlind, 2003:387). Åkerlind (2003) argues that the nature of phenomenography shifts the focus from the individual to the collective, thereby allowing for conceptions that are not just a set of different experiences but a collective representation of patterns of variations that are logical, hierarchical, holistic, and inclusive of the phenomenon under investigation.

As discussed in Chapter 3, adopting phenomenography directly shapes the research question, requiring it to investigate ways of experiencing (Mimirinis and Ahlberg, 2021) and variations in experience (Åkerlind, 2025). This core concept of variation is key because it represents the search for the critical distinctions that reveal qualitatively different ways in which participants experience innovative teaching (Åkerlind, 2025). Therefore, the research question for this study is:

What are the qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff within the context of a University?

1.7 Thesis overview

In addition to this introductory chapter, this thesis has six other chapters structured as follows:

Chapter 2 is a review of the literature on innovative teaching. The review provides an overview of key debates, questions and research that shape the context of this study. It explores the literature on innovative teaching and identifies three key themes: understandings of innovative teaching, factors influencing staff engagement with it, and its purpose.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework for this study. Here, I discuss the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this study, as well as my choice to adopt phenomenography. An overview of phenomenography and its fundamental characteristics is discussed with a particular focus on its implementation and implications for my research. I also drew on examples from other phenomenographic studies to illustrate the approach's strengths. In addition, an example of an outcome space from the literature is presented to emphasise its centrality in phenomenographic studies such as this project.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed overview of the research design employed in this study. This includes a discussion of the research site, insider research, participant recruitment and selection, data collection methods and data analysis. Additionally,

the considerations and actions taken to ensure research quality, as well as the ethical principles that guided the research, are discussed.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of my study, specifically the outcome space, which comprises four categories of description and four dimensions of variation. Each category of description offers a distinct way of experiencing innovative teaching and its constituent critical aspects, highlighting the qualitatively different ways in which research participants experience innovative teaching. The description also illustrates how the dimensions of variation vary across the categories of description, as well as the structural relatedness that connects the categories within each dimension.

Chapter 6 presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings from Chapter 5 and explores how they address my research question. Most importantly, this chapter demonstrates how the research findings contribute to the literature on innovative teaching.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, concludes the thesis with a reflection on the study's primary contributions and areas for future research, an acknowledgement of its limitations, and a discussion of its implications for policy and practice.

2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to synthesise existing research on innovative teaching and to demonstrate how my research is grounded in this body of work. The literature has been critically reviewed to identify potential areas where this study can contribute and to shape its research questions.

This Chapter presents and discusses the prominent themes identified in the literature. Section 2.2 is a discussion of the literature search strategy and analysis employed for this review. Section 2.3 addresses the first theme (understandings of innovative teaching) identified in the literature. Section 2.4 focuses on the second theme (factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching), while Section 2.5 explores the third and final theme (the purpose of innovative teaching).

2.2 Literature search strategy

The literature search strategy employed in this study is based on the work of Booth et al. (2021) and Galvan & Galvan (2016). This strategy was selected to maintain a clear focus and establish a basis for the study's contribution. The literature review began by scoping for research on teaching within the context of higher education. Through this process, I became aware of a body of literature on the conceptions of teaching, which I considered useful for my work because of the focus of the studies and the methodological approach adopted. This work on the conceptions of teaching has been prominent, and some examples include studies such as Prosser et al. (1994), on ways teachers experience and conceptualise teaching and learning; Samuelowicz & Bain (1992; 2001), on conceptions of teaching, Kember et al. (2001) on conceptions of good teaching and Trigwell et al. (2005), on ways in which teachers experience change in their understanding of the subject matter they have recently taught. A key contribution of these studies to the field of higher education is that they have provided opportunities to uncover a "*hierarchy of expanding awareness of the range of aspects which constitute university teaching*" (Åkerlind, 2003:387)

However, in the end, I decided not to focus on analysing literature on conceptions of teaching because although my research is located in the field of teaching, I wanted my review of the literature to focus on innovative teaching in particular, as I believe this approach would help my understanding of what is already known about the subject and how my literature can contribute to this aspect of teaching.

With this in mind, I scoped for literature that focused on staff experiences with innovative teaching practices, as this aligns with the focus of this study. The scope generated literature that described innovations in non-HE settings and innovations in general. I therefore chose to discount literature in non-HE settings, as my scoping of the literature in these settings revealed a heavy focus on describing the integration of technology and tools used to improve learning outcomes.

Additionally, the majority of the literature did not provide a narrative explaining what made these teaching approaches innovative. Therefore, to discount these, I focused my search on studies within Higher Education that sought to understand the experiences of innovative teaching among teaching and non-teaching staff. Defining my scope helped clarify the key search terms for the literature search and the inclusion and exclusion criteria. My search, therefore, focused on studies that explored the meaning and experiences of innovative teaching from the perspectives of both teaching and non-teaching staff, as this is the research area to which I intend for this study to contribute.

I searched the ERIC database using the search term "innovative teaching" to identify relevant literature, generating 454 results. The term "Higher Education" was selected in the educational level tab to streamline the results and ensure relevance. Results were then restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles. This narrowed the results to 204. The abstracts for these results were exported to Excel, where each abstract was read to determine its relevance to my study. The inclusion and exclusion criteria adopted were based on focus and context. Hence, these studies were excluded if they focused solely on describing a teaching intervention or were set in a context other than Higher Education. Studies that described teaching interventions were excluded because the majority of these studies were descriptive in nature and focused heavily on the types of interventions implemented, rather than their impact on student learning. Again,

studies not set in higher education were excluded because they had a heavy focus on describing technology integration and tools to improve learning outcomes. 48 studies were subsequently identified as being appropriate for my research. I also employed the snowball method of reviewing references in the selected literature, identifying 12 additional studies. As part of the snowball process, I also identified various theses that explored innovative teaching and one that used the same methodology as my study. Given the similarity in focus and methodology, I believe this thesis is relevant to include in my review of the literature. In total, this literature review encompasses 60 studies pertinent to my research.

2.2.1 **Analysing the literature**

The selected studies were read several times to identify the arguments presented in them. My review focused on identifying studies that explore the experiences and meanings of innovative teaching within the higher education sector.

As part of the analysis, I conducted a thematic analysis by categorising the key arguments, findings, agreements, and disagreements across the articles. Several themes were identified and later refined into three main themes. I chose to focus on these three themes because they were extensively discussed in the literature and aligned with the focus of my study, helping to identify areas where my research can contribute and facilitating connections between the articles and my research. Additionally, focusing on these three themes is relevant because a relationship exists between understanding, engagement, and purpose. In other words, how innovative teaching is understood shapes the purpose and drives engagement. The three themes identified from the literature review are:

Theme 1: Understandings of innovative teaching
Theme 2: Factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching
Theme 3: Purpose of innovative teaching.

In Section 2.3, I present Theme 1 and its sub-themes. Section 2.4 covers Theme 2, and its relevant sub-themes, and Section 2.5 covers Theme 3 and its relevant sub-themes.

2.3 Theme 1: Understandings of innovative teaching

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, the first theme focuses on how innovative teaching is understood in the literature. This theme was dominant in the literature reviewed, and a strong narrative emerged that debates and interrogates what constitutes "innovative teaching." The literature aimed to provide various meanings of innovative teaching or improve existing ones, with a focus on deepening our understanding and providing opportunities for the advancement of teaching in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Given the prevalence of this theme in the literature, it seems appropriate to critically examine the arguments presented therein. Within this theme, innovative teaching was presented in the literature as new, transformative and multidimensional.

This section examines these understandings and provides a critical review of the literature, drawing on 28 of the 95 studies selected for the literature review.

2.3.1 Newness

The first way of understanding identified in the literature is the focus on newness, which the literature presents as a fundamental aspect of innovative teaching (Fraser, 2019; Denholm, 2023). This view of newness relates to any teaching-related activity regarded as new within a particular context (Hannan et al., 1999; O'Banion et al., 2011; Chou et al.,2018; Stasewitsch et al., 2022) or adaptation of existing ideas and methods (O'Banion et al., 2011; Gilbert et al., 2020). The literature suggests that the context in which newness occurs can be a situation, course, department, or institution (Silver, 1999; Tapalova et al., 2024). These activities, however, should be planned rather than accidental and intentionally designed (Silver, 1999) to enhance student learning and development (Chou et al., 2018).

The presentation of innovative teaching as newness in the literature contributes to our understanding of the concept. It supports the view that something new to the teacher, students, or discipline can be understood as innovative. However, the literature classifies this understanding of innovative teaching as being foundational, as it pays minimal attention to different ways of understanding what

innovative teaching means (Fraser, 2019; Stasewitsch et al., 2022). This is because innovative teaching is not just about using a novel or improved process/method, as what might be new to one set of individuals might not be to another set, given that disciplinary differences might influence the perception of what is new (Smith, 2012; Walder, 2014; Khayati & Selim, 2019).

Gilbert et al. (2020:126) also caution against the overreliance on "newness" in defining innovative teaching. They argue that "newness" is a complex term as it depends on "context, identities and beliefs"; therefore, it would be beneficial to consider innovative teaching as a process rather than an outcome. Johannessen et al. (2001:21) disagree with labelling "newness" as a complex term, as they believe the complexity does not lie with the term itself, but rather with the question of "what is new, how new and new to whom".

These studies offer valuable insights into innovative teaching methods. However, our current understanding of this "newness" largely stems from non-empirical data (Hannan et al., 1999; Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2020; Stasewitsch et al., 2022). Conversely, empirical studies tend to highlight similarities in understanding (O'Banion et al., 2011; Chou et al., 2018). This disparity highlights a clear need for further empirical research to deepen our understanding of innovative teaching, as the literature is unclear about who understands what is new, thereby contradicting the emphasis in the literature on the contextual nature of newness.

2.3.2 **Transformative**

Transformative is another way innovative teaching is understood in the literature. This understanding relates to its ability to transform students and help staff achieve their goals (O'Banion et al. 2011). The literature suggests that transformation occurs through increased student engagement, motivation, and skills development (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Chou et al., 2018), as well as by fostering lifelong learning (O'Banion et al., 2011). Transforming students can be achieved by aligning the development of students' creative thinking skills with improved learning outcomes (Chou et al., 2018; Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018). However, the literature argues that staff ought to be fully committed to these goals for transformation to occur (Fraser, 2019), as there might be a need for staff to

challenge their beliefs about teaching (Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018), which can be daunting, especially if it contradicts disciplinary norms (Khayati & Selim, 2019; Averill & Major; 2020). The transformative nature of innovative teaching can be harnessed through technology and experiential learning to create engaging learning experiences (van der Rijst et al., 2019), thereby changing the style and method of teaching (Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018).

This perspective in the literature offers an alternative way of understanding innovative teaching by shifting the focus away from novelty and assumes that innovative teaching leads to improvement (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Chou et al., 2018; Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018). However, the literature argues that improvement in student learning and development is not always a guaranteed outcome due to competing assumptions and priorities within HEIs, as well as evidence suggesting that not all teaching innovations result in improvement (Karavas-Doukas, 1995, 2014; Hannan and Silver, 2000; Serdyukov, 2017).

Although the studies highlighting the transformative nature of innovative teaching contribute to our understanding by emphasising its transformative nature (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Chou et al., 2018), one shortcoming of these studies is that the methodology adopted in studies such as Jaskyte et al. (2009) and O'Banion et al. (2011) does not fully explain how the similarities in understanding were achieved. The findings seem to operate on the assumption that participants' meanings of the free list items, such as "transformative", often presented to participants as list items, hold the same meaning. Smith (2011:434) suggests this assumption is problematic as the meanings people ascribe to innovative teaching are "diffuse and slippery." This shortcoming, therefore, emphasises the need to explore innovative teaching using different methodologies.

2.3.3 **Multidimensional**

Multidimensional is another way innovative teaching is presented in the literature (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Walder, 2014; Denholm, 2023). The literature suggests that innovative teaching cannot be understood as being singular, as it encompasses several elements (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Walder, 2014; Naz and Murad, 2017). For example, Walder (2014) identified seven notions of innovative teaching, which she characterised as a cyclical process that helps staff improve teaching quality by

supporting students to understand the discipline, thereby fostering success. Other elements, such as instructors' personalities, classroom culture, student-faculty relationships, teaching methods, and outcomes, are identified in the literature as contributing to this understanding (Naz and Murad, 2017; Maaß et al., 2019). Recognising this multidimensional nature of innovative teaching provides opportunities for teaching to be adapted to address student needs through staff reflection (Denholm, 2023).

Denholm's (2023) doctoral thesis is a key study that explored this multidimensional understanding of innovative teaching. As mentioned in Section 2.2, this study is relevant as it guided my research and examined the variation in the meaning of innovative teaching using phenomenography, the same methodology used for this study (See Chapter 3 for a discussion on phenomenography). Denholm (2023) analysed data from 13 academics and identified eight qualitatively different categories of how staff experience innovative teaching. These eight categories are grouped into what Denholm terms a "compound outcome space" (Denholm 2023:95). These categories represent two main aspects: teaching and assessment activities, and novelty, denoting how participants experienced innovative teaching. Denholm (2023) discovered that participants experienced novelty in innovative teaching as "different to what we normally do, new to the context, new to me." By highlighting the different aspects of novelty, Denholm (2023) demonstrates the existence of internal and external focus on how novelty is experienced. She attributes "different to what we normally do, new to the context" as being external, as it is context-dependent, and "new to me" as being internal, as it relates to the individual. Within the context of teaching and assessment activities, Denholm (2023) identifies ways in which participants enact innovative teaching, including through teaching and assessment activities, pedagogic alignment, personal creative development, and ethos. These findings demonstrate the multidimensional nature of innovative teaching and the variation in meanings among practitioners.

The existing body of research makes valuable contributions to our understanding of innovative teaching, revealing its multidimensional nature and how it encompasses various interconnected elements (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Walder, 2014; Naz and Murad, 2017). Recognising this multidimensionality allows for a

deeper understanding of what innovative teaching entails. Although studies by Jaskyte et al. (2009) and Walder (2014) demonstrate the multidimensional nature of innovative teaching, these studies focus heavily on the similarity in meaning. Also, the findings of these studies depict a process aimed at improving teaching rather than the meanings of innovative teaching itself. Additionally, while Denholm's (2023) offers valuable insights into innovative teaching by examining variations in meaning, it does not account for the perspectives of other stakeholders.

2.3.4 **Summary**

In summary, the literature reviewed in this section presents a range of insights into innovative teaching. Yet a crucial shortcoming is that these insights primarily stem from non-empirical data (Hannan et al., 1999; Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018; Gilbert et al., 2020; Stasewitsch et al., 2022), while empirical studies tend to highlight similarities (Jaskyte et al., 2009; O'Banion et al., 2011; Walder, 2014; Chou et al., 2018). This imbalance means we are missing opportunities to explore the full spectrum of existing understandings, thereby limiting our comprehension of innovative teaching.

Therefore, while previous studies have certainly advanced our knowledge, it is essential to empirically explore staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching, with a particular focus on differences. This approach promises to deepen our understanding, as Denholm (2023) demonstrated by showing how acknowledging variations in meaning can provide a framework to support staff in implementation and reveal the truly multidimensional nature of innovative teaching.

Additionally, the methodology adopted in studies such as Jaskyte et al. (2009) and O'Banion et al. (2011) does not fully explain how the similarities in understanding were achieved. Their findings appear to assume that participants' meanings of the free list items used in their studies are uniform. Smith (2011:434) suggests this assumption is problematic as the meanings people ascribe to innovative teaching are "diffuse and slippery."

To address these shortcomings, my study does not aim to define innovative teaching principles but to explore staff members' ways of experiencing the term

"innovative teaching" through phenomenography, uncovering underexplored variations in experience. Adopting this approach also addresses Smith's (2011) call to contextualise the meaning of innovative teaching. Smith (2011) argues that contextualising the meaning of innovative teaching is necessary, as the social and geographical context influences what constitutes innovative teaching, especially since what is innovative in one discipline may be the norm in another. Therefore, exploring variations in experiences within the university context will contribute to our understanding of innovative teaching, enrich the discussion on innovative teaching, and support the development of interventions that aid staff in their teaching (Stasewitsch et al., 2022).

Finally, although phenomenography has been used to explore the ways of experiencing teaching in general (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001; Eley, 2006), limited research uses phenomenography to explore variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching. Denholm's (2023) study particularly inspired me, as it examined differences in innovative teaching and addressed a critical gap in the literature. The use of phenomenography in Denholm (2023) provided me with the inspiration to undertake a similar investigation in a new context aimed at expanding the findings of Denholm (2023). However, although Denholm (2023) explores variation in meaning and makes a valuable contribution to the literature on innovative teaching, the study overlooks the perspectives of other stakeholders. Hence, though my research is similar to Denholm's (2023), it is distinctive because my study includes the perspectives of different stakeholders, such as policymakers and staff developers, who are equally important in shaping the narrative of teaching (Kopcha et al., 2016). Especially as research (Findlow, 2008; Whitworth, 2012) suggests that policymakers play a vital role in advancing innovative teaching in Higher Education Institutions, their voices must contribute to the narrative shaping our understanding of innovative teaching.

Considering this, my study aims to recruit academics and policymakers to explore variations in how they experience innovative teaching.

Section 2.4 discusses the second theme identified from the literature review. This theme examines the factors that influence staff engagement with innovative teaching.

2.4 Theme 2: Factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, the second theme, which is prominently addressed in the selected literature, focuses on factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching. Besides its prominence in the literature, this theme is relevant to my research, which explores staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching. Exploring these factors helps clarify the challenges staff face and how they navigate the perceived risk associated with the teaching–research divide. Exploring these also helps provide insights into how innovative teaching might be nurtured to drive engagement. Within this theme, three factors influencing engagement were identified from the literature. These three factors are collaboration, self-efficacy, and context. The following sections examine these factors and draw on 25 out of the 95 studies selected for the literature review.

2.4.1 Collaboration

One of the factors identified in the literature as influencing how staff engage with innovative teaching is collaboration (O'Banion et al., 2011; Smith, 2012; Fraser, 2019). The literature suggests that collaboration enables staff to share ideas and expertise, thereby enhancing practice, particularly when complementary skills are utilised (Smith, 2011; Sjoer & Meirink, 2015). This sharing of ideas, the literature argues, provides opportunities to create environments receptive to innovative teaching and fosters interdisciplinary research and discovery (Al-Husseini et al., 2019; Feixas et al., 2018). This approach is seen in the literature as creating spaces that encourage diverse teaching methods and enhance pedagogical skills that support innovative teaching (Gong, 2023).

Additionally, the literature suggests that collaboration enhances the relationship between teaching and research networks, where formal organisational sub-units serve as hubs for teaching-related dialogue (Feixas et al., 2018; Greener, 2018). This suggests that the relationship between teaching and research networks can be harnessed to encourage staff to learn about innovative teaching, as the most innovative teachers are characterised by extensive personal networks, broad network reach, and strong interconnectedness (Fraser, 2019; Blumenschein and Hannisdal, 2024). O'Banion et al. (2011:476) argue that for innovation to flourish,

staff must collaborate, as "collaboration is the core value that binds almost all elements and players involved as the idea of creative genius working in isolation is an outdated notion in education".

Furthermore, collaboration is viewed in the literature as being vital for innovative teaching. This is because staff who implement such practices would have to develop relevant skills, an understanding of the implications of any practice they adopt, and share their experiences with colleagues (Feixas et al., 2018; Greener, 2018; Blumenschein and Hannisdal, 2024). This process, the literature argues, helps minimise any perceived negative impact associated with innovative teaching, as staff have opportunities to learn from and support one another (Smith, 2012; Fraser, 2019; Blumenschein and Hannisdal, 2024).

Again, collaboration in innovative teaching is seen in the literature as occurring through policymaking, research and teaching (Fraser, 2019; Blumenschein and Hannisdal, 2024) with varying degrees of impact. The literature views collaboration in policymaking as having the highest impact, as it provides the social architecture and structure needed for innovative teaching to thrive (Greener, 2018; Fraser, 2019; Al-Husseini et al., 2019).

Overall, the literature emphasises the importance of collaboration in innovative teaching by showing how it influences staff engagement with innovative teaching (Greener, 2018; Fraser, 2019; Al-Husseini et al., 2019). Whilst a valuable addition to our understanding of how staff are influenced to engage with innovative teaching, these studies overlook how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence their collaboration (Feixas et al., 2018; Greener, 2018; Blumenschein and Hannisdal, 2024).

2.4.2 **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is another factor the literature identifies as influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching. The literature indicates that staff belief in their capacity and competence influences their engagement with innovative teaching (Buss et al, 2013; Bathgate et al, 2019; Fernández-Cruz & Rodríguez-Legendre, 2021) as pedagogical and social competencies provide staff with the confidence to embrace new and potentially challenging teaching approaches

irrespective of risk of failure (Zhu et al, 2013; Averill and Major, 2020). Pedagogical competence, in particular, is presented in the literature as being the most vital, as it is necessary to boost confidence, given that not all teaching innovations are successful (Zhu et al., 2013; Averill & Major, 2020). Thereby, having a boost in confidence encourages staff to work collaboratively with each other and with students to gain insights that advance teaching, irrespective of perceived risks (Buss et al., 2013; Averill & Major, 2020; Blumenschein & Hannisdal, 2024). The literature thereby suggests a strong link between respondents' feelings of competence and engagement with innovative teaching, as this influences how staff deal with challenges they encounter whilst trying to implement innovative teaching (Averill and Major, 2020; Blumenschein and Hannisdal, 2024).

The literature discusses that these feelings can be perceived by staff as either supportive or constraining, depending on their impact on staff confidence (Buss et al., 2013; Averill & Major, 2020). When feelings are perceived as a constraint, staff disengage with innovative teaching due to the perception that engaging with it would undermine their confidence, especially where innovative teaching is perceived as new. This perception, the literature argues, is fuelled by a lack of recognition and reward for staff who engage with innovative teaching (Kreber, 2013; Walker et al., 2011; Fraser, 2019), especially where there is minimal institutional support for teaching-related activities (Fraser, 2019; Gilbert et al., 2020) and disciplinary constraints (Fraser,2019). Despite these constraints, staff who engage with innovative teaching understand the risks involved but view themselves as rebellious (Gilbert et al., 2020). The literature suggests that staff who engage in innovative teaching are not necessarily being rebellious but rather are driven by a personal motivation to understand the learning needs of students and provide the necessary support through their teaching practice (Hellmann et al., 2014; Chang & Wang, 2021).

Hence, the literature recommends encouraging self-efficacy by promoting a process of self-reflection on the alignment of lecturers' roles, teaching methodologies, and desired learning outcomes as this process offers a platform for staff to engage in a thorough and critical examination of their current instructional approaches (Hellmann et al., 2014; Bathgate et al, 2019).

Overall, the literature reviewed in this section demonstrates the role that self-efficacy plays in staff engagement with innovative teaching, helping to deepen our understanding of the factors that influence staff engagement with innovative teaching (Buss et al, 2013; Bathgate et al, 2019; Fernández-Cruz & Rodríguez-Legendre, 2021; Averill & Major, 2020; Blumenschein & Hannisdal, 2024). An area that deserves further study is how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence their engagement. Exploring these experiences is vital, as it would provide opportunities for ongoing development and relevant institutional support (Fraser, 2019; Gilbert et al., 2020).

2.4.3 **Context-driven factors**

Contextual factors are presented in the literature as influencing how staff engage with innovative teaching. The literature suggests that staff who feel supported institutionally are more likely to engage with innovative teaching, as this support fosters an environment that encourages staff to adopt innovative teaching practices (Robson et al., 2013; Kunnari & Ilomaki, 2014; Fraser, 2019; Averill & Major, 2020). For example, in Fernández-Cruz & Rodríguez-Legendre's (2021) study of 1404 university teachers, 65.45% of respondents assessed their innovative competence profile as being low. Fernández-Cruz & Rodríguez-Legendre (2021) attribute this low score to the lack of institutional support, particularly in the dissemination of innovation, and argue that for staff to engage in teaching innovations, avenues for dissemination need to exist, as this creates awareness and fosters the nurturing of innovative teaching within the university community. It appears that institutional support can be utilised as a means of encouraging staff to engage in innovative teaching. This the literature argues that even when staff are pedagogically competent, they do not always engage innovative teaching due to the lack of institutional support in areas such as time (Orsmond and Stiles, 2002; Buss et al., 2013; Kunnari & Ilomaki, 2014), the tension between disciplinary and pedagogical research (Robson et al., 2013; Fraser, 2019) and the lack of leadership (Averill & Major, 2020; Gilbert et al., 2020).

The literature suggests that categorising teaching as "traditional" or "innovative" can be problematic as it creates a perception of a wrong way and right way of

teaching (Orsmond and Stiles, 2002; Ferrari et al., 2009). Such labelling, the literature argues, can lead to disengagement as it creates the notion that staff who adopt traditional teaching practice ought to be corrected. However, when teaching is viewed as a continuum, opportunities arise to equip staff to provide a diversified student learning experience through staff development activities that build confidence and encourage staff to move along the teaching continuum based on student needs (Orsmond and Stiles, 2002; Ferrari et al., 2009). The literature therefore calls for a focus on student needs, as this encourages staff to engage with innovative teaching from a student development perspective and promote student active participation, rather than whether tutors are "traditional" or "innovative" in their approach (Orsmond and Stiles, 2002; Ferrari et al.,2009). This process, Ferrari et al. (2009) argue, provides opportunities to question embedded practices and find ways to address student needs.

The literature also identifies a connection between contextual factors and how staff perceive their roles (Robson et al., 2013; Fraser, 2019). Suggesting that where staff perceive their roles as primarily transmitting knowledge, they seem less likely to engage with innovative teaching, as they focus on knowledge transmission rather than student learning per se (Lami et al., 2021). The literature recommends that staff be encouraged to engage more with innovative teaching through institutional support that recognises the value of teaching and supports career progression, irrespective of whether they focus on pedagogical research or disciplinary research (Robson et al., 2013; Fraser, 2019).

The literature demonstrates how contextual factors influence staff engagement with innovative teaching (Robson et al., 2013; Fraser, 2019; Fernández-Cruz & Rodríguez-Legendre, 2021), highlighting the vital role that institutional support plays in this process. Despite this contribution, the literature does not fully explore staff experiences of innovative teaching. Exploring staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching would help ensure that the appropriate institutional support is provided to enhance staff engagement and the development of innovative teaching.

2.4.4 **Summary**

In summary, the literature reviewed in this section highlights factors that influence staff engagement with innovative teaching, thereby creating opportunities to learn about this approach. While the literature helps shape our understanding of staff engagement with innovative teaching, a notable deficit remains in demonstrating how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching might influence staff engagement. Understanding these ways of experiencing is fundamental in identifying opportunities that facilitate staff engagement with innovative teaching. Smith (2011) argues that a complex interplay of personal experiences, cultural norms and contextual factors shapes the decision to implement innovative teaching. Therefore, staff experiences of innovative teaching need to be explored to better understand what it entails, so that staff engagement activities can be developed accordingly.

Despite the contribution of the existing literature on the culture of innovative teaching, what seems underexplored is the ways of experiencing innovative teaching and the differences in experiences, if any. Exploring these experiences would help shift teaching as a continuum toward focusing on student learning needs and provide the foundation for meaningful discourse on innovative teaching and its potential impact on student learning.

Section 2.5 discusses the third theme identified from the literature review. This theme examines the purpose of innovative teaching as presented in the literature.

2.5 Purpose of innovative teaching

As discussed in Section 2.2.1, the third significant theme addressed in the selected literature is the purpose of innovative teaching. The literature prominently discusses this theme with an emphasis on the interconnectedness between the purpose of innovative teaching and its meaning. This interconnectedness demonstrates the relevance of this theme to my research, which explores staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching. The literature suggests that examining the purpose of innovative teaching is beneficial, as it provides opportunities for appropriate support activities through staff empowerment and professional development. Within the theme of purpose, 3 factors were identified from the

literature as the purpose of innovative teaching. These factors focus on student engagement, student achievement and institutional expectations. The following sections address these factors and draw on 54 out of the 95 studies selected for the literature review.

2.5.1 **Student engagement**

Student engagement is prominently discussed in the literature as one of the key purposes of innovative teaching. When considering the purpose of innovative teaching, scholars argue that it fosters improvements in student engagement by encouraging students to be curious about their learning and enabling them to take an active interest in their learning (Pluta et al., 2013; Ferreri & O'Connor, 2013; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Jang et al; 2016; Nguyen et al, 2018; Ma, 2024; Casari et al., 2025). This curiosity, Fredericks et al (2004) argue, stems from a change in students that encompasses behavioural, cognitive and emotional dimensions. Fredericks et al. (2004) state that the behavioural dimension enables students to participate actively in class activities and discussions, the cognitive dimension encourages students to invest mental effort in understanding the material being taught, while the emotional dimension supports students in developing a positive attitude towards learning. According to the literature, these activities lead to increased student engagement, which fosters a strong sense of ownership among students and supports their development as independent critical thinkers (Lightner et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2025; Casari et al., 2025).

Additionally, the literature suggests that when staff adopt innovative teaching approaches, they create opportunities that shift teaching environments from being teacher-centred to student-centred (Ma, 2024; Casari et al., 2025). However, the literature argues that for this shift to be meaningful, that is, to enhance student engagement significantly (Bowyer & Chambers, 2017), innovative teaching must be carefully planned and intentionally designed (Lightner et al., 2007), as evidence suggests that not all teaching innovations result in improved student engagement (Karavas-Doukas, 2014; Serdyukov, 2017). To address this, the literature proposes the creation of learning environments that enable students to question, think critically, reflect, and connect ideas (Pluta et al., 2013; Ferreri & O'Connor, 2013; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015).

Furthermore, the literature advocates that innovative teaching can be used to adapt to different student learning scenarios and preferences, ensuring that more students find the learning experience inclusive. According to the literature, this experience provides students with learning that meets their needs, thereby enhancing student engagement (Marmet, 2023).

The literature also maintains that staff play a pivotal role in student engagement as engaged students are more open to building relationships with both their peers and staff (Alvarez-Bell et al., 2017; Griffin & Howard, 2017; Asif et al., 2021). This relationship helps learning transition from an isolated individual experience to one that fosters a sense of community and mutual support (Willms et al., 2009; Parsons & Taylor, 2011). For example, Dunleavey and Milton (2009) found that student engagement improved when innovative teaching was used to create opportunities for students to learn with and from each other, connect with experts, and engage in dialogue that challenged their assumptions.

Overall, the literature demonstrates the role that innovative teaching plays in student engagement and how it can be harnessed to create student-centred teaching environments. However, what seems underexplored in the literature is how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence their encouragement of student engagement. Exploring staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching is essential for creating student-centred teaching that enhances student engagement.

2.5.2 **Student outcomes**

Student outcomes are another key purpose of innovative teaching, a theme prominently discussed in the literature. The literature emphasises how student outcomes can be enhanced through innovative teaching by arguing that when students are motivated and engaged, the content being taught appeals to their natural curiosity (Chen et al., 2025). This curiosity, the literature argues, encourages more profound understanding and retention by providing opportunities for students to delve deeper into the subject and move away from rote learning, thereby improving student outcomes (Trigwell et al., 2013). The literature suggests that innovative teaching can help students reach their full

potential (Lavy, 2011) and enable them to develop skills that transcend their programme of study (Bosio & Origo, 2020).

Additionally, the literature suggests that when innovative teaching is used to support students in their learning, they become persistent in their learning, which helps them develop higher-order thinking skills, leading to improved academic outcomes (Jang et al., 2016; Naz & Murad, 2017; Sankey, 2021). However, the literature suggests that these outcomes can be either short-term or long-term, identifying discipline-related outcomes as short-term and employability-related outcomes as long-term (Pool & Sewell, 2007). The literature, therefore, emphasises the need to distinguish what student outcomes staff hope to achieve and to align these outcomes with the innovative teaching being implemented (Yorke & Knight, 2004; Knight & Yorke, 2004; Nguyen et al., 2018).

The literature also demonstrates how innovative teaching provides opportunities for learning to be made relevant and meaningful for learners. The literature highlights how innovative teaching allows for a connection between the discipline and real-world issues (Wooldridge & Kuntze, 2010; Nowak & Zuidema, 2019; Saparbayeva et al., 2025). This connection, the literature argues, enables learners to be active participants in the learning process, as it increases learners' interest and enthusiasm for the subject, leading to a deeper understanding and improved academic performance (Docherty et al., 2018; Nowak & Zuidema, 2019).

Furthermore, the literature highlights the impact of innovative teaching on learner attributes (Neo & Neo, 2001; Mandula et al., 2012; Starford & Ravlikj, 2024), suggesting that it fosters creativity and problem-solving skills in learners. These skills, the literature argues, are a result of innovative teaching being used as a conduit to encourage interdisciplinary approaches that require learners to draw on knowledge from various fields to address multifaceted challenges, as well as providing them opportunities to evaluate critically (Mandula et al., 2012; Liu & Sonsupap, 2015; Naz & Murad, 2017; Erdem et al., 2025). For example, studies such as those by Zhang et al. (2020) and Erdem et al. (2025) have found that student outcomes significantly improve when innovative teaching is used to create opportunities for interdisciplinary learning by exposing learners to real-world issues.

Overall, the literature demonstrates the role that innovative teaching plays in improving student outcomes and how it can be harnessed to create opportunities for interdisciplinary learning through exposure to real-world issues. However, what seems underexplored in the literature is how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence student outcomes. Exploring staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching is essential for delivering teaching that encourages interdisciplinary learning and exposure to real-world issues.

2.5.3 **Institutional expectations**

Institutional expectations are prominently discussed in the literature as one of the key purposes of innovative teaching. The literature suggests that, amongst other expectations, engaging in innovative teaching is a significant expectation of academics by their institutions (Schneckenberg, 2009; Towndrow et al., 2010; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021). The literature highlights the significance of this expectation, as delivering innovative teaching aligns with the strategic plans of many Higher Education Institutions (Dziuban et al., 2018; Graham, 2013; Lašáková et al., 2017), particularly when innovative teaching is viewed as a means of driving institutional competitiveness and addressing workforce needs (Ödalen et al., 2018; Fraser et al., 2019; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021). The literature further argues that, as part of their strategic plan, Higher Education Institutions expect staff to engage in innovative teaching as a way of boosting graduate outcomes, primarily when innovative teaching is used to develop employability skills in learners (De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021).

