
**Qualitative variation in perceptions of Open Educational
Practices by educators and academic administrators: A
phenomenographic analysis**

Abedelaziz Khalil, BSc, MSc

March 2024

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.

Signature: Abedelaziz Khalil

The following five courses were successfully accomplished, and five research papers were submitted as part of the requirements of the E-Research & Technology Enhanced Learning doctoral programme:

- **Module 1 (ED. S821) - Research Methods in Education and Social Science Settings:** “E-learning services in an Open University: My expectations and the reality”
- **Module 2 (ED. S822) - The Development of Professional Practice:** “Technology Effect on Students’ Engagement in Teaching English as a Foreign Language: Teaching Methods and Challenges in Blended Learning: Literature Review”
- **Module 3 (ED. S823) - Researching Technology Enhanced/Networked Learning, Teaching and Assessment:** “Teachers' perceptions of flipped learning implementation in higher education: Phenomenography”
- **Module 4 (ED. S824) - Researching Technology Enhanced & Networked Learning Communities** “Networked Collaborative Learning in Online Laboratories of Engineering in HE – Opportunities and Challenges”
- **Module 5 (ED. S825) - Interculturality and Globalisation in Technology Enhanced Learning:** “HE Teachers’ Perceptions of Enhancing Students’ Cultural Awareness in EFL Course: Phenomenographic Study”

Abstract

Openness in higher education is crucial for fostering collaboration, diversity, engagement, co-creation, and knowledge sharing. Recent scholarship has discussed the emergence of Open Educational Practices (OEP), studies of which have focused on providing the definitions of OEP, differentiating it from an earlier focus on Open Education Resources (OER), and stipulating the roles of the practitioners involved. Yet what seems missing is any conception of how the practitioners undertaking OEP understand, experience, and make sense of it themselves.

This thesis adopts a phenomenographic approach to understand the assigned meanings and variation of experiences of those practitioners who work on the issue. Seven educators and six administrators from an Open University in Palestine were interviewed about their practical understandings and roles in OEP implementation. Interview transcripts were subject to a phenomenographic analysis which sought to reveal patterns of variation in practitioners' holistic and detailed perceptions and experiences.

The findings are presented as a phenomenographic outcome space presenting four distinct, ways in which the research participants describe the OEP phenomenon. In four progressively inclusive categories of description, OEP is understood as (1) Recontextualizing open resources and methods; (2) Collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities; (3) Empowering OEP practitioners by enhancing their understanding of openness; (4) Engaging communities by creating knowledge and exchanging experiences. Between the categories, a developmental progression is illustrated, underscoring an expanding awareness across three dimensions of variation: practitioners, beneficiaries, and implementation. For example, in the first category, the OEP beneficiaries are understood as learners within the classroom, but by the fourth category, they are understood as the global higher education community.

This thesis contributes to the literature based on this close analysis of practitioners' understandings. For example, in the literature on defining OEP, I contribute an

understanding that reaches beyond content towards open pedagogies and collaborative practices. To the literature on the relationship between OEP and OER, I contribute an innovative perspective on OEP implementation, shifting from resources to approaches emphasising the interconnected use of multiple open platforms for immersive learning. In the literature on the roles of OEP practitioners, I contribute an appreciation of how practitioners perceive their roles as recruiting other practitioners, including learners, educators, researchers, administrators, and the global higher education community. These contributions offer crucial insights into the recent academic discourse of maximising openness in higher education, derived from analysing the real-world understandings of actual practitioners.

Acknowledgements

With deepest gratitude, I extend my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Brett Bligh, whose unwavering guidance and support have been fundamental throughout my Ph.D. journey. Collaborating with Dr Bligh has been an honour, as his expertise in computing and educational research closely aligns with my own computing experience and aspirations as an educational researcher. His patience, kindness, and insightful feedback have not only enriched my work but also inspired me to strive for excellence.

I am profoundly grateful to the E-research and Technology-Enhanced Learning programme staff at Lancaster University for their professionalism and unwavering support. Being a doctoral graduate of Lancaster University in the UK fills me with immense pride, and I am grateful for the opportunities and resources provided by this esteemed institution. I also extend my thanks to my peers from Cohort 12, studying and engaging in discussions with them during the residential has been both a privilege and a source of inspiration.

I extend special gratitude to my examiners, Prof. Malcolm Tight and Dr. Maria Cutajar, for their meticulous review and invaluable feedback on this thesis. Their insights have greatly enhanced the quality of my work, and I am profoundly appreciative of their expertise and dedication.

I thank AL Quds Open University for their unwavering support in nurturing academic staff. I am committed to using my acquired knowledge to benefit colleagues and students, honouring their investment in my academic growth.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support of my beloved family.

To my lovely wife, Engineer Lena, your unwavering support, and boundless patience have been the cornerstone of my academic pursuits. Your steadfast encouragement,

understanding, and sacrifices have sustained me through the challenges of doctoral research.

To my beautiful daughter Rania and my adorable son Issam, you are my greatest treasures and endless inspiration. Your joy, support, and energy bring immense happiness to my life. Every achievement is dedicated to you both. Pursue your dreams with passion.

To my lovely parents, Dr. Issam and Dr. Amal, words cannot express my gratitude for your unwavering support and belief in my potential. Your dedication to education and guidance have shaped every aspect of my academic journey. I am deeply thankful for your sacrifices and the boundless love you have shown me.

Additionally, I am grateful to my parents-in-law, Dr. Samir, and Dr. Randa, for their invaluable support and guidance throughout my academic journey. Their insights and encouragement have enriched my path in countless ways, for which I am deeply appreciative.

To my supportive brothers, Journalist Ahmad, and Engineer Hassan, thank you for your unwavering support during the busiest periods of my Ph.D. journey. I hope to see you both pursuing your PhD studies in the near future.

Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the cherished memory of my beloved uncles, Akram and Atef, who passed away during my PhD journey. Their friendship and support meant the world to me, and their influence continues to inspire me every day.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Personal motivation	5
1.3 Policy context.....	8
1.4 Research context.....	11
1.5 Practice context.....	13
1.5.1 AL Quds Open University as a research site	13
1.5.2 Practitioners' experiences in OER and OEP.....	16
1.5.3 AL Quds Open University impact and potential.....	18
1.6 Research Questions.....	19
1.7 Thesis overview	20
Chapter 2: Literature Review	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.1.1 Locating the project.....	23
2.1.2 Searching for literature	25
2.1.3 Analysing the literature	26
2.2 Theme 1: Definitions of OEP	28
2.2.1 OEP within content.....	30
2.2.2 OEP beyond content.....	31
2.2.3 Summary of Theme 1: Definitions of OEP	32
2.3 Theme 2: The relationships between OER and OEP.....	33
2.3.1 OEP within OER.....	35
2.3.2 OEP beyond OER.....	36
2.3.3 Summary of Theme 2: The relationship between OER and OEP	37
2.4 Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners	38
2.4.1 OEP practitioners	41
2.4.2 OEP beneficiaries.....	42
2.4.3 Summary of Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners.....	43
2.5 Conclusion	44
Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework	46
3.1 Introduction	46
3.2 Ontological and epistemological assumptions	46
3.3 Selecting a research approach	49

3.3.1 Phenomenology.....	50
3.3.2 Grounded theory.....	52
3.3.3 Phenomenography.....	54
3.4 The nature of phenomenography	56
3.4.1 Non-dualist or Relational	56
3.4.2 Qualitative	57
3.4.3 Second-Order	57
3.4.4 Focus on Variation	58
3.4.5 Internally related.....	59
3.5 Example of phenomenographic studies	60
3.6 Applying phenomenography to my project	66
3.6.1 Non-dualist or Relational	66
3.6.2 Qualitative	67
3.6.3 Second-Order	67
3.6.4 Focus on Variation	68
3.6.5 Internally related.....	69
3.7 Reporting phenomenographic outcomes	69
3.8 Limitations of phenomenography	72
3.9 Conclusion.....	75
Chapter 4: Research Design.....	76
4.1 Introduction	76
4.2 Research Site	77
4.3 Insider Research	79
4.4 Participants.....	83
4.5 Interviews.....	86
4.5.1 Creating an Interview Guide	87
4.5.2 Managing the Interview	94
4.6 Data Analysis.....	96
4.6.1 Creating the data analysis environment	98
4.6.2 Interrogating data	101
4.6.3 Exploring the collective perceptions	110
4.6.4 Constructing the outcome space	111
4.7 Research quality	112
4.7.1 Content-related credibility	113

4.7.2 Research method credibility.....	114
4.7.3 Communicative credibility	115
4.8 Ethics	117
4.8.1 Ethical principles	117
4.8.2 Formal ethical approval.....	118
4.9 Conclusion	119
Chapter 5: Findings	121
5.1 Introduction	121
5.2 Research findings	121
5.2.1 Outcome space.....	122
5.3 Category 1: Recontextualizing open resources and methods.....	125
5.3.1 Meaning structure	125
5.3.2 Structure of awareness	128
5.3.3 Dimensions of Variation	132
5.3.4 Summary	135
5.4 Category 2: Collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities.....	136
5.4.1 Meaning structure	137
5.4.2 Structure of awareness	141
5.4.3 Dimensions of Variation	145
5.4.4 Summary	147
5.5 Category 3: Empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness.....	148
5.5.1 Meaning structure	148
5.5.2 Structure of awareness	151
5.5.3 Dimensions of Variation	154
5.5.4 Summary	155
5.6 Category 4: Engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences.....	157
5.6.1 Meaning structure	157
5.6.2 Structure of awareness	161
5.6.3 Dimensions of variation.....	164
5.6.4 Summary	167
5.7 Summary of the findings	169

5.8 Conclusion	170
Chapter 6: Discussion	174
6.1 Introduction	174
6.2 Variations in perceiving OEP	175
6.3 Dimensions of variations in perceiving OEP	177
6.3.1 OEP beneficiaries' dimension.....	177
6.3.2 OEP practitioners' dimension.....	178
6.3.3 OEP implementation dimension	178
6.3.4 Categories of description dimension.....	179
6.4 Contributing to the research area of OEP	180
6.4.1 Contributing to Theme 1: Definitions of OEP.....	182
6.4.2 Contributing to Theme 2: The relationship between OEP and OER.....	187
6.4.3 Contributing to Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners	192
6.4.4 Summary of the research contributions	197
6.5 Conclusion	202
Chapter 7: Conclusion	204
7.1 Introduction	204
7.2 Personal reflections	204
7.3 Research implications	207
7.4 Policy implications	209
7.5 Practical implications	212
7.6 Limitations of the study	213
7.7 Future research directions	218
7.8 Conclusion	221
Chapter 8: References	222

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Shift to OEP (Adapted from Huang, Liu, et al. (2020))	10
Figure 1.2: OEP framework for open education (Adapted from Huang, Liu, et al. (2020)).....	10
Figure 3.1 Phenomenography compared to other qualitative research approaches	56
Figure 3.2 Phenomenographic relationality	57
Figure 3.3 First-order and second-order epistemological perspectives	58
Figure 3.4: The anatomy of experience.....	60
Figure 3.5 The structure of phenomenography in the current study	67
Figure 3.6: Example of phenomenographic outcome space by (Ashwin, 2006)	70
Figure 4.1: Initial coding.....	104
Figure 4.2: Example of commonalities of codes among 7 participants	106
Figure 4.3: Example of mind map of codes related to participant A10	107
Figure 4.4: Structure of the matrix framework, including participants and codes.....	109
Figure 5.1: The outcome space of this study.....	124
Figure 5.2: Structure of awareness for Category 1	129
Figure 5.3: Structure of awareness of Category 2.....	142
Figure 5.4: Structure of awareness of Category 3.....	151
Figure 5.5: Structure of awareness of Category 4.....	161
Figure 6.1: Variation in the perceptions of OEP meaning, beneficiaries, and implementation	175

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Examples of phenomenographic studies from the literature.....	64
Table 4.1 Participant's profiles	84
Table 4.2: Interview guide for this project.....	92
Table 5.1: Meaning structure of Category 1	126
Table 5.2: Dimensions of variation of Category 1	132
Table 5.3: Summary for Category 1 of Recontextualizing open resources and methods	136
Table 5.4: Meaning structure of Category 2	138
Table 5.5: Dimensions of variation of Category 2.....	145
Table 5.6: Summary for Category 2 of collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities	148
Table 5.7: Meaning structure of Category 3	149
Table 5.8: Dimensions of variation of Category 3.....	154
Table 5.9: Summary of Category 3 of empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness	156
Table 5.10: Meaning structure of Category 4	158
Table 5.11: Dimensions of variation of Category 4.....	165
Table 5.12: Summary of Category 4 of engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences	168
Table 5.13: Summary of the findings.....	173
Table 6.1: Summary of contributions.....	201
Table 7.1: Summary of the thesis contributions.....	208