The literature further suggests that, as the higher education landscape has become increasingly competitive, Higher Education Institutions must find ways to differentiate themselves to attract students (Findik & Ozkan, 2013; Lašáková et al., 2017; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021). The literature suggests that this expectation presents an opportunity for Higher Education Institutions to enhance their institutional reputation and position themselves as offering value for money through innovative teaching (Findik & Ozkan, 2013; Donnelly et al., 2013; Porter et al., 2016).

Additionally, the literature suggests that institutions expect staff to engage in innovative teaching as a way to leverage advancements in technology. Therefore, activities such as staff development programmes and teaching awards are used to drive this purpose of innovative teaching (Zhu & Turcis II, 2018; Fraser et al., 2019; Seppala & Smith, 2019). These activities, the literature argues, act as a driving force by equipping staff with the necessary skills through development programmes and providing motivation through teaching awards (Gan & Geertsema, 2018; Scheidig & Tremp, 2024).

Furthermore, the literature suggests that by expecting staff to engage in innovative teaching, higher education institutions can be seen as promoting inclusive and equitable learning among learners. Staff can utilise innovative teaching methods to provide opportunities that cater to individual learner needs, thereby improving access and enhancing student retention rates (Findik & Ozkan, 2013; Lašáková et al., 2017).

Overall, the literature demonstrates how innovative teaching is leveraged by higher education institutions to achieve strategic objectives and enhance their institutional reputation. However, what seems underexplored in the literature is how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching are harnessed to support these objectives of Higher Education Institutions. Exploring staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching is essential to harness the potential it can offer to higher education institutions.

2.5.4 **Summary**

In summary, the literature reviewed in this section highlights the purpose of innovative teaching and its potential to achieve various objectives in higher education institutions. While the literature deepens our understanding of the purpose of innovative teaching, a significant shortcoming not fully addressed in the literature is how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence the purpose they hope to achieve. Understanding these ways of experiencing is fundamental in identifying opportunities to support staff in achieving their purpose of delivering innovative teaching.

Although the purpose of innovative teaching has received attention in existing literature, a deeper exploration of how innovative teaching is experienced and how these experiences vary is largely unexplored. Exploring these ways of experiencing is essential to reorient teaching towards supporting learner engagement and improved outcomes, thereby providing opportunities for discourse on innovative teaching and its potential.

2.6 Research question

The literature review discussed the importance of understanding innovative teaching while recognising the complexity of what it means. The literature also reveals the multidimensional nature of innovative teaching, encompassing various interconnected aspects. However, a crucial shortcoming is that these understandings primarily stem from non–empirical data, while empirical studies tend to focus heavily on similarities in meaning. This imbalance means we are missing opportunities to explore the full spectrum of existing experiences, thereby limiting our comprehension of innovative teaching.

Additionally, although the literature identifies collaboration, self-efficacy, efficacy and context as factors that influence staff engagement with innovative teaching, a notable deficit remains in demonstrating how the ways of experiencing innovative teaching might influence staff engagement.

Furthermore, the literature identifies various purposes of innovative teaching and its potential to achieve multiple objectives in higher education institutions, including student engagement and improved outcomes. A shortcoming in the literature is the lack of understanding of how staff experience of innovative teaching influences its purpose.

Therefore, while previous studies have certainly advanced our knowledge, it is essential to empirically explore staff's experiences of innovative teaching, with particular attention to differences, as this approach promises to deepen our understanding. To address these shortcomings, the research question for this study is:

What are the qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff within the context of a University?

2.7 Conclusion

To establish a foundational understanding and identify areas for contribution regarding innovative teaching, this chapter presented a comprehensive review of the literature. The review revealed three key themes: understandings of innovative teaching, factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching, and the purpose of innovative teaching. These three themes were discussed and helped identify areas in which this study can contribute. The literature review identified areas of shortcoming and helped frame the research question for this study, as stated in Section 2.6.

Chapter 3, which follows, focuses on the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

3 Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the theoretical framework that underpins the present research. It comprises six main sections. Section 3.2 examines the ontological and epistemological perspectives adopted in this project, my motivation for investigating the diverse meanings of innovative teaching among staff, and the reasons for selecting a phenomenographic research design. Section 3.3 explicates phenomenography, highlighting its philosophical foundations and implications. Section 3.4 illustrates how phenomenography has been utilised in the field and shaped my research design. Section 3.5 discusses the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenography and how they have been employed as a frame of reference in this research project. The chapter concludes with Section 3.7, which summarises the key points discussed.

3.2 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

The aim of this research, as discussed in Chapters 1 & 2, is to explore ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff and the differences that exist in those experiences. My position as a university teacher, combined with the literature on innovative teaching, has influenced my interest in exploring qualitatively different ways in which staff experience innovative teaching. My interest in innovative teaching stems from my first experience in UK Higher education as an international student. This interest was rekindled when I joined the Higher Education sector as a faculty member. Having experienced both sides of the coin as a student and a faculty member, I was drawn to focus my research studies on exploring the differences in ways of experiencing innovative teaching within the University context.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, the ways of experiencing innovative teaching vary contextually. However, limited research has explored these variations. Therefore, these variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching deserve investigation. My discussion in the literature review (Chapter 2) demonstrates how innovative teaching has been ascribed different meanings and the various enactments o thereof; these differences in experiences, I believe,

deserve to be investigated from the perspective of those who engage with innovative teaching, in this case, staff who teach and those who influence teaching policy.

As with any research, it is necessary to consider the ontological and epistemological stance adopted and how these have shaped the research, namely, the nature of reality (ontology) and the nature of knowledge (epistemology) that underpin this study. Richardson (1999) argues that a challenge in using phenomenography is explicating the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions made. In light of this, the ontological and epistemological assumptions made in this research as part of the phenomenographic approach are explained in this section. My decision to use phenomenography will be discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.

In this study, I assume that innovative teaching is a phenomenon, and this view comes from its association with "newness" in literature and the contextual nature of definitions, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. A phenomenon can be defined as "something that can be observed and studied and is typically unusual or difficult to understand or explain fully" (Britannica Dictionary,2024). Larsson and Holmstrom (2007:5) state that

"*In phenomenography, a phenomenon means to make manifest or to bring to light, with the suffix 'graph' denoting a research approach aimed at describing the different ways a group of people understand a phenomenon*."

Based on this definition, the key epistemological assumption in this research is that innovative teaching, as a phenomenon, can take on different meanings depending on practice, implementation, and experience. Therefore, I aim to investigate how staff experience innovative teaching across various teaching-related practices.

Throughout this project, I will adopt specific ontological and epistemological perspectives. Tight (2015) advises that, as with any research, those considering the use of phenomenography in their study must elucidate and justify their

ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches. The following sections, therefore, aim to illuminate these concepts.

Adopting a phenomenographic perspective entails embracing certain ontological and epistemological assumptions. A fundamental ontological assumption adopted for this study is that reality is subjective, multiple, and relational; that is, reality is shaped by the internal relationship between the individual and their world (Marton, 1986; Svensson, 1997). This subjective view of reality, Åkerlind (2025) states, does not mean the absence of an external reality but rather that our understanding of the world is based on our experience of it. These experiences thereby influence the relationship we form with the world and reflect our view of the world based on our way of experiencing it.

Therefore, people's way of experiencing is shown as an internal relationship between human beings and the world. This way of experiencing the world, Åkerlind (2025) says, brings about variation in experience because we can discern different aspects of the same phenomenon at any given point in time. Hence, phenomenography seeks to uncover the various ways of experiencing a phenomenon by focusing on collective ways of experiencing rather than individual ones, thereby allowing for "*maximising the chances of as 'complete' a range of qualitatively different ways of experiencing a phenomenon as possible being present*" among participants (Åkerlind, 2025:78).

Additionally, non-dualism in phenomenography aligns with the focus of this research, as non-dualism predicates a paradigm that moves away from the separation of people and their experiences (Säljö, 1997). Uljens (1996:112) argues that "reality is considered to exist through the way in which a person conceives of it", through the relation between their awareness and reality. In other words, our way of experiencing the world (phenomenon) is based on our experience of it, without which we would not know of its existence. Therefore, individuals cannot be separated from their experiences.

Epistemologically, phenomenography adopts a second-order approach, focusing on people's experiences of the world rather than exploring the world itself, as in the first-order perspective (Richardson, 1999). The second-order epistemology in

phenomenography aims to investigate people's relationships and experiences of a phenomenon from their perspective. The central epistemological assumption is that individuals experience a phenomenon in diverse ways, leading to varied yet interconnected awareness and descriptions of that phenomenon. This approach, therefore, implies that we can only understand people's experience of a phenomenon from their description of that experience (Marton, 2015). Marton and Booth (1997:111) state that:

"*The root of phenomenography lies in an interest in describing the phenomena in the world as others see them, and in revealing and describing the variation therein, especially in an educational context*".

The second-order perspective of phenomenography suggests that the primary focus is on the relationship between the phenomenon and the participants, rather than the phenomenon or participants themselves. This approach aligns with the objective of my research, which aims to explore innovative teaching from the participants' perspective. Consequently, the subject of this study is not the participants or innovative teaching, but rather the connection between the two, that is, the experiences and understandings that participants have of innovative teaching.

Furthermore, the second-order perspective entails describing the world as it is experienced by participants, rather than attempting to adopt an external perspective, even though the phenomenon may be understood differently by different participants in various contexts (Åkerlind, 2012). This perspective, Cousin (2009:184) states, is because "nobody has unmediated access to the world; it is always shaped by our experiences and our context." This second-order approach also disparages value judgements on the researcher, for example, about what constitutes innovative teaching. Marton & Booth (1997) emphasise this by pointing out that there is no right or wrong way of experiencing, understanding, conceptualising, or perceiving a phenomenon in phenomenography, as the aim of the approach is to capture these processes from the participants' perspective with a non-judgmental attitude. In phenomenography, even though perspectives are not judged according to their correctness, some variations may be recognised as

more complex than others. This complexness, Marton & Booth (1997:107) refer to as the level of awareness of the

"*constituent parts or aspects of the phenomenon which are discerned and appear simultaneously in people's experience of the phenomenon. The more aspects are discerned, the more advanced and inclusive the experience of the phenomenon is*".

This complexity in variations arises from the existence of "*a level, a level of modes of experiences and forms of thought*" of the phenomenon in question (Marton, 1981:181).

Applying this second-order perspective to my research means that my focus would be on investigating staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching, based on their reflections and descriptions, rather than on my perspective on what constitutes innovative teaching. Additionally, the focus will be on uncovering the levels of awareness or complexity among participants in their experiences of innovative teaching, as well as the critically significant differences.

Marton & Booth (1997:13) reinforce the non–dualistic nature of phenomenography by stating:

"*There is not a real world "out there" and a subjective world "in here." The world is not constructed by the learner, nor is it imposed upon her; it is constituted as an internal relation between them. There is only one world, but it is a world that we experience, a world in which we live, a world that is ours*".

Highlighting the importance of this internal relationship, Marton & Booth (1997:113) state that "*a way of experiencing something is an internal relationship between the experiencer and the experienced*". That is, our realities are based on our interactions and experiences with a given phenomenon, rather than the phenomenon itself. This relational approach in this study, therefore, means that the phenomenon, innovative teaching and the research participants will not be viewed or treated separately, as it is the inseparability of this relationship that

phenomenography represents as experiences which, when combined, aid our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Yates et al, 2012).

Methodologically, phenomenography aligns with a qualitative paradigm, with the key method for data collection being phenomenographic interviews (Tight, 2015). This method is equally appropriate for my research, which aims to understand qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff within the University.

As stated earlier in this section, my interest in exploring the various ways of experiencing innovative teaching stems from both my personal experience and a review of the literature on innovative teaching. As discussed in Chapters 1 & 2, different meanings are ascribed to innovative teaching in the literature and coupled with calls (Walder, 2014; Kopcha et al., 2016) for further research on what innovative teaching means contextually, I believe it is necessary to explore the qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching to deepen our understanding.

3.3 Choosing phenomenography

Phenomenography—a term derived from the Greek for 'appearance' (*phainemenon*) and 'description' (*graphein*)—emerged in the late 1970s and early 80s as a specialised field (Hasselgren and Beach, 1997; Pang, 2003; Marton, 1981). Phenomenography was developed in the 1970s within the field of educational research by Ference Marton, Lennart Svensson, Roger Saljö, and Lars-Owe Dahlgren whilst conducting experimental studies into student learning (Åkerlind, 2010, 2025). These studies by Marton and his colleagues investigated the concept of learning from the perspective of students (Åkerlind, 2010) and were considered groundbreaking as they signalled a shift from the quantitative paradigm that dominated the field (Pang, 2003; Åkerlind, 2025). This shift represented a focus from "viewing the learner from the outside to one that tried to see learning from the learner's point of view (Marton & Booth, 1997:15), especially as these studies differed from the existing positivist quantitative methods used to study students' learning (Svensson, 1997).

"Phenomenography" was formally introduced to mainstream scholarly discourse in 1981 in Marton's publication "Phenomenography-Describing Conceptions of the World around Us" (Åkerlind, 2025). This 1981 article served as a catalyst for phenomenography, in which Marton first argued that the variation in how people experience and conceptualise the world warrants its own specialised area of study (Svensson, 1997), though Åkerlind (2025) argues that at that point, phenomenography as a research approach was still being developed.

During its developmental phase of the 1990s, debates and critiques about phenomenography's methodological approaches and theoretical underpinnings began to surface (Entwistle, 1997). These debates and critiques centred on the subjectivity of findings in line with its qualitative nature, the lack of clear methodological and theoretical assumptions, and how phenomenography differed from phenomenology (Entwistle, 1997; Svensson, 1997; Åkerlind, 2025).

These debates and critiques of phenomenography signalled a need for clarity on the methodological, theoretical and epistemological underpinnings (Bowden, 1996; Dall'Alba & Hasselgren, 1996). To address the debates and critiques of phenomenography, Marton and Booth published their book "Learning and Awareness" in 1997, where they articulated the methodological, theoretical and epistemological underpinnings of phenomenography. For example, this book led to a shift from phenomenography being simply classified as a research approach that focuses solely on documenting the different ways people experience and understand the world around them (Pang, 2003; Åkerlind, 2010) to a research approach that also uncovers the structural relationships that connect the different ways of experiencing and relevant critical aspects that underlie different ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Pang, 2003; Åkerlind, 2025).

Highlighting the significance of the structural relationships, Marton & Booth (1997) argued that learning and all forms of understanding are a form of awareness because our understanding has a structure to it, that is, "*at any instant, certain things come to the fore; they are figural or thematised whilst other things have receded to the background, they are tacit or unthematized... They are different degrees of how figural, thematised or explicit things or aspects are in our awareness"* (Marton & Booth, 1997:98). In other words, the same phenomenon

can be understood in different ways because "our consciousness of the world is not the entire world, nor even the entire situation in which we find ourselves, since we actually focus on a single part of our externality." (Jarvis 2004:94).

Additionally, Åkerlind (2025) posits that the theoretical developments of phenomenography have helped shape the aims and outcomes of phenomenographic research. For example, phenomenography of the 1970's to 1990's focused on the qualitatively different ways in which a phenomenon was experienced. In comparison, phenomenography of the 21st century focuses not just on the qualitatively different ways a phenomenon is experienced, but also on the structure of understanding of a specific experience, that is, the structure of awareness within each way of experiencing the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997). Identifying the structure of awareness, Åkerlind (2025) argues, is a major developmental benefit from the publication of "*Learning and Awareness*" by Marton & Booth in 1997, because in the book, Marton & Booth defined what constitutes a "critical aspect". This thereby provided clarity to researchers on how to identify the structure of awareness, that is, "*what critical aspects of the phenomenon are discerned (and not discerned) within each way of understanding*" (Åkerlind, 2025:30).

The field of phenomenography has gone through a series of developments, evolving from a simple description of experiences to more complex investigations that capture descriptions of different ways of experiencing a phenomenon, as well as the nature of those descriptions (Marton, 2015; Rovio-Johansson & Ingerman, 2016). These developments, Åkerlind (2025:19) states, have helped to ensure rigour and trustworthiness in phenomenographic research, leading to phenomenography moving from being just a "research approach to a methodology with clear methodological expectations."

As a methodology, phenomenography has been applied in various empirical studies, such as studies that focused on conceptions and approaches to learning, aspects of approaches to learning and teaching and ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2015). It must be noted that although phenomenography was developed within the field of education, it has been used in other fields such

as healthcare (Sjöström & Dahlgren, 2002; Larsson and Holmstrom, 2007; Whitfield et al, 2023) and management studies (Dunkin, 2000).

As a qualitative approach, phenomenography is suitable for this study because it enables participants to express their understanding of the phenomenon under investigation through their experiences, providing opportunities to clarify and elaborate further (Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden, 2000). As such, I believe phenomenography aligns with the aim of this project, which is to explore the qualitatively different ways that staff collectively understand and experience the phenomenon under investigation – innovative teaching at the University.

As an interpretive research methodology, phenomenography has examined variation in participants' ways of experiencing a phenomenon (Marton, 1981). These variations, Åkerlind (2005) argues, are not just a set of different experiences but a collective representation of patterns of variations that are logical, hierarchical, holistic, and inclusive of the phenomenon under investigation. The representation of findings in this manner, as Åkerlind (2012, 2025) states, is crucial in phenomenographic research, as it enables us to develop a deeper understanding of the structural relationships between different ways of experiencing the phenomenon. For example, Larsson and Holmström (2007) in their study of anaesthesiologists' understanding of work demonstrated how analysing data from a phenomenological lens differed from analysing data from a phenomenographic lens. The findings, using the phenomenographic lens, provided different aspects of anaesthesiologists' work and how the structural relationship between the variations creates a holistic collective representation of the work of anaesthesiologists. In comparison, the findings from the phenomenological lens showed the essence of being an anaesthesiologist. This difference in findings is what Åkerlind (2012) argues is a key strength of phenomenography, as it provides a deeper understanding of participants' way of experiencing the object of study (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Phenomenography was developed within the field of higher education research by Ference Marton and co-workers in Göteborg, Sweden, starting in the 1970s. In phenomenography, the aim is to study the variation of people's conceptions of a given phenomenon in the surrounding world (Marton, 1981; Tight, 2015). Given

the focus of my research, which is to explore the differences in ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff, phenomenography lends itself as an approach to use, as it would allow me to explore the different ways of experiencing among participants and present these experiences in a hierarchical structure that provides a holistic account of what innovative teaching means within the context of the University.

Although there were other theories I could have used for this study, phenomenography seems an appropriate methodology given its focus on conceptualisation and variation. For example, I considered using phenomenology, an approach that also seeks to study people's experiences of phenomena to find commonalities in the data. Cibangu and Hepworth (2016) argue that phenomenography has its foundations in phenomenology as both approaches focus on the experiences of participants of a phenomenon. Marton (1981) disagrees with this notion but recognises that some aspects of phenomenography align with phenomenology (Marton & Booth, 1997). Larsson and Holmstrom (2007:55) state that the fundamental difference between these two approaches is that phenomenology "*aims to clarify the structure and meaning of a phenomenon, whereas phenomenography denotes a research approach aiming at describing the different ways a group of people understand a phenomenon*." Larsson and Holmström (2007:59) assert that the goal of phenomenological research is to understand the "*essence*" of the phenomenon by examining participants lived experiences of it. This essence is described as "*its inner core, without which it could not be what it is.*"

Marton (1988a:144) identifies the aim of phenomenography as "*mapping out the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of and various phenomena in the world around them*." Given the aim of this research, which is to explore the staff experiences of innovative teaching and how these experiences vary from each other, phenomenography is an appropriate approach for this study as a person's experience of a phenomenon is based on a particular relationship between a person and the world; a situation contributes to variation of experience (Åkerlind,2012). If I were to use a phenomenological lens, example research questions would have been:

- **What is the lived experience of staff of innovative teaching?**
- **How do staff make sense of innovative teaching?**

However, from a phenomenographic perspective, the research question focuses on differences in experiences of innovative teaching; hence, the research question for this study is:

What are the qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff within the context of a University?

Based on these differences in focus, I chose to adopt a phenomenographic approach, which also allows for the exploration of a phenomenon from the perspective of others, rather than the researcher's (Marton & Booth, 1997). It provides opportunities for conceptualisations that have relevance to the advancement of our understanding of teaching and learning practice in general (Entwistle, 1997) and innovative teaching in particular.

Ultimately, phenomenography has been widely applied in educational studies. For example, Marton and Booth's (1996) study focused on students' learning experience; Prosser et al.'s (1994) study on the conceptions of teaching, Åkerlind's (2005a) study on the experiences of growth and development among academics and Lam's (2018) study on teaching the recognition of Chinese characters. The outcome of these studies supports my decision to employ phenomenography as the most suitable approach for this study. I provide examples of phenomenographic studies in Section 3.5 to further support the appropriateness of this approach for my research on innovative teaching.

3.4 Overview of phenomenography

As the current study focuses on the relationship between people and the phenomenon, specifically their experiences of innovative teaching, it is essential to discuss the philosophical foundations of phenomenography to address this relationship within this project. Trigwell (2006) illustrates how phenomenography differs philosophically from other research approaches in five main areas, as

illustrated in Figure 3.1 below, where the key elements of phenomenography are highlighted on the right. I provide an overview of how these elements apply to my research in the subsequent sections and discuss these in detail in Section 3.5.

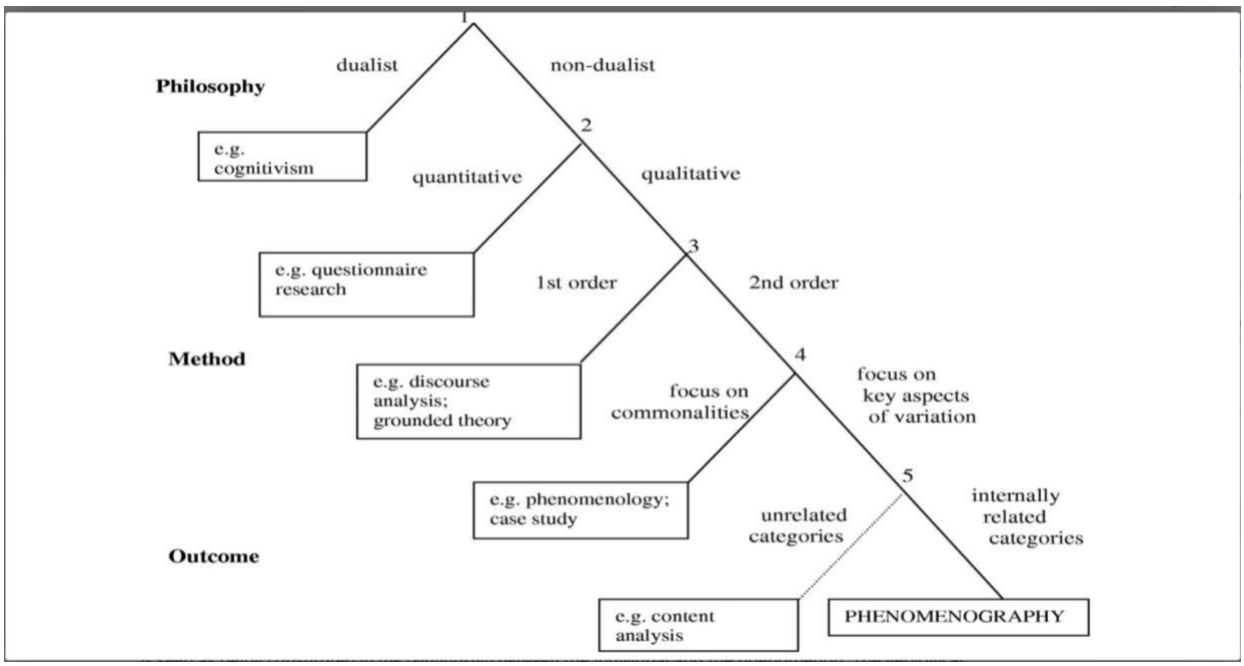


Figure 3.1: Phenomenography in comparison to other qualitative approaches.
Source: Trigwell (2006)

3.4.1 **Non-dualistic**

In the first instance, Trigwell (2006) states that phenomenography is philosophically non-dualistic as it does not separate the individual from the phenomenon but instead focuses on ways of experiencing derived from the relationship between the individual and the phenomenon in question. The implications of this non-dualist stance in my research mean that the object of study is the relationship between participants (staff) and the phenomenon (innovative teaching). As shown in Figure 3.2 below, my research adopts a non-dualist stance, where the experiences of participants in innovative teaching are inseparable, and the aim is to explore this relationship.

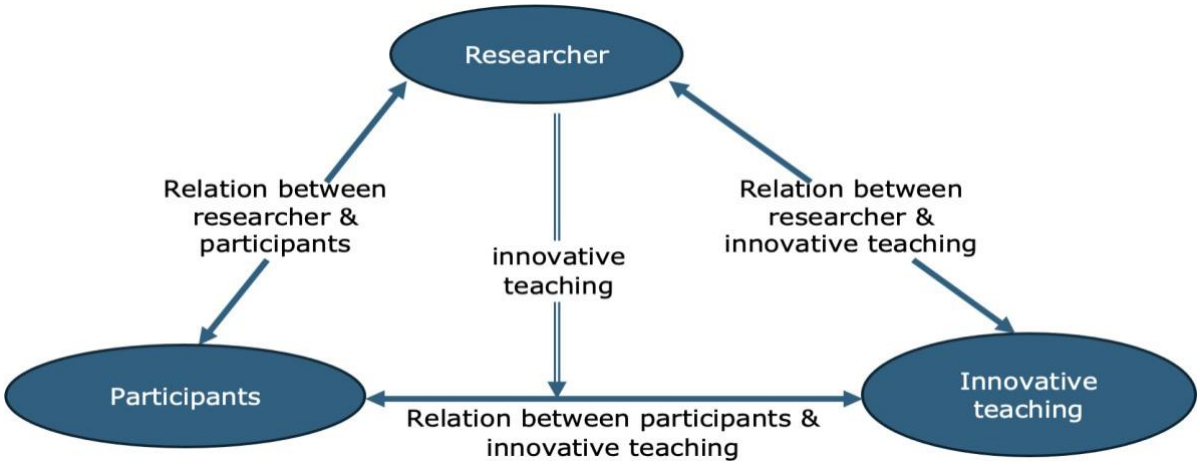


Figure 3.2: Phenomenographic relationality
Source: Bowden (2005:13)

3.4.2 **Qualitative paradigm**

Secondly, phenomenography employs a qualitative approach that seeks to elicit multiple perspectives, in contrast to a quantitative approach. Åkerlind (2005) argues that phenomenography aims to investigate variations in ways of experiencing, rather than to explain or explore the causes of these variations.

This aspect of phenomenography is useful within the context of my research as my focus is to investigate participants' ways of experiencing innovative teaching, the differences that exist and the hierarchical relatedness of these differences. The implication of this qualitative paradigm is the use of interviews as a data collection method in my research. Given the aim of my study, the interviews need to be designed to allow for interactivity and provide opportunities for participants to discuss their way of experiencing innovative teaching. Additionally, to elicit variation in ways of experiencing among participants in my study, my questions should be sufficiently open to allow participants to structure their responses and provide opportunities for them to reflect on their experiences (Bruce, 1994) of innovative teaching.

3.4.3 **Second-order perspective**

The second-order perspective in phenomenography focuses on the experiences of participants rather than those of the researcher. Marton (1981:178) highlights the

difference between the first–order perspective and the second-order perspective by stating that:

"*We orient ourselves towards the world and make statements about it. In the second [order] perspective, we orient ourselves towards people's ideas about the world (or their experience of it) and we make statements about people's ideas about the world (or about their experience of it)*."

Within the second-order perspective, the focus is on the experiences, and the meanings participants ascribe to a phenomenon. These experiences and meanings provide the foundation for the researcher's description (Trigwell,2006).

With this perspective, the implications for my project are that the ways of experiencing by participants, as expressed in the interviews form the basis of my analysis. In other words, my focus is on the experiences of innovative teaching from the participants' perspective and presenting these experiences.

3.4.4 **Focus on key aspects of variation**

Phenomenography focuses on the collective differences in ways of experiencing rather than the similarities of a phenomenon. Trigwell (2006) identifies this as a key aspect of phenomenography, which sometimes leads to similarities being excluded from the categories of description.

Although variation is key in phenomenographic research, Åkerlind (2005a:72) argues that its role is not to provide richness of variation in meanings of a phenomenon but to provide critical aspects that "*allow for structural relationships to be highlighted in a way that would not be possible if the analysis focused on every nuance of meaning.*" Additionally, the focus on variation and structure is key in presenting findings that are valuable and significant, as it enables the distinction between qualitative, distinctive ways that participants experience the same phenomenon and aspects that are not (Åkerlind, 2005a).

Therefore, within this study, a focus on variation implies that the outcome of my research will be to explore variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching

among staff. That is, the findings should present a collective view of the dimensions of variation in how staff experience innovative teaching at the University.

3.4.5 **Internally related categories**

The objective of phenomenography is to present categories of description that are internally related (Åkerlind, 2005). These categories of description represent the collective hierarchical ways in which people experience the object of the study and contribute to creating the outcome space. Marton & Booth (1997:125) identify three criteria for assessing the quality of the outcome space by stating:

"*The first criterion that can be stated is that the individual categories should each stand in clear relation to the phenomenon under investigation so that each category tells us something distinct about a particular way of experiencing the phenomenon. The second is that the categories have to stand in a logical relationship with one another, a relationship that is frequently hierarchical. Finally, the third criterion is that the system should be parsimonious, which is to say that as few categories should be explicated as is feasible and reasonable, for capturing the critical variation in the data."*

To identify the interrelatedness among categories of description, Marton & Booth (1997:206) propose the use of an analytical framework, which they characterise as "*a way of experiencing something*." This framework comprises a referential aspect and a structural aspect that co-occur and are intertwined with the referential aspect relating to the meaning of an experience and the structural aspect associated with the structure of that experience. These two aspects reflect a "what" (referential) aspect, which corresponds to the phenomenon, and a "how" (structural) aspect, which relates to the act. Within the structural aspect, a further distinction is made between the internal horizon and the external horizon of an experience.

The external horizon refers to what is in the background of the experience, and the internal horizon refers to what is in focus —the internal relationship of the phenomenon's parts to each other and its unified whole (Marton & Booth, 1997). This framework is depicted in Figure 3.3 below.

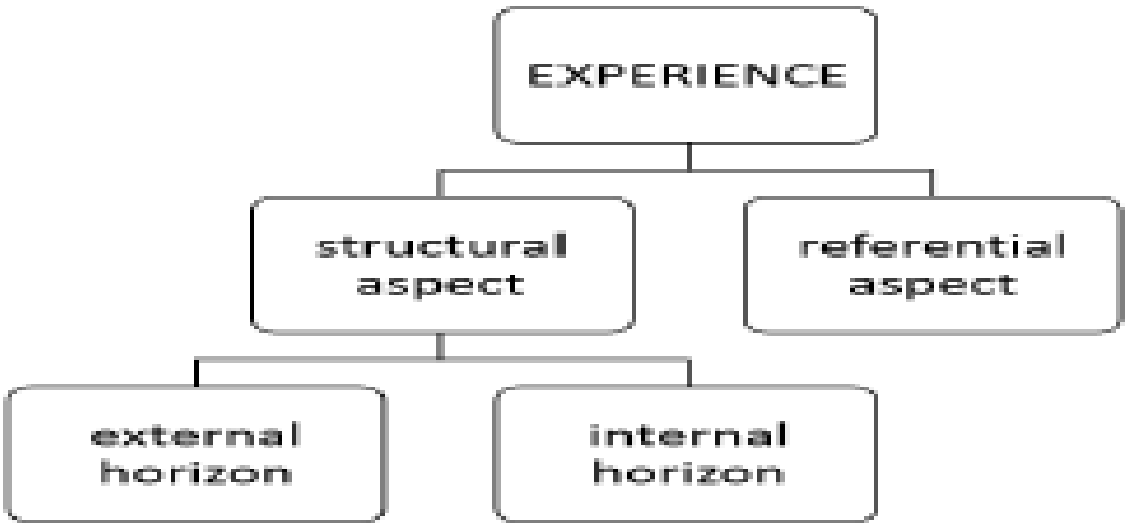


Figure 3.3: The anatomy of experience
Source: Marton & Booth (1997:88)

The anatomy of experiencing a phenomenon will be illustrated through an analogy used by Marton and Booth (1997). Imagine looking out into your garden, and you notice a hedgehog (the phenomenon) on the lawn. To see the hedgehog, you need to distinguish it from the surrounding grass and the broader environment. The surrounding grass and the broader environment form the external horizon of the experience. There is a possibility of seeing the various parts of the hedgehog, its snout, eyes, mouth, and spines. The ability to differentiate between the hedgehog and the grass and to know the separate parts of the hedgehog constitute a whole. Being able to discern the hedgehog and its different parts, and being able to relate these parts together, comprises the internal horizon.

In this instance, the referential aspect refers to being able to recognise a hedgehog based on prior experiences of the same phenomenon, allowing one to recognise it and assign a meaning or label to it. Figure 3.4 below illustrates this analogy visually.

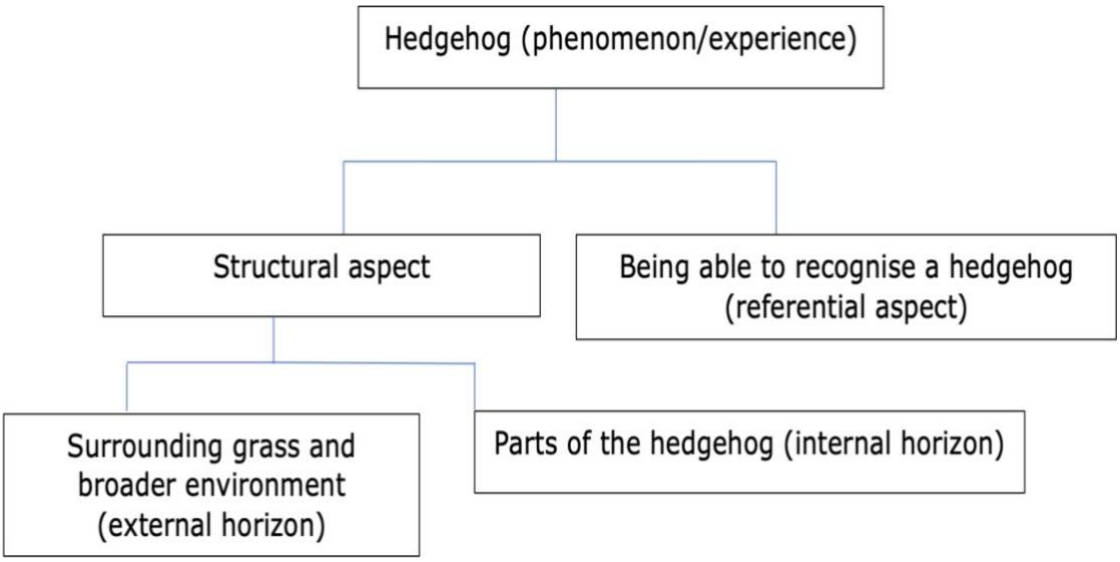


Figure 3.4: The anatomy of experience
Adapted from Marton & Booth (1997:88)

Collier-Reed & Ingerman (2013) highlight the importance of such a framework by arguing that phenomenography requires more than just identifying a set of qualitatively different categories. As the categories per se are not the primary focus, instead the crucial element is the structure and meaning related to the categories – specifically, the differences and similarities that connect and distinguish one category from another.