List of abbreviations

HE	Higher Education
OEP	Open Educational Practices
OER	Open Educational Resources
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
UK	United Kingdom
QOU	AL Quds Open University
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
ERASMUS	European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

Publication derived from work on the Doctoral Programme

The research paper for Module 2 was published in the *Palestinian Journal for Open Learning & e-Learning* in 2021:

Khalil, A. (2021). Students' Engagement in English as a Foreign Language Course: Literature Review of Flipped Learning. *Palestinian Journal for Open Learning & e-Learning*, 9(15), 9-23.
<https://doi.org/https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/jropenres/vol9/iss15/12>

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores practitioners' perceptions and experiences regarding Open Educational Practices (OEP), a phenomenon that aims at maximizing openness in higher education. Research on OEP practitioners' perceptions and experiences advocates for a shift in focus from *open* as a property of something accessible, such as the digital *content* of Open Educational Resources (OER) and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), towards *open* as something someone does, such as *practices* of open teaching and learning, open pedagogy, and open collaboration (Tur et al., 2020).

The OEP approach has evolved from OER (Andrade et al., 2011) and its scholarship is dominated by content-focused studies of OER (Ehlers & Conole, 2010; Stagg et al., 2023; Wiley & Hilton III, 2018). Recent non-empirical studies have expanded their scope to promote OEP beyond content, including OEP definitions and frameworks, with less attention being paid to understanding the work of OEP practitioners. Therefore, this project aims to explore what OEP means in practice for practitioners who have been entrenched in OER for an extended period and are now asked to do OEP. The exploration involves understanding how those practitioners perceive OEP as well as their roles in its implementation and in engaging people within a university in such practices. Mayrberger (2020) summarised this issue as the following:

“Open educational practices (OEP) are the core feature of the open education approach. Only the use of OEP leads to open education. This can be seen as a consensus in the scientific community. However, there is no consensus on any concept or approach of OEP. The variety of OEP that can be found does not make it easier to differentiate OEP or the relationship between OEP and OER, open education, open pedagogy... So, speaking, writing, and doing research about OEP (not only) in higher education holds a lot of promises for a possibly better world through open education.” (p. 1).

Recent scholarship has emphasised the challenges and opportunities of providing education across a complex landscape of physical, digital and conceptual spaces using digital technologies (Bligh, 2019). In an open and digital space, it has been suggested that the core objectives of open educational practices are to put into practice the online educational content of OER, construct flexible pedagogies for educators and learners within open education, and empower learners to become contributors to knowledge (Kaatrakoski et al., 2017). OEPs are seen as important because they aim to implement a flexible teaching and learning environment to serve all higher education learners, including the disadvantaged ones. Those learners face challenges in learning at universities such as low income, living in geographically dispersed rural areas for some reason, or adult learners who have full-time jobs (Lee, 2020a). OEP has been discussed in a wide range of contexts over the past ten years. They have been addressed mostly in European countries and mainly in the United Kingdom (UK), which is the most contributor to the OEP in analyses of author affiliations (Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018). Since OEP is a relatively new research area, compared to the wider literature on open education, its literature emphasises critical reflections and position pieces on theoretical concepts, such as creating precise definitions of OEP based on OER and promoting OEP as a philosophy of open education that people need to buy into (Naidu, 2016), and a strand of empirical papers that focus mainly on content issues (Conole, 2015; Wiley, 2014, March 5). Yet, there has been a paucity of research relating to the perceptions and experiences of practitioners that could yield more pragmatic understandings of OEP and actionable guidance for its implementation. Therefore, this research will be looking into the different ways of perceiving and experiencing OEP by some practitioners in HE, who work with OEP or might be asked to do it in a university.

This investigation takes into account the shift in focus in the literature from content-centric approaches to practice, aiming at maximizing openness within higher education (Karunanayaka et al., 2015). The literature on content-centric understanding advocates implanting OEP as “*a set of activities*” (Ehlers & Conole, 2010, p. 2) that support some dimensions of opening higher education through widening access to online educational content. Those activities consist of content-based ones such as access, production, and reproduction of online resources such as OER and MOOC. The literature on the second approach of OEP beyond content

promotes its implementation beyond OER through open “*innovative pedagogical models*” (Andrade et al., 2011, p. 12), such as open teaching and learning and open pedagogy. In my view, however, the first approach limits the potentials and perspectives of OEP, whereas the second approach has insufficient practical understanding of OEP and is deficient in offering clear guidance on its implementation and collaboration between practitioners. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to this literature by offering insights into the various perspectives on OEP and its implementation from experienced research participants.

This study aims to consider the experiences and perceptions of practitioners who are endeavouring to undertake OEP in a particular setting: an open university. The research site of this project is AL Quds Open University (QOU) in Palestine. The university is an interesting research site for my study because QOU practitioners have a long history of opening HE as a means to serve disadvantaged learners. QOU practitioners place a significant focus on OER to empower learners and create an open and personalized learning environment for its learners who face difficulties due to the difficult living situations in Palestine (as discussed later in section 1.4). While some aspects of this situation are unique, the broad mission of QOU is broadly reflective of what an open university is supposed to do elsewhere in serving learners of low-income, full-time jobs, adult learners, or geographically dispersed, through innovative pedagogies, state of the art technologies, and open admission policies (Lee, 2020a). Indeed, the practitioners’ experiences of opening education long predate the current fascination with OEP (Lane, 2020). In this context, QOU practitioners actively participate in regional and international OER projects, highlighting its dedication to openness. By embracing OEP, QOU practitioners aim to increase access to higher education and improve educational services globally as well, aligning with the core mission of open universities to serve disadvantaged learners. QOU Practitioners involved in planning, designing, and implementing OER and OEP projects are mainly administrators and educators who collaboratively work in teams to implement OER and are now moving to OEP. Yet the voices of those experienced and early adopters actors of OEP (Lee, 2020b) have long been overlooked in the literature (Cronin, 2017; Lee, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to focus on individual experiences and the collaborative practices they work on rather than just focusing on technology and resources (Luckin et al., 2012). This study, therefore, will recruit two

groups of experienced practitioners from educators and academic administrators because OEP projects require both groups to be working on it.

This research addresses OEP as a *phenomenon* and adopts an ontological strand where reality is seen as subjective, multiple, and socially constructed. Epistemologically, I agree with Ashwin that the world “cannot be known directly. Rather, the world can only be known through our constructs of it” (Ashwin, 2009, p. 17). These constructs between the person and the world are the “experiences”. In my study, therefore, I plan to follow the phenomenographic approach where those experiences between practitioners - that form the research sample- and the studied phenomenon are described and categorized based on their commonality and variation. In phenomenography, “the focus is on the variations in understanding across the whole sample, rather than on the characteristics of individuals’ responses” (Tight, 2016, p. 320). The findings of a phenomenographic investigation are presented in an outcome space (Marton & Booth, 1997). In this context, this project aims to construct an outcome space, encompassing a finite number of categories that collectively describe what *OEP means* in practice for practitioners; how they perceive its implementation *within* and *beyond* some approaches of open education such as OER, MOOC, open pedagogies, and others; and how those practitioners understand their *roles*, as well as the ways those develop within particular institutions in order to accomplish OEP.

The central argument stemming from this project does not revolve around proposing novel definitions or theoretical frameworks for OEP. Instead, it pivots toward seeking the perspectives of practitioners on their immersed experiences in OER and OEP. The study aims to offer valuable insights into OEP by providing practical and collective understandings of its meaning and its implementation, highlighting its dynamic integration with OER and emphasising the role of OER - that they have been long working with - in implementing OEP. The study also aims to understand approaches to implementing OEP within and beyond content by exploring how the shift in focus from content to practices is taking place. The study not only aims to delve into technical considerations of experiences about resources and practices but also aims to foreground the social aspects involved when engaging audiences from

higher education, such as educators, learners, and researchers, as well as how this engagement evolves over time.

1.2 Personal motivation

My motivation for conducting this research on OEP comes from both of my professions at QOU, as an ICT engineer in the E-learning data centre, and as an educator.

Since 2006, I have been involved as an ICT Engineer in implementing several projects focused on open education that concern openness as a means for increasing learners' accessibility and implementing flexible pedagogy for learners and educators. Working in the ICT infrastructure department as a networks and systems engineer, I specialise in establishing robust computer networks to connect learners, educators, administrators, and e-learning resources. My focus on leveraging technology, including networks, servers, and systems, to improve teaching and learning processes has been central to my role. Notably, I played a pivotal role in launching QOU's first e-learning service in 2009, centred on streaming lectures via the internet. However, the one-way broadcasting nature of this service highlighted the absence of collaborative practices compared to traditional classes. This realisation, coupled with the emergence of OER globally in 2011, led me to understand the importance of online collaborative practices, some of which have been discussed more recently in the literature on OEP. My experiences as an ICT engineer have provided valuable insights into the technological aspects of the teaching and learning process, shaping my understanding of creating and managing educational resources to maximize openness in education. I realised that technological and educational resources are useful foundations, but practices of teaching and learning on top of these resources are crucially important for establishing an effective online educational environment. My active role in shaping the technological infrastructure for e-learning projects, particularly those involving OER, has heightened my awareness of the crucial interplay between open resources, practices, and the experiences of practitioners. Recognizing the importance of these experiences as valuable assets for sustaining educational enhancements through

evolving technologies, I felt inspired to conduct this research. The dynamic and rapid changes in technology underscore the need to capture and understand these practitioner experiences, contributing to the ongoing evolution of education through technology.

My transition to an educator role at QOU in 2015 marked a shift in my work from implementing educational resources using technology to actively practising as an open educator. This shift has afforded me the flexibility to engage learners in contributing to digital course content, experiment with pedagogies like flipped learning, and employ diverse assessment methods based on students' practical experiences in the computer science courses I teach. However, in my discussions with other practitioners at QOU, I realised that they have embraced some open practices beyond utilizing existing OER. Examples include the implementation of open teaching and learning practices along with open assessment. For instance, in computer programming courses, some practitioners have incorporated open assessment approaches, wherein groups of learners are assigned projects. The final evaluation of these projects is conducted by their peers, utilising predetermined criteria for assessing the software they develop. I observed many practices on top of OER and other available resources among practitioners and I believe that their experiences hold qualitatively distinct meanings. Through an exploration of these differences, my goal is to present the diverse interpretations of OEP as experienced by educators and academic administrators.

Another motivation for carrying out this project in experiencing OEP came from the research I did in the first module of my PhD study. That article was not concerned with OEP, but I have taken away from it a commitment to understand the experiences of practitioners after exploring my own experiences. In that research, I aimed to explore the issue of educators' adoption and use of technology in teaching and learning. For this purpose, I used autoethnography methodology to explore my experiences that are suitable to reflect educators' adoption and use of technology at an open university, aiming to contribute to solving the problem of educators' low adoption and utilization of technology. In doing this research, my identity as a researcher was first constructed by exploring both of my experiences as an ICT engineer and educator, aiming to write an empirical qualitative article about a

problem in higher education using myself as the data source for that article. That article makes me think differently about my own experiences, as well as the experiences of my peers from educators, and the nature of learners enrolled in an open university. For instance, several findings in that study underscored that my adoption and use of technology in teaching were positively affected by my previous experiences in being engaged in e-learning projects and workshops, as discussed earlier in this section. Institutional support, particularly through staff development initiatives, also played a positive role. However, negative experiences, including outdated resources and curriculum, as well as the absence of an e-learning policy, hindered my adoption and effective use of technology. Inspired by Christopher Pappas' assertion that "content means everything in eLearning", I found the challenge of outdated content frustrating. Although a limitation existed in my relatively short experience as a new educator, particularly in the online environment, conducting that research about my experiences underscored the significance of incorporating insights from domain experts and experienced practitioners in addressing educational phenomena, like the adoption and use of technology in teaching and the phenomenon of OEP in this PhD thesis.

In the middle of my PhD study, I conducted a literature review about learners' engagement in flipped learning pedagogy as one of the employed pedagogies at QOU and I critiqued this literature for ignoring this pedagogy in a completely online environment and limiting its implementation to blended learning. This article has since been published in the QOU academic journal (Khalil, 2021). Understanding that work deepened my perspectives about the open education philosophy, rather than just seeing it as a way of teaching and learning from a distance. Through that project, I started to develop my identity as an educational researcher, exploring educational aspects of this philosophy, such as open pedagogies and learners' engagement. Therefore, in this thesis, I aim to contribute to this literature by exploring the different ways in which practitioners perceive the implementation of such open and online pedagogies and how to engage individuals in its practices.

My motivation for exploring OEP experiences stemmed from a gap I identified in my initial literature review for this work when I noticed that practitioner perspectives of OEP were notably absent. Recognizing the importance of understanding the

perspectives and experiences of practitioners in open education, as I discussed earlier in this section, I felt concerned about the lack of voices from these individuals in the discourse on OEP. Therefore, my aim in this thesis is to contribute to a literature still dominated by theoretical concepts and a content-centric approach by shedding light on the perceptions and experiences of practitioners involved in implementing OEP within and beyond content. This includes both educational and administrative practitioners collaborating to enact OEP within a university.