It, therefore, seems imperative that in presenting the categories of description in my research, I consider the interrelatedness (referential and structural aspects) to generate "the set of different aspects of the phenomenon as experienced that are simultaneously present in focal awareness" (Marton & Booth, 1997:101).

3.4.6 **Summary**

The five philosophical underpinnings of phenomenography discussed above have various implications for my study, as they shaped the research approach adopted, the framing of the research question, and the findings thereof. Table 3.1 below illustrates the implications of these findings in my research.

Feature of phenomenography	Meaning	Implications for my project
Non dualistic	Does not separate the experiences of participants from the object of study	Object of the study is the relationship between participants (staff) and innovative teaching as a phenomenon
Qualitative	Provides opportunity to explore multiple perspectives	Using interviews as a data collection method in my research
Second order perspective	Focusses on people's experience of the phenomenon	Participant experiences and meanings of innovative teaching form the basis of my analysis
Focus on variation	Focusses on variation in experience of the phenomenon	Presentation of the variations of how staff perceive innovative teaching at the University
Internally related	Focusses on demonstrating the referential and structural aspects of the categories of description.	Presenting the hierarchical relationship among experiences of innovative teaching and their interrelatedness.

Table 3.1: Features of phenomenography and its implications for this research

As not all works of phenomenography use the same approaches, in Section 3.4, I explore some examples of phenomenographic studies that helped me understand the application of the common principles of phenomenography (human experience and variations in experiences) and how these can be applied to my study to achieve my research objectives.

3.5 Samples of phenomenographic studies that have shaped my research

As stated above, findings from a scoping review of various phenomenographic studies in the field showed that not all studies in phenomenography use the same

approach. I therefore had to draw upon multiple studies to help shape my understanding of how to approach my research in a way that, Åkerlind (2005a) states, makes phenomenographic studies complete.

This section, therefore, draws on phenomenographic studies from the field of education, which demonstrate how phenomenography has been used to investigate a phenomenon (the object of study) and inform my approach to using phenomenography in my research. The studies were chosen because they explored differences in the meanings of a phenomenon in the field of Higher education from different perspectives. Based on these considerations, eight studies were selected as shown in Table 3.2 below.

In my review of the chosen studies in Table 3.2, I realised that adopting phenomenography in my research was appropriate as it would enable me to achieve my research aim—for example, all the studies focused on participants' ways of experiencing a phenomenon. In addition, the studies focused on the differences in experiences. They were able to present their findings in a manner that captured the categories of description and showed that their research objective(s) had been met. Table 3.2 hence focuses on the common attributes of chosen phenomenographic studies, which are stated below:

The object of study – ways of experiencing a particular phenomenon

Research question – focused on different ways of experiencing and understanding a particular phenomenon.

Categories of description – the first step in presenting the findings in phenomenography that demonstrates differences in ways of experiencing the given phenomenon.

	Study	Object of study/phenomenon	Research question	Categories of description
1.	Walsh et al (2007)	Problem solving ability of physics students	How do introductory physics students approach problem-solving?	C1: Scientific approach C2: Plug & chug. - Structured manner - Unstructured manner C3: Memory-based approach C4: No clear approach
2.	Brown et al (2016)	How staff conceptualise their CELT activities	How university staff conceptualise their CELT activities	C1: Relating an expert/novice discourse to perceptions of learning and teaching. C2: Translating expertise into advocating subject knowledge in, with and for the community. C3: Transforming advocacy to reciprocal learning.
3.	Beagon (2021)	To understand how academics teaching on engineering programmes conceptualise the term Professional Skills.	To examine the different ways in which academics teach Professional Skills in engineering programmes in Ireland. To investigate if there is a relationship between how academics teach Professional Skills and their Conception of Professional Skills.	C1: Transmitting knowledge. C2: Practicing C3: Coaching C4: Mirror industry environment C5: Role modelling

4.	Zou et al (2020)	Academics' conceptions of excellent teaching	1. What are the qualitatively different ways winners of awards for teaching excellence conceive of excellent teaching? 2. What critical aspects of excellent teaching need to be discerned in order to experience them in those different ways?	C1: Teachers teach confidently and effectively. C2: Teachers guide students to achieve the intended learning outcomes in their courses and programmes. C3: Teachers empower students to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in their discipline holistically. C4: Teachers work with students to enable them to own their learning, make an impact on the community, and become lifelong learners.
5.	Munangatire & McInerney (2022)	Roles of stakeholders in nursing education	Understand the qualitative different ways in which stakeholders conceptualise their roles in nursing education	C1: Initiating learning. C2: Supporting teaching & learning. C3: Moving towards a holistic role in the teaching and learning. C4: Owning the role of teaching and learning.
6.	Mimirinis (2020)	Conceptions of what constitutes excellent teaching among undergraduates	Explore the different ways in which undergraduate students understand teaching excellence	C1: Optimal presentation of subject matter C2: being taught by an excellent teacher. C3: Enabling & achieving an understanding of the principles of the subject matter. C4: Questioning knowledge C5: Bringing about change in the discipline.

7.	Denholm (2023)	What do we mean by innovative teaching	What are the qualitatively different ways academics perceive/ experience innovative teaching? In what ways do academics describe innovative teaching and what it means to them? • What are the critical ways these perceptions vary? • How do these different perceptions relate to each other? • How can this understanding be used to inform practice?	**Theme 1** C1: Teaching & assessment activities C2: Pedagogic alignment - Student – centred active learning - Professionally authentic learning C3: Personal creative development C4: An ethos **Theme 2** C5: Different to what we normally do C6: New to the context C7: New to me
8.	Henttonen et al (2023)	Ways of experiencing the writing of a bachelor's thesis	Nursing students' ways of experiencing the writing process at the halfway stage.	C1: Structure C2: Comparison C3: Shift C4: Relation

Table 3.2: Examples of phenomenographic studies in Higher Education

The above studies show how phenomenography has been used to explore various phenomena in the field of higher education. In the review of these samples, I identified some approaches which I have used as guiding principles in my study. For example, Denholm's (2023) thesis on innovative teaching reinforced the appropriateness of using phenomenography to understand the meaning and experience of innovative teaching among staff and the limited number of studies on innovative teaching that use this approach.

In addition, the studies helped deepen my understanding of how categories of descriptions are identified as part of the data analysis process. Another key lesson from these studies was how to structure my interviews to achieve the aim of my research. This was especially useful as it sensitised me to who my research participants should be. The considerations made in participant selection are addressed in Section 4.3.

Furthermore, these studies helped me phrase my research question in a manner consistent with phenomenographic studies and hone the focus of my research, namely, moving away from aiming to understand what innovative teaching per se is to exploring the variations in the experience of innovative teaching among staff. For example, the framing of the research questions in Table 3.2 allowed the researchers to uncover variations in ways of experiencing the given phenomenon. This approach thus allowed the data analysis to capture the categories of description, representing differences in ways of experiencing. By adopting this approach, I hope that the way I have framed my research question will enable me to uncover differences in staff experiences of innovative teaching and demonstrate these differences through the categories of description I have established.

Again, these studies encouraged me to consider the number of categories of description that I might generate from my data analysis. In the above studies, four categories of description seem to be the norm. Therefore, for my project, I aim to present between 4 and 6 categories of description based on the studies mentioned above.

In reviewing the samples above, a disparity emerged regarding how the outcome space was presented. Although there was consistency in presenting categories of

description, there seemed to be no definite way of presenting the outcome space. Some of the studies above presented the outcome space as categories of description, whereas others included the interrelatedness (both referential and structural aspects) among the categories of description presented. At this point, I choose to refrain from choosing a particular way of presenting my outcome space as the approach I adopt will be dependent on the data collected and the picture the data paints during the data analysis process. A further discussion on outcome space is presented in Section 3.6.

3.6 My approach to phenomenography

In Section 3.3, I presented an overview of phenomenography and how Trigwell's (2006) five philosophical elements apply to my research in a general way. In this section, using these five philosophical elements as a frame of reference and the review of the phenomenographic studies in Section 3.4. I provide a detailed discussion on how these elements specifically apply to my research and how phenomenography, as the approach adopted for this study, addresses the research objective of this project, which is to understand the qualitatively different ways that staff experience innovative teaching within the University context.

3.6.1 Non-dualistic

Adopting this stance in my research means avoiding dualism between the phenomenon, innovative teaching, and participants. In other words, the ways of experiencing innovative teaching that participants ascribe to the phenomenon of innovative teaching will not be treated as separate entities, but rather as one. This is because, as Marton & Booth (1997:113) note, an individual's experience of a phenomenon involves the internal relationship between '*the experiencer'* and '*the experienced*'. Marton & Pong (2005) refer to this internal relationship as "a way of experiencing something" or "conception".

Therefore, concerning a non-dualistic stance in this study, participants' ways of experiencing innovative teaching are shaped by their conception of it. In other words, this implies that innovative teaching (the object) and participants (subjects) cannot be separated, as there is only one world. Although experiences

of innovative teaching will differ, participants cannot be seen as separate from their experiences based on the internal relationship they have with these experiences. Figure 3.5 is an illustration of this internal relationship between participants and the object of this study/phenomenon (innovative teaching).

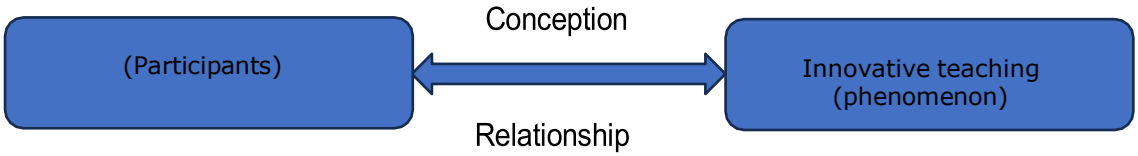


Figure 3.5: Illustration of internal relationship (adapted from Bruce, 2003)

3.6.2 **Qualitative paradigm**

The research employs an interpretive paradigm to delve into the collective ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff. This approach involves gathering diverse perspectives from participants to create a framework of categories, where each category represents a holistic viewpoint on innovative teaching. Within this element, as per Trigwell (2006), rather than focusing on individual experiences, the qualitative data collected and its analysis will represent collective variations that seek to uncover how participants experience innovative teaching.

In addition, similar to the method and focus employed in the research samples discussed in Section 3.4, this approach ensures that the focus of the interviews with participants is based on their relationship with or experiences of innovative teaching, rather than on innovative teaching as a phenomenon in itself. Further details of the data collection and analysis are discussed in Chapter 4 (Research design).

3.6.3 **Second-order perspective**

My application of the second-order perspective in this study entails approaching the research from the collective perspective of participants, seeking their experiences of innovative teaching. This stance implies that I aim to focus on how collectively participants experience innovative teaching and not what innovative teaching is; this allows for a focus on the experiences of participants "*without necessary reference to correctness or truth*" (Booth, 1992:54).

As this approach seeks to understand how innovative teaching is experienced from the collective perspective of participants, it requires that I adopt an open-minded approach and seek to understand innovative teaching from their perspective, rather than mine. This means refraining from being judgmental or biased towards a particular narrative. Figure 3.6 below illustrates the second-order perspective in my work.

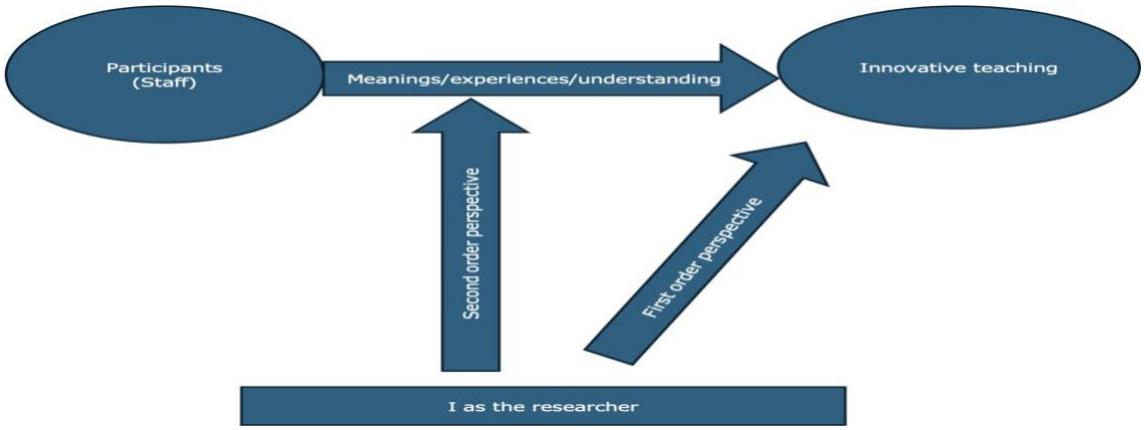


Figure 3.6: Visual representation of second-order perspective in my study
Adapted from: Uljens (1991)

3.6.4 **Focus on key aspects of variation**

As the objective of this study is to investigate the differences in ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff, the assumption is that there would be variations in experiences of innovative teaching, as the literature (Khayati & Selim, 2019; Fraser, 2019) on innovative teaching shows there is no consensus on innovative teaching, given the varied meanings ascribed to it. In addition, the literature (Walder, 2014; Kopcha et al., 2016) calls for the meanings of innovative teaching to be explored contextually. For example, Jaskyte et al. (2009) found that staff and students had different views on the characteristics of innovative teaching. These findings support my view that variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching may exist among participants.

Phenomenography is, therefore, an appropriate methodology for exploring and identifying the differences in experiences of innovative teaching among participants. The categories of description generated from the data would contribute to our understanding of innovative teaching from the relationship

between "*the experiencer*" (participants) and "*the experienced*" (innovative teaching), Marton & Booth (1997:113), and the structural relationship between the categories of description. In addition, learning from the examples discussed in Section 3.4 indicates that each category of description presented in my study will demonstrate one of the ways through which staff experience innovative teaching at the University.

3.6.5 **Internally related categories**

Building on the focus on identifying variations, there is a need to elucidate how the categories of description I generate from my data analysis are internally related. In other words, presenting the dimensions of variations (referential and structural aspects) of participants' collective experiences of innovative teaching. This presentation is key for my study to be considered phenomenographic in nature because the product of this process contributes to the outcome space.

The outcome space in this study, therefore, aims to present not just the categories of description that capture variations but also to show the dimensions of variation that depict how the various categories are related through shared features, while also being different, that is, a contrasting comparison of categories. An example of an outcome space is discussed in Section 3.6 using Mimirinis's (2020) study as a frame of reference.

3.7 Presenting findings in phenomenography

Outcome spaces are used to present the findings in phenomenography and reflect the holistic representation of the collective experience of people of the phenomenon in question. The outcome space comprises two elements: categories of description and dimensions of variation (Åkerlind, 2012; Trigwell, 2006). The categories of description are essentially a hierarchical presentation where each category contains more complex descriptions than the previous category, and the dimensions of variations show the relationship between categories.

As the outcome space plays a key role in phenomenography, it seems appropriate to provide an example of an outcome space from the literature, since outcome

spaces vary. Figure 3.7 and Table 3.3 below illustrate an example of an outcome space, which depicts the categories of description and dimensions of variation, respectively. This example is Mimirinis's (2020) study on "what undergraduate students understand by excellent teaching." The study produced five categories of description (labelled A-E), demonstrating the variation in the meaning of what excellent teaching means to participants in the study.

Figure 3.7: Categories of description showing variation in meaning of undergraduate students understanding of excellent teaching. Source: Mimirinis, 2020

Within the categories of description depicted in Figure 3.7 above, Category A represents a basic understanding of excellent teaching, with Category E representing an advanced understanding of excellent teaching. In this context, the implication is that an understanding of excellent teaching at Category E includes experiences of Categories A to D. Still, an understanding of excellent teaching at Category A does not include experiences of Categories B to E. These categories of description are based on the collective understanding of participants in the Mimirinis (2020) study, rather than the individual understanding of each participant. From the categories of description, it can be seen that though presentation of the subject matter is essential in excellent teaching (Category A), it does not consider other aspects of excellent teaching, such as the role of the teacher in the process, understanding, questioning and change, which are present in other categories (B, C, D, E).

In Mimirinis's (2020) study, the dimensions of variation depicting the referential and structural aspects represent how the categories of descriptions vary in participants' ways of experiencing excellent teaching. Table 3.3 below illustrates

the outcome space, which depicts the model's structural and referential elements. The study identified three main structural aspects: "focus unrelated to understanding," "focus related to understanding," and "focus on change."

The relationship between the categories of description identified the structural aspects of categories unrelated to understanding (A and B), categories related to understanding (C and D), and categories related to change (E). Identifying the structural relationship between the variations is what creates a holistic collective representation of students' understanding of what excellent teaching is.

	Structural aspect		
	Focus unrelated to understanding	Focus related to understanding	Focus on change
Referential aspect			
Category A = Optimal presentation of subject matter	A		
Category B = Category A + being taught by an excellent teacher	B		
Category C = Category B + enabling and achieving an understanding of the principles of the subject matter		C	
Category D = Category C + questioning knowledge		D	
Category E = Category D + bringing about change in the discipline			E

Table 3.3: Outcome space showing referential and structural aspects of undergraduate students' understanding of excellent teaching. Source: Mimirinis, 2020

Applying the above to my research, I present three hypothetical categories of description which could contribute to the outcome space of my research on innovative teaching, as shown in Figure 3.8 below. For example, Category A could

be "Innovative teaching is about experiencing something new". Category B is "Innovative teaching is about creating curiosity among students," and Category C is "Innovative teaching is about feeling empowered". These categories of description illustrate the collective variations in how participants might perceive innovative teaching and its relationship with student development.

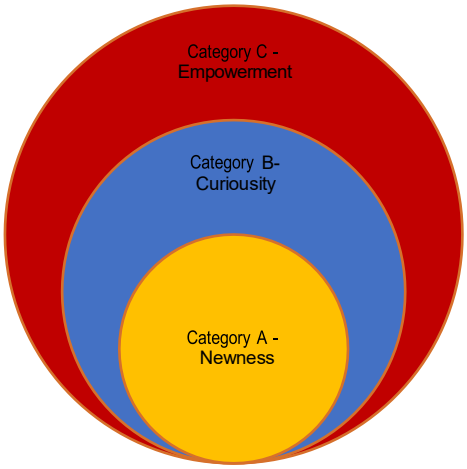


Figure 3.8: Hypothetical categories of description showing variation

As part of the outcome space, it is also important that I demonstrate the meaning of the categories of description derived above and how they are related. This hypothetically generates the dimensions of variation within the categories of description as depicted in Table 3.4 below:

	Structural aspect	
	Focus related to context	Focus related development
Referential aspect		
Category A= Innovative teaching is about experiencing something new	A	
Category B = A + Innovative teaching is about creating curiosity among students		B
Category C = B + Innovative teaching is about feeling empowered		C

Table 3.4: Hypothetical outcome space showing referential and structural aspects of innovative teaching.

From the hypothetical categories of description, it can be deduced that Category A represents a fundamental meaning of innovative teaching; at the same time, Category B demonstrates a greater awareness of the experience, where the experience is not just about newness but also about creating curiosity. Category C can be considered the most inclusive, as it adds a dimension of empowerment that assumes the presence of newness and curiosity found in Categories A and B. This hierarchy of descriptions, which illustrates what innovative teaching entails, serves as the referential aspect. A hypothetical relationship between the variations could be identified as the structural aspect. This structural aspect could be "a focus on context", which relates to the context in which the teaching experience occurred, and "a focus on development", which transcends the teaching experience.

In summary, this project aims to provide an outcome space (based on findings in phenomenography) that captures what innovative teaching means to staff and the critical aspects that exist within these meanings. The categories of description will be a collective representation of the participants' experiences, identifying the referential and structural aspects that exist. This process ensures that my research not only conforms to the requirements of phenomenography but also provides a deeper understanding of participants' ways of experiencing of innovative teaching.

In addition, the findings will contribute to the literature on innovative teaching in general and address the call (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Smith, 2011) for more research on innovative teaching that explores experiences from different stakeholders (Kopcha et al, 2016).

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the philosophical, epistemological and theoretical framework underpinning this study of innovative teaching. I discussed the appropriateness of using phenomenography as a theoretical framework, given the aim of this study, which is to explore the difference in understanding of innovative teaching from the perspectives of staff. An overview of phenomenography and its fundamental characteristics was discussed with a particular focus on its implementation and implications for my research. I also drew on examples from other phenomenographic studies to illustrate the strength of phenomenography and its capacity to provide researchers with rich understandings of their object of study, which collectively represent logical, hierarchical, holistic, and inclusive patterns of variation, thereby deepening our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. An example of an outcome space from the literature was presented, along with a hypothetical outcome space for my research on innovative teaching.

The next chapter (Chapter 4) discusses the research design for this study, including the main research elements, their implementation, and the implications for the study.

4 Research design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter demonstrates the guiding principles of my research project by discussing key considerations I made regarding data collection and its analysis. A qualitative research design was chosen in line with phenomenography, which subsequently influenced how the interviews were conducted, the questions asked, and the data analysis process. Phenomenography represents a distinct qualitative research paradigm due to its focus on the second-order perspective and variations thereof (Marton & Booth, 1997; Ashworth & Lucas, 2000). To capture this essence, the data collection process and its analysis must capture the understanding and experiences of participants, as well as variations in meanings. Cope (2004) argues that, as phenomenography seeks to provide descriptions and understanding, the research design must offer opportunities for this. This chapter is structured to provide a detailed description of how the relevant aspects of the research design were implemented in a way that adheres to phenomenography.

The chapter consists of 8 sections, each addressing a key aspect of the research design. Section 4.2 presents an overview of the research site and its appropriateness for my study. This section provides a detailed description of the research site, highlighting how its operations offer opportunities for staff to become aware of innovative teaching practices and to capture variations in meaning and experiences among research participants, in line with the principles of phenomenography (Åkerlind, 2005). Section 4.3 discusses insider research, its associated issues, and how these were addressed. Section 4.4 focuses on participant recruitment and how it was carried out to ensure that participants had an awareness of the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997), specifically, innovative teaching. In Section 4.5, the data collection process is presented to demonstrate its alignment with phenomenographic interviews (Bruce, 1994; Cousin, 2009). Section 4.6 shows how the data was analysed as per phenomenography and how the steps suggested by Åkerlind (2005a;2025) were used to enhance the process. In Section 4.7, steps undertaken to ensure the quality and validity of my research are discussed. Section 4.8 addresses ethical considerations as per research in

general and the requirements of Lancaster University in particular. Section 4.9 provides a summary of the key points discussed in this chapter.

4.2 Research site

This section describes the research site used for this study and its appropriateness for phenomenography. The research site chosen for this study is the research-intensive University where I work, herein referred to as Southeast University. What makes this site appropriate for my research on innovative teaching is Southeast University's stance on teaching. The University deems itself as providing opportunities for staff to be innovative in their teaching by supporting teaching-focused development among staff. The University regularly organises teaching-focused workshops and conferences for staff and supports staff in achieving teaching accreditations. As part of this process, staff employed by the University are required to achieve certification with Advance HE within three years of joining, if they do not already hold it as part of the probation process.

Southeast University is a public research university located in the southeast region of England. It employs over 2,000 academic staff and approximately 1,400 professional services staff, with a student population of over 20,000, registered in various programmes at undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels. The University is clustered into 9 disciplinary schools, with some schools further divided into disciplinary departments. This structure is currently under review to adopt a faculty system, which would involve the merging of some schools into a single faculty.

Again, the Southeast's description of itself as an advocate and leader of innovation in teaching and research makes it an appropriate site to explore the different meanings of innovative teaching among its staff. Based on Southeast's positioning, as part of its 2025 strategy, it introduced various activities aimed at supporting innovations in research and teaching. To emphasise this, the Southeast's 2025 strategic framework encourages staff and students to be disruptive in their approaches to learning, teaching and research.

Additionally, the University's teaching-focused awards were rebranded to reinforce the drive for staff to be innovative in their teaching. These awards were redesigned to recognise staff who colleagues and students identify as being transformational in their teaching. Award winners are usually described as staff who dare to be innovative and different in their approach. Each year, the University receives an average of 100 nominations for staff who have been identified as innovative in their teaching. The high number of nominations for this category in the awards suggests that the ethos of innovative teaching is prevalent among staff and students at Southeast University. This apparent awareness of innovation, therefore, presents opportunities to explore variations in staff experiences of innovative teaching, which is the aim of this project.

Furthermore, as the aim of phenomenography is to seek variation in meaning (Bruce, 1994; Åkerlind, 2005), this site is appropriate as it provides access to a diverse group of potential participants concerning discipline, teaching experience, qualification and other relevant characteristics that increase the possibility of variation in experiences of the phenomenon of my study, which is innovative teaching.

The University has four main contract types: research and teaching, teaching and scholarship, research-focused, and professional services. Staff on research and teaching contracts have relatively lower teaching responsibilities. In comparison, those on teaching and scholarship contracts have relatively higher teaching responsibilities, and those on research contracts have minimal to no teaching responsibilities. Staff on professional services contracts, such as academic developers, quality assurance managers, and learning technologists, deliver workshop activities that influence policy and the narrative around innovative teaching and its delivery. Each School is assigned an academic developer and a learning technologist who work closely with staff in their assigned School on ways to make teaching innovative. As such, they deliver workshops on innovative teaching approaches. I believe that the various contract types existing at the University may influence how staff experience innovative teaching. This, therefore, makes the University an appropriate research site as there is the possibility of uncovering variations in the ways of experiencing innovative teaching based on contract types.

Although this approach might seem opportunistic, it is pragmatic given my limited resources. Taylor et al. (2016) highlight the benefits of "insider research" in terms of participant recruitment, the selection process, and familiarity with the research site. I believe using my workplace as my research site would not only provide easy access but also help foster a connection with participants and develop trust.

4.3 Insider–outsider considerations

There is a need to consider the impact of insider research, as it is being carried out where I work, and the research participants are my colleagues. Therefore, given my choice of research site, I was mindful of the challenges associated with insider research and had to consider the implications of this. I also had to be aware that in some contexts, I might be seen as an outsider by participants due to disciplinary differences and my administrative role. Hammersley (1993) suggests, however, that insider/outsider is not a case of one versus the other but instead occurs on a continuum. I consider myself an insider, as the research site for this study is my workplace. As I discussed my positionality in Chapter 1, this section focuses solely on undertaking insider research.

Undertaking insider research has its pros and cons. As an insider, my identity as a member of the teaching faculty provided easy access to participants and created a sense of belonging, which in turn fostered a level of trust and candidness during the interview process. This sense of belonging, however, was a double-edged sword, as some colleagues I interviewed felt that I should have answers to some of the questions, given my role as a faculty member or Director of Teaching and Learning. To address this, I emphasised the focus of the research, which is the need for their experiences and meanings to contribute to the deepening of our understanding of innovative teaching. I was also mindful that, as an insider, I had certain assumptions about the culture at the University.

For example, being familiar with the context and culture, I was tempted to fill in the blank spaces in the first interview based on prior knowledge or "a near obsession with seeking an unseen 'reality' in virtually every corner" Labaree,

2002:102). With this in mind, in subsequent interviews, I actively took steps to "bracket" these assumptions by entering the interviews with a mindset that I knew nothing about innovative teaching and gathering data from the participants' perspectives (Asselin, 2003). "Bracketing" allowed me to set aside any preconceptions, presuppositions, and prior knowledge about innovative teaching, enabling me to approach the interviews with a clearer vision (Taylor et al., 2016). This was necessary, especially as the central tenet of phenomenography is experiencing a phenomenon through the eyes of others (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Some participants expressed concerns that I might have a hidden agenda, such as judging and evaluating staff teaching practices and reporting the findings to senior management. These concerns were addressed by indicating to staff that the research was for my study at Lancaster and had no bearing on my role at the University. I needed to address these concerns promptly, as failure to do so could have led to issues of trust and impacted participant openness (Merriam et al., 2001). Being mindful of the concerns that some participants had, it was necessary to provide full disclosure of my intent and aims at the start of each interview and to have participants reread the participant information sheet and consent form. I also sought to create an environment where participants felt comfortable sharing their perspectives on innovative teaching with me. For example, where interviews were held in person, a meeting room was booked instead of using offices to ensure privacy and minimise the possibility of interruptions from others. In all sessions, I began by making my intentions clear by presenting my true self to the staff, specifically as a researcher interested in the construction of ways of experiencing innovative teaching within the University context, rather than as someone evaluating their practice (Taylor, 2011). This approach was vital for "creating a researcher-participant learning partnership" (Asselin,2003:3) to achieve my research aims.

Additionally, I was aware of the issues of familiarity, rapport, power, and representation (Merriam et al., 2001; Taylor, 2011). For example, there was an increased willingness among staff to partake in my research due to the perceived power my role as DTL holds. In a couple of interviews, participants veered off-topic and wanted to vent their frustrations on other matters not relevant to the research focus. I had to be sensitive to their concerns and tactfully draw their

attention back to the research's focus to avoid any data distortion. I achieved this by reiterating the session's objective and reaffirming my position as a researcher (Asselin, 2003).

In subsequent interviews, to maintain focus, I used follow-up questions that encouraged participants to elaborate on their experiences of innovative teaching, rather than the challenges of teaching in general.

Taylor (2011) and Holmes (2020) encourage the use of reflexivity in research to navigate the dilemma associated with insider research. As part of the reflective process, I kept a reflective diary during the research process. This diary was used to note any methodological issues that arose during the interview process, complementing the interview transcripts and ensuring that the participants' experiences were accurately interpreted. This diary helped determine whether any adjustments were needed for the interview process, such as questions, location, or style. Also, it served as a reminder of the need to accurately capture the narrative of my respondents, which is vital for the second-order perspective in phenomenography (Cope, 2004).

Additionally, the reflective diary was the space where I undertook the "bracketing" activities such as identifying and writing down my thoughts and beliefs about innovative teaching so I could approach interviews without any preconceived understandings but rather attempt to understand innovative teaching as seen and experienced by interviewees as per phenomenographic interviews (Bruce 1994; Cope, 2004) and minimise the potential for data distortion and bias. Being reflective also helped minimise the occurrence of role confusion, as it provided opportunities to periodically take a break from the data collection process and review my fieldwork notes on thoughts and feelings about participant responses. Cope (2004) emphasises the importance of reflexivity, particularly in phenomenographic research, as it enables researchers to position themselves in a manner that enhances the credibility of the study.

4.4 Participants

This study aimed to identify staff members engaged in teaching, as well as those who influence policy, as these individuals support the University in delivering its teaching strategy, particularly innovative teaching. Staff with teaching responsibilities are expected to design, prepare and deliver the curriculum to students and are usually at the forefront of teaching activities. On the other hand, staff who influence policy are generally not at the forefront of student teaching but rather deliver workshops that support staff in their teaching practice.

I aimed to recruit participants who have teaching responsibilities and staff who influence teaching policy. I was particularly interested in recruiting staff who had acted as a judging panel member, had been nominated, or had won an award in the University's Education Awards. The reasons for these are that I believe these members of staff would possess various perspectives and experiences of innovative teaching, based on their engagement with teaching, and would be able to share their perspectives on ways of experiencing innovative teaching.

To ensure that my study aligns with phenomenography, I aimed to recruit between thirteen and twenty participants, which the literature on phenomenography (Cousin, 2009; Tight, 2015) suggests is sufficient to allow for variation and data manageability. Additionally, a purposeful sampling strategy was used to maximise variation (Cousin, 2009). This approach, phenomenographic literature (Åkerlind, 2005; Cousin, 2009; Orgill, 2012) suggests, allows for the identification and selection of information-rich cases due to the relative ease of identifying potential participants. As the objective of this study was to uncover the differences in the ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff at the University, the selection process allowed for these variations to be revealed. Hence, when choosing participants for this study, I accounted for variation across key indicators (Åkerlind et al., 2014), such as involvement in education awards, gender, discipline, teaching experience, type of appointment, grade, etc.

To achieve the above, the criteria outlined below acted as guidelines in the recruitment process.

For staff directly involved in teaching, I aimed to recruit participants on different teaching contracts. In addition, I aimed to recruit participants who had some form of teaching qualification or accreditation, as I believed this could serve as a measure of awareness of innovative teaching. Regarding accreditations, I aimed to have staff who held either Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow, or Principal Fellow status with Advance HE. Through engagement with teaching-related development activities and certification status, I believe participants will be able to provide rich and varied accounts of their experiences of innovative teaching. I also aimed for participants who had been nominated or won an award in the University's Education Awards.

In addition to teaching staff, this study aimed to recruit participants who worked in professional services as learning technologists and academic developers, as these staff members shape and influence practice at the University and also manage the University's Education Award process. While learning technologists and academic developers at the University typically support academic staff with technology-based challenges, the majority also have a background in pedagogy and are responsible for delivering teaching development workshops to academic staff. Some of these workshops feed into staff applications for certification with Advance HE, as well as the in-house qualification for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education. Based on their roles and backgrounds, it seems appropriate to aim to recruit participants in this category who support staff with their teaching practice, particularly in innovative practices. I also aimed to recruit professional services staff who were members of the judging panel for the University's Education Awards nominations.

The reason for this approach was that the experiences of the phenomenon - innovative teaching among staff involved in teaching, and those shaping and influencing teaching policy - will differ, and therefore provide variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching. In addition, recruiting staff involved in different teaching-related activities offers opportunities to explore ways of experiencing innovative teaching holistically and from various perspectives.

As part of the recruitment process, a targeted email was sent to all staff directly engaged in teaching activities or staff who influence teaching activities at the

University. To encourage variation in the narrative, as per phenomenography, staff from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, genders, teaching experiences, appointment types, and grade levels were selected to participate. Regarding emails, I chose to send these out to members of staff in each faculty at the University to allow for variation in characteristics. For example, with staff in the Business School, emails were sent to each of the five disciplinary departments in the School. This was to ensure that staff who responded to my call would be from different disciplines and prevent the likelihood of overrepresentation of a particular discipline. Once a response was received from a potential participant, I looked up their staff profile to note characteristics such as their work experience, which helped determine their teaching experience, the type of contract they were likely to be on, and whether they held any teaching qualifications and certifications.

Additionally, I checked if they had been involved in the University Education Awards, either as a panel member, nominee, or recipient. These details, however, were confirmed with participants before interviews took place. These processes and guidelines were designed to ensure that participants selected for interviews could offer a range of experiences and meanings they ascribe to innovative teaching, thereby allowing for variation that is key in phenomenographic research (Marton & Booth, 1997; Bowden, 2000).

Based on the recruitment process outlined above, I successfully recruited a total of sixteen staff members, comprising twelve directly involved in teaching and four who influenced and shaped policy on teaching. Of the twelve, three held research and teaching contracts, and the other nine held education and scholarship contracts. Table 4 below provides a profile of staff participants, showing variation in the sampling method. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of participants. Although I hoped to recruit an equal mix of staff on various contract types, I believe the number of interviews and the different staff profiles allowed for heterogeneity of participants and meaningful data analysis (Åkerlind, 2005).

Participant	Gender	Education awards	Role	Teaching Qualification/ Accreditation	Type of contract	Faculty	Years of teaching/ Working in HE
Participant 1	M	Nominee	Lecturer	Ongoing	Teaching focussed	Business	14
Participant 2	F	Winner	Lecturer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Teaching focussed	Business	6
Participant 3	M	Winner	Lecturer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Teaching focussed	Business	7
Participant 4	F	Nominee	Lecturer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Teaching focussed	Business	6
Participant 5	M	Winner	Lecturer	PGCertHE /Fellow	Teaching Focussed	Business	20
Participant 6	M	No	Senior Lecturer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Research Focussed	Business	11
Participant 7	F	Winner	Professor	PGCertHE/ SFHEA	Teaching Focussed	Science, Engineering & Medicine	13
Participant 8	F	Nominee	Senior Lecturer	PGCertHE/ SFHEA	Research Focussed	Social Sciences	15
Participant 9	F	Winner	Senior Lecturer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Teaching focussed	Social Sciences	15
Participant 10	F	Winner	Academic Developer	AFHEA	Professional services	Media, Arts & Humanities	8
Participant 11	F	No	Education Manager	None	Professional services	Business School	6
Participant 12	F	Winner	Academic developer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Professional services	Social Sciences	16
Participant 13	F	Winner	Lecturer	Ongoing	Teaching Focussed	Media, Arts & Humanities	15
Participant 14	M	Winner	lecturer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Research focus	Business	3
Participant 15	F	Winner	Academic developer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Professional services	Business	10
Participant 16	F	Winner	Senior Lecturer	PGCertHE/ Fellow	Research focussed	Business	11

Table 4.1: Profile of participants

4.5 Data collection

As discussed in Section 3.6.2, interviews were chosen for this study to allow participants to express their views on ways of experiencing innovative teaching, thereby producing rich and valid data necessary for the categories of description. I employed what Orgill (2012: 2609) refers to as "open and deep" interviews in phenomenographic studies. This approach provided opportunities for me to explore and probe participants on their experiences of innovative teaching until the line of questioning had been exhausted and there was nothing more to cover on the subject. As discussed in Section 3.6.3, this approach is fundamental in phenomenography for exploring underlying ways of experiencing from the second-order perspective.

Considering the philosophical position discussed in Section 3.2, my questions were unstructured. They began with general inquiries about innovative teaching to elicit participants' ways of experiencing of the phenomenon (Cousin, 2009), allowing for their concepts and words to be captured appropriately through follow-up questions. This approach minimised the overreliance on predetermined questions, which do not always capture people's experiences of a phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2005a).

According to phenomenographic interviews, I needed to have a process in place to aid the focus of the interview and address my research aims, as discussed in Chapter 1. Therefore, I used the interview guide in these studies, which had employed phenomenography (Zhao, 2016; Condappa, 2018; Denholm, 2023) and Åkerlind's (2011) approach. The interviews focused on gathering participants' views on what innovative teaching meant to them, the characteristics that made teaching innovative, their experiences with innovative teaching, and what they aimed to achieve through innovative teaching (See Appendix 1 for interview protocol). Additionally, follow-up questions were used to elicit deeper meanings from the participants' responses. Åkerlind (2005) argues that follow-up questions are essential in delving deeper into participant responses than pre-determined ones. Follow-up questions were also used to verify the meaning of words used by participants as part of the "bracketing" necessary in phenomenography, especially since understanding a phenomenon from a second-order perspective is crucial.

Each interview began with asking each participant to share a bit about their academic journey, the purpose of which was to gain insight into how their teaching practice had evolved. From this, the follow-up question was "Could you please tell me what innovative teaching means to you?". Based on the answers provided, follow-up questions were asked about the characteristics of innovative teaching, the purpose of trying to be innovative in their teaching, what, in their view, constituted non-innovative teaching, and the challenges faced when attempting to be innovative in teaching. Follow-up prompts such as "Could you explain x further?", "Can you give me an example of …" and "What do you mean when you say…" were used. These prompts were used to provide participants with opportunities to reveal their experiences of innovative teaching as fully as possible, ensuring that I did not introduce any new aspects not previously mentioned by the participant (Åkerlind, 2005). I was also mindful to use these prompts appropriately and not to interrupt participants. I also took note of the keywords used by interviewees to explore their meanings in more depth. For example, an interviewee likened "innovative teaching to impact". The follow-up prompt sought to explore what the participant meant by "impact" I asked, "What do you mean innovative teaching has to do with impact"? This approach was necessary because the meaning this participant associated with the word "impact" would not necessarily be the same meaning I had when it was mentioned (Åkerlind, 2005).

Additionally, I approached each interview as if it were the first of the 16, I conducted. The idea behind this approach was to ensure that I did not influence participant responses from previous interviews and provide opportunities for each participant to discuss how they perceive, understand, or experience innovative teaching (Bruce, 1994).

Finally, as part of managing the interview process, the purpose of the interview was reiterated, and verbal confirmation was sought to ensure participants were still happy to partake in the study. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. Most interviews were held online, as most staff were working from home during the interview period. (April – June). All interviews were recorded, regardless of the mode (online or in-person).

4.6 Data analysis

This section provides an account of the iterative analysis process I undertook to analyse the data generated from the interviews. Before starting the analysis, I transcribed the recordings from the interviews as I believed this would help me familiarise myself with the data. Each interview was assigned a pseudonym, and the files were uploaded to NVivo to make the data manageable and facilitate data interrogation.

Deciding on which analytic approach to use proved to be a challenge, as there is no singular way of analysing data in phenomenography. After reading various literature, including Marton (1986), Prosser et al. (1994), Bowden and Walsh (2000), and Åkerlind (2012) on phenomenography, I remained uncertain about which approach to use that would ensure my interpretation of the data was credible. I therefore reached out to two authors (Taylor–Beswick and Åkerlind), who had published books on phenomenography, and they kindly shared their work with me. Their materials provided the clarity I needed to help me decide which approach to use and the implications for my study. I, therefore, decided to adopt Åkerlind's (2012) approach, as it allowed me to simultaneously unearth meaning (referential aspect) and structure (structural aspect) from the data. Åkerlind (2025) proposes a 10-step process for data analysis, which I adopted as the guiding principle for my data analysis, along with the guidelines provided in Taylor-Beswick & Hornung (2024). The steps, which are Familiarising, Condensing, Comparing, Grouping, Delimiting, Discerning, Articulating, Checking, Labelling and Relating, are presented in Section 4.6.1. It is worth noting that the steps were not followed linearly, as I had to revisit some steps during the data analysis, and specific steps occurred simultaneously, such as Comparing, Grouping, and Delimiting.

4.6.1 My application of the two processes

1. Familiarising

This process began during the transcription phase, as I became familiar with the data. As part of the process, I initially read the 16 transcripts as a whole to become familiar with the data. In the second round, I broke down the transcripts and

identified responses related to innovative teaching, the focus of this study. I also highlighted sections of the transcripts that were unrelated to the study, such as the icebreaker questions used at the beginning of the interviews. In subsequent readings, I began to make notes in NVivo on my observations of similarities, differences and any ideas that I thought were interesting.

2. Condensing

As part of this step, I identified and highlighted statements that I considered "meaning-laden" (Åkerlind, 2005). These statements and words were examples that participants used to describe innovative teaching, explain what innovative teaching meant to them, and justify why they considered some experiences more innovative than others. I also highlighted the keywords that participants had used and the responses they provided when probed about their choice of particular words. For example, words such as "new", "community", "development", and "reflection" were highlighted in their respective transcripts as they were identified as "meaning-laden". It is worth emphasising that although statements and words were selected, these were always considered in the broader context of the transcript as a way of focusing on relevant aspects of the data and gaining deeper insights (Åkerlind, 2005c). This process helped identify key ideas, concepts, and experiences of innovative teaching expressed by participants and was applied to all transcripts. Table 4.1 is an example of the condensing process. See Appendix 2 for an example of condensation for each transcript.

Condensing	
Skills	Creative skills self-reflect and building self-awareness
Performance	they do better when they're hands on trying things out and then discussing
Opportunities	sort of a chance for students to explore what they're good at give this person a challenge
Development	develop this person holistically having the sense of purpose
Feeling	pressure the students were under to develop their English remove some of these barriers for students

Table 4.1: Example of the condensation process

3. Comparing, Grouping & Delimiting

Here, the data condensed in Step 2 was compared to identify variations and similarities in participant experiences of innovative teaching. As part of the process, I also sought new labels and refined these where necessary, as I realised that some of the labels I had chosen earlier did not accurately capture participant meanings. I was also looking for critical variations among participant responses, as this was fundamental to identifying the qualitatively different ways in which participants experienced innovative teaching. The process also helped me identify commonly used words by participants and group similar statements and labels together, which helped develop my categories of description. This process was iterative, as I kept circling back to reread the data and rearrange statements and labels based on similarities and differences. This iterative process helped determine whether my proposed categories were supported by the data and helped identify any inclusive relationships between categories (Åkerlind, 2005d). This iterative and continual sorting of data was necessary as it allowed for neutrality and enhanced the validity of categories of description and outcome space constructed from the data (Ashworth &Lucas, 2000; Bowden & Walsh, 2000). As part of the iterative process, I was able to narrow the initial 200 labels generated down to 100 and continued the process till the labels were narrowed down to 20. See Appendix 3 for an example of initial labels.

4. Discerning

In this step, my focus was to identify specific aspects of the phenomenon that differentiated between various groupings or categories. This process involved comparing the different groupings themselves rather than individual statements or transcripts. I also searched for critical aspects that were identified in one group but not in others. In other words, what was different between the categories or recognised in one category that was not recognised in others? For example, as part of this process, I identified the critical aspect of "impact on learning" in Category 2, which was not discerned in Category 1. As part of the process, I also sought commonalities and structure within the categories constructed. This involved examining the categories for shared understanding and analysing how these categories relate to one another in terms of increasing complexity and inclusivity of understanding (Åkerlind, 2014).

5. Articulating

At this stage, I sought to identify the elements that differentiated the categories, thereby defining the meaning ascribed to each category relative to the others. This allowed me to identify the characteristic features of each category and the dimensions of variation within each. For example, I was able to determine the primary focus of each category. The dimensions of variation identified at this stage helped discover the level of awareness, which illustrates the extent of awareness of different aspects in an expanding way across the categories (Åkerlind, 2011). For example, the dimensions that emerged from the data regarding expanding awareness of innovative teaching were the "Role of instructor", "Purpose of innovative teaching", "Perceived outcome of innovative teaching", and "Expressed emotions".

6. Checking

This stage aimed to test the categories and dimensions of variation against the data. I had several discussions with my supervisor at this stage about the categories of description I had generated and to test their coherence. This iterative stage required rereading the transcripts and reformulating the initial versions of the identified categories of description and critical aspects. It was also helpful in verifying whether the identified dimensions of variation were grounded in empirical data as well as assessing the level of inclusiveness within each dimension. Table 4.2 is an example of one of the initial categories of description identified.

Categories of description	**Refined categories of description**
Teaching that challenges students	Teaching that improves performance
Teaching that improves student experience	Teaching that is captivating
Innovative teaching is about newness	Teaching that is new to the context
Teaching that is student focussed	Teaching that is learner centred
Teaching that encourages community	Teaching that encourages inclusive learning

Table 4.2: Example of initial categories of descriptions identified

7. Labelling

At this stage, once I was confident that my categories of description and critical aspects had been thoroughly checked and rechecked against the transcripts, I felt optimistic about formally labelling the categories. As per phenomenography, the labels I assigned to each category are brief descriptive headings and not comprehensive descriptions of the category. A key question I asked myself when deciding on the final labels was, "What do I want the labels to highlight about the categories of description"? (Åkerlind, 2025). Based on my answers, I opted for labels that highlight the unique meaning of each category, thereby emphasising what is different about each category (Åkerlind, 2025). Table 4.3 shows the final labels assigned to the categories of description.

Categories of description
Category 1. Innovative teaching is about newness or difference
Category 2. Innovative teaching is about making an impact
Category 3. Innovative teaching is about inclusivity
Category 4. Innovative teaching is about student development

Table 4.3: Final labels for categories of descriptions

8. Relating

In this stage, I focused on explicitly searching and identifying the hierarchical relationships between the different categories of description. This process was necessary to develop a comprehensive and holistic representation of the outcome space, as outlined by Åkerlind (2025). The critical elements identified helped demonstrate the interconnectedness among categories and the ordering of the categories of description within the outcome space. As part of the process, I used my activities in the previous stages to identify overlapping or intersecting categories and considered their relationships. Table 4.4 below highlights the critical aspects identified among the categories, where an asterisk indicates awareness of the vital aspect.

Understanding of innovative teaching				
	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Critical aspects discerned				
Focus on classroom activities	*	*	*	*
Role of teachers in student learning		*	*	*
Empowering students			*	*
Contribution to society through teaching				*

Table 4.4: Table showing critical aspects of innovative teaching discerned among categories.

In summary, the discussion above shows the process by which the outcome spaces presented and discussed in Chapters 5 & 6 were identified. As discussed in Section 3.7, there are various ways of presenting the outcome space in phenomenography. However, two key components are consistent across most studies: the categories of description (**referential aspect**) and the dimensions of variation (**structural aspect**). In this study, the four categories of description illustrate the holistic ways of experiencing innovative teaching that emerged from the data analysis, and the four dimensions of variation show how these dimensions are structurally related (Åkerlind, 2018). Although the data analysis process has been presented as a series of stages, it is essential to reiterate that it is iterative and simultaneous in this study. I had to reevaluate several times by rereading transcripts and updating labels as needed, ensuring that the outcome spaces were valid and reliable.

4.7 Research quality

As with the analytic approach, there is no consensus among phenomenographers on what constitutes rigour in phenomenography (Åkerlind, 2005). In light of this, Åkerlind (2025) advises that those using phenomenography should be thoughtful and mindful of how they might ensure rigour in their research. Therefore, I chose to use the umbrella term "research quality" as I believe this captures the credibility identified by Collier-Reed et al (2009) and discusses how this has been considered in my research.

To ensure research quality, interviews—a well-established method in phenomenography—were used for data collection (Trigwell, 2006) and to help establish critical variation in the data (Cope, 2004). I designed my line of

questioning to align with that of other phenomenographic studies, such as Åkerlind (2008), which allowed for what Collier-Reed et al. (2009:7) refer to as "*open understanding*". This line of questioning provided opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences of innovative teaching and allowed them to express their way of experiencing innovative teaching freely with minimal interruptions from me. I also used iterative questioning to clarify participant responses, ensuring that their focus was on the phenomenon of the study and eliciting further details on terms they had used. As part of the research quality process, Merriam & Tisdell (2016) advocate the use of triangulation. This was achieved through the use of multiple sources, including interviews with 16 participants on various contracts and from different disciplines, as discussed in Section 4.4, to ensure variation in ways of experiencing the phenomenon. The use of participant quotes was also employed to illustrate and support the findings. This process ensured the epistemological and methodological consistency of the research, that is, alignment between the purpose, research question, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis (Åkerlind, 2012).

Additionally, as this research aims to understand innovative teaching from the participants' perspectives, I employed the technique of "*bracketing*" during the data analysis. I actively took steps to "*bracket*" any preconceived assumptions and experiences I had of innovative teaching from my teaching experience and the literature on innovative teaching. I also avoided reading literature on innovative teaching as a way of exercising "*interpretive awareness*" (Sandberg, 2000:208) and avoiding data distortion (Åkerlind, 2012; Taylor-Beswick & Hornung, 2024).

Finally, as part of the research quality process, I discussed the outcome space I had constructed with my supervisor and colleagues. This was not to find the correct interpretation of the data, but to achieve a defensible interpretation (Åkerlind, 2012). This was done to ensure that I could justify my outcome spaces.

In summary, I have demonstrated how the issue of research quality was considered and addressed throughout my study, enabling the verification of my findings. The approach adopted aligns with Entwistle's (1997:129) argument that

"*for researchers in higher education, the test is generally not phenomenography's theoretical purity but its value in producing useful insights*…".

4.8 Ethical considerations

Cousin (2009) advocates that research projects require a robust ethical framework, as this helps address key ethical issues, such as the safety of the researcher and participants, and the credibility of the research approach and findings. For this research, I adopted a principlist approach (Wiles, 2012). The ethical considerations for this study were guided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (2018) and relevant literature on ethics.

Ethics approval was obtained from the Centre for Higher Education Research and Evaluation at Lancaster University, and approval was granted under reference FL16077, allowing the study to commence. This process was completed before invitations were sent to staff. As part of the ethics process, the purpose of the study, participant information sheets, and a timeline for withdrawing consent were included in the invitations sent. Before participating in the study, participants were provided with consent forms and were allowed to ask any questions they may have had. Before the start of each interview, the consent forms (Appendix 4) and participant information sheets (Appendix 5) were reviewed to ensure that participants were aware of the study's focus, their right to withdraw, and the timeframes for doing so.

Also, as informed consent is not a one-time event, I was open to answering any questions participants had and providing additional information as needed throughout the study. The aim was to ensure that participants were fully aware of what they had agreed to and had the opportunity to make an informed decision about their participation.

A room was booked explicitly for in-person interviews, as most staff share offices. This was necessary to foster confidentiality, trust, and privacy and provide a space that minimised disruptions. A composite profile was developed for all participants by assigning pseudonyms and removing other identifiers not necessary for data

analysis. Participants were informed that interviews would be recorded to facilitate transcription and would be stored in a secure location accessible only to me. To ensure the accuracy of the data collected, I used the prompts provided by Åkerlind (2023) to check for the meaning underlying the language used by participants.

As part of the ethical framework process, the issue of trustworthiness was considered in relation to the researcher's positionality, that is, the position I have chosen to adopt within the research. The issue of positionality is crucial, as it influences what is researched, how it is researched, and the results (Rowe, 2014). This is especially important since minimal research in the educational field can be value-free (Holmes, 2020). On a micro level, the ethical dilemma I encountered involved power relations between the participants and me. In some situations, participants wanted to know if they had provided the correct responses. In contrast, others were self-conscious when being interviewed and sought assurances that they could not be identified from their responses. To address these concerns and avoid what Brinkmann & Kvale (2005:164) refer to as "*one-way instrumental dialogue*" associated with interviews, I reiterated the purpose of the research. I assured participants that, since pseudonyms will be used, there will be minimal risk to respondents when the findings are made public. I also re-emphasised the focus of my research, which is to share their perspectives on ways of experiencing innovative teaching.

Furthermore, to address power asymmetry, I considered using a research assistant for data collection. However, I decided against this, given the need for me to be able to identify which interview process works and build "a researcher–participant learning partnership" (Asselin, 2003). Moreover, Brinkmann & Kvale (2005) suggest that ethical dilemmas are not easy to address; however, researchers need to be aware of these and know how to overcome them when they do occur.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research design employed in this study. The chapter provides a context that aims to situate the research site and emphasise its suitability for my study. The discussion on insider research highlighted the advantages and challenges I encountered in conducting the research as an insider, as well as how I managed any concerns raised by participants. The recruitment and selection process adopted for the study to ensure a variation of experiences among participants, which is key in phenomenography, was also presented. A detailed description was provided of the steps used in the iterative data analysis process, along with an explanation of how this process ensures the dependability of the findings. Considerations and actions undertaken to ensure research quality, as well as the ethical principles that guided the research, are also discussed.

The next chapter (Chapter 5) presents the findings from the iterative data analysis process.

5 Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my findings on the qualitative ways participants experience innovative teaching. As discussed in Section 3.7, findings in phenomenography are presented as an outcome space. The data analysis process discussed in Section 4.6 led to the development of the outcome space, comprising four hierarchical categories of description, which will be discussed in subsequent sections. The hierarchical categories of description ranged from less to more complex conceptions, with Category 1 being the least inclusive and Category 4 being the most inclusive. The outcome space of the categories of description constructed from the data analysis process described in Chapter 4 is:

Category 1. Innovative teaching is about newness or difference
Category 2. Innovative teaching is about making an impact on student learning
Category 3. Innovative teaching is about inclusivity
Category 4. Innovative teaching is about student development

Each category of description is described in detail in Section 5.3, with illustrations of key aspects of the categories and quotes from the interviews. The quotations are intended to provide a concrete sense of how participants experience the meaning or understanding represented by each category, as well as an opportunity to demonstrate how the data align with the categories of description (cf. Taylor-Beswick & Hornung, 2024; Åkerlind, 2025). The discussion illustrates how the categories are logically related in an inclusive hierarchy, focusing on the differences between them by highlighting the primary focus of each category (Åkerlind, 2011; Taylor-Beswick & Hornung, 2024; Åkerlind, 2025).

In Section 5.4, I present the dimensions of variation, which is a further exploration of the categories of description, highlighting the **structural aspect** of the outcome space. The dimensions of variation show how the critical aspects are constituted in a structurally related way. The dimensions of variation enabled me to identify logical relationships among the critical aspects that emerged during the data analysis, as discussed in Section 4.6. These logical relationships allowed the

critical aspects to be grouped and highlight the ways they run across all the categories of description, showing how awareness expanded along that dimension as one moves from Category 1 to Category 4. (Åkerlind, 2003a)

As discussed in Chapter 4, I present my outcome space using text, tables, and diagrams, which highlight two key aspects: a **referential/meaning aspect** and a **structural aspect**. In my study, the referential aspect focuses on the ways of experiencing the phenomenon in question that participants attributed to it, specifically examining participants' experiences of innovative teaching. This **referential/meaning aspect** is captured in qualitatively different participant ways of experiencing, which are presented as **categories of description**. The dimensions of variation are used to demonstrate how particular dimensions expand structurally, or, in other words, the **structural aspect** that displays the relationship connecting the categories. The dimensions of variation not only focus on a particular dimension within each category but also illustrate how each dimension increases in complexity across the categories of description.

Additionally, based on the discussion in Section 3.7 on the various ways of presenting findings in phenomenography, I have chosen to illustrate my outcome space using formats that allow me to remain faithful to the data and fully capture the experiences of innovative teaching as expressed by participants.

5.2 Categories of description

From the data analysis described in Section 4.6, the 16 in-depth interview transcripts identified four qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching, as shown in Table 5.1 below, with their corresponding focus constituting the **referential aspect** of what innovative teaching means.

Categories of description	Focus of each category/Referential aspect
Category 1: Innovative teaching is about newness or difference	primary focus on using new or different methods to teach.
Category 2: Innovative teaching is about making an impact on student learning	primary focus on the role of the teacher in student learning.
Category 3: Innovative teaching is about inclusivity	primary focus on improving the performance of students through inclusive practice.
Category 4: Innovative teaching is about student development	primary focus on encouraging the growth of students beyond the classroom.

Table 5.1: Outcome space: Referential aspect of innovative teaching

Each category of description can be described as being different and distinct, given the focus of each category. Also, the categories of description are developed in a logical and hierarchical structure of expanding awareness and the principles of inclusivity as per phenomenography. Within this hierarchical structure, Category 1 acts as the foundation on which other categories are built. Although Category 1 is at the bottom of the hierarchy and is identified as the least complex experience, it represents the fundamental experience of what innovative teaching is, with its focus on the use of new or different methods to teach. Category 2 builds on Category 1 and includes the focus on using new or different methods to teach, but adds an emphasis on recognising the role of the teacher in student learning. Category 3 is composed of the foci of Categories 1 and 2, as well as its focus on improving the performance of students through inclusive practice. The last category, which is Category 4, is the most complex among the categories of description as it includes the foci of Categories 1, 2 and 3 and a new focus on encouraging the growth of students beyond the classroom. Figure 5.1 is a visual representation of the four categories of description and depicts their inclusive hierarchical structure.

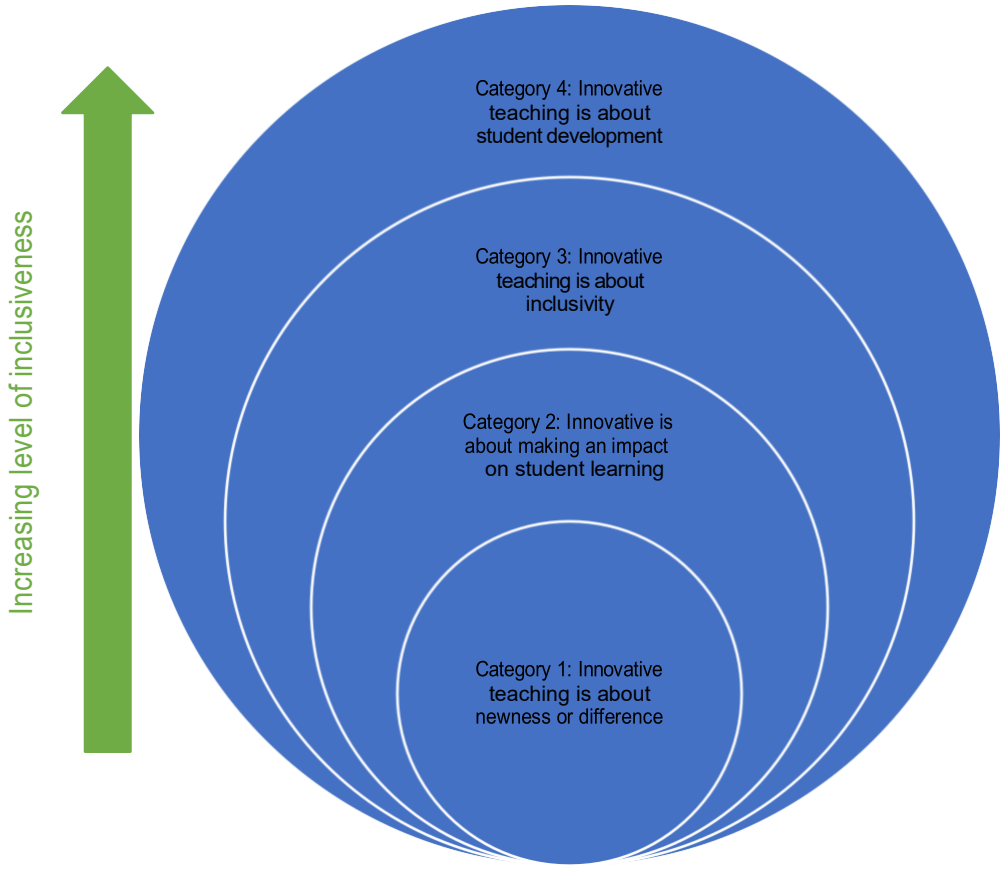


Figure 5.1: Outcome space: Categories of description with their hierarchical and inclusive structure

As shown in Figure 5.1, this hierarchical structure reflects an inclusivity of awareness, with complex categories of description incorporating the insights of less inclusive ones but not vice versa. It must be noted that while each category of description shares some characteristics with those below it (for example, **Category of Description 3** shares characteristics with **Categories of Description 2 & 1**), it also offers a distinct perspective, making it a unique way of understanding what innovative teaching means. As a whole, the categories of description represent the key variations in how this phenomenon can be conceived and show the hierarchical relationships that exist between different categories of description. As per phenomenography, the hierarchical structure among the categories of description is not about a more complex category being superior to less complex ones but rather demonstrating a more comprehensive and complete understanding that builds on the foundational knowledge found in less complex categories.

In the next section, I describe what each category means and use quotations from participants to illustrate what is new about each category, that is, the different ways of experiencing that each category brings (Taylor-Beswick & Hornung, 2024). It is worth mentioning here that, as stated in Section 4.6, the focus of phenomenography is to identify the variation in the collective experience among participants and not the individual. The quotes, therefore, reflect how innovative teaching is experienced collectively by participants in each category.

5.2.1 **Category 1: Innovative teaching is about newness or difference**

In the first, least inclusive way of experiencing innovative teaching, innovative teaching is experienced as anything new or different to either staff, students or both. The way of experiencing identified within this category constitutes the referential aspect and encompasses practice, context and the individual, which are discussed below.

In this category, the primary focus is on the use of new or different methods to teach. This view is illustrated by the quotations below:

> *"Implementing completely new teaching approaches."*
> *(Participant 15)*

> *"…innovative teaching is about doing something that's quite different."*
> *(Participant 5)*

> *"…do things a bit differently in the classroom..."*
> *(Participant 7)*

> *"I guess rather than do something the way it's always been done, trying to come up with new ways of helping students to learn, maybe through the use of technology…."*
> *(Participant 11)*

In this category, the critical aspect discerned focuses on what happens in the classroom and not beyond, that is, ensuring that the content required for the teaching is delivered, as the quotations below illustrate:

> *"…. that's part of applying the learning and reinforcing the learning from that week's lecture topic to its experiential learning…., but in a way that took workload off tutors because you don't get those questions by emails. You don't explain the same thing again and again…"*
> *(Participant 2)*

"…. Innovative teaching is using different approaches from an instructor's side and deciding what content you can cover and how you cover it if there's less... I think my approach to teaching is I try to cover the content and the information that I need students to learn…".
(Participant 6)

Regarding practice, any form of teaching that was different to everyday practice was seen as being innovative. The use of the traditional lecturing style was viewed as standard practice. However, there was the view that tweaks could be made to lectures to make them innovative, as expressed below:

"I witnessed a different form of lecturing by a senior colleague in my previous institution. He didn't have recordings or slides. Instead, he gave away some photocopies of, you know, newspapers linked to the topic that he was teaching, and the students took notes as he spoke. I've never seen a class more engaged than that, you know, that was very innovative..."
(Participant 16)

"…I think the common thread probably is just that it's not traditional teaching, it's doing something a bit different that moves us away from the traditional model of teaching such as lecturing"
(Participant 9)

"Innovative teaching is doing something different that's a bit different from the traditional view of teaching"
(Participant 7)

"It should almost surprise students …. it would be different from what I would think of as a classic learning activity where students read this case study, and here are some very boring slides with, you know, low design levels."
(Participant 2)

Additionally, practice deemed different from what others did was described as being innovative. For example, the introduction of instructional videos to help students in their learning, as the accounts below indicate:

"So what was innovative was we realised that students were forgetting …, but students were forgetting the more detailed explanations ... I made like a tutorial video for each of the seven weeks in chunks kind of explaining it again in more detail …."
(Participant 2)

"…. What was different was using video, so instructor-generated videos. I created some videos and then provided them to students, covering just one or two learning outcomes. Before we had actual live lectures…."
(Participant 4)

In this category, there was a perception of innovative teaching as being contextual, as a particular teaching practice might not be new per se, but somewhat different or new in a specific context. This newness may involve a different approach that is not the norm within the discipline or faculty, as the following quotations indicate.

"…because nobody else, you know, in their school is doing something on that theme, with that particular approach... And yes, it's just that that idea of something different, not necessarily completely new, can be described as innovative… It's not necessarily new in the sense that we didn't conjure it up out of the blue, we actually sort of built it from, you know, what other people are doing"
(Participant 7)

".... it was, it was outside of everybody's norm to a certain extent, no one else was doing it, we were forging new ground by applying old ideas to new contexts."
(Participant 12)

"So that was also innovative because I was using it in a quantitative module, and this had never been done before in the university..."
(Participant 4)

"…it might not necessarily be something that's brand new in terms of, you know, something that's just come along…, but it might be something different from what students have been used to receiving in their teaching or the way that they've been used to being taught historically, or that they might be taught in other contexts."
(Participant 11)

Regarding the individual, there was the perception in this category that innovative teaching is dependent on individual experiences. Although some practices might not necessarily be new or different for some, for others, these approaches might be seen as innovative, especially if they are encountering this for the first time.

".. innovation to me means something that is new to me or something I'm trying out for the very first time, which may not be new to other people. It may be new to students or not, but it has to be new to someone... If it's new to you, then it's innovative. If it's new to the group you're introducing it to, then it's innovative…"
(Participant 4)

"We've tried to have an innovative approach to it now. Not everyone would feel that way…. Well, it's not new because there are probably only so many ways you can teach this same sort of content. … So yeah, I think innovative is very personal in that respect because it's so it could be new to the discipline, new to this university, which I think we kind of were in that respect, a new style or approach, then it can also feel new to the person."
(Participant 9)

Finally, there was an acknowledgement of the temporary nature of innovative teaching as what might be regarded as new or different might become the norm over time and thereby no longer be seen as innovative.

"…because in some way, I mean, I'm not an expert on innovation, but I feel like what is innovative changes over time. Because innovation is sort of relative to what most people are doing or what the dominant way or style of teaching is. Innovative teaching is something that's different. But over time, if the dominant way or majority way of doing things changes, then what's innovative will also change…"
(Participant 6)

"Well, starting with that same module the following year, the approach was no longer innovative because I was doing the same thing again, right? So there are some modules where you know I've carried on doing the same thing just because it works and therefore would not class what I do as innovative…"
(Participant 14)

The description of Category 1 shows how innovative teaching is experienced as newness or different, and the least complex conception. In the subsequent sections, its foundational role in other categories will be demonstrated, as well as the empirical evidence of the inclusiveness of awareness.

5.2.2 Category 2: Innovative teaching is about making an impact on student learning

In this category, innovative teaching is experienced as teaching that aims to make a significant impact on student learning. Although there was an awareness of newness in this category, as the illustrations below demonstrate, this was not the primary focus; instead, the emphasis was on the critical aspect of making a positive impact on student learning.