1.3 Policy context

There has been a lot of policy interest in OEP within higher education around the world with policymakers recognizing its transformative potential in education (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020; Stagg et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2019, November 25; Wimpenny et al., 2022). Governments and institutions alike are investing in OEP initiatives, envisioning a future where education is more accessible, inclusive, and innovative. Influencing policy is also a core concern of those scholars and practitioners who are leading the debates on OEP. For example, policies are mentioned explicitly as the first aspect of such transformation in the first definition of OEP by the OPAL project's report "Beyond OER: Shifting focus to open educational practices":

“Practices which support the (re)use and production of OER through institutional policies, promote innovative pedagogical models, and respect and empower learners as co-producers on their lifelong learning path. OEP addresses the whole OER governance community: policy makers, managers/administrators of organizations, educational professionals, and learners” (Andrade et al., 2011).

The surge in policy interest in OEP stems from a series of prior discussions centred around OER as an important approach for addressing concerns of openness in education. In various corners of the world, policymakers have been embracing OEP with a shared hope for widespread positive outcomes. For instance, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Recommendation on OER in 2019 marked a milestone, urging member states and policymakers to develop national policies and envision a landscape where OEP and OER can achieve the enhancement of learning quality, accessibility, and effectiveness in universities. Their recommendations state that:

“Member States, according to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions, should develop or encourage policy environments, including those at the institutional and national levels, that are supportive of effective OER practices...developing mechanisms to create communities of practice, promote teacher professional development using OER, create networks of experts of OER and properly recognize OER creation as professional or academic merit... promoting and stimulating cross-border collaboration and alliances on OER projects and programmes, leveraging existing transnational, regional and global collaboration mechanisms and organizations. This should include joining efforts on collaborative development and use of OER as well as capacity building, repositories, communities of practice, joint research on OER and solidarity between all countries regardless of their state of OER development” (UNESCO, 2019, November 25).

One important component of the policy discussion has been to differentiate OEP from existing work on OER. Policymakers engaged in conversations about open access, open data, open licenses, content copyrights, and redistribution. Recently, discussions have laid the groundwork for the current emphasis on OEP. For instance, in 2020, during the closure of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO proposed guidance on OEP during school closure calling for utilizing the existing experiences of OER to actively develop policies with a vision of fostering a practice-centred approach beyond OER as presented in Figure 1.1 (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020).



Figure 1.1: Shift to OEP (Adapted from Huang, Liu, et al. (2020))

Many researchers and institutions within higher education have been following this approach by proposing various frameworks and definitions to implement OEP in order to maximize openness in HE through its potential dimensions, such as open teaching and learning, open collaboration, and open pedagogies. For instance, in the official guidance by UNESCO, several definitions and frameworks have been proposed that attempt to describe a transformative approach to OEP by utilizing OER experiences and resources. One example framework is shown in Figure 1.2 which includes many approaches to open education such as OER and open teaching and learning: all of them centre on OEP.

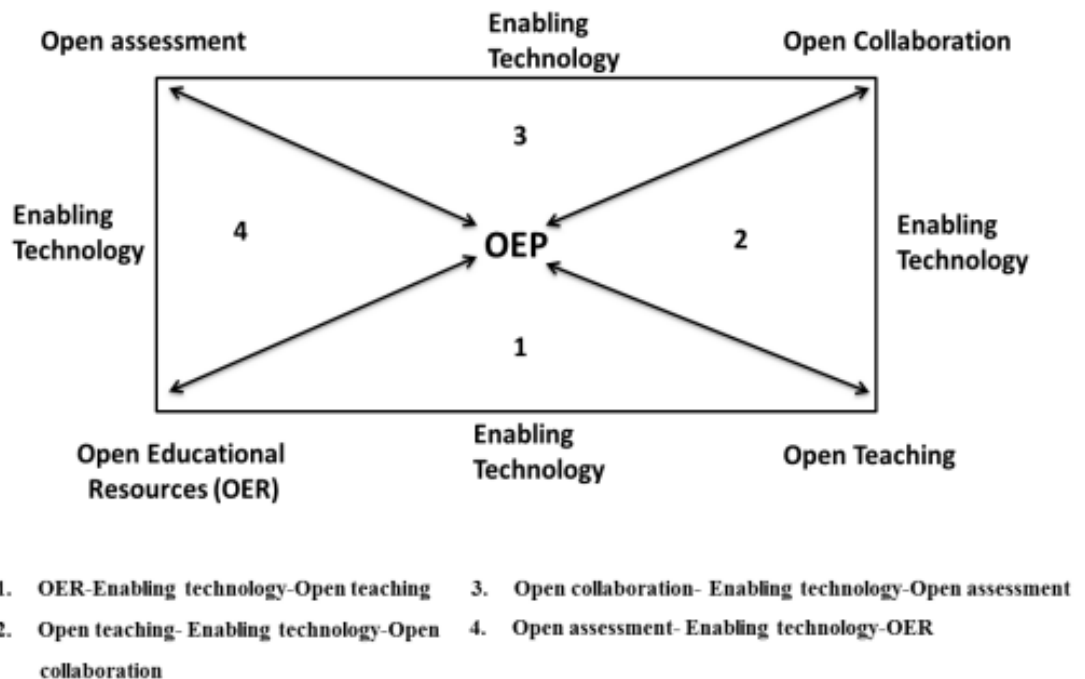


Figure 1.2: OEP framework for open education (Adapted from Huang, Liu, et al. (2020))

This policy work correctly highlights that OEPs are important because they can expand the global efforts made in OER and put their outcomes into pragmatic practices that serve the objective of maximizing openness in higher education. Yet this policy work fails to consider the experiences of practitioners, especially educators and administrators. In this context, it is crucial to recognize that OEP is not a rigid doctrine but rather a concept that can manifest in diverse forms and be further developed in practice (Tlili et al., 2023). Therefore, this project can be useful to policymakers because it explores the different ways in which both educators and administrators understand OEP, its implementation, and their roles and audiences. I believe that the experiences of this research participants, who have been long working as educators and policymakers at an open university, will contribute to the policy context of OEP and OER.