"Innovative teaching is about using new methods or approaches aimed at changing behaviour."
(Participant 13)

"…something which is so kind of mind-blowing and almost shocking to see"
(Participant 2)

"...Innovative teaching is one where you're impacting the students in a personal way as well. It is not just about newness or different approaches…"
(Participant 6)

"… being innovative is being willing to try out different things that might have more of an impact on students."
(Participant 4)

Within this category, there was an awareness that innovative teaching was not only about newness and delivering teaching as in Category 1 but included a primary focus on the role of the teacher in student learning. The way of experiencing that makes up the referential aspect identified within this category are the role of teachers in learning and knowing their students.

In this category, the critical aspect discerned is that teachers had a role to play in students' learning, and this could be achieved through activities that facilitated and encouraged student learning, as the following quotes show.

"...it's really useful to allow them to discuss what they've what's happened in their own experience and what they've learned. And then, a lot of times, the students get into conversations. And I'm more of like a moderator rather than an instructor…"
(Participant 6)

"...Innovative teaching is about recognising my role in student learning, so as part of my role, I might have to do things differently and set up the module differently…"
(Participant 14)

"Innovative teaching is always thinking about how to present the content in a way that sort of fosters active engagement with the material. So trying to think of ways to get students to interact even and reflect."
(Participant 15)

It is also perceived within this category that, as part of their role in student learning, teachers need to reflect or embody the norms expected within their

disciplines, thereby acting as role models who inspire and motivate students to be curious about the discipline.

> *"…that's also important to the identity of somebody working in education. …., but you're so aware when you teach in education that you are supposed to be modelling good practice to everybody. You know, you're not just delivering your topic, you should be delivering it in a way that's interesting because you should know somehow how to be a good teacher because that's your topic…because of that, I think there's much more of an impetus to do things in an innovative way..."*
> *(Participant 9)*

> *"… we decided to take a sort of sketchbook approach to the student's learning so that they were generating their own work… we took the emphasis away from how well they could replicate or how well they could do a cover song. And it moved to what are the interesting ideas that you can use to write music. How do we support students to develop critical listening skills as part of the discipline…"*
> *(Participant 13)*

Furthermore, although there was an awareness of the newness of approaches used as per Category 1, the focus within this category is on the aims of the approaches used, which is to help students understand the subject.

> *"…The main aim is to be able to go much deeper into the content and have more discussions and conversations with the students about the content rather than just teaching the content in the class because the content has essentially already been taught. I think the main goal is to help students have a deeper understanding of the subject."*
> *(Participant 6)*

> *"…another aim was for them to find a way for them to remember what it was that I taught them for it to remain in their minds for longer. So it wasn't something that was just a kind of fleeting repeat after me and then go away and forget about it. It was building up a sort of an experience if you like, a lesson that would enable them to learn at that moment but then remember afterwards..."*
> *(Participant 11)*

To achieve this impact, there is the perception that knowing who your students are is vital. This is because this allows for the teaching to align with the learning needs of students, as the quotations below illustrate:

> *".. for any innovation, it is important to know what the needs are. So that means we at least need to know who our students are, their background, and what theoretical background they have and then provide the help and*

support they need. For example, maybe some students really need help more than others which allows us to provide support accordingly…."
(Participant 14)

"...I'm always trying new things. I mean, like I've been teaching the same modules, … the nature of the cohort has shifted over the years and so I'm trying to respond to changing cohort needs…"
(Participant 8)

Additionally, within this category, student learning outcomes are seen as being intertwined with teaching and, therefore, the need to create environments that support student learning. There was the perception that creating the right learning environment encouraged student engagement, which could lead to improved student outcomes.

"…I don't want people to be always like having to be there 100% on it. But I do want people to sort of be able to turn off everything else that's happening in their lives and try and find a way to focus in this space. And so that's why attending to the energy in the room is really important…. By energy, I mean my perception of how people are feeling and acting. And what they need to be doing with their minds and bodies..."
(Participant 8)

"There should be a space for their views and perspectives, and they should feel kind of safe expressing that… I mean what does it feel like to be in the space? Do you feel as if you're being respected as a learner, and do you feel as if you've got the space to express yourself? For me, that's important as it shows that you have thought of the learner and the things that they are facing before changing the direction of the teaching…"
(Participant 9)

The description of Category 2 has shown how it covers its critical aspect and elements of Category 1, but as will be shown below, not the focus of Category 3, which is improving the performance of students through inclusive practice.

5.2.3 **Category 3. Innovative teaching is about inclusivity**

Innovative teaching in this category is experienced as teaching that is inclusive. Although there was an awareness of newness and making an impact, as in categories 1 and 2, the primary focus in this category is improving the performance of students through inclusive practice, with the critical aspect being empowering students, as the quotations below indicate

"… innovative teaching is not only about newness but also improving student performance in a way that is inclusive. I believe that students are unique and they're different and they come from different backgrounds. This also includes the academic background, which means the way they learn will be different. I'm not saying that we have to suit each person's learning needs…but as teachers, we need to recognise these differences and find ways of helping students. I think we think that it will be very difficult for you to try to address all these things without any practice of innovation at all…"
(Participant 4)

"…it's not just about newness but like building an experience so students can navigate their own way through their learning. So there's something there for really motivated students who want to do better. And for students who, for whatever reason, aren't performing like they're not motivated or they've got a lower competency level, there's stuff there that will help them that they can access kind of in their own time…"
(Participant 2)

As stated above, within this category, there was an awareness of the aspects in categories 1 and 2, as the quotations indicate; however, the primary focus is on inclusive teaching practice. Within this category, the way of experiencing that constitutes the referential aspect were student voice and the role of students.

There is the recognition that for teaching to be inclusive, there is a need for teachers to be flexible in their approach to the teaching process, as the quotations below show.

"…Innovative teaching is thinking about how you're designing your teaching. Flexibility in terms of how you might enable students to engage with the material, …So inclusive teaching gives students avenues to engage in ways that are meaningful to them or gives them at least some choices so that they can tailor that learning experience to their interests…"
(Participant 12)

"…But the point is that increasingly we're seeing more and more students who are in some ways neurodivergent. And if we keep that thought in our mind, then we really do need to take seriously the thought about what students are going to be learning. What we try to tell them in very different ways, and I suppose in a way it's the same point about flexibility. So, you want to make sure that information is available to students in ways that is meaningful to them and not ways that are meaningful to you as a lecturer.
(Participant 1)

"Innovative teaching is not just about different means and different methods; it's also about demonstrating some flexibility and enabling

students to be a little bit more. I guess the word is autonomous in the way that they want to do something or learn…"
(Participant 11)

Within this category, there is the notion that, as part of inclusive practice, students ought to feel that they have a role in the teaching process, as their input helps shape the teaching approach implemented.

"they felt like they were kind of heard and included within their teaching. That they could give feedback, and it would be kind of acted on, or at least acknowledged…"
(Participant 15)

"…you can design your curriculum by incorporating student voice to remove barriers and engage students in broader ways as much as possible…"
(Participant 5)

In addition, there is the belief that when students are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas, they feel valued and empowered, which leads to increased student engagement and improved performance.

"…So I have to kind of meet my students where they are, respond to changing cohort needs and so I'm constantly listening to my students, basically. And trying to find out new ways of delivering what they need that keeps me fresh but also address challenges…"
(Participant 8)

"… and this encourages everybody to participate in some way because I think we learn by discussion, that is the I think of it as shifting performance rather than just learning. They're not just get getting facts in their head..."
(Participant 2)

"So I guess something that would disrupt that and be more innovative would be a way of teaching that gets the students much more actively involved … and then the class period is all about discussion. I think something that's innovative is the idea that the students learn from each other just as much as they learn from the instructor. This makes them feel valued as they get the sense their perspective matters…"
(Participant 6)

Within this category, there is an awareness that being inclusive means encouraging students to work together, learn and support each other as part of their learning development. This is deemed useful in helping students develop

learning communities built on respect and trust, which helps foster a sense of belonging.

> *"…for me, the idea of community is about feeling a sense of connection as a group and connection to the experience you're going through together, in which this case would be a module or a course, so a community would be a group with a shared experience or journey, even if it's temporary…"*
> *(Participant 9)*

> *"… it's really useful to allow them to discuss what's happened in their own experience and what they've learned. And then a lot of times the students get into conversations. And I'm more of like a moderator rather than an instructor. And that, I think, is quite useful, I mean, compared to like the very traditional thing that I described in the beginning, that would be quite innovative. The notion that students can learn from each other and not just from the instructor helps students develop..."*
> *(Participant 6)*

From the description of this category, it is evident that although there is an awareness of all aspects of categories 1 and 2, this category demonstrates an expansion in awareness by focusing on the critical aspect of innovative teaching, which is about inclusive practice that improves student performance. The elements within this category focused on flexibility, incorporating student input in curriculum design and encouraging students to work together as a means of fostering learning communities.

This category demonstrates an inclusive understanding of innovative teaching compared to categories 1 and 2. However, as will be shown in the description of category 4 in Section 5.3.4 below, it does not include the focus of category 4, which is encouraging the growth of students beyond the classroom.

5.2.4 **Category 4. Innovative teaching is about student development**

Innovative teaching in this category was experienced as teaching that supports student development. This category was identified as the most inclusive because although there was an awareness of aspects of other categories, this category showed an expansion of awareness that extends beyond teaching and learning. This expansion of awareness is captured in this category's primary focus, which is encouraging students' growth beyond the classroom. The way of experiencing identified as part of the referential aspect in this category are student support and skill development.

Also, within this category, there was the recognition that innovative teaching was not just about newness and student performance but supporting students to develop beyond the module or programme of study, as illustrated by the following quotations.

> *"…but it's thinking about how you, I think I'm in the mindset of not just teaching content, or student performance, or newness or developing knowledge but also kind of developing skills and competencies and as a broader interest like our job isn't to necessarily motivate students, but they should feel inspired, motivated to kind of make connections and create that sense of purpose in their head… that helps them continue to develop…"*
> *(Participant 5)*

> *"…and not just focus on newness. So not only understanding the theory of how that works and developing project management skills but developing beyond the module, like a Venn diagram with lots and lots of things overlapping…"*
> *(Participant 2)*

As stated above, within this category, there was an awareness of the aspects in categories 1, 2 and 3, as the quotes indicate; however, the primary focus was on student development.

There is the recognition that for teaching to support student development and bring about growth in students, the teaching process needs to provide students with opportunities to develop skills that prepare them for their respective careers and the real world. The critical aspect discerned in this category was the contribution to society through teaching.

> *"So for me, innovative teaching kind of goes beyond sort of the relaying the information that they've been taught to be able to really use it in the world beyond the university, so whether that's employability sort of skills…"*
> *(Participant 12)*

> *"…you know, coming back to the teaching, it should achieve multiple goals at the same time, like they're developing communication skills and teamwork. Also working on, you know, project management documentation."*
> *(Participant 2)*

Student development is recognised as being multi-faceted due to the diverse needs of students. Therefore, there is an awareness to allow students to determine how they would want to grow and support their needs accordingly, which encourages students to feel empowered and engage with the teaching process.

> *"… it's about supporting students in their journey and allowing them to make informed choices… it's like creating their own intellectual property. Like to have ownership over that and to feel like they had agency and ownership over the things that they were making…Sort of trusting the students to make stuff and to come back, and for that to be an ongoing process. I feel like there's a democratisation that happens in that process as well…"*
> *(Participant 13)*

> *"… innovative teaching involves an element of personal development... this is what we're gonna do. We're gonna, like, create this little bit of success, and you're gonna take these skills and techniques, and you're gonna use them, and you'll get rid of some of them and you'll develop them yourself. And that's all OK, but yeah, just that they that they feel empowered is so important…*
> *(Participant 3)*

There is the view that, as part of the skills development process, there is a need to emphasise to students the relevance of their discipline and learning to society, as doing so enables students to recognise how their learning contributes to societal progress.

> *"… it is just getting students to be demonstrating the skills that they need sort of to thrive in their discipline. So, it's not necessarily about getting students to absorb a lot of knowledge about their discipline, but it's getting them to understand why it's relevant, how it might be relevant outside of the university and how they can kind of use those skills effectively in society."*
> *(Participant 7)*

> *"it could also be, you know, social justice skills or just life skills as well. But for me, that really is innovative teaching where students are gaining the knowledge and the skills that they're having, that awareness of how valuable that is to the broader kind of society beyond the university..."*
> *(Participant 10)*

Consistent with the focus on encouraging students' growth beyond the classroom, there is the recognition that students ought to be sensitised to recognise the importance of the continuous pursuit of knowledge and skills upon completion of their studies, especially with the advancement of technology. This is seen as

beneficial for career advancement and personal development, as the quotes below illustrate.

> *"… But the creative aspect is going to be needed because AI, okay, AI can be creative, but we have to be able to tell AI what we want it to do for it to produce the output … there's an element of creativity that can't be surpassed by AI. And in terms of, you know, what employers look for, the message increasingly is that actually what they want are people who don't just sort of do the same old thing that everyone else has always done… So I think just our job is really preparing the students for life after Uni by focusing on creativity and getting them to think about their growth, thinking outside the box and think of futureproofing their skills…"*
> *(Participant 7)*

> *"…they're also recognising what skills they need and developing these. It's almost like a deeply immersive experience for them. So yeah, I think it should be future-facing. So not, oh, AI. But rather focus on how do I support the student to move forward? How does this apply to what they're going to do in the real world? How does this respond to a challenge in the external environment? Getting students to think about their broader development and the sense of wanting to continue developing…"*
> *(Participant 2)*

From the description of this category, it is evident that although there is an awareness of all aspects of categories 1, 2 and 3, this category demonstrates an expansion in awareness by focusing on the critical aspect of innovative teaching being about student development, with the primary focus of growth beyond the classroom and hence the most complex category. The elements within this category focused on creating opportunities for students to develop skills they deem relevant to their growth, helping students recognise their contributions to societal progress and sensitising students to the benefits of lifelong learning.

In summary, this section focused on the referential/meaning aspect of innovative teaching by describing the four categories of description identified from the interviews. The description of the four categories showed how they are organised hierarchically and demonstrated a progressive understanding of inclusivity. Category 1 is situated at the bottom of the hierarchy, demarcating the least inclusive, followed by categories 2 & 3, which are at the midpoint, with category 4 being the most inclusive. As discussed in Section 3.7, it is equally essential in phenomenography to show the structural relationships that connect the different ways of experiencing a phenomenon. Hence, in Section 5.3, I present the structural aspects of innovative teaching and illuminate the critical ways in which

the dimensions of variation are structurally related along each identified dimension within the categories of description.

5.3 Dimensions of variation

The dimensions of variation illuminate how specific dimensions extend across the categories of description, revealing the structural relationships that bind these categories together. This detailed examination of the structure of variation in awareness not only highlights the similarities between categories but also underscores their unique differences. The dimensions of variation highlight shared concepts across categories and the increasing complexity of these categories (Åkerlind, 2011, 2017).

Four dimensions of variation were identified from the data, as shown in Table 5.2. These dimensions run across the categories of description in an expanding way, showing how the awareness expands collectively, that is, how each dimension is discerned along a particular category of description. Each dimension will be explored, accompanied by excerpts from the interview transcripts to demonstrate the qualitative expansion of awareness across categories.

Dimensions of variation/Structural aspect
Role of instructor
Purpose
Perceived outcome
Expressed emotions

Table 5.2: Outcome space: Structural aspect of innovative teaching

5.3.1 First dimension of variation – Role of the instructor

Under this dimension, there was a varying focus on the role of the instructor amongst the categories of description. In **Category 1**, where innovative teaching is about newness or difference, the role of the instructor is perceived as implementing innovative teaching to meet institutional expectations, such as covering teaching materials and fulfilling the traditional role of being a teacher. It

is perceived that innovative teaching is a conduit for meeting institutional expectations, as the quotations below illustrate.

> *"…I feel like students are now very passive participants in their own learning, and they're sort of expecting that we will satisfy them, and we will provide them with everything they need and so we try to find innovative ways to make this happen. They can just kind of sit back and chill and engage with it if they want to, or if they don't want to…"*
> *(Participant 6)*

> *"…Whereas I think oftentimes like if you only have a few hours each week and you're just focusing on delivering the content, you don't have that extra time and space to be all that critical."*
> *(Participant 5)*

In **Category 2**, where innovative teaching is about making an impact on student learning, the role of the instructor is perceived as being responsive to the needs of students. This perception suggests that innovative teaching ought to align with students' needs and ensure that the instructor understands and addresses the unique needs that students might have. This emphasises the need for staff to be flexible in their teaching approaches, as the quotations below illustrate.

> *"I think as educators, the first thing we need to do is listen, whether or not that's innovative, I don't know.……and all of that listening should channel into what we present to students and what we ask students to do in workshops…"*
> *(Participant 1)*

> *"…It's not just coming up with different means and different methods, it's also demonstrating some flexibility and enabling students to be a little bit more. I guess the word is autonomous in the way that they want to do something…."*
> *(Participant 11)*

For **Category 3** - innovative teaching is about inclusivity, the role of the instructor is perceived as supporting the growth of students. Instructors were perceived as being responsible for implementing innovative approaches that could foster deeper understanding and allow students to develop key skills. It was perceived that instructors played a pivotal role in supporting student growth by providing

guidance that encouraged them to take ownership of their learning, as the quotations below demonstrate.

> *"… they're being encouraged or challenged or forced to think about things differently, and to learn the information differently… obviously like the instructor would have to play a role in that because the instructor might have to do things differently and set up the module differently to support students…"*
> *(Participant 6)*

> *"…So they're using kind of reflective pieces of writing as well to kind of self-assess how they're developing on that module. Inside that, talking to the students about why that voice is really important, that kind of personal voice and that personal development for students. They're using that knowledge in a practical kind of way, and they're reflecting on the development of the skills as well. And then reflecting on their learning. So it's a really kind of personal kind of component to that and I have to support students through that process."*
> *(Participant 10)*

Within **Category 4**, where innovative teaching is about student development, the role of the instructor is perceived as encouraging lifelong learning among students. Instructors are perceived as having a responsibility that transcends imparting disciplinary knowledge. Their role of encouraging lifelong learning is perceived as inspiring students to develop a love for learning that extends beyond their discipline.

> *"…my business is not putting in, it's drawing out. So, the students already have transmissive education through lectures through reading materials where stuff is transmitted to them through teaching practice and assessment practice. My job is to help pull out what they know and help them develop skills, confidence, all the transferable stuff, but also to allow them to apply their learning no matter what career path they go on…"*
> *(Participant 8)*

> *"…if those connections are always made that explicit for students. I think I'd just like to see that kind of connection made more for students that they can really obviously see and what they're learning at university is connected to life beyond the university…"*
> *(Participant 10)*

5.3.2 **Second dimension of variation – Purpose**

Within this dimension, there was a focus on the purpose of innovative teaching. It was perceived that there ought to be a goal for implementing innovative teaching, and this focus varied across the categories of description. For **Category 1,** where innovative teaching is about newness or difference, the purpose of innovative teaching was perceived as supporting teaching. The emphasis here is on implementing activities that support teaching through technology or other modes, as illustrated in the quotations.

> *"I made like a tutorial video for each of the seven chunks kind of explaining it again in more detail, you know, bringing to life what the students needed to do. So, if they came to work on it in a month, they could go back ..., but they've got real-time help but in a way that took the workload off tutors because you don't get those questions by email. You don't explain the same thing again and again, and it meant students could listen, watch the videos as often as they wanted…"*
> *(Participant 2)*

> *"And that involves using video, so instructor-generated videos. I created some videos and then provided them to students, covering just one or two learning outcomes. Before we had the actual live lecture. It was a big risk for me because it was time-consuming and I wasn't sure it was going to work right, but it did, and I used it for 2-3 years before moving on to something else."*
> *(Participant 4)*

In **Category 2**, where innovative teaching is about making an impact on student learning, the purpose of innovative teaching is perceived as supporting learning. The perception is to provide a learning environment where students are supported to achieve their full potential. The emphasis is on providing opportunities for students to understand the subject and acquire the expected knowledge and skills. This purpose is illustrated in the quotations below:

> *"So that was also innovative because I was using it in a quantitative module that, you know that we had never done before in the university. It was also new to the students, but it was relevant, it helped to improve their scores. It also gave very good feedback. We received very good comments that year as well. I did a regression analysis showing them how watching the video had an impact on their score, a direct impact on their score."*
> *(Participant 4)*

"I created the first few videos, 10 minutes long each, and I made sure that they were really basic with real-life examples. Then, I had quizzes embedded in each video, which students had to take before watching other parts of the video. I could see students attempting the questions. I could see what their answers were, and then we discussed, you know, their responses and why they were wrong and why the correct answer was correct in the lecture before moving on to the other parts of the lecture. As I mentioned earlier, with innovation. It's not just about something being new, it's about the relevance and being able to measure that impact"
(Participant 14)

In **Category 3**, where innovative teaching is about inclusivity, the purpose of innovative teaching is perceived as building a learning community. The emphasis here is on fostering a sense of belonging and connection among students. It is perceived that community building encouraged student engagement as students would respond positively to the teaching, leading to increased well-being. This process allows students to build strong relationships with their peers and instructors, as the quotations below illustrate.

"Students would interact with other students, not necessarily from their cohorts… I learned a bit about how you interact in classes and how you participate from observing how the older students did. Do you know what I mean? And I think that would be very useful. It helps develop personal connections with the students, which is what I think encourages them to learn and get a better experience."
(Participant 6)

"Rather than just content, we have a kind of space for developing community around teaching, like we ask students to engage in action learning and reflect together in groups. So, there are a couple of examples of how we try to rethink that course differently. There should be a space for their views and perspectives, and they should feel kind of safe expressing that."
(Participant 16)

"And you build community through shared experiences, right? So, you might, you're all in a group together, but maybe you also all go out, like go on the outdoor walk together and you share different things about your life. We just learn different things about each other because you're outside of that normal dynamic. And so, does that build a community? I don't know. It builds a connection with each other, which might translate

to a feeling of community. It builds towards that sense of together of being something together."
(Participant 9)

For **Category 4**, where innovative teaching is about student development, skills development is perceived as the purpose of innovative teaching. The emphasis here is supporting students to develop more than just discipline-specific skills. It is perceived that supporting students to develop a wide range of skills was necessary as these increased the potential for them to succeed in their course and improve their career prospects, as the quotations below demonstrate.

"Creating new..., but it's like creating their intellectual property. Like to have ownership over that and to feel like they had agency and ownership over the things that they were making. Sort of trusted the students to make stuff and to come back, and for that to be an ongoing process. I feel like there's a democratisation that happens in that process as well as an element of personal development for the students."
(Participant 13)

"We are going to create this little bit of success, and you're going to take these skills and techniques, and you're going to use them, and you'll get rid of some of the skills that are not useful, and you'll develop new ones. And that's all OK, making students feel empowered is so important."
(Participant 16)

"And they're also developing their own skills, so it should. It's almost like a deeply immersive experience for them. So yeah, it should achieve more than anything. I think it should be future-facing. So not, oh, AI. But it should focus on how the student moves forward. How does this apply to what they're going to do in the real world? How does this respond to a challenge in the external environment? Supporting them to develop evaluative skills and critical thinking skills by explaining why this one's better than that one. So developing knowledge but also kind of developing skills and competencies."
(Participant 2)

5.3.3 **Third dimension of variation – Perceived outcome**

The focus of this dimension was on the perceived outcome of innovative teaching. This dimension suggests that there is a perception that innovative teaching should offer some results and impact student learning. In **Category 1** (innovative teaching is about newness or difference), the perceived outcome is the promotion of knowledge and understanding. The emphasis here was on ensuring that students have opportunities to engage with teaching in ways that help them understand the subject and its key concepts.

"There should be a behaviour change; they should feel inspired and motivated to kind of make connections and create that sense of purpose in their head. It's about them as a person and having a sense of purpose, situating it, trying to make them understand the subject. They should find it intrinsically motivating and directly relate to how their knowledge is improved in that particular concept being taught and improve their performance."
(Participant 2)

"…where students are really applying what they've learned to a potential kind of real-life sort of situation. They're using that knowledge in a practical kind of way, and they're reflecting on their learning and development of the skills as well. They get a better feeling for different ways of approaching the task. Different ways of writing, different uses of language, different ways of presenting their work."
(Participant 10)

"I guess the reason for my approach was… but also for them to remember it and to come out at the end of it feeling like they'd learned something from it. Because I think like with anything, you go into, whether you're, you know, learning something, whether you're going into a teaching session or whether you're. I don't know, going into a show or something. It's not just how engaging it is and how interesting it is, but also what you learn."
(Participant 11)

Similar to Category 1, **Category 2** (making an impact on student learning) also focuses on student learning, with the perceived outcome being to reinforce learning. The difference, though, lies in the strong emphasis on helping learners develop strategies that enhance their understanding of the subject. It was perceived that to reinforce learning, it is important to make use of scaffolding to help students build on prior knowledge as well as provide opportunities for reflective practice. This perception suggests that using scaffolding and reflective

practice enables students to think deeply, internalise knowledge and refine their learning strategies.

> *"This is something that is very innovative and very impactful was on our …module. We have a project assessment, and there are 7 sections to it from Week 4 onwards. The section of the project plan corresponds with the weekly topic, and they work on it in the workshop, that's part of applying the learning and reinforcing the learning from that week's lecture topic...So what was innovative was we realised that students were forgetting what was taught and the detailed explanations that were meant to bring the learning to life..."*
> *(Participant 2)*

> *"…So the reason I felt that was innovative was it was using technology, which is good... I didn't assume they didn't want to learn but rather thought if we gave them resources that would help them, they would understand how to consume those and use those in a way to help them understand the subject better..."*
> *(Participant 3)*

Improved student performance is perceived as the outcome for **Category 3** (innovative teaching is about inclusivity). There is the perception that creating active learning opportunities for students encourages them to be active in their learning, with instructors acting as facilitators of the process. This suggests that promoting a sense of ownership among learners and not viewing them as passive learners improves their performance as they develop an interest in the discipline.

> *"I find different ways to get them talking about the discipline. So I could say, you know, discussing in your groups and then put your answer on Padlet and then I read out what they have written. I try to encourage those who have good answers to explain their answers to the class."*
> *(Participant 4)*

> *"the idea is that each student submits a portion of their writing that is going to feed into their final assessment, and then they receive peer feedback from two other students and also give feedback to two other students. So they are then benefiting from feedback. In theory, that is more accessible to them because it comes from a peer, but they are also then exposed to other students' writing so that they get a better feeling for different ways of approaching the task. Different ways of writing, different uses of language, different ways of presenting their work. It was*

quite helpful because it encouraged them to take a more active role in planning their learning"
(Participant 7)

A positive student experience is the perceived outcome of innovative teaching for **Category 4** (innovative teaching is about student development). There is the conception that when students feel listened to and supported, they tend to be motivated to work harder and enjoy the learning process. The focus is on tailoring teaching in a way that addresses individual needs. The perception is that this process leads to potential satisfaction and a positive student experience, as the quotations below illustrate.

"I think as educators, the first thing we need to do is listen whether or not that's innovative, I don't know…and all of that listening should channel into what we present to students and what we ask students to do in workshops…"
(Participant 1)

"…It's not just coming up with different means and different methods, it's also demonstrating some flexibility and enabling students to be a little bit more. I guess the word is autonomous in the way that they want to do something… And these are the processes that they have to follow. So what else do you put into the set-up of your service operation to get those outcomes …, there's that experience, experience element that should go with it for students as well. And the broader development and the sense of purpose that they should come out of their degree with."
(Participant 11)

"...if I was in an organisation, I would do internal comms, I'd do a change plan, I'd develop training materials. So, I think of it as shifting performance rather than just learning. They're not just getting facts in their head. There's no point in just knowing them. You know them, and then what? So I think it's that mindset of performance and having a, you know, a fun experience, a positive experience, not just the transmission of information..."
(Participant 2)

5.3.4 **Fourth dimension of variation – Expressed emotions**

The focus of this dimension is the subconscious emotions perceived to align with each category. These emotions are believed to influence the student-teacher relationship and the way staff support student learning. In **Category 1** (innovative teaching is about newness or difference), the expressed emotion is perceived as neutral; there was a sense of limited engagement in building student-teacher relationships, as the focus was on getting the work done, which is to deliver teaching.

> *"…it does require that certain degree of stability, confidence, and feeling settled in your job to disrupt what you already do because it involves additional labour… Because you know, when you first start teaching, you just want to do things like to feel that you're doing a good job…"*
> *(Participant 9)*

> *"When they come to university, they believe that what they're doing is buying an education. Now, they aren't, of course. They're buying access to an education, but their mindset is one of consumers consuming a service. The way to deal with satisfaction among consumers buying a service is to be seen to be responding and to tell your consumers how you're responding. If things go slightly wrong. So you talk to them, you keep a dialogue open with them, and when things do go wrong, signpost very clearly that you've seen the problem. You've acknowledged it, and you've put it right as a lecturer. The only things I really have control over, are what's said in the lectures and the workshops".*
> *(Participant 1)*

For **Category 2** (making an impact on student learning), the expressed emotion is identified as mixed, with a sense of interest and bravery. Here, there is recognition of the risks involved in implementing innovative teaching and the uncertainty regarding student responses. There is more engagement within the category as the perception is that to build a student-teacher relationship, one needs to have an interest and be brave enough to overcome challenges and explore new ideas.

> *"I'd like to kind of try and support with maybe teaching provision at university for students to try and help, you know, remove some of these barriers for students… but kind of alongside that and related to that, the work I did with international students on pre-sessional courses again was*

very interesting. It just really opened my eyes to student experiences as well as international student perspectives. So again, I was working with these students, and I was thinking, oh, this is a really difficult situation for some of these students. Some of their experiences aren't positive at all and put them under a lot of pressure; I was thinking, what can I do that would not add to this pressure…"
(Participant 10)

"I'm worried about doing anything that has a negative impact on student's grades without knowing how it would go, particularly for my foundation year students, because they've got to pass the course to progress, right? And so, it's quite a high risk to do anything too out there for them, that might risk them not passing the module. With my second-year students, obviously, it feeds into the degree award, so then I introduced it as a formative assessment and got much better buy-in from students…"
(Participant 8)

The expressed emotion within **Category 3** (innovative teaching is about inclusivity) is enthusiasm, as this is seen as being key in motivating staff to persist when faced with challenges. Being enthusiastic is perceived as being necessary to strengthen any student-teacher relationships that have been built/developed through the teaching process. This emotion is evident in the way challenges are viewed as opportunities for learning.

"My rationale for being innovative was I suppose I was really quite scared this year of that group because I haven't had such a large group before, and the module itself used to be 6 weeks and now it's eleven, so it was. It was all changing and I was thinking, Oh my God, am I going to be able to handle it? Can I keep 50 people interested for three hours? It's a horrible time of day. You know, I was really like, what do I do, I was really worried about it. And I was just like, you know, I've got to approach this just with joy. And I've just got to try and have fun because, you know, you feel responsible…"
(Participant 9)

"...You know, whatever it might be, I just want to try. I want to throw everything at it. Throw the whole toolbox of ideas because I felt like, yeah, why not"
(Participant 3)

Empathy is the expressed emotion identified in **Category 4** (Innovative teaching is about student development). Here, there is a sense of heightened emotional engagement, as staff seem passionate about supporting students throughout the teaching process. Staff acknowledged the need for perspective-taking, that is, listening and understanding students' needs and finding ways to address these needs. It is perceived that being empathetic helps build a stronger student-teacher relationship, allowing for enhanced student engagement, as students who feel understood and valued are more likely to be engaged.

> *"… you feel a sense of responsibility. You think these students are from all over the world, they've come here for me. Not for me. But you know that they've given the university all of this money and time. And I just felt a real weight of responsibility again. And so, like, I felt that innovation was the only way to sort of really enjoy the space to inject energy…"*
> *(Participant 9)*

> *"I mean, I would ask, I would say, right, how's this going? Should we spend a little bit longer? I never know whether I do it to the whole group very much like as in, I don't know where that's useful. So yeah, I have like if I introduce a task I'll say generally how does this feel? What do you think? And obviously, that's a really pointless question because nobody's really going to answer. And then what I tend to do is if people are working in groups, I'll go around to a couple of groups and say how are we doing, is this the amount of time? do you think we need a bit more?"*
> *(Participant 16)*

5.4 Conclusion

The above description illustrates how the dimensions vary across the categories of description and the structural relatedness that connects the categories within each. From Table 5.3, it can be seen how the level of inclusiveness increases along the dimensions and the categories. The table shows that at the least inclusive level, the perceived outcome of innovative teaching is to promote knowledge and understanding, which aligns with the role of the instructor in meeting institutional expectations. In comparison, the more inclusive way of experiencing innovative teaching focuses on providing a positive student experience. In addition, the purpose of innovative teaching extends beyond the discipline, encompassing skills development and lifelong learning as integral components of the process.

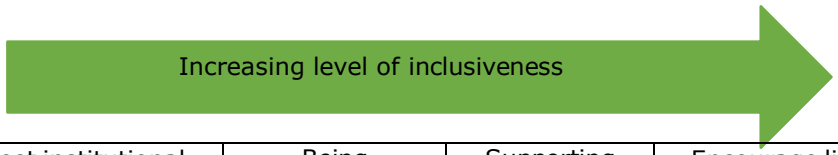
	Referential aspect of innovative teaching			
	Innovative teaching is about newness/ difference (Category 1)	Innovative teaching is about making an impact on student learning (Category 2)	Innovative teaching is about inclusivity (Category 3)	Innovative teaching is about student development (Category 4)
Structural aspect of innovative teaching				
Role of instructor	Meet institutional expectations	Being responsive to student needs	Supporting the growth of students	Encourage lifelong learning
Purpose	Support teaching	Support learning	Building a learning community	Skills development
Perceived outcome	Promote knowledge & understanding	Reinforce learning	Improved student performance	Positive student experience
Expressed emotions	Neutral	Mixed emotions	Enthusiasm	Empathy

Table 5.3: Outcome space of innovative teaching

6 Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the variations in the ways staff experience innovative teaching. This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 5 and presents my contribution to the literature on innovative teaching. As stated in Chapter 1, my study aimed to investigate the qualitatively different ways that staff at the University collectively experience innovative teaching. The research question I sought to answer in my study is:

What are the qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff within the context of a University?

The content in this chapter, therefore, builds on the findings presented in Chapter 5 by discussing their relevance to my research and presents my contribution to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Section 6.2 discusses how the findings answer my research question. Section 6.2.1 focuses on how staff experience innovative teaching. Section 6.2.1 focuses on the critical differences in ways of experiencing. In Section 6.3, I discuss the contributions that my research makes to the literature on innovative teaching, as reviewed in Chapter 2. These contributions are aligned with the three key themes outlined in Chapter 2.

6.2 Variations in experiences of innovative teaching

This section addresses the study's research question, which explores variations in the collective ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff at the University. As described in Chapter 5, four qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching emerged from the data analysis. Each category of description offered a distinctive perspective on innovative teaching. The focus within each category differed from the next, with each demonstrating an increasing awareness from the lowest to the highest. Together, the categories illustrate an inclusive, hierarchical view of how participants experience innovative teaching.

The hierarchical relationship between the categories is from the least inclusive conception, "**innovative teaching is about newness/difference,"** to the most

inclusive conception, "**innovative teaching is about student development"**. The hierarchical structure among the categories emphasises the logical relationships among them, with each category offering distinctive perspectives on innovative teaching. However, it is worth noting that the hierarchical nature does not denote a better or worse understanding of innovative teaching, but rather illustrates the inclusive nature of certain categories relative to others (Åkerlind, 2011, 2025; Taylor-Beswick & Hornung, 2024).

To illustrate, when compared to Category 1, where innovative teaching was experienced as newness or difference, Category 2 (innovative teaching is about making an impact) was perceived as more inclusive than Category 1 because, although awareness of newness was present, the focus was not on newness but rather on making an impact. Category 4 – **innovative teaching is about student development** was classified as the most inclusive of the four categories, as it encompassed the other three conceptions but not vice versa. In other words, the perception that **innovative teaching is about student development** (Category 4) was more inclusive than the perception that **innovative teaching is about newness** (Category 1). This is because, although there is an awareness and connection with newness within the perception of student development in Category 4, a connection with student development is not evident in the perception of innovative teaching being about newness in Category 1.

Section 6.2.1 is a discussion of the nuances in the categories of description.

6.2.1 How staff perceive innovative teaching and what it means to them

In Category 1, innovative teaching is experienced as being about newness/difference. The focus here is on the use of new or different methods to teach. This newness/difference was recognised as being context and practice-specific and could be different to either staff, students or both. A common thread within this category was the use of tools and technology considered new/different to one's teaching practice and discipline. For instance, as set out in Section 5.2.1, a respondent suggested innovative teaching was about trying new ways with the help of technology.

Category 2 provides a distinct perspective by focusing on making an impact on student learning. This category is distinct from Category 1 because although there was an awareness of newness/difference, the focus was not on the newness of the methods per se but rather on how to use these methods in ways that improve student learning and the role that teachers play in student learning. In this category, there was the recognition that knowing your students helped in achieving the aim of impacting student learning. There was the sense that knowing one's students helps identify their needs, allowing staff opportunities to align their teaching practice to student needs. As detailed in Section 5.2.2, a respondent expressed that innovative teaching is more concerned with impact than introducing something new.

Progressing to Category 3, where innovative teaching is experienced as inclusive teaching, there was an awareness of catering to student needs. However, the distinction between Category 3 and Category 2 is that in Category 3, the focus is on improving student performance through inclusive practice and empowering students to take an active role in their learning. Innovative teaching was perceived as providing differentiated instruction and personalised learning experiences that catered to student needs. Within Category 3, the role of student voice in inclusive practice was recognised. This role was perceived as being important as it allows students to feel empowered, transforming their learning experience through increased engagement and motivation. There was the perception that personalised learning promotes equitable learning experiences, which leads to improved performance. Student experience seemed dominant in Category 3, as there was the perception that addressing student needs leads to better learning environments and positive student experiences.

For Category 4, where innovative teaching is experienced as student development, although there was an awareness of improving student performance, as in Category 3, the distinctiveness from the previous category is that the focus here was on supporting students to develop beyond the module or course. There was the perception that innovative teaching should not just be about teaching and learning but extend to skill development. There was a sense within Category 4 that innovative teaching should provide students with opportunities to develop skills that transcend the discipline. In other words, it was perceived that although

discipline-specific knowledge is important, it is vital for students to develop skills that allow them to contribute to society. As the most inclusive, Category 4 was the only category in which a perceived connection between teaching and its contribution to societal progress was made.

Section 6.2.2 focuses on the distinctions in the dimensions of variation and highlights the critical differences.

6.2.2 **Critical differences in ways of experiencing innovative teaching**

In addition to the categories of description, four dimensions of variation were identified, which showed how these dimensions are discerned along a particular category. Dimensions of variation provide a way to explore the structural connections among the categories of description along a particular dimension and to identify critical aspects of the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2025). Therefore, in this study, the dimensions of variation indicate where critical differences in experiences emerge.

The dimensions of variation in the categories of description show how each dimension represents different values along the dimension from a collective perspective. For example, the dimension "role of instructor" holds different values across the categories of description, with the least inclusive being "meet institutional expectations" and the most inclusive being "encourage lifelong learning".

6.2.2.1 First dimension of variation: Role of the instructor

The first dimension of variation addresses the role of the instructor and implicates the recognition that instructors have a role to play in student learning. Innovative teaching was seen as a means of fulfilling this role. However, the role varied within each category. In Category 1, the role of the instructor is to meet institutional expectations. The role of the instructor was seen as delivering instruction and demonstrating subject-matter expertise. There was concern about the lack of time to engage in activities that could create more opportunities to improve student learning, as well as students' passive nature.

For Category 2, the role of the instructor was perceived as being responsive to student needs. It was identified as student-focused, indicating a shift from Category 1, where the focus was on meeting institutional expectations. Additionally, for Category 2, the focus is not only on meeting institutional expectations but also on engaging in activities that provide differentiated learning tailored to individual student needs and guiding students to become knowledgeable in the subject.

In Category 3, the role of the instructor is about supporting student growth. For Category 3, the role of the instructor was more about supporting student growth and was perceived as encouraging students to regularly reflect on their understanding and identify areas for improvement. Student growth was perceived as the ability to approach the discipline with a critical perspective, enabling students to become autonomous learners.

In Category 4, the role of the instructor extends beyond teaching the discipline to include encouraging lifelong learning. This shift in perspective here shows a direction of travel from one that is teacher-focused, that is, "meeting institutional expectations" identified in Category 1, to holistically supporting students and being student-focused as in Category 4, "encouraging lifelong learning". Encouraging lifelong learning was seen as necessary for students to excel in their chosen careers, as it supports students in developing a quest for personal and professional growth and transcends disciplinary boundaries.

6.2.2.2 Second dimension of variation: Purpose

The second dimension of variation identified was the purpose of innovative teaching, which demonstrates the acknowledgement that innovative teaching ought to have a purpose, that is, a reason or goal for a particular approach. The purpose of each category differed. For Category 1, the purpose of innovative teaching is to support the teaching process through methods that ensure the instructor can meet institutional expectations. The purpose of innovative teaching was perceived as a means to an end, supporting staff in their teaching, especially given the time constraints they face.

For Category 2, there was a shift in focus, in which the purpose of innovative teaching was perceived as supporting student learning. Innovative teaching was viewed as integral to the teaching process for student-centred learning. Student-centred learning provides students with opportunities to understand the discipline and the associated skills required to master the subject, thereby enhancing their performance. The purpose of innovative teaching in Category 3 is to build a learning community.

In Category 3, there was a shift in perception where building learning communities was viewed as vital to student success, as these provide safe spaces for students to interact with other learners, co-create understanding, and improve their skills and knowledge. The learning communities were also perceived as a way to promote a sense of belonging, as they encouraged students to be their authentic selves and develop connections with their peers.

In Category 4, the purpose is perceived as skills development. It was recognised that students had to develop skills beyond those specific to their subjects. The focus was on encouraging students to identify and develop skills needed to excel in their future careers. Here, the shift identified and distinguishing this category from other categories was the focus on skills development. Developing these skills was seen as a way to prepare students for the future and enhance their career opportunities and overall well-being, especially since personal development was understood to support self-esteem and self-awareness.

6.2.2.3 Third dimension of variation: Perceived outcome

The third dimension of variation recognised innovative teaching as leading to an outcome or result, which ties in with the second dimension, "purpose". The outcome is perceived as the result of one's action. In Category 1, the perceived outcome of innovative teaching is the promotion of knowledge and understanding. Here, the link between "meeting institutional expectations," identified in the first dimension – "role of the instructor," is evident, as most teaching sessions aim to promote knowledge and understanding, and the purpose of innovative teaching is to facilitate this.

Similar to Category 1, the perceived outcome for Category 2 was linked to student learning; the shift here is that Category 2 focuses on reinforcing learning and emphasises helping learners develop learning-enhancing strategies. These learning strategies were recognised as assisting learners to improve their information retention, increase their engagement with the learning process and engage in active reflection, which helps students understand the discipline better.

Building on Category 2, the perceived outcome for Category 3 is improved student performance. It was recognised that creating active learning opportunities supports students to take ownership of their learning, with instructors acting as facilitators. Students taking ownership of their learning was seen as a way to boost their confidence and motivation to learn.

A positive student experience is the perceived outcome for Category 4. There was recognition that meeting students' learning needs through tailored feedback and positive reinforcement helps them feel heard and supported, leading to increased engagement and a more positive learning experience. Within this dimension, a shift in focus can be seen across the categories of description, from "promoting knowledge and understanding" in Category 1 to "a positive student experience" in Category 4.

6.2.2.4 Fourth dimension of variation: Expressed emotions

The final dimension of variation identified was subconscious emotions, which vary across the categories of description. These emotions were perceived as influencing the student-teacher relationships and the support staff provided for student learning. In Category 1, the expressed emotion perceived was neutrality, as staff focused on meeting institutional expectations, as seen in the first dimension of variation, "role of the instructor". There was a sense that adopting a neutral stance helped facilitate the work. This neutral feeling was perceived as providing mental clarity and a better perspective on what they could control, which in turn supported their purpose: delivering teaching.

In Category 2, there was a shift from neutral emotions to mixed emotions, comprising elements of interest and bravery. This mix results from recognising the challenges associated with implementing innovative teaching. Participants recognised that to achieve one's purpose of supporting learning, as in the second dimension of variation, one ought to have an interest and be brave, irrespective of potential risks. There was awareness of the risks, including the impact on grades and the potential for a negative student experience or feedback. However, it was recognised that, despite the associated risk, being brave helped identify ways to minimise its impact on student outcomes and learn from any mistakes. Having an interest and being brave were seen as the initial steps in developing student-teacher relationships, as they provided opportunities for staff and students to learn from each other.

Enthusiasm is the expressed emotion in Category 3, indicating a shift from the mixed emotions of Category 2. In Category 3, being enthusiastic was perceived as key to student engagement as it creates opportunities for teaching to be adapted to suit the needs of learners. Enthusiasm was seen as a way of strengthening student-staff relationships, as it helps develop effective learning environments and approaches that support and guide student learning.

Finally, for Category 4, the expressed emotion perceived is empathy. Being empathetic helped staff develop a better understanding of student learning needs and gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives. This emotion was perceived as helping staff strengthen the student-staff relationship, leading to improved learning because students felt heard and valued. In Category 4, the expressed emotion of empathy was viewed as holistic, as it requires staff to reflect on their practice, focusing on perspective-taking, compassion, and building strong, positive relationships.

The above discussion has centred on the distinctions identified between the dimensions of variation and has illustrated the relationship that exists between them.

6.3 Contribution to the literature on innovative teaching

In this section, I demonstrate how my research findings contribute to the three key themes of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2: understandings of innovative teaching, factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching, and the purpose of innovative teaching. Table 6.1 summarises the five contributions my research makes to the three themes of the literature on innovative teaching discussed in Chapter 2.

Theme 1: Understandings of innovative teaching
Contributions: • to highlight the relationship between staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching and their aspirations. • to foreground the disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching. • to demonstrate the structure of variation in ways of experiencing innovative teaching.
Theme 2: Factors influencing staff engagement with innovative teaching
Contribution: • to highlight how expressed emotions influence staff engagement with innovative teaching
Theme 3: Purpose of innovative teaching
Contribution: • to emphasise how instructors' ways of experiencing innovative teaching influences their role

Table 6.1: Summary of contributions to the literature on innovative teaching

6.3.1 Relationship between staff understandings and aspirations

My first contribution to the literature on Theme 1, "understandings of innovative teaching", as discussed in Section 2.3, is to highlight the relationship between staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching and their aspirations. This relationship illustrates how staff members' ways of experiencing innovative teaching impact their practice, particularly in how their experiences of what innovative teaching entails shape their aspirations for its outcomes. This relationship can be viewed as dynamic, as the experience derived from innovative

teaching serves as the foundation, thereby influencing practice and the perceived outcome.

The literature reviewed in Section 2.3 identified three ways in which innovative teaching is understood, that is, innovative teaching being about newness (Hannan et al., 1999; O'Banion et al., 2011; Chou et al.,2018; Stasewitsch et al., 2022; Smith, 2011; Walder, 2014; Khayati & Selim 2019), innovative teaching being transformative (Chou et al., 2018; Kalyani and Rajasekaran, 2018; Khayati & Selim, 2019; Averill & Major; 2020) and innovative teaching being multidimensional (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Walder, 2014; Naz and Murad, 2017; Denholm, 2023). Although these ways of understanding add to our knowledge of innovative teaching, the literature does not consider the implications of such understandings for teachers' practices. My findings contribute to the literature by highlighting the relationship between staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching and their practice.

My findings demonstrate that the way innovative teaching is experienced by staff guides them in pursuing different forms of teaching practice to achieve various outcomes. My findings expand on the ways of experiencing innovative teaching identified in the literature by highlighting the relationship between these ways of experiencing and staff's aspirations for innovative teaching. This relationship highlights the interdependence among ways of experiencing, practice, and aspirations, as illustrated in Figure 6.2 below. As shown in Figure 6.2, this interdependence can be viewed as mutually reinforcing, in which one's way of experiencing innovative teaching guides learning and clarifies goals, which, in turn, help align with the aspirations of innovative teaching. This aspiration, in turn, serves as a tool for skill acquisition and a source of motivation, thereby informing and refining practice.

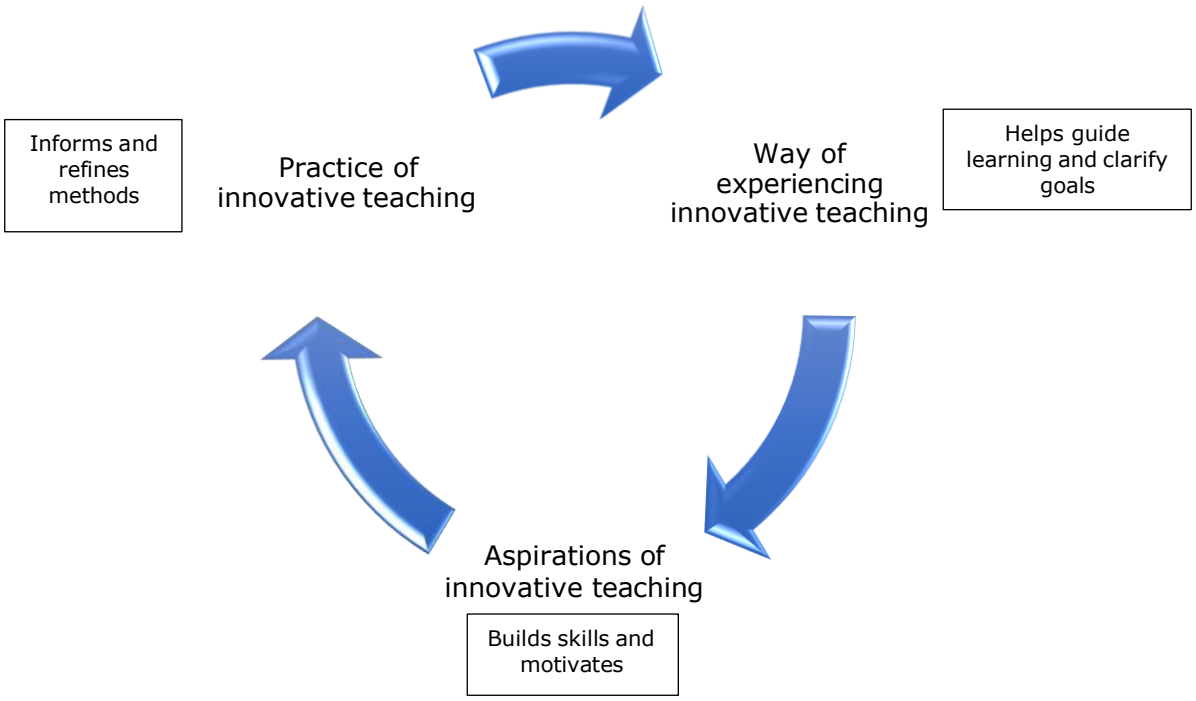


Figure 6.1: Mutually reinforcing model of understanding, aspirations and practice of innovative teaching

Similar to the literature discussed in Section 2.3, the conceptions of innovative teaching presented in the outcome space (Section 5.3) indicate that participants understood it as characterised by newness, transformation, and multidimensionality. As discussed in Section 5.3, which explores the dimensions of variation, my findings expand these understandings by showing the link between understanding, practice, and aspirations. For example, in Category 1, where innovative teaching was understood as newness, the practice described by staff focused on ensuring that opportunities are available for students to engage with teaching in ways that enable them to understand the subject and its key concepts, with the aspiration to promote knowledge and understanding. In comparison, for Category 2, where innovative teaching was understood as making an impact on student learning, the aspiration was to reinforce learning. The practice described by staff focused on helping learners develop strategies that enhance their understanding of the subject through scaffolding and reflective practice, enabling students to think deeply, internalise knowledge and refine their learning strategies.

This contribution is valuable because it highlights the relationship between staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching and how they guide staff to pursue different forms of teaching to achieve different outcomes. It also supports the various experiences attributed to innovative teaching in the literature. This contribution, therefore, suggests that researchers should focus less on differentiating among multiple ways of experiencing innovative teaching and more on how teachers' ways of experiencing guide them in pursuing different forms of teaching practice for diverse outcomes.

6.3.2 To foreground the disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching

My second contribution to the literature on Theme 1, "understandings of innovative teaching," is to foreground the disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching. This contribution illustrates the diverse interpretations of innovative teaching held by participants. These differences in ways of experiencing revealed that their experiences of innovative teaching were not singular, thereby highlighting the dynamic nature of innovative teaching and the need to move away from singular experiences as presented in the literature reviewed in Section 2.3.

Although the literature reviewed in Section 2.3 provides an understanding of what innovative teaching is, the literature tends to focus heavily on singular meanings (Jaskyte et al., 2009; Walder, 2014; Chou et al., 2018) and similarities in understanding (O'Banion et al., 2011; Chou et al., 2018). Additionally, the methodology used in some of these studies, for example, Jaskyte et al. (2009) and O'Banion et al. (2011), does not fully explain how the similarities in understanding were achieved and operates on the assumption that the meanings that participants ascribed to the free-list items used in the studies are the same. This heavy focus on singular meanings and similarities results in missed opportunities to explore differences in ways of experiencing and the coexistence of different ways of experiencing innovative teaching. My findings, as presented in Section 5.2, contribute to the literature by foregrounding the disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching.

The outcome space presented in Table 5.3 illustrates the different ways of experiencing innovative teaching. It includes four categories of description, each demonstrating unique insights among participants and differences in focus. For

example, in Category 1, where innovative teaching was understood as newness/difference, participants focused on using innovative teaching to support teaching. This focus, however, evolves in subsequent categories to include student learning and growth achieved through inclusive teaching. This approach, participants suggested, fosters a sense of belonging and connection among students. This progression in ways of experiencing innovative teaching among participants represents an expansion in focus, demonstrating the disparate ways of experiencing that exist.

Additionally, these findings offer a broader perspective on how innovative teaching is experienced, as the literature reviewed in Section 2.3 focuses heavily on its role in supporting teaching and helping students develop discipline-specific skills. The various foci identified across the four categories of description contribute to the literature by foregrounding disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching and offering a broader perspective beyond those that focus solely on supporting teaching and helping students develop discipline-specific skills.

The use of phenomenography and the choice of participants in the study, as discussed in Chapters 3 & 4, helped provide a more holistic way of experiencing innovative teaching. It offered opportunities to examine variations in ways of experiencing among participants, as presented in the categories of description discussed in Section 5.2. Also, using phenomenography helped uncover aspects in which the categories of description vary. For example, Table 5.3, which depicts the outcome space, illustrates how the categories of description vary across different dimensions. For instance, Table 5.3 shows that the focus on the dimension of variation "purpose" differs across each category of description. For category 1, the purpose was perceived as supporting teaching, whereas for category 4, the purpose of innovative teaching was perceived as skills development. This variation in focus contributes to the literature by foregrounding the disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching. It suggests that researchers should place less emphasis on identifying singular ways of experiencing and instead better account for and value the range of disparate ways of experiencing that practitioners hold about innovative teaching.

6.3.3 To demonstrate the structure of variation in ways of experiencing innovative teaching

My third contribution to Theme 1, 'Understandings of innovative teaching," is to demonstrate the structure of variation in ways of experiencing innovative teaching. This contribution shows the qualitative differences in how participants experience innovative teaching. By using phenomenography, my findings provide an outcome space that maps out the distinct categories of description of how participants experience innovative teaching and the critical aspects of each category. Additionally, the discussion of the category of description, in Section 5.2, demonstrates a hierarchical and inclusive expansion of awareness: from a focus on newness as identified in the least inclusive category (Category 1) to a focus on student development in the most inclusive category (Category 4). The structure of variation also contributes to the pool of meanings of the ways in which innovative teaching is experienced by staff.

Additionally, the discussion of the dimensions of variation in Section 5.3 shows the variation and interconnectedness between the categories of description along a particular dimension. For example, in the first dimension of variation, which is the role of the instructor, for Category 1, the role was seen as "meeting institutional expectations", and for Category 4, the role of the instructor was seen as "encouraging lifelong learning". This example highlights how the categories of description are connected as well as vary along a particular dimension.

This contribution is valuable as it provides a holistic picture of how innovative teaching is collectively experienced by participants by highlighting critical aspects discerned within each category, as well as showing how these ways of experiencing vary and their interconnectedness. This contribution suggests that researchers should place more emphasis on identifying the range of critical aspects of ways of experiencing innovative teaching.

6.3.4 Staff emotions and engagement with innovative teaching

My primary contribution to Theme 2, 'Factors Influencing Staff Engagement with Innovative Teaching,' is to highlight how emotions affect staff engagement with innovative teaching approaches. This contribution shows how participants' subconscious emotions influence their engagement with innovative teaching. In Section 5.3, which discusses the dimensions of variation, the findings indicate that these emotions influence how staff engage with innovative teaching to support students' learning.

The literature reviewed in Section 2.4.2 contributes to our understanding of factors that influence staff engagement with innovative teaching. The literature indicates that staff belief in their capacity and competence influences their engagement with innovative teaching (Buss et al, 2013; Bathgate et al, 2019; Fernández-Cruz & Rodríguez-Legendre, 2021), as pedagogical and social competencies provide staff with the confidence to embrace new and potentially challenging teaching approaches irrespective of risk of failure (Zhu et al, 2013; Averill and Major, 2020). While the literature adds to our understanding of how these feelings impact staff engagement with innovative teaching, it tends to focus heavily on how these feelings act as supporting or constraining factors (Buss et al., 2013; Averill & Major, 2020) rather than on how these emotions affect how staff engage with innovative teaching. My findings show how expressed emotions perceived by staff influence their engagement with innovative teaching to support students' learning.

My discussion of the dimensions of variation in Section 5.3.4 shows how the expressed emotions perceived by staff influence their engagement with innovative teaching and their support for student learning through student-teacher relationships. For example, in Category 1, where the expressed emotion was perceived as neutral, staff engagement with innovative teaching focused on completing the work—delivering the teaching—and on a limited focus on building student-teacher relationships. However, in Category 2, where the expressed emotion was identified as a mix of interest and bravery, there was greater engagement with innovative teaching, as participants recognised the need for both interest and bravery to overcome challenges and explore new ideas. Participants also recognised the importance of building strong student-teacher relationships to support student learning.

Additionally, enthusiasm was perceived as necessary to strengthen any student-teacher relationships built or developed through the teaching process. Based on the dimensions of variation described in Section 5.3.4, it is evident that there was a perceived increase in engagement with innovative teaching in Category 4 compared with Categories 1, 2, and 3. There was also a perceived sense of responsibility among staff, as evidenced by increased emotional engagement, with staff seeming passionate about supporting students throughout the teaching process. Again, there was awareness of the need to take a perspective to understand and address students' learning needs. Participants also recognised that being empathetic helped build stronger student-teacher relationships.

This contribution is important because it highlights how expressed emotions influence staff engagement with innovative teaching approaches. This contribution also demonstrates how expressed emotions influence student-teacher relationships, a finding supported by the literature (Pluta et al., 2013; Ferreri & O'Connor, 2013; Ma, 2024; Casari et al., 2025), which suggests that such relationships can improve student engagement. This contribution suggests that researchers should focus more on how staff's emotions towards innovative teaching influence the support they provide to students.

6.3.5 Emphasise how instructors' ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence their role

My primary contribution to the literature on Theme 3, "purpose of innovative teaching", is to emphasise how instructors' ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence their role. This contribution demonstrates how staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching influence their role. As discussed in Section 5.3.1, the findings suggest that instructors play a crucial role in implementing innovative teaching approaches.

The literature reviewed in Section 2.5 identifies various purposes of innovative teaching. Some of these purposes include fostering improvements in student engagement (Pluta et al., 2013; Ferreri & O'Connor, 2013; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Jang et al; 2016; Nguyen et al, 2018; Ma, 2024; Casari et al., 2025);

enhancing student outcomes (Trigwell et al., 2012; Bosio & Origo, 2020; Chen et al., 2025; Jang et al., 2016; Naz and Murad, 2017; Sankey, 2021) and meeting institutional expectations (Schneckenberg, 2009; Towndrow et al., 2010; De los Ríos-Carmenado et al., 2021; Graham, 2013; Lašáková et al., 2017). These purposes add to our understanding of innovative teaching; however, the literature tends to focus heavily on them, thereby minimising the extent to which instructors' ways of experiencing of innovative teaching might influence their role.

My discussion of "the purpose of innovative teaching" in Section 5.3.1, as part of the dimensions of variation, suggests that staff's ways of experiencing of innovative teaching shapes their role, which in turn influences their adaptability. For example, in Category 1, where innovative teaching was experienced as newness/difference, the role of the instructor was viewed as meeting institutional expectations. However, in Category 2, where innovative teaching is experienced as making an impact on student learning, the instructor's role was perceived as being responsive to student needs. These findings suggest that staff ways of experiencing of innovative teaching influences their role by shaping their mindset and willingness to adapt. Additionally, the different ways of experiencing highlight the relationship between ways of experiencing and role. These differences in ways of experiencing of innovative teaching demonstrate how staff roles are redefined to align with its purpose.

This contribution emphasises how ways of experiencing innovative teaching shape staff roles, which in turn influence staff adaptability. This contribution is vital, as it sheds light on how the roles staff play can serve as a bridge between innovative teaching and its intended purpose. This contribution suggests that researchers should focus more on how staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching shapes their roles to influence the purpose of innovative teaching.

6.4 Summary

In this Chapter, I presented a discussion of my findings from Chapter 5 to demonstrate how they answer my research question by explicitly focusing on the qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching among university staff. I also discussed the contributions of my findings to the three themes identified in the literature review on innovative teaching. I demonstrated how my findings extend the discussion on the ways of experiencing innovative teaching.

In the following chapter, I conclude my thesis by reflecting on the overall findings and their alignment with the research question and objectives stated in Chapter 1. I will also outline the study's limitations, the implications of my findings and suggest areas for further research.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study aimed to contribute to the literature on innovative teaching by examining variations in how this phenomenon is understood. In Chapters 1 and 2, I argued that the current literature overlooks the disparate ways of experiencing of innovative teaching that might exist by overemphasising singular ways of experiencing. To address this shortcoming, a phenomenographic framework, as discussed in Chapter 3, was chosen as the methodological approach for this study. This approach was chosen because it was well-suited to exploring staff's collective ways of experiencing of innovative teaching. This approach also aligned with the ontology and epistemological perspectives adopted for this study, as discussed in Chapter 3. My research was underpinned by phenomenography, a methodology specifically chosen to explore the different ways individuals collectively experience the phenomenon of innovative teaching. This approach was crucial as it guided the formulation of my research question and the careful design of my interview protocols. This ensured focused, distraction-free discussions that yielded rich data from the participants, as discussed in Chapter 4.

Therefore, in this final chapter, I provide a summary of the findings of my study in Section 7.2. Section 7.3 discusses the limitations of my research, while Section 7.4 focuses on the contributions of my work to our understanding of innovative teaching and identifies areas for future work. Section 7.5 discusses the policy implications, followed by a discussion on implications for practice in Section 7.6. Section 7.7 offers personal reflections.

7.2 Research findings

This project addresses the research question regarding variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching among university staff. The research question for this study was:

What are the qualitatively different ways of experiencing innovative teaching among staff within the context of a University?

Using phenomenography, the results identified an outcome space consisting of four distinctive ways in which participants conceptualise innovative teaching and four dimensions of variation. The categories of description represent the collective hierarchical ways in which participants perceived innovative teaching. Each category of description provides a distinct understanding of innovative teaching and its critical aspects, highlighting the qualitatively different ways in which research participants understood innovative teaching. The categories of description identified are:

Category 1 - Innovative teaching is about newness or difference
Category 2 - Innovative teaching is about making an impact on student learning
Category 3 - Innovative teaching is about inclusivity
Category 4 - Innovative teaching is about student development.

The qualitatively different ways participants experienced innovative teaching were discussed in detail in Section 5.2, and the associated variation in ways of experiencing was discussed in Section 6.2.

In addition to the categories of description, the dimensions of variation, discussed in detail in Section 5.3, illuminate how the dimensions identified in my findings span these categories and reveal the structural relationships that bind them together. This detailed examination of the structure of variation in awareness not only highlights the similarities between categories but also underscores their unique differences. The dimensions of variation highlight shared dimensions across categories and their increasing inclusiveness. The dimensions of variation identified for this study are:

- Role of the instructor
- Purpose
- Perceived outcome
- Expressed emotions.

The analysis revealed nuanced and evolving ways of experiencing innovative teaching among participants, providing insight into the diverse perspectives on these experiences.

Overall, this study has identified qualitatively different ways in which innovative teaching is understood. These differences in understanding also revealed the existence of critical variations in meanings. These findings offer institutions opportunities to maximise the benefits of innovative teaching. For example, by recognising the existence of differences in meanings, institutions can start to shift from singular to context-dependent meanings, as this approach would encourage a sense of empowerment among staff, leading to increased engagement with innovative teaching.

7.3 Limitations

The preceding discussion covered the study's findings, in which I demonstrated the variations in the ways of experiencing innovative teaching among participants. The findings uncovered disparate ways of experiencing of innovative teaching among participants and how these ways of experiencing influenced their roles and aspirations. The findings also helped clear the confusion I had over what innovative teaching entails, as discussed in Chapter 1, by allowing me to uncover variations in ways of experiencing innovative teaching. Additionally, these findings will help me evaluate my teaching practice in relation to the aspirations I have for student outcomes. However, like all research, this study also has some limitations. Therefore, in the subsequent sections of this chapter, I will address the limitations of this study and highlight the boundaries within which it was conducted.

The first limitation of this study is that participants were from a single university. This choice, however, is appropriate given that the phenomenon under study—innovative teaching—is considered a contextual one. Hence, selecting participants from a single institution for this study was applicable. However, although recruiting participants from other universities might have produced a different outcome space, it is worth noting that the focus of the outcome space in phenomenography is not generalisability, but rather, to describe the full range of variation in understanding among participants, that is, the complete set of possible ways a phenomenon can be understood by people in a specific context (Åkerlind, 2023). Again, though the local context limits the generalisability of the categories of description of this study, Marton (1986:35) states that "*the original finding of the*

categories of description is a form of discovery, and discoveries do not have to be replicable."

Additionally, the focus of this project was not to provide universal definitions of innovative teaching. Instead, it aimed to explore the diverse ways of experiencing innovative teaching within a university context. Consequently, the study and its findings reinforce the need to examine the contextual ways of experiencing innovative teaching, broadening perspectives on what it entails and encouraging a shift away from singular meanings. The consequence of this limitation is that the outcome space presented in this study represents the ways of experiencing by the participants of this study and, therefore, is not representative of other contexts.

A further limitation of this study is the range of participants selected. Although disciplinary backgrounds varied, the majority of participants were on teaching-focused contracts. I would have liked to recruit a relatively equal spread of participants across the three contract types used at the university, as indicated in Section 4.4. In addition, I had hoped to recruit colleagues in leadership positions who influence policy, such as Deans and Pro-Vice-Chancellors; however, I encountered challenges related to their availability and time constraints. Although this approach would have increased the number of participants, it is worth noting that, since phenomenography focuses on collective meanings (Åkerlind, 2023), the findings of this study are representative of participants' ways of experiencing innovative teaching. Additionally, the majority of participants had prior experience from different universities and drew on it, which allowed them to provide examples from other contexts. However, it is worth noting that using the same data, another researcher might uncover a different outcome space of what constitutes innovative teaching.

A final limitation was the study's focus on collective ways of experiencing, which meant excluding unique experiences or perspectives mentioned by individual participants from the outcome space. For example, a participant provided a unique perspective on what innovative teaching meant by identifying the role of institutions in providing learning environments that are flexible and which empower staff and students to take full ownership of the teaching and learning

process; however, this perspective was excluded because it could not be integrated into the categories of description, as other participants did not mention it. Excluding this perspective was necessary to ensure that the categories of description reflected qualitative variation across the group, rather than individual experiences, as per phenomenography, thereby ensuring the holistic integrity of the outcome space (Åkerlind, 2023, 2025). The consequence of this limitation is that the outcome space presented in this study focuses on collective ways of experiencing among participants, rather than unique ways of experiencing. This perspective can, however, be explored further in subsequent studies, namely, what constitutes flexible learning environments.