1.4 Research context

My study is situated within the broader scholarship on open education in higher education, with a specific focus on OEP. Research on open education encompasses both OER and OEP. Studies on open education aim to understand the facilitation of openness by promoting the creation and utilization of open content and educational resources and practices (Cronin, 2017; Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018; Naidu, 2016). Its objectives are to understand and facilitate the production of OER that can benefit a wide range of learners and educators in higher education, thereby enhancing the accessibility and flexibility of learning within this context. Extending beyond the initial focus on content, OEP is considered a growing area. Research on OEP promotes the practical implementation of pedagogical activities that leverage existing educational content, including OER, to enrich these activities to become established practices under the umbrella of OEP (Bozkurt et al., 2019; Karunanayaka et al., 2015; Mayrberger, 2020; Shareefa et al., 2023). Therefore, my research focus is directed towards the newer and evolving domain of OEP that goes beyond a content-centric approach of OER, placing emphasis on understanding practical approaches such as open pedagogy, diverse strategies in open teaching and learning, and understanding the roles of practitioners engaged in its implementation.

As I document in more detail in Chapter 2, when I initially reviewed the literature on OEP, three prominent themes emerged: 1) Definitions of OEP; 2) The relationship between OEP and OER; 3) The roles of OEP practitioners. These themes emerged after reviewing a collection of studies on OEP and organizing them according to their focuses. My first observation of the selected literature is that it predominantly centres on OER. Moreover, there are some distinctions that I highlight in my analysis between the emerging themes. First, the theme of definitions of OEP is evident in various non-empirical studies proposing definitions and theoretical frameworks for OEP and its understanding whether within or beyond the content-based approach. My analysis suggests a need for more pragmatic approaches which explore the understandings of OEP from the perspectives of those who work on it in a university. Second, the theme of the relationship between OEP and OER delves into the implementation of OEP and the interdependence between OEP and OER, investigating how OEP relates to and builds upon OER. A debate in these studies takes place about whether to implement OEP within OER or beyond it. My analysis suggests a need for a more practical approach that explores how the people involved in such implementation perceive such a relationship between OEP and OER. Third, the theme on the roles of OEP practitioners emphasises some actions and activities of those who engaged in OEP and OER and the beneficiaries of such approaches within higher education. My analysis suggests a need for more exploration of how those who work on OER and OEP perceive their roles and the roles of their peers and how they engage people in such approaches.

Some shortcomings in the selected literature highlight the necessity of exploring practitioners' experiences. For instance, the recent OEP guideline issued by UNESCO (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020) places a substantial responsibility on educators to implement OEP, particularly during the challenges posed by the pandemic. An intriguing aspect arises when I consider educators who have not previously engaged with OER and have been accustomed to other types of content, such as multimedia, in their teaching and learning environments. How might they perceive OEP? Furthermore, for those familiar with OER, the exploration of moving beyond these resources to implement open pedagogies during this emergent period poses a compelling question. My inquiry delves into their understanding of the role of learners and other individuals and groups in such open environments. Based on my

experience as an open educator, and as I delved into the literature, numerous questions surrounding the comprehension of OEP and the varied roles of practitioners surfaced, prompting the initiation of this research project by focusing on their perceptions of OEP approach to address part of the shortcomings about OEP understandings, implementation, and roles of practitioners in engaging their peers and beneficiaries.

In summary, by focusing on these three key themes in the literature, my study aims to demonstrate the value of constructing an outcome space that represents holistic perspectives of what OEP means in practice for practitioners, how they perceive its implementation within and beyond specific dimensions of open education, such as OER, and how those practitioners understand their own roles, as well as the ways those develop within an open university in order to accomplish OEP. My decision to use phenomenography as a *research methodology for this research encompasses seeking a research site that provides access to a diverse participant group, enhancing variation in experiencing phenomena* (Åkerlind, 2005c). Therefore, phenomenography is suitable for exploring such holistic understandings from the research participants who are experienced in OER and are now working on OEP at an open university and whose voices are missing from the literature on OEP. Importantly, despite conducting the project in an open university, I aim to contribute not only to the open university discourse but also to the broader OEP and OER literature. I aim to provide new understandings which are relevant across various university models, including traditional and open universities.

1.5 Practice context

1.5.1 AL Quds Open University as a research site

AL Quds Open University (QOU) is a highly pertinent site for this project because of its pioneering role in the Arab world and its long-standing commitment to openness in education. QOU has the vision of “achieving leadership, excellence and innovation in the field of open learning, community service, and scientific research, in addition to

reinforcing its leading role in establishing a Palestinian society built on knowledge and science.” (QOU, n.d-c)

Established in 1991 as the first Arab open university and the 39th worldwide (Peters, 2008), QOU has consistently pursued openness through the establishment of regional branches, the development of open content, and the fostering of open practices. The inception of QOU was driven by the urgent need of the Palestinian local community, which has faced challenging geographical and socio-economic conditions since the 1948 Arab-Israeli war (Falah, 1996). This historical context of persecution and deprivation underscored the necessity for flexible higher education opportunities, particularly for underserved Palestinian populations, both within Palestine and the diaspora (QOU, n.d-a)

QOU's mission to democratise education aligns closely with the principles of OEP, making it an ideal research site (as elaborated further in Section 4.2). Educators and administrators at QOU have been deeply involved in open education approaches, such as OER and, more recently, for example, in the 1990s, QOU concentrated on foundational educational projects, including digital curriculum development, robust infrastructure establishment, and digital platform creation and dissemination through the creations of the Media Production Centre (MPC) and the Information and Communication Technology Center (ICTC). In the 2000s, the university expanded its academic offerings, embraced modern educational technologies, and fostered international collaborations. Key initiatives included establishing e-libraries with advanced equipment for visually impaired persons, developing mobile learning services, participating in Erasmus+ programmes, launching new majors like "Learning Resources and Educational Technology," and signing significant agreements to enhance technical, vocational, and language education, such as joining the international association of open digital space e-OMED for “disseminating openness and communication, pooling knowledge, promotion of usage, co-production, research, development and innovation.” (QOU, n.d-c).

More recently, the establishment of the Open Learning Centre (OLC) in 2008 epitomises QOU's commitment to advancing technology-enhanced learning, self-learning skills, cooperation, and innovation within a framework of autonomy and

accountability (QOU, n.d-b). QOU established the OLC in 2008 with the following vision:

“Open Learning Center (OLC) was founded in 2008 as an educational and technological centre for developing and enhancing the digital learning environment at al-Quds Open University. OLC is seeking to improve technology-enhanced learning, pedagogy, self-learning skills, cooperation, and innovation within a framework of autonomy and accountability. Furthermore, OLC provides innovative and engaging technology-enhanced learning environments to learners, according to the latest global teaching methodologies and the new trends in technology.” (QOU, n.d-b).