7.4 Contributions and future work

This research makes five key contributions to the literature on innovative teaching. As outlined in Chapter 6, the study provides insights into the major themes identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

My first contribution to Theme 1, "understandings of innovative teaching, is to highlight the relationship between staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching in their practice. This contribution demonstrates that the understanding staff hold of innovative teaching guides them in pursuing different forms of teaching practice to achieve various outcomes. My contribution builds upon existing understandings in the literature by highlighting the relationship between these ways of experiencing and staff's aspirations for innovative teaching. It also sheds light on the mutually reinforcing interdependence between ways of experiencing innovative teaching, aspirations, and the practice of innovative teaching.

The second contribution to Theme 1, understandings of innovative teaching, highlights the disparate interpretations of this concept. This contribution illustrates the diverse interpretations of innovative teaching held by participants and supports the view that no universal definition exists. It also offers a broader perspective on innovative teaching, extending beyond understandings that focus solely on supporting teaching and helping students develop discipline-specific skills.

The third contribution to Theme 1, provides a holistic picture of how innovative teaching is collectively experienced by participants. This contribution demonstrates the structure of variation in ways of experiencing innovative teaching. This contribution shows the qualitative differences in how participants experience innovative teaching and highlights critical aspects discerned within each category, as well as showing how these ways of experiencing vary and their interconnectedness.

For Theme 2, "factors affecting staff engagement with innovative teaching," my contribution highlights how expressed emotions influence staff engagement with innovative teaching. This contribution shows how subconscious emotions influence staff engagement with innovative teaching and student-teacher relationships.

Finally, my contribution to Theme 3, "purpose of innovative teaching," emphasises how instructors' understanding of innovative teaching influences their roles. This contribution emphasises how ways of experiencing innovative teaching shapes staff roles, thereby influencing staff adaptability. This contribution also highlights how staff roles can be seen as a bridge between innovative teaching and its intended purpose.

This study has uncovered opportunities for further research that can contribute to the understanding and discourse on innovative teaching. My contribution to Theme 1 identified disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching among participants. These disparate ways of experiencing could serve as a guide for future quantitative research by being transformed into measurable variables in large-scale surveys. Using these ways of experiencing this way would help institutions develop targeted interventions that support staff in their innovative teaching practice, as they would inform the specific support needed at each stage, depending on the intervention's aim. For example, suppose the intervention aims to support practice from Category 1 (innovative teaching is about newness) to Category 3 (Innovative teaching is about inclusivity). In that case, the categories can inform the support needed for this intervention. This approach would help staff who want their innovative teaching practice to evolve from a focus on "newness" (Category 1) to a focus on "student development" (Category 4). It is

worth noting, though, that the aim of phenomenography is not to move people from one understanding to another but rather to uncover variations in ways of experiencing.

Additionally, my study does not suggest that institutions move staff along the various categories of description. Instead, it suggests that institutions are aware of the variation in staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching. In light of this, future work could use seek to explore how the disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching shifts based on context and how different ways of experiencing innovative teaching develop. These studies can seek to develop frameworks that encourage staff buy-in and help transition teaching-related enhancement activities from solitary to collective, evidence-based designs.

My contribution to Theme 2 highlights how staff's expressed emotions influence their engagement with innovative teaching and student-teacher relationships. To further develop this contribution, future studies could focus on how a particular way of experiencing innovative teaching translates into specific practices and their impact on student-staff relationships. These studies could help institutions create a climate that supports staff in pursuing innovative teaching, as their outcomes could help institutions achieve strategic objectives, particularly given the increasing emphasis on innovative teaching in global, national, and institutional policy documents.

Additionally, my contribution to Theme 3 highlights the critical role of instructors in innovative teaching and how their understanding of the role shapes their practice. Further studies could explore how flexible learning environments influence staff practice of innovative teaching, especially as a participant aligned the practice of innovative teaching with the role of institutions by perceiving innovative teaching as a practice that is supported by learning environments that are flexible and empower staff and students to take full ownership of the teaching and learning process. These studies could help identify what constitutes a flexible learning environment and how these environments can be used to encourage staff engagement with innovative teaching practices. Additionally, future

Finally, further studies using phenomenography could explore ways of experiencing from the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as students. This approach would help provide critical user-centred perspectives on innovative teaching, especially as research by Jaskyte et al. (2009) found that staff and students' experiences of innovative teaching differ. This knowledge would broaden the experiences ascribed to innovative teaching and help move away from singular ways of experiencing. Additionally, such studies would help institutions provide pedagogical choices validated through research. Findings from such studies would help foster student agency and partnership by supporting the co-creation of pedagogical approaches, thereby encouraging student engagement and empowering students to take ownership of their learning.

7.5 Implications for policy

This section emphasises the policy implications of my findings, particularly how they contribute to the ongoing discussion on innovative teaching as outlined in Sections 1.4 and 1.5. I demonstrate how these results can inform and shape new policies on implementing innovative teaching within HEIs.

As discussed in Sections 1.4 and 1.5, although various global, national, and institutional policies recognise the value of innovative teaching, the tendency to equate it solely with "newness" and to assign a single way of experiencing innovative teaching in such documents diminishes its importance among staff. This study shows that to realise the full potential of innovative teaching, policy documents must move away from the narrative that equates innovation with "newness", as the findings indicate that staff hold multiple ways of experiencing innovative teaching. Therefore, it would be advantageous for policies to go beyond portraying innovative teaching as merely new and to allow for context-specific ways of experiencing. This approach would shift from a "one size-fits-all" model to one that recognises multiple ways of experiencing innovative teaching. This approach would encourage flexibility among staff by allowing staff to interpret innovative teaching in ways that align with their aspirations and disciplinary norms, thereby shifting the focus from method to outcome. Also, providing contextual ways of experiencing innovative teaching would minimise the likelihood of ambiguity, inconsistent practice and superficial adoption. Having contextual ways of experiencing innovative teaching will allow staff to adopt practices

supported by appropriate pedagogical principles, especially as my findings, as discussed in Section 6.3.1, suggest a relationship between staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching and their aspirations.

Finally, policies must acknowledge the connection between staff understandings of innovative teaching and its influence on their roles. For instance, although the Danish policy on innovative teaching discussed in Section 1.4 recognises that innovative teaching involves more than just tools, acknowledging that it also requires a change in mindset, it fails to consider how this mindset shift might affect staff roles. My findings suggest a link between staff members' ways of experiencing innovative teaching and their roles. The findings show that staff roles evolve in line with their way of experiencing innovative teaching, as discussed in Section 5.3.1. For example, in Category 1, staff perceived their role as meeting institutional expectations; in Category 3, they perceived their role as supporting student growth. This finding suggests that policy documents could extend the guidelines to recognise the time spent on activities that promote innovative teaching, especially as these changing roles call for experimentation among staff. This recognition would mean that the time staff spend experimenting is recognised as a core part of their role, rather than an add-on.

7.6 Implications for practice

My study offers several implications for how ways of experiencing innovative teaching can influence the teaching practice and the broader higher education sector. These implications are discussed in turn below.

A key implication emerging from this study is the importance of recognising the disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching among practitioners. Relying on the assumption of singular experiences can contribute to feelings of exclusion and devaluation among staff, especially when a single way of experiencing dominates the narrative. These feelings are similar to what my colleagues and I felt when we were expected to be more innovative in our teaching, as discussed in Section 1.2. This could mean that staff implementing context-specific,

innovative teaching may feel their efforts are not recognised because they do not fit the dominant way of experiencing innovative teaching.

In addition, focusing on a single way of experiencing can sometimes lead to superficial change without underlying pedagogical improvement. For example, relying on a way of experiencing that focuses solely on the "introduction of technology" could lead to situations in which its impact on student learning is overlooked. The focus might be on the tool itself—in this case, technology—rather than the effect. Also, recognising disparate ways of experiencing innovative teaching could empower staff to identify ways to contextualise these practices, especially as my findings, discussed in Sections 5.2 and 6.3.2, show the different ways of experiencing innovative teaching. This approach shifts away from "a one size fits all" way of experiencing, providing opportunities for staff to adopt contextually effective methods. Adopting this stance, could improve staff engagement with teaching related workshops compared to the current low uptake as discussed in Section 1.5.

Another implication from this study is recognising how staff's expressed emotions influence their engagement with innovative teaching, as my findings discussed in Section 5.3.4 indicate a link. This recognition ensures that staff are supported in using these emotions to encourage engagement rather than as a barrier. When staff feel supported and encouraged, their self-efficacy and confidence tend to improve, as emotions of fear are more likely to be channelled into readiness to engage with innovative teaching rather than avoidance. Also, when staff feel supported, their willingness to share concerns and collaborate with others increases, thereby enhancing their engagement with innovative teaching. The recognition of the link between staff expressed emotions and their engagement with innovative teaching will provide avenues for staff to share their concerns. Concerns raised by staff can be addressed when teaching-related workshops are being developed, allowing staff to feel heard. This would also ensure that these workshops are fit for purpose, thereby minimising the feeling of apathy among staff as mentioned in Section 1.5

Furthermore, my study suggests the need for institution-wide conversations about what constitutes innovative teaching. Given the different ways of experiencing

innovative teaching as discussed in Section 5.2, these conversations would help inform the teaching-related enhancement activities offered. Also, these conversations could provide the intellectual framework, staff buy-in and transition teaching-related enhancement activities from solitary to collective, evidence-based designs thereby enhancing these workshops. Additionally, these conversations would ensure that development activities meet staff expectations by providing opportunities to identify needs and gaps and by delivering training that contextualises innovative teaching. This approach promotes a community of practice among staff, enabling them to form supportive professional networks to discuss challenges, seek feedback, share resources and best practices. Currently the absence of guiding principles as stated in Section 1.5, creates some level of uncertainty and confusion among colleagues which could be the case for those enrolled on the Advance HE accredited courses offered at the university.

A final implication of this study suggests the need for institutions to deliver personal development workshops that supports an alignment between staff ways of experiencing innovative teaching and their aspirations. My discussion in Section 6.3.1 shows a relationship between staff's ways of experiencing innovative teaching and their aspirations. Understanding this relationship provides opportunities for critical reflection on current practice among staff, encouraging them to learn and refine their practice continuously. This process of critical reflection could encourage staff to concentrate on identifying practices that foster student development rather than simply delivering content. Again, this process provides opportunities for staff to gain a deeper understanding of their teaching efficacy and its impact on student learning, motivating staff to experiment with new ideas influenced by their aspirations. Recognising this relationship will help foster shared contextual understandings of innovative teaching and support the development of workshops that nurture innovative teaching as discussed in Section 1.5.

7.7 Reflections

This doctoral study has been a learning and self-discovery journey, fulfilling my motivations at the start. It has helped me achieve my core objectives: exploring different meanings and understandings of innovative teaching and contributing to

the existing literature on the topic. Using phenomenography, I identified varied interpretations of innovative teaching among university staff and the critical variations across these meanings. The findings have helped clear the confusion I had about what innovative teaching means as described in Section 1.2. The findings have provided me with some guiding principles of what constitutes innovative teaching and some of the critical variations that exist among these meanings. This understanding has helped me develop a mindset where I frequently reflect on my practice as a way of identifying ways to improve my teaching practice as a means of supporting student learning. For example, I now design my teaching in a way that provides opportunities for students to evidence their learning in their own way and encourage collaborative learning among students to help them in their skills development and growth.

The findings from this study have informed my practice. For example, based on this study's findings, my focus has shifted from methods to outcomes. In other words, my teaching practice is informed by the outcome I hope to achieve in a particular session. This approach means that I frequently engage in systematic self-reflection to identify what is working and what needs adjustment. In addition, induction checklists have become part of my practice to identify and understand student concerns, providing tailored support that addresses them. This practice provided me with the opportunity to present with one of my students at the 2024 Advance HE EDI conference[1]. The presentation focused on how teaching activities can be adapted to create inclusive classrooms. In my presentation, I demonstrated how I redesigned the module's curriculum and assessment to address students' concerns. The process involved providing students with a checklist at the start of the semester to help them identify areas of concern. These concerns were then grouped into categories, which then informed the redesign of the curriculum and the assessment. In addition, exemplars and formative feedback sessions were introduced in the module, especially since the majority of students enrolled were not familiar with the UK higher education system. This approach provided students with opportunities to feel listened to and supported, as the support offered was tailored to their specific needs. The presentation was well received, and two attendees invited me to contribute to their platform "Academia Untold". I have

[1] Advance HE EDI 2024 Conference

also been asked by an attendee who works at the University of Reading to share my approach with colleagues in her department.

As part of this process, I have contributed to conversations on practice-informed teaching at the university, won various university education awards and been nominated by the university to apply for Advance HE's 2026 CATE award, which recognises and rewards collaborative work that has impacted teaching and learning.

Undertaking this research also influenced my performance in the role of Director of Teaching and Learning, as mentioned in Section 1.5. The insights gained from this study also influenced the teaching-related development activities I organised for staff. For example, at the 2024 Faculty Teaching and Learning Day, which focused on Sustainable Education, various workshops were designed to showcase how staff can incorporate sustainability into their teaching in a meaningful way and encourage dialogue among participants. Additionally, the findings of this study inspired me to initiate a faculty-wide initiative known as the "Talking Teaching Series", where staff shared best practices, addressed pedagogical challenges, and created knowledge.

Again, the findings have influenced the conversations with colleagues and the support I provide. For example, I always felt the need to support colleagues in developing and enhancing their teaching practice, especially during annual course and curriculum change processes. I consistently acted as a critical friend during these processes, collaborating with colleagues to refine their course offerings and teaching approaches.

These conversations have helped me develop as a researcher and build my confidence along the way, and I am grateful to everyone who has acted as a critical friend in this journey. I plan to continue contributing to the narrative on teaching in general and innovative teaching in particular, especially given the insights gained from this research.

Appendix 1 - Questions Interview Protocol

- _Date of interview
- _Location of interview
- _Time of start /end = duration

Introduction and background to study, reinforce consent and right to withdraw. Give assurance of confidentiality. Interviewee is free to interrupt or ask for clarification. State the length of the interview. Ask permission to turn on the recording device.

Interview Questions:

1. First, by way of context, can you tell me about your current role and a little about your history as an academic? Including where you have worked and your own University education.

2. Using the context of teaching and learning in its broadest sense, I would like you to tell me about some teaching & learning that you have been involved in that you consider was innovative in some way. Describe it to me in detail or from start to finish, and tell me how you felt about it.

a. Please could you explain to me why you did it that way?

b. What were the aims in doing this, or what did you hope to gain?

c. Why do you view it as innovative?

3. I would now like you to tell me about some teaching & learning that you have been involved in that you consider was not innovative. Describe it to me in detail and tell me how you felt about it. a. Why do you view this as not innovative?

4. You have told me about an instance of teaching and learning that you view as being innovative in some way and an example you view as not being innovative. Can you compare these instances and tell me why you selected them?

5. Now that we have explored some examples, I would like you to explain what innovative teaching and learning mean to you. a. Check includes description, feeling,

6. What is it not? /How would you describe teaching and learning that is not innovative? Have you ever experienced a difference in opinion, e.g. things at a conference?

7. What motivates you to be innovative? a. You have said 'more time', which I understand, but given there is never enough time and yet you have previously taken time to do something you consider innovative, what does it mean it becomes a priority where you do find time?

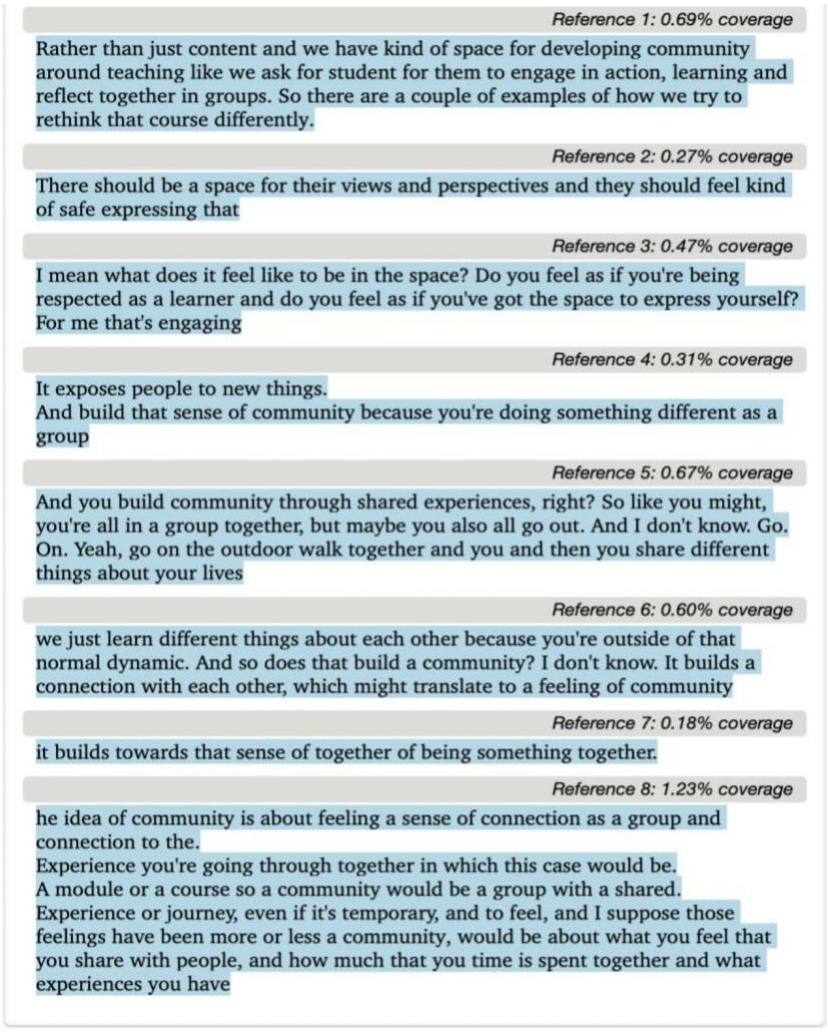
8. Do you have an example of something you would like to do and why?

9. Before we finish, is there anything else you would like to add?

Possible follow-up prompts:
• _Tell me (more) about...
• _Repeat significant words
• _You mentioned... tell me about that....
• _You mentioned... can you describe an example?
• _Could you please explain what you mean by……?
• _Could you explain…… further?
• _Could you clarify…… ?
• _I am not sure what you mean…. ?
• _Do you have further examples of … ?
• _What else did you notice/feel?
• _Could you give a more detailed description?
• _Just now you said... but earlier you said... how does this fit together?
• _Silence – allow pauses for reflection and for the participant to continue.
• _I think you have mentioned, but can you say more about....

Keeping on track:
• _I don't mean to be pushy, but I would like to hear more about....
• _I am interested in your views, not the management/norm/mine/...
• _Thanks for sharing that, can we return to... remember I asked you to tell me about...
• _What did that experience mean for you?
• _Could you recap....
• _Check for both feelings as well as descriptions

Appendix 2 – Example of condensing



Reference 1: 0.69% coverage

Rather than just content and we have kind of space for developing community around teaching like we ask for student for them to engage in action, learning and reflect together in groups. So there are a couple of examples of how we try to rethink that course differently.

Reference 2: 0.27% coverage

There should be a space for their views and perspectives and they should feel kind of safe expressing that

Reference 3: 0.47% coverage

I mean what does it feel like to be in the space? Do you feel as if you're being respected as a learner and do you feel as if you've got the space to express yourself? For me that's engaging

Reference 4: 0.31% coverage

It exposes people to new things.
And build that sense of community because you're doing something different as a group

Reference 5: 0.67% coverage

And you build community through shared experiences, right? So like you might, you're all in a group together, but maybe you also all go out. And I don't know. Go. On. Yeah, go on the outdoor walk together and you and then you share different things about your lives

Reference 6: 0.60% coverage

we just learn different things about each other because you're outside of that normal dynamic. And so does that build a community? I don't know. It builds a connection with each other, which might translate to a feeling of community

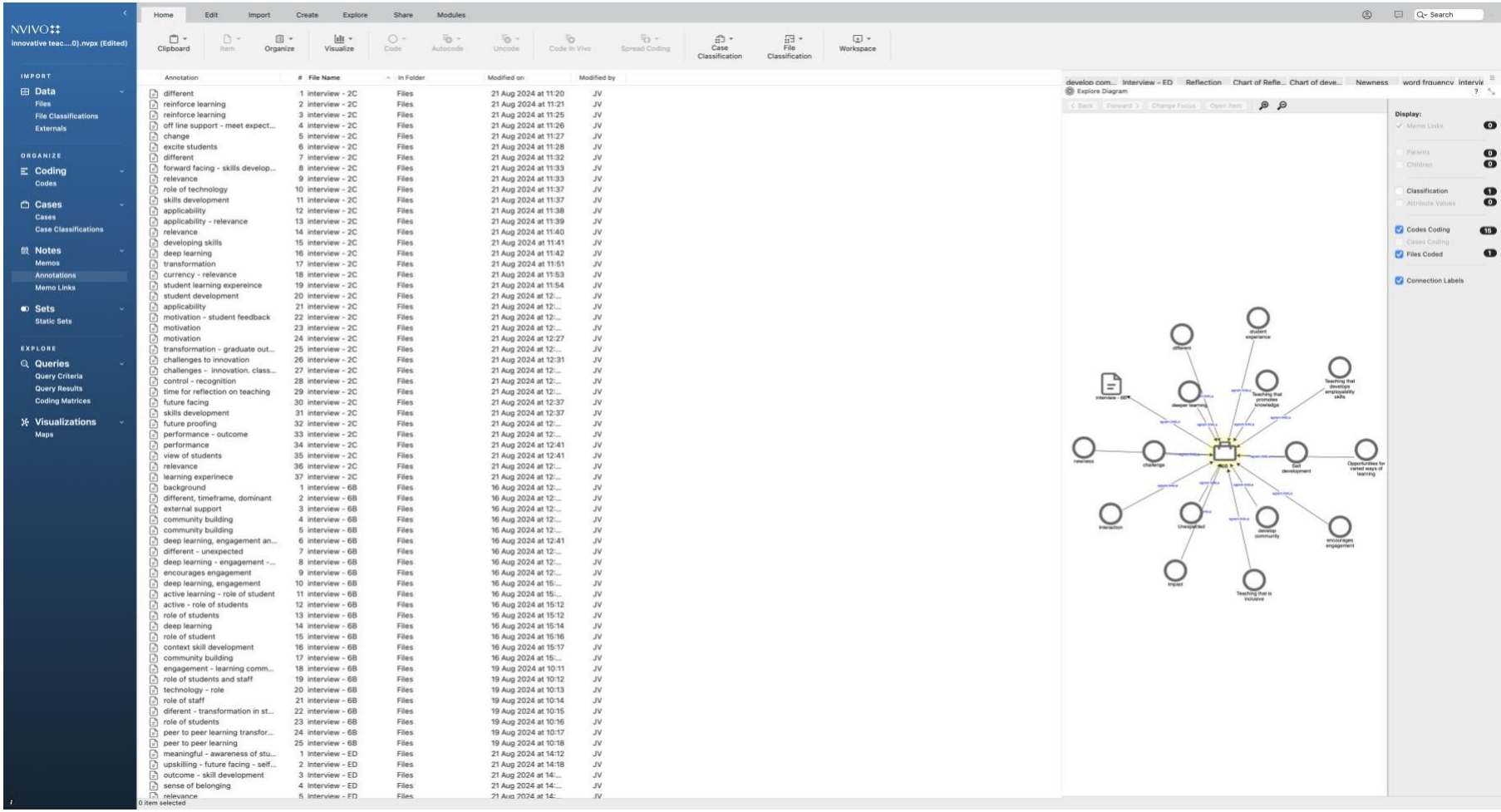
Reference 7: 0.18% coverage

it builds towards that sense of together of being something together.

Reference 8: 1.23% coverage

he idea of community is about feeling a sense of connection as a group and connection to the.
Experience you're going through together in which this case would be.
A module or a course so a community would be a group with a shared.
Experience or journey, even if it's temporary, and to feel, and I suppose those feelings have been more or less a community, would be about what you feel that you share with people, and how much that you time is spent together and what experiences you have

Appendix 3 – Sample of initial labels



Appendix 4 - Consent Form

Project Title: A phenomenographic analysis of innovative teaching among staff.

Name of Researcher: Email:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study and within 2 weeks after I take part in the study, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within two weeks of participating in the study, my data will be removed. If I participate in focus groups and then withdraw, my data will still be part of the study. ☐

3. I understand that any information given to me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher, but my personal information will not be included, and I will not be ☐

4. I understand that my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations without my consent.

5. I understand that any interviews or focus groups will be audio-recorded and transcribed, and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure. ☐

6. I understand that data will be retained in accordance with University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the study concludes. ☐

I agree to take part in the above study

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Date Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent:

_____

Date: _____ (Day/month/year)

One copy of this form will be given to the participant, and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Appendix 5 - Participant information sheet

Start by presenting yourself:
I am a PhD student at Lancaster University. I invite you to participate in a research study about staff interpretations of innovative teaching.

Please take the time to read the following information carefully before deciding whether you wish to participate.

What is the study about?
This study aims to explore the variations in the experiences of innovative teaching among staff.

Why have I been invited?
I have approached you because I am interested in understanding staff experience and interpretation of innovative teaching. I would be grateful if you could agree to participate in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?
If you decide to participate, this will involve an interview session, which typically lasts between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview questions would include being given an account or an episode of a teaching session to elicit your views and experiences of innovative teaching. All interview sessions would occur in a pre-booked room on-site or online.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Participating in this study will enable you to share your experiences of teaching and learning on campus. Your insights may contribute to our understanding of variations in the meaning of innovative teaching.

Do I have to take part?
No. It's entirely up to you to decide whether you participate. Your participation is voluntary.

What if I change my mind?
If you change your mind, you are free to withdraw at any time during your participation in this study. If you wish to withdraw, please notify me, and I will remove any data you contributed to the study and destroy it. Data refers to the information, views, ideas, and other content that you and other participants will share with me. However, it is often difficult and sometimes impossible to extract data from a specific participant when this data has already been anonymised or combined with other people's data. Therefore, you can only withdraw up to two weeks after participating in the study.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
It is unlikely that there will be any significant disadvantages to participating; however, you will be spending 30–60 minutes in the interview session.

Will my data be identifiable?
After the interview, only I, the researcher conducting this study and my supervisor will have access to the data you share with me. The only other person who will have access to the data is a professional transcriber who will listen to the recordings and produce a written record of what you and others have said. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement.
I will keep all personal information about you confidential; that is, I will not share it with others. I will anonymise any audio recordings and hard copies of any data. This means that I remove any personal information and use pseudonyms.

How will my data be stored?
Your data will be stored in encrypted files (accessible only to me, the researcher) and on password-protected computers. I will store hard copies of any data securely in locked cabinets in my office. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with university guidelines, I will maintain the data's security for a minimum of ten years.

How will we use the information you have shared with us, and what will happen to the results of the research study? I will use the data you have shared with me only in the following ways:

- I will use it solely for academic purposes. This will include my PhD thesis and other publications (for example, journal articles). I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.

- When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you shared with me. When doing so, I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from our interview with you), so that although I will use your exact words, you cannot be identified in our publications.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

What if I have a question or concern? If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, don't hesitate to get in touch with me: J.Van-Ess@lancaster.ac.uk and my supervisor, Dr Brett Bligh: B.Bligh@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:
Prof Paul Trowler
Email: P.Trowler @lancaster.ac.uk
Phone: 01524592879
Address: Department of Education, Lancaster University, Bailrigg, Lancaster, LA1 4YW

References

Adedeji, S., & Rahman, M. (2018). Innovative Teaching Methods and Entrepreneurship Education: A Review of Literature. *Journal of Research in Business, Economics and Management*, 10(1),1807-1813.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2003). *Growing and developing as an academic: Implications for academic development and academic practice* (PhD thesis). University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development* , *24*(4), 321–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360500284672

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005a). Academic growth and development - How do university academics experience it? *Higher Education*, *50*(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-004-6345-1

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005). Phenomenographic methods: A case illustration. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), Doing developmental phenomenography (pp. 103–127). Melbourne: RMIT Press.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2005d). Learning about Phenomenography: Interviewing, Data Analysis and the Qualitative Research Paradigm. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), Doing developmental phenomenography (pp. 103–127). Melbourne: RMIT Press.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2015). From phenomenography to Variation Theory: A review of the development of the Variation Theory of Learning and implications for pedagogical design in higher education. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, 2, 5–26.

Åkerlind, G. S. (2017). What future for Phenomenographic research? on continuity and development in the Phenomenography and Variation Theory research tradition. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *62*(6), 949–958. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2017.1324899

Åkerlind, G. S. (2023). Common misunderstandings of phenomenographic research in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *43*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2023.2218804

Åkerlind, G. S. (2025). Phenomenography in the 21st Century: A Methodology for Investigating Human Experience of the World (PDF). Loughborough University. Monograph. https://hdl.handle.net/2134/28551905.v1

Åkerlind, G., Bowden, J., & Green, P. (2005). Learning to do phenomenography: A reflective discussion. In J. A. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), Doing developmental phenomenography (pp. 74–100). Melbourne: RMIT University Press

Åkerlind, G., McKenzie, J., & Lupton, M. (2014). The potential of combining phenomenography, variation theory and threshold concepts to inform curriculum design in higher education. In *Theory and method in higher education research II (International Perspectives on Higher Education Research* (pp. 227–247). https://doi.org/10.1108/s1479-3628(2014)0000010017

Al-Husseini, S., Beltagi, I. E., & Moizer, J. (2019). Transformational leadership and innovation: the mediating role of knowledge sharing amongst higher education faculty. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *24*(5), 670–693. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2019.1588381

Alvarez-Bell, R., Wirtz, D., & Bian, H. (2017). Identifying Keys to success in Innovative Teaching: student engagement and instructional practices as predictors of student learning in a course using a Team-Based Learning approach. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry the ISSOTL Journal*, *5*(2). https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.5.2.10

Ashwin, P. (2009). *Analysing Teaching-Learning Interactions in Higher Education: Accounting for Structure and Agency*. London, UK: Continuum

Ashworth, P., & Lucas, U. (2000). Achieving Empathy and Engagement: A practical approach to the design, conduct and reporting of phenomenographic research. *Studies in Higher Education*, *25*(3), 295–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/713696153

Atherton, G., Lewis, J., & Bolton, P. (2024). *Higher education in the UK: Systems, policy approaches, and challenges*. https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9640/CBP-9640.pdf

Asif, M., Thomas, G., Awan, M. U., & Din, A. M. (2020). Enhancing student engagement through heterogeneous pedagogical approaches: action research in a university level course in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Educational Management* , *35*(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1108/ijem-10-2019-0375

Averill, R. M., & Major, J. (2020). What motivates higher education educators to innovate? Exploring competence, autonomy, and relatedness – and connections with wellbeing. *Educational Research*, *62*(2), 146–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2020.1755877

Bathgate, M. E., Aragón, O. R., Cavanagh, A. J., Waterhouse, J. K., Frederick, J., & Graham, M. J. (2019). Perceived supports and evidence-based teaching in college STEM. *International Journal of STEM Education*, *6*(1), 11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40594-019-0166-3

Beagon, U. (2021). A phenomenographic study of academics teaching in engineering programmes in Ireland: Conceptions of professional skills and approaches to teaching professional skills. *Arrow - TU Dublin (Technological University Dublin)*. https://doi.org/10.21427/k4md-2571

Blumenschein, D., & Hannisdal, B. (2024). Social network analysis and educational change: unravelling the role of innovative teaching staff in a higher education environment.*Studies in Higher Education*, *49*(12), 2827–2843. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2324346

Booth, S. (1992). *Learning to program: A phenomenographic perspective*. Gothenburg University Publications Electronic Archive (Gothenburg University). http://hdl.handle.net/2077/16224

Booth, A., Sutton, A., Clowes, M., & James, M. M. (2022). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review*. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036232009

Bosio, G., & Origo, F. (2020). Who gains from active learning in higher education? *Education Economics*, *28*(3), 311–331. https://doi.org/10.1080/09645292.2020.1761298

Bowden, J. (1996). Phenomenographic research: Some methodological issues. In G. Dall'Alba and B. Hasselgren (Eds) *Reflections on Phenomenography: Toward a Methodology?* Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, (pp. 49–66).

Bowden, J. (2000). The nature of phenomenographic research. In J. A. Bowden & E. Walsh (Eds.), *Phenomenography* (pp. 1–18). Melbourne: RMIT University.

Bowden. (2005). Reflections on the phenomenographic team research process. In J. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography* (pp. 11–31). Melbourne: RMIT University Press

Bowden, J. A., & Walsh, E. (2000). *Phenomenography*. Melbourne: RMIT University Press

Bowyer, J., & Chambers, L. (2017). Evaluating blended learning: bringing the elements together. *Cambridge Assessment: Research Matters*, 23, 17-26.

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2005). Confronting the ethics of qualitative research. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, *18*(2), 157–181. https://doi.org/10.1080/10720530590914789

Brown, K., Shephard, K., Warren, D., Hesson, G., & Fleming, J. (2016). Using phenomenography to build an understanding of how university people conceptualise their community-engaged activities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *35*(4), 643–657. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2015.1137880

Bruce, C. (1994). Reflections on the experience of the phenomenographic interview. *QUT ePrints (Queensland University of Technology)*. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/62362/1/reflections_on_the_experience_of.pdf

Bryson, C., & Hand, L. (2007). The role of engagement in inspiring teaching and learning. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *44*(4), 349–362. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290701602748

Buss, R. R., Zambo, D., Painter, S. R., & Moore, D. W. (2012). Examining faculty member changes in an innovative educational doctorate program. *Innovative Higher Education*, *38*(1), 59–74. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-012-9222-3

Cachia, R., Ferrari, A., Ala-Mutka, K., & Punie, Y. (2010). *Creative Learning and Innovative Teaching Final Report on the Study on Creativity and Innovation in Education in the EU Member States.* Publications Office. Luxembourg: European Union https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/981b61b3-20f4-4e7d-a061-ce142eb3e983/language-en

Casari, P., Maniero, S., Rosani, A., Picasso, F., & Serbati, A. (2025). Experimenting Team-Based Learning in a Large Computer Networks Class. *IEEE Transactions on Education*, *68*(2), 248–257. https://doi.org/10.1109/te.2025.3549688

Chang, C., & Wang, Y. (2021). Using Phenomenological Methodology with Thematic Analysis to Examine and Reflect on Commonalities of Instructors' Experiences in MOOCs. *Education Sciences*, *11*(5), 203. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11050203

Chen, F., Chen, L., Tseng, C., Pai, C. H., Tsai, K., Liang, E., Chen, Y., Chen, T., Liu, S., Lee, P., Lai, K., Liu, B. R., Fouad, K. E., & Chen, C. (2025). Enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes in life sciences: implementing interactive learning environments and flipped classroom models. *Discover Education*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00501-x

Chou, C., Shen, C., Hsiao, H., & Shen, T. (2018). Factors influencing teachers' innovative teaching behaviour with information and communication technology (ICT): the mediator role of organisational innovation climate. *Educational Psychology*, *39*(1), 65–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2018.1520201

Cibangu, S. K., & Hepworth, M. (2016). The uses of phenomenology and phenomenography: A critical review. *Library and Information Science Research*, 38(2), 148–160. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2016.05.001

Coates, H. (2006b). *Student Engagement in Campus-Based and Online Education: University Connections*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203969465

Collier-Reed, B., & Ingerman, Å. (2013b). Phenomenography: From critical aspects to knowledge claim. In *International perspectives on higher education research* (pp. 243–260). https://doi.org/10.1108/s1479-3628(2013)0000009016

Collier-Reed, B. I., Ingerman, Å., & Berglund, A. (2009). Reflections on trustworthiness in phenomenographic research: Recognising purpose, context and change in the process of research. *Education as Change*, *13*(2), 339–355. https://doi.org/10.1080/16823200903234901

Condappa, Charmaine (2019) *A Phenomenographic Study on On-reserve First Nations, Metis and Inuit Students' Experiences in a One-year College Transition Programme* Doctor of Education thesis, University of Liverpool.