QOU’s selection as a research site is thus justified by its long-standing and established experience in openness and its mission to make higher education accessible to Palestinian people and beyond. With 20 branches, 1600 employees, and 50,000 learners across the West Bank, Gaza, and the diaspora, QOU emphasises OER to empower learners and foster open and individualized learning environments (Matheos et al., 2007). The institution's engagement in regional and international OEP projects underscores its commitment to this educational philosophy.

The philosophy of openness at QOU is rooted in the history of open universities globally. Since the establishment of the United Kingdom Open University in 1969, the concept of open education has evolved, championing the cause of making education more accessible and flexible, particularly for underserved learners (Bell & Tight, 1993; Lee, 2019; Li & Wong, 2018). The advent of the internet and educational technologies around 2000 propelled the promotion of open education, with MIT’s pioneering move in 2002 to establish the first OER setting a precedent for numerous educational initiatives of openness. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated efforts towards OER and OEP (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020). Therefore, as these practices of openness gain wider interest in higher education, this project is referring to those who have been working with openness at QOU to explore their perspectives on this transformative approach.

QOU's strategic and technological accomplishments make it an ideal research site for studying OE. The university's dedication to openness is reflected in its extensive use of OER and its participation in international projects that promote educational accessibility and innovation. The experience of QOU's practitioners in implementing OEP, supported by a solid infrastructure and strategic vision, provides a rich context for exploring the perceptions and experiences of educators and administrators. For example, in 2019, in partnership with the Jordanian Ministry of Education, a project funded by UNESCO was conducted to create Arabic OER and promote OEP. The project aims "to enhance awareness of the importance of OER in terms of production, reuse, and redistribution with high-quality standards, as well as to promote open educational practices to improve the quality of education and its outputs in Jordan, Palestine, and the whole Arab world. To achieve this, an open, smart course in Arabic was developed, and workshops were held in Jordan and Palestine to train trainers in using this course for OER training." (QOU, n.d-c). More details about OER and OEP at QOU are discussed in Section 4.2.

In summary, this research will benefit from the context of well-established practices in promoting openness and its commitment to serving disadvantaged communities, contributing valuable insights to the literature on OEP.

1.5.2 Practitioners' experiences in OER and OEP

QOU practitioners are experienced in promoting openness, exemplified by the university's digital learning content and online platforms. These include initiatives such as training OER using Open edX, Self-Learning Open Online Courses, QOU Video platform, and Slide Share platform. The active participation of QOU's educators in regional and international projects, such as the Second World OER Congress led by UNESCO and an OER workshop funded by ERASMUS+, further highlights the institution's commitment to openness (UNESCO, 2017).

The experience of practitioners at QOU in adopting OEP goes beyond merely building educational resources. It involves educational services and practices that utilise the existing OER and MOOC platforms to widen access to higher education.

These initiatives have been led by educators and academic administrators who have been involved in OER and OEP projects over the last decade.

Some examples of OER and OEP practitioners' initiatives such as:

- **Research Output Management through Open Access Institutional Repositories** in Palestinian higher education institutions: Developing digital repositories to manage and disseminate the outputs of scientific research, contributing to the practice of open education (QOU, n.d-c).
- **Participation in Edraak MOOC portal:** Creating open access courses prepared by QOU qualified team and published on the Arabic MOOC platform for education and development of Edraak (Edraak, n.d).
- **Preparation of interactive educational content for entrepreneurship:** This project developed interactive educational content on the Moodle platform for the learning and training course in entrepreneurship, in order to enhance employment opportunities for new graduates and the unemployed.
- **Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in Palestinian higher education institutions:** This project aims to expand educator skills in open learning and e-learning and enhance educational services. A TEFL course was designed using interactive activities and lessons to engage learners in a proactive way and focus on the four skills of reading, listening, writing, and speaking.

Recently in 2022, QOU practitioners' interest in OEP is evident in the establishment of an international programme aimed at widening access to higher education globally, which explicitly mentions OEP in its vision section, where emphasis is placed on:

“Designing a student-centred teaching and learning process in accordance with the *open education practices* based on the most recent quality, excellence, and creativity standards, in terms of preparing qualified cadre in a variety of fields (QOU, n.d-a).”

This study leverages phenomenography to capture diverse experiences and perceptions of OEP from QOU practitioners (as elaborated further in Section 4.4). Participants were recruited based on their involvement in planning, designing, developing, and implementing OER and OEP projects. This included decision-makers, academic council members, and key figures from various departments, as well as educators and designers working on open pedagogy. Their roles span planning, design, implementation, and feedback, providing a comprehensive understanding of OEP's practical workflow and its alignment with the university's goals. Their collective expertise and practical involvement in OEP projects offer valuable insights into the challenges and successes of integrating open practices in higher education. This diverse range of experiences is crucial for understanding the holistic implementation of OEP and its impact on widening access to higher education.

1.5.3 AL Quds Open University impact and potential

AL Quds Open University in Palestine could play a vital role in addressing several critical needs and challenges faced by the Palestinian people. Many Palestinians face barriers to accessing higher education due to restrictions on movement, checkpoints, and economic hardship (Falah, 1996). Based on my personal experience, I believe that AL Quds Open University could provide flexible learning opportunities, allowing learners the flexibility to learn openly through its local community branches, thus overcoming these geographical and logistical barriers. By leveraging OER and OEP, I emphasise that AL Quds Open University can empower Palestinian individuals, especially women and marginalised groups, to pursue their educational aspirations and improve their socio-economic conditions through the availability of open content and relevant educational practices.

Given the ongoing political instability and conflict that disrupt traditional educational systems, AL Quds Open University can offer a resilient educational infrastructure that is less vulnerable to political upheavals, ensuring continuity of learning even during times of crisis (Tawil, 1997). Furthermore, building a skilled workforce is essential for economic development and nation-building; AL Quds Open University

can offer vocational and technical training programs tailored to the needs of Palestinian industries, equipping learners with practical skills to enhance employability and contribute to the local economy. Education also plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and heritage, and QOU, as a public university in Palestine, can offer content and practices that celebrate Palestinian culture, history, and language, fostering a sense of pride and identity among learners (QOU, n.d-c).

Based on my personal experience at AL Quds Open University, practitioners often collaborate with institutions and experts from around the world, facilitating knowledge exchange, academic partnerships, and research collaborations, enriching the educational experience and contributing to global understanding of Palestinian issues through publishing open content. Practitioners' experiences with OER and OEP at AL Quds Open University highlight the transformative impact of open education in resource-constrained environments. Additionally, AL Quds Open University can serve as a hub for community development initiatives, offering outreach programs, workshops, and resources to support sustainable development efforts in many areas. In summary, AL Quds Open University plays a vital role in expanding access to education and has the potential to promote empowerment and resilience, foster economic development, preserve cultural heritage, facilitate international collaboration, and support community development initiatives.

As an employee at AL Quds Open University, I aim to leverage my role to conduct this project for the benefit of my fellow practitioners engaged in OER and OEP. This research not only aims to shed light on various aspects of the OEP phenomenon for policymakers but also offers insights from practitioners actively involved in its implementation. The outcomes of this project have the potential to benefit not only QOU but also other universities in Palestine and the wider higher education community.

1.6 Research Questions

In this project, as I have explained above, I aim to explore the various collective experiences of the participants regarding the phenomenon of OEP. To do so, I adopt

phenomenography because it is suitable for exploring variations in experiencing a phenomenon in higher education collectively by research participants, such as the study conducted by Cutajar (2019) that describes educators' experiences using digital technologies for teaching. The decision to adopt phenomenography has consequences for my research question, as I elaborate below.

As discussed in Chapter 3 about applying phenomenography to my project, research questions for phenomenography are framed in specific ways. The goal is to design research questions that go beyond merely exploring the phenomenon or the diversity of experiences but instead investigate the collective perceptions and experiences. (Cutajar, 2014), as well as the dimensions and structure in which these vary (Åkerlind, 2023). The research questions should align with the objectives of phenomenography, emphasising the exploration of variations in how practitioners experience the OEP phenomenon (see Table 3.1 in Chapter 3 for some examples of research questions from the literature).

Variation is core to phenomenography, involving identifying critical structural elements that differentiate qualitative experiences of a phenomenon. (Åkerlind, 2005a). For this research, therefore, it was clear that the RQ should focus on understanding the collective ways practitioners perceive and comprehend OEP in an open university, delving into the nuances of these understandings and how they manifest in various dimensions. For this purpose, one RQ is designed to achieve the aim of this study as the following:

What are the qualitative variations in the perceptions of educators and academic administrators of Open Educational Practices in an open university?

1.7 Thesis overview

This thesis is structured into seven chapters. This chapter has provided an introduction to the current project, describing the context of personal motivation, policy, and research and locating the project within the literature.

Chapter 2 reviews and discusses relevant academic literature, so as to situate the study in the existing scholarly discourse, identify emerging themes from the literature, and justify that the findings from this research will make an original and meaningful contribution to the relevant themes. This chapter is organised into five sections, which consider the three themes of definitions of OEP, the relationship between OEP and OER, and the roles of OEP practitioners.

In Chapter 3, the theoretical framework is outlined, elucidating my ontological and epistemological stances and my choice of a phenomenographic research approach. This chapter covers crucial phenomenographic concepts like categories of description, meaning structure, structure of awareness, dimensions of variation, outcome space, and the importance of a second-order perspective. Additionally, examples of phenomenographic study designs are presented. In turn, the chapter addresses ontological and epistemological assumptions, the nature of phenomenography, examples of previous phenomenographic studies, the application of phenomenography to this project, and the format for reporting outcomes as an outcome space.

Chapter 4 details the research design, focusing on the chosen research site, insider researcher challenges, participant recruitment, and data analysis. It emphasizes maintaining credibility, a vital quality measure in phenomenographic research. Ethical considerations, aligned with Lancaster University guidelines for PhD theses, are also addressed. In turn, the chapter addresses the research site, my implications as an insider researcher, the research participants, the ways of conducting interviews, data analysis methods, research quality, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 unveils the study's findings, presenting a nuanced outcome space with four categories of description and three dimensions of variation. Each category offers a unique, holistic perspective on the OEP phenomenon, derived from participant data analysis. Phenomenographic principles guide the identification of meaning structure, structure of awareness, and dimensions of variation within each category. The chapter concludes with a summarized findings table. In turn, the chapter presents the research findings in one outcome space and underscores the four categories of description revealed from the analysis.

Chapter 6 critically discusses the findings from Chapter 5, linking them to the three themes outlined in Chapter 2's literature review. It directly addresses the research question by exploring nuanced variations in perceiving OEP, emphasizing participant perspectives and dimensions like OEP implementation, beneficiaries, and practitioners. The chapter underscores the project's contributions, presenting nine detailed contributions, three for each literature theme. A summarizing table concludes the chapter. In turn, the chapter discusses the variations in perceiving OEP, the dimensions in which these perceptions vary, and my contributions to OEP research.

Chapter 7 is the final chapter of this thesis, which provides an overview of the contributions of the research findings in relation to the relevant literature. It also highlights the research recommendations, limitations, and areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This doctoral project addresses the relatively new field of Open Educational Practices (OEP). Boote and Beile (2005) emphasise that doctoral work hinges on rigorous and critical analysis of scholarly literature. This involves more than summarising previous studies; it includes drawing conclusions, critically assessing themes and research areas, and determining the validity of key claims.

This literature review aims to demonstrate that this study is positioned in existing scholarly discourse and to justify that the findings from the research will make an original and meaningful contribution to the relevant research area.

This chapter has a sequential approach and consists of five sections. In Section 2.1 of the Introduction, I position the project within the research area of OEP, navigating the intersection with Open Educational Resources (OER) research, all situated within the broader context of open education research in Higher Education (HE). I also outline the process of searching the literature and the process of analysing it, which revealed three themes mentioned at the end of this section. The first theme, examining *OEP definitions*, is presented in Section 2.2. The second theme, delving into *the relationship between OEP and OER*, is explored in Section 2.3. The third theme, examining *the roles of OEP practitioners*, is explored in Section 2.4. The chapter concludes in Section 2.5, encapsulating the key insights.

2.1.1 Locating the project

My study is based on the research area of OEP within the broader scholarship on open education in HE. Although I did not initially set out to use this body of literature, it naturally emerged during my literature search, as outlined in Section 2.1.2. The open education literature primarily emphasises OER, which focuses on creating open content using technology and advocating for open licensing and

policies to enhance accessibility and flexibility. OEP, as a subset within the open education scholarly domain, has more recently emerged in the literature.

Having decided to study OEP as the research area of this study, I found that OER literature dominates within the broader open education scholarship. It has been established earlier and is rich with various frameworks, empirical studies, and guidelines for its implementation. In contrast, OEP is a newer approach aiming