Cope, C. (2004). Ensuring validity and reliability in phenomenographic research using the analytical framework of a structure of awareness. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *4*(2),5. http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=133094720910488;res=E-LIBRARY

Cousin, G. (2009). *Researching Learning in Higher Education: An Introduction to Contemporary Methods and Approaches*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203884584

Craig, T. T., & Marshall, J. (2019). Effect of project-based learning on high school students' state-mandated, standardized math and science exam performance. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *56*(10), 1461–1488. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21582

Dall'Alba, G. and Hasselgren, B. (1996) (Eds), *Reflections on Phenomenography. Towards a Methodology?* Gothenburg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis

Danish Ministry of Education (2011) *Iværksætteri og innovation i erhvervsuddannelserne: Råd og Vink*. UC Knowledge - University Colleges Knowledge Database. https://www.ucviden.dk/en/publications/iv%C3%A6rks%C3%A6tteri-og-innovation-i-erhvervsuddannelserne-r%C3%A5d-og-vink/

De Los Ríos-Carmenado, I., Sastre-Merino, S., Lantada, A. D., García-Martín, J., Nole, P., & Pérez-Martínez, J. E. (2021). Building world class universities through innovative teaching governance. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *70*, 101031 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2021.101031

Denholm, C. (2023). *What Do We Mean by Innovative Teaching? A Phenomenographic Study of Academics' Perspectives*. United Kingdom: University of the West of England.

Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills. (2008). Innovation nation. The Stationery Office: UK https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7bace2e5274a7318b90326/7345.pdf

Docherty, A., Warkentin, P., Borgen, J., Garthe, K., Fischer, K. L., & Najjar, R. H. (2018). Enhancing Student Engagement: Innovative Strategies for Intentional Learning. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, *34*(6), 470–474. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2018.05.001

Donnelly, R., & Fitzmaurice, M. (2005). Designing modules for learning. In G. O'Neill, S. Moore & B. McMullin (Eds). *Emerging Issues in the Practice of University Learning and Teaching (pp. 1- 20)*. Dublin: AISHE.

Donnelly, K., Rizvi, S., & Barber, M. (2013). An Avalanche Is Coming. Higher Education and the Revolution Ahead. *Educational Studies*, 152-229.

Dunkin, R. (2000). Using phenomenography to study organisational change. In J.A. Bowden and E. Walsh (eds) *Phenomenography*, Melbourne: RMIT University Press, (pp. 137– 152).

Dunleavy, J., Milton, P. & Crawford, C. (2010). The Search for Competence in the 21st Century. *Quest Journal*, 2, 1-8

Dziuban, C., Graham, C. R., Moskal, P. D., Norberg, A., & Sicilia, N. (2018). Blended learning: the new normal and emerging technologies. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, *15*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-017-0087-5

Eley, M. G. (2006). Teachers' conceptions of teaching and the making of specific decisions in planning to teach. *Higher Education*, *51*(2), 191–214. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-004-6382-9

Entwistle, N. (1997). Introduction: Phenomenography in Higher Education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *16*(2), 127–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/0729436970160202

Entwistle, N., Skinner, D., Entwistle, D., & Orr, S. (2000). Conceptions and Beliefs About "Good Teaching": An integration of contrasting research areas. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *19*(1), 5–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360050020444

Erdem, C., Kaya, M., Toptaş, H. T., & Altunbaşak, İ. (2025). Problem-based learning and student outcomes in higher education: a second-order meta-analysis. *Studies in Higher Education*, *51*(4), 950–971. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2025.2498084

European Commission. (2008). *Think Small first: a "Small Business Act" for Europe*. http://www.cdiex.org/documentos/documento_218.pdf

European Commission. (2020). *Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion*. https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/european-skills-agenda_en

European Commission. (2020) *A Blueprint for a European degree*. https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/202403/European_Degree_Communication_Graphic_Version_EN.pdf

European Commission. (2025). *Funding opportunities*. Erasmus+. https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/funding-callshttps://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/funding-calls

European Commission. (2025). *The European Innovative Teaching Award*. https://innovative-teaching-award.ec.europa.eu/index_en https://innovative-teaching-award.ec.europa.eu/index_en

European Training Foundation. (2025). Innovative teaching and learning-CNL. https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/innovative-teaching-and-learning-cnl

Fatt, J. P. T. (1998). Innovative Teaching: Teaching at Its Best. *Education*, *118*(4), 616. https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-20978272/innovative-teaching-teaching-at-its-best

Feixas, M., Martínez-Usarralde, M., & López-Martín, R. (2018). Do teaching innovation projects make a difference? Assessing the impact of small-scale funding. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2017.1417470

Fernández-Cruz, F. J., & Rodríguez-Legendre, F. (2021). The innovation competence profile of teachers in higher education institutions. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *59*(6), 634–645. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2021.1905031

Ferrari, A., Cachia, R., & Punie, Y. (2009). Innovation and creativity in education and training in the EU member states: Fostering creative learning and supporting innovative teaching. *JRC Technical Note*, *52374*, 64.

Ferreri, S. P., & O'Connor, S. K. (2013). Redesign of a large lecture course into a Small-Group learning course. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *77*(1), 13. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe77113

Fındık-Coşkunçay, D., & Özkan, S. (2013). A model for Instructors' adoption of learning Management Systems: Empirical Validation in Higher Education context. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *12*(2), 13–25. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1015409.pdf

Findlow, S. (2008). Accountability and innovation in higher education: a disabling tension? *Studies in Higher Education*, *33*(3), 313–329. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070802049285

Fleming, J. (2025). Embracing innovation in higher education: our approach to artificial intelligence. Office for Students. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/embracing-innovation-in-higher-education-our-approach-to-artificial-intelligence/

Fraser, S. (2019). Understanding innovative teaching practice in higher education: a framework for reflection. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *38*(7), 1371–1385. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1654439

Fraser, K., Ryan, Y., Bolt, S., Copeman, P., Cottman, C., Fisher, M. B., Fleming, J., & Luzeckyj, A. (2019). Contemporary induction to teaching in Australian universities. *The International Journal for Academic Development*, *24*(3), 286–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144x.2019.1612751

Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, *74*(1), 59–109. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543074001059

Galvan, J., & Galvan, M. (2016). *Writing literature reviews: A guide for students of the social and behavioural sciences*. New York: Routledge.

Seng, M. G. J., & Geertsema, J. (2017). Sharing practices, but what is the story? Exploring award-winning teachers' conceptions of teaching. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *37*(2), 254–269. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1373331

Gilbert, A., Tait-McCutcheon, S., & Knewstubb, B. (2020). Innovative teaching in higher education: Teachers' perceptions of support and constraint. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *58*(2), 123–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2020.1715816

Gong, L. (2023). How can college teachers' information literacy empower their innovative teaching behaviors under the background of informatization? *Plos one*, *18*(12), e0294593. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0294593

Graham, C. R. (2013). Emerging practice and research in blended learning. In M. G. Moore (Ed.), *Handbook of distance education*. New York: Routledge. (pp. 333–350)

Greener, S. (2018). Reframing innovative teaching. *Interactive Learning Environments*, *26*(4), 425–426. https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2018.1457135

Griffin, C. P., & Howard, S. (2017). Restructuring the College Classroom: A critical reflection on the use of collaborative strategies to target student engagement in higher education. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, *16*(3), 375–392. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475725717692681

Gunn, C. (2006). Engaging Learners through Continuous Online Assessment. In *in engaged learning with emerging technologies* (pp. 255–273). https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3669-8_12

Hammersley, M. (1993). On the Teacher as Researcher. *Educational Action Research*, *1*(3), 425–445. https://doi.org/10.1080/0965079930010308

Hannan, A., English, S., & Silver, H. (1999). Why innovate? Some preliminary findings from a research project on 'innovations in teaching and learning in higher education'. *Studies in Higher Education*, *24*(3), 279–289. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079912331379895

Hannan, A., & Silver, H. (2000). Innovating in higher education: teaching, learning and institutional cultures. *Medical Entomology and Zoology* 23(4) 1020-1024. https://doi.org/10.1097/mjt.0000000000000351

Hannan, A. (2005). Innovating in higher education: contexts for change in learning technology. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *36*(6), 975–985. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8535.2005.00568.x

Hasselgren, B. and Beach, D. (1997) Phenomenography—A 'good-for-nothing brother' of phenomenology?. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 16, 191–202.

Hellmann, J. H., Paus, E., & Jucks, R. (2014). How Can Innovative Teaching be Taught? Insights from Higher Education. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, *13*(1), 43–51. https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2014.13.1.43

Henttonen, A., Ahlberg, K., Scheja, M., Fossum, B., & Westerbotn, M. (2023). Students' ways of experiencing writing a bachelor's thesis: a phenomenographic interview study, *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(7), 1640-1653, DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2023.2174085

Hellmann, J. H., Paus, E., & Jucks, R. (2014). How Can Innovative Teaching be Taught? Insights from Higher Education. *Psychology Learning & Teaching*, *13*(1), 43–51. https://doi.org/10.2304/plat.2014.13.1.43

Hoidn, S., & Kärkkäinen, K. (2014). *Promoting skills for innovation in higher education: A literature review on the effectiveness of problem-based learning and of teaching behaviours* (OECD Education Working Papers, No. 100). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/5k3tsj67l226-en

Holmes, A. G. D. (2020). Researcher Positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new Researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, *8*(4), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232

Imperial College London. (2017). Innovative teaching for world class learning. In *Learning and Teaching Strategy*. https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/about/leadership-and-strategy/vp-education/public/LearningTeachingStrategy.pdf

Jang, H., Kim, E. J., & Reeve, J. (2016). Why students become more engaged or more disengaged during the semester: A self-determination theory dual-process model. *Learning and Instruction*, *43*, 27–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.01.002

Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Halusic, M. (2016). A new Autonomy-Supportive way of teaching that increases conceptual learning: teaching in students' preferred ways. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *84*(4), 686–701. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.2015.1083522

Jarvis, P. (2004). *Adult Education and Lifelong Learning: Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203561560

Jaskyte, K., Taylor, H., & Smariga, R. (2009). Student and Faculty Perceptions of Innovative Teaching. *Creativity Research Journal*, *21*(1), 111–116. https://doi.org/10.1080/10400410802633673

Johannessen, J., Olsen, B., & Lumpkin, G. (2001). Innovation as newness: what is new, how new, and new to whom? *European Journal of Innovation Management*, *4*(1), 20–31. https://doi.org/10.1108/14601060110365547

Jones, M., & McLean, K. (2018). Personal Means Learner as Central. In *Personalising Learning in Teacher Education* (pp. 55–70). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7930-6_5

Kalyani, D., & Rajasekaran, K. (2018). Innovative teaching and learning. *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research*, S23–S25. https://doi.org/10.21839/jaar.2018.v3is1.162

Karavas-Doukas, E. (1995). Teacher identified factors affecting the implementation of an EFL innovation in Greek public secondary schools. *Language Culture and Curriculum*, *8*(1), 53–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/07908319509525188

Karavas-Doukas, K., (2014). Evaluating the implementation of educational innovations: Lessons from the past. In R. Dickins & K. Germaine, K. (Eds). *Managing Evaluation and Innovation in Language Teaching: Building Bridges*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315841014

Kember, D. (1997). A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics' conceptions of teaching. *Learning and Instruction*, *7*(3), 255–275. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0959-4752(96)00028-x

Kember, D., & Kwan, K. (2000). Lecturers' approaches to teaching and their relationship to conceptions of good teaching. *Instructional Science*, *28*(5), 469–490. https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1026569608656

Kember, D., Kwan, K., & Ledesma, J. (2001). Conceptions of good teaching and how they influence the way adults and school leavers are taught. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *20*(5), 393–404. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370119164

Khayati, A., Selim, M., & Chan, S. (2019). The status of innovation in Saudi Universities. *Cogent Education*, *6*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2019.1653635

Khurshid, F., & Ansari, U. (2012). Effects of Innovative Teaching Strategies on Students'performance. *Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research*, *12*. https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume12/7-Effects-of-Innovative-Teaching-Strategies-on-Students-Performance.pdf

Knight, P. & Yorke, M. (2004). *Learning. curriculum and employability in higher education*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
Kopcha, T. J., Rieber, L. P., & Walker, B. B. (2015). Understanding university faculty perceptions about innovation in teaching and technology. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *47*(5), 945–957. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12361

Kreber, C. (2013). *Authenticity in and through Teaching in Higher Education: The transformative potential of the scholarship of teaching*. http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=536551

Krišťák, Ľ., Němec, M., & Danihelová, Z. (2014). Interactive Methods of teaching Physics at technical Universities. *Informatics in Education*, *13*(1), 51–71. https://doi.org/10.15388/infedu.2014.04

Kunnari, I., & Ilomäki, L. (2014). Reframing teachers' work for educational innovation. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *53*(2), 167–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2014.978351

Labaree, R. V. (2002). The risk of 'going observationalist': negotiating the hidden dilemmas of being an insider participant observer. *Qualitative Research*, *2*(1), 97–122. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794102002001641

Lam, H. C. (2018). The phenomenography tradition in the study of classroom teaching. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *42*(5), 513–524. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2018.1518417

Lami, R., Gastineau, S., Flom, H., & Desdevises, Y. (2021). Big steps, little change: A case study in French university teachers' cognitions in the context of Pedagogical innovation. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.765771

Larsson, J., & Holmström, I. (2007). Phenomenographic or phenomenological analysis: does it matter? Examples from a study on anaesthesiologists' work. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, *2*(1), 55–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620601068105

Lašáková, A., Bajzíková, Ľ., & Dedze, I. (2017). Barriers and drivers of innovation in higher education: Case study-based evidence across ten European universities. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *55*, 69–79. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.06.002

Lavy, V. (2015). What makes an effective teacher? Quasi-Experimental evidence. *CESifo Economic Studies*, *62*(1), 88–125. https://doi.org/10.1093/cesifo/ifv001

Lee, Y. (2011). A study on the effect of teaching innovation on learning effectiveness with learning satisfaction as a mediator. *World Transactions on Engineering and Technology Education*, *9*(2), 92–101. http://wiete.com.au/journals/WTE&TE/Pages/Vol.9,%20No.2%20(2011)/08-Lee-YJ.pdf

Lightner, S., Bober, M. J., & Willi, C. (2007). Team-Based activities to promote engaged learning. *College Teaching*, *55*(1), 5–18. https://doi.org/10.3200/ctch.55.1.5-18

Liu, P., & Sonsupap, K. (2024). Experiential teaching method Enhance surgical nursing learning achievements and learning attitude of Five-Year higher vocational nursing students. *Journal of Education and Learning*, *14*(2), 63. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v14n2p63

Ma, X. (2024). Enhancing language skills and student engagement: investigating the impact of Quizlet in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. *Language Testing in Asia*, *14*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-024-00275-3

Maaß, K., Geiger, V., Ariza, M. R., & Goos, M. (2019). The Role of Mathematics in interdisciplinary STEM education. *ZDM*, *51*(6), 869–884. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11858-019-01100-5

Manalu, D. E., Sulistyawati, S., Wahid, W., Bahari, Y., & Warneri, W. (2023). Facing new challenges: The role of teachers as agents of change in the 21st century. *International Journal of Multi Discipline Science (IJ-MDS)*, *7*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.26737/ij-mds.v7i1.5024

Mandula, K., Meda, S. R., & Jain, D. K. (2012). *Research and implementation of a mobile video streaming application for ubiquitous learning*. https://doi.org/10.1109/ictee.2012.6208655

Marmet, M. D. (2023). Bridging the power gap: the impact of pedagogical strategies and relationship-building on student success. *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*, 16(2), 192–209, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIT-01-2023-0009

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography? Describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, *10*(2), 177–200. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00132516

Marton, F. (1986). Phenomenography-a research approach to investigating different understandings of reality. *The Journal of Thought*, *21*(3). https://philpapers.org/rec/MARPAR-7

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography—Describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science*, 10, 177–200

Marton, F. (1988). Phenomenography: Exploring different conceptions of reality. In D. Fetterman (Ed.), Qualitative approaches to evaluation in education: The silent revolution (pp. 176–205). New York: Routledge.

Marton, F. (1988a). Describing and improving learning. In R. R. Schmeck (Ed.), *Learning strategies and learning styles* (pp. 53-82). New York: Plenum Press.

Marton F. (2015). *Necessary Conditions of Learning*. New York: Routledge.

Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1996). The learner's experience of learning. In D. R. Olson & N. Torrance (Eds.), *The handbook of education and human development: New models of learning, teaching and schooling* (pp. 534-564). Cambridge: Blackwell.

Marton F., & Booth S. (1997). *Learning and Awareness*. NJ: Erlbaum Associates

Marton, F., & Pong, W. Y. (2005). On the unit of description in phenomenography. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *24*(4), 335–348. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360500284706

Marton, F., Tsui, A. B., Chik, P. P., Ko, P. Y., & Lo, M. L. (2004). *Classroom discourse and the space of learning*. New York: Routledge https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410609762

Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, *20*(5), 405–416. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370120490

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Mimirinis, M. (2018). Qualitative differences in academics' conceptions of e-assessment. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *44*(2), 233–248. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1493087

Mimirinis, M. (2020). What do undergraduate students understand by excellent teaching? *Higher Education Research & Development*, *41*(2), 466–480. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1847048

Mimirinis, M., Ventouris, A. & Wright, E. (2024). Variation in Black students' conceptions of academic support. *British Educational Research Journal*, 50, 241–259. **https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3921**

Mimirinis, M., & Ahlberg, K. (2021). Variation in education doctoral students' conceptions of university teaching. *British Educational Research Journal*, *47*(3), 557–578. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3669

Munangatire, T., & McInerney, P. (2022). A phenomenographic study exploring the conceptions of stakeholders on their teaching and learning roles in nursing education. *BMC Medical Education*, *22*(1), 404. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12909-022-03392-w

Naz, F., & Murad, H. S. (2017). Innovative teaching has a positive impact on the performance of diverse students. *SAGE Open*, *7*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017734022

Neo, M., & Neo, K. T. (2001). Innovative teaching: Using multimedia in a problem-based learning environment. *Educational Technology & Society*, *4*. http://elibrary.lt/resursai/Uzsienio%20leidiniai/IEEE/English/2006/Volume%204/Issue%204/Jets_v4i4_03.pdf

Nguyen, T. D., Cannata, M., & Miller, J. (2016). Understanding student behavioral engagement: Importance of student interaction with peers and teachers. *The Journal of Educational Research*, *111*(2), 163–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2016.1220359

Njie-Carr, V. P., Ludeman, E., Lee, M. C., Dordunoo, D., Trocky, N. M., & Jenkins, L. S. (2017). An Integrative Review of Flipped Classroom Teaching Models in Nursing Education. *Journal of professional nursing: official journal of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing*, *33*(2), 133–144. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2016.07.001

Nowak, T., & Zuidema, A. (2019). Calling Brussels: an innovative teaching project. *Journal of Political Science Education*, *17*(sup1), 204–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/15512169.2019.1702883

Nurutdinova, A., Perchatkina, V. G., Zinatullina, L. M., Zubkova, G. I., & Galeeva, F. T. (2016). Innovative Teaching Practice: Traditional and Alternative Methods (Challenges and Implications). *The International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, *11*(10), 3807–3819. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1116729.pdf

O'Banion, T., Weidner, L., & Wilson, C. (2011). Creating a culture of innovation in the community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *35*(6), 470–483. https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2010.515508

Ödalen, J., Brommesson, D., Erlingsson, G. Ó., Schaffer, J. K., & Fogelgren, M. (2018). Teaching university teachers to become better teachers: the effects of pedagogical training courses at six Swedish universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *38*(2), 339–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1512955

Office for Students. (2022). *Requirements for initial registration - Office for Students*. https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-framework-for-higher-education-in-england/part-iii-regulation-of-individual-providers/requirements-for-initial-registration/

O'Flaherty, J., & Phillips, C. (2015). The use of flipped classrooms in higher education: A scoping review. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 25, 85-95. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.iheduc.2015.02.002

Orgill, M. (2012). Phenomenography. In N. M. Seel (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the sciences of learning* (pp. 2608–2614). New York: Springer.

Orsmond, P., & Stiles, M. (2002). University teaching: a challenge to staff development. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *39*(4), 253–255. https://doi.org/10.1080/13558000210161098

Pang, M. F. (2003). Two Faces of Variation: On continuity in the phenomenographic movement. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *47*(2), 145–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313830308612

Parsons, J., & Taylor, L. (2011). Improving student engagement. *SHILAP Revista De Lepidopterología*. https://doaj.org/article/ff50fdb0e9814bdb98d6c2a9fea8cc1a

Peterson, A., Dumont, H., Lafuente, M., & Law, N (2018). Understanding innovative pedagogies: Key themes to analyse new approaches to teaching and learning. (OECD Education Working Papers, No. 172). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/9f843a6e-en.

Pool, L. D., & Sewell, P. (2007). The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability. *Education + Training*, *49*(4), 277–289. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910710754435

Pluta, W. J., Richards, B. F., & Mutnick, A. (2013). PBL and Beyond: Trends in Collaborative Learning. *Teaching and Learning in Medicine*, *25*(1), S9–S16. https://doi.org/10.1080/10401334.2013.842917

Porter, W. W., Graham, C. R., Bodily, R. G., & Sandberg, D. S. (2015). A qualitative analysis of institutional drivers and barriers to blended learning adoption in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, *28*, 17–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.08.003

Prosser, M., Trigwell, K., & Taylor, P. (1994). A phenomenographic study of academics' conceptions of science learning and teaching. *Learning and Instruction*, *4*(3), 217–231. https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-4752(94)90024-8

Puranik, S. (2020). Innovative teaching methods in higher education. *BSSS Journal of Education*. https://doi.org/10.51767/je0907

Ramsden, P. (2002). *Learning to teach in higher education*. London: Routledge https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203413937

Randi, J., & Corno, L. (2000). Teacher Innovations in Self-Regulated Learning. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 651–685). https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-012109890-2/50049-4

Richardson, J. T. E. (1999). The concepts and methods of phenomenographic research. *Review of Educational Research*, *69*(1), 53–82. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543069001053

Robson, S., Wall, K., & Lofthouse, R. (2013). Raising the profile of innovative teaching in higher education? Reflections on the EquATE Project. *Durham Research Online (Durham University)*, *25*(1), 92–102. https://durham-repository.worktribe.com/file/1478418/1/Published%20Journal%20Article

Rovio-Johansson, A., & Ingerman, Å. (2016). Continuity and development in the Phenomenography and Variation Theory tradition. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, *60*(3), 257–271. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313831.2016.1148074

Rowe, W. E. (2014). "Positionality. In D. Coghlan & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds) The Sage Encyclopaedia of Action Research. London: SAGE

Säljö, R. (1997). Talk as Data and Practice — a critical look at phenomenographic inquiry and the appeal to experience. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *16*(2), 173–190. https://doi.org/10.1080/0729436970160205

Samuelowicz, K., & Bain, J. D. (1992). Conceptions of teaching held by academic teachers. *Higher Education*, *24*(1), 93–111. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00138620

Samuelowicz, K., & Bain, J. D. (2001). Revisiting academics' beliefs about teaching and learning. *Higher Education*, *41*(3), 299–325. https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1004130031247

Sandberg, J. (2000). Understanding Human Competence at Work: An Interpretative Approach. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *43*(1), 9–25. https://doi.org/10.2307/1556383

Sankey, M. (2021). Learning technologies. In L. Hunt & D. Chalmers (Eds.) *University Teaching in Focus: A learning-centred approach*, (pp. 179-198). London: Routledge.

Saparbayeva, E., Abdualiyeva, M., Torebek, Y., Kostangeldinova, A., Tursynbayev, A., Takibayeva, G., & Sabalakhova, A. (2025). Transforming mathematics education in Kazakhstan: evaluating the impact of innovative teaching methods on student outcomes in technical universities. *Cogent Education*, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2025.2461978

Scheidig, F., & Tremp, P. (2024). Teaching award winners – (in)visible best-practice examples? Findings from Austria and Switzerland. *The International Journal for Academic Development* , *30*(3), 378–390. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144x.2024.2378790

Schneckenberg, D. (2009). Understanding the real barriers to technology-enhanced innovation in higher education. *Educational Research* , *51*(4), 411–424. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131880903354741

Seppala, N., & Smith, C. (2019). Teaching awards in higher education: a qualitative study of motivation and outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education* , *45*(7), 1398–1412. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1593349

Serdyukov, P. (2017). Innovation in education: what works, what doesn't, and what to do about it? *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning* , *10*(1), 4–33. https://doi.org/10.1108/jrit-10-2016-0007

Silver, H. (1999). Managing to innovate in higher education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, *47*(2), 145–156. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8527.00108

Sjoer, E., & Meirink, J. (2015). Understanding the complexity of teacher interaction in a teacher professional learning community. *European Journal of Teacher Education* , *39*(1), 110–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2014.994058

Sjöström, B., & Dahlgren, L. O. (2002). Applying phenomenography in nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 40(3), 339–345. doi: 10.1046/j.1365-2648.2002.02375.x

Smith, K. (2011). Cultivating innovative learning and teaching cultures: a question of garden design. *Teaching in Higher Education* , *16*(4), 427–438. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2011.560374

Smith, K. (2012). Lessons learnt from literature on the diffusion of innovative learning and teaching practices in higher education. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* , *49*(2), 173–182. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2012.677599

Starford, A., & Ravlikj, I. (2024). Innovative progress tracking: Enhancing student achievement with effective interventions. *TESOL in Context*, *32*(2), 5–40. https://doi.org/10.21153/tesol2024vol32no2art1819

Stasewitsch, E., Dokuka, S., & Kauffeld, S. (2021). Promoting educational innovations and change through networks between higher education teachers. *Tertiary Education and Management*, *28*(1), 61–79. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11233-021-09086-0

Stern, D., & Huber, G. L. (1997). *Active learning for students and teachers: reports from eight countries*. Germany: Peter Lang

Struyven, K., Dochy, F., & Janssens, S. (2010). 'Teach as you preach': the effects of student-centred versus lecture-based teaching on student teachers' approaches to teaching. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *33*(1), 43–64. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619760903457818

Subramani, P. N., & Iyappan, V. (2018). Innovative methods of Teaching and Learning. *Journal of Applied and Advanced Research*, S20–S22. https://doi.org/10.21839/jaar.2018.v3is1.161

Svensson, L. (1997). Theoretical foundations of phenomenography. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *16*(2), 159–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/0729436970160204

Tan, O. S. (2000). Thinking Skills, Creativity and Problem-Based Learning. *In 2nd Asia Pacific Conference on Problem-Based Learning: Education Across Disciplines*, (pp. 43-55)

Tapalova, O., Zhiyenbayeva, N., & Abdigapbarova, U. (2024). Mechanisms and technologies for fostering the research and innovative capability in university teachers. *Journal of Technology and Science Education*, *14*(3), 903. https://doi.org/10.3926/jotse.2675

Taylor, J. (2011). The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research. *Qualitative Research*, *11*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794110384447

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & Devault, M. L. (2015). *Introduction to Qualitative Research methods: a Guidebook and Resource*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Taylor-Beswick, A., & Hornung, E. (2024). *Doing Phenomenography*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Teo, R., & Wong, A. (2000). Does problem-based learning create a better student: A reflection. *In 2nd Asia Pacific conference on problem–based learning: Education across disciplines* (pp. 4-7)

Tight, M. (2015). Phenomenography: the development and application of an innovative research design in higher education research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *19*(3), 319–338. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2015.1010284

Towndrow, P. A., Silver, R. E., & Albright, J. (2009). Setting expectations for educational innovations. *Journal of Educational Change*, *11*(4), 425–455. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-009-9119-9

Töytäri, A., Piirainen, A., Tynjälä, P., Vanhanen-Nuutinen, L., Mäki, K., & Ilves, V. (2016). Higher education teachers' descriptions of their own learning: a large-scale study of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *35*(6), 1284–1297. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1152574

Trigwell, K. (2006). Phenomenography: An Approach to Research into Geography Education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, *30*(2), 367–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260600717489

Trigwell, K., Prosser, M., Martin, E., & Ramsden, P. (2005). University teachers' experiences of change in their understanding of the subject matter they have taught. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *10*(2), 251–264. https://doi.org/10.1080/1356251042000337981

Trigwell, K., Ashwin, P., & Millan, E. S. (2012b). Evoked prior learning experience and approach to learning as predictors of academic achievement. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, *83*(3), 363–378. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8279.2012.02066.x

Trigwell, K., Ellis, R. A., & Han, F. (2011). Relations between students' approaches to learning, experienced emotions and outcomes of learning. *Studies in Higher Education*, *37*(7), 811–824. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2010.549220

Uljens, M. (1996). On the philosophical foundations of phenomenography. In G. & H. B. Dall'Alba (Ed.), *Reflections on phenomenography: Toward a methodology* (Issue August 1996, pp. 105–130). Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report: Inclusion and education: all means all*. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718

UNESCO. (2025). *Countdown to 2030: Education leaders assess progress towards SDG 4 and chart the future of a global post-2030 education agenda*. https://www.unesco.org/sdg4education2030/en/high-level-steering-committee/education-leaders-assess-progress-towards-sdg4

Universities UK (2023). *The value of innovation in teaching and learning*. Universities UK. https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/value-innovation-teaching-and-learning

University of Nottingham Ningbo China. (2025). *International Business and Management - University of Nottingham Ningbo China*. https://www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/business/academic-departments/international-business-and-management/international-business-and-management.aspx

University of Sussex. (2018). *Teaching and learning in Higher Education*. https://canvas.sussex.ac.uk/courses/6267

University of York. (2025) "Principles of Teaching Innovation." University of York, www.york.ac.uk/teaching-innovation/principles/. Accessed 6 Nov. 2025.

Van Der Rijst, R., Baggen, Y., & Sjoer, E. (2018). University teachers' learning paths during technological innovation in education. *The International Journal for Academic Development*, *24*(1), 7–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144x.2018.1500916

Walder, A. M. (2014). The Concept of Pedagogical Innovation in Higher Education. *Education Journal*, *3*(3), 195. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.edu.20140303.22

Walker, A., Recker, M., Robertshaw, M. B., Osen, J., Leary, H., Ye, L., & Sellers, L. (2011). Integrating Technology and Problem-based Learning: A mixed methods study of two teacher professional development designs. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning*, *5*(2). https://doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1255

Walsh, L. N., Howard, R. G., & Bowe, B. (2007). Phenomenographic study of students' problem-solving approaches in physics. *Physical Review Special Topics - Physics Education Research*, *3*(2). https://doi.org/10.1103/physrevstper.3.020108

Whitfield, M. M., Mimirinis, M., Macdonald, D., Klein, T., & Wilson, R. (2023). Phenomenographic approaches in research about nursing. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*, *10*, 23333936231212281. https://doi.org/10.1177/23333936231212281

Whitworth, A. (2011). Invisible success: Problems with the grand technological innovation in higher education. *Computers & Education*, *59*(1), 145–155. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2011.09.023

Wiles, R. (2013). *What are Qualitative Research ethics?* London: Bloomsbury Academic https://doi.org/10.5040/9781849666558

Willms, J. D., Friesen, S., & Milton, P. (2009). What Did You Do in School Today? Transforming Classrooms through Social, Academic, and Intellectual Engagement. *First National Report*. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506503.pdf

Wooldridge, B. R., & Kuntze, R. (2010). Publish or perish and Innovative teaching: combining the two to explore ethical behaviors. *Marketing Education Review*, *20*(2), 143–148. https://doi.org/10.2753/mer1052-8008200205

Wrenn, J., & Wrenn, B. (2009). Enhancing learning by integrating theory and practice. *International Journal on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *21*(2), 258–265. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ899313.pdf

Yates, C., Partridge, H., & Bruce, C. (2012). Exploring information experiences through phenomenography. *Library and Information Research*, *36*(112), 96–119. https://doi.org/10.29173/lirg496

Yorke, M., & Knight, P. (2004). Self-theories: some implications for teaching and learning in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, *29*(1), 25–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/1234567032000164859

Zhang, A., Olelewe, C. J., Orji, C. T., Ibezim, N. E., Sunday, N. H., Obichukwu, P. U., & Okanazu, O. O. (2020). Effects of innovative and traditional teaching methods on technical college students' achievement in computer craft practices. *SAGE Open*, *10*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020982986

Zhao, X. (2016). *Qualitatively Different Ways of Experiencing Learning: A phenomenographic investigation of international Economics and trade undergraduates' conceptions of learning in a Chinese-Australian cooperative programme*. UCL Discovery (University College London). https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1544347/

Zhu, C., Wang, D., Cai, Y., & Engels, N. (2013). What core competencies are related to teachers' innovative teaching? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* , *41*(1), 9–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866x.2012.753984

Zhu, E., & Turcic, S. M. (2018). Teaching awards: do they have any impact?. *The Journal of Faculty Development*, *32*(3), 7–18. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1192057

Zou, T. X. P., Harfitt, G., Carless, D., & Chiu, C. S. T. (2020). Conceptions of excellent teaching: a phenomenographic study of winners of awards for teaching excellence. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *41*(2), 577–592. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1842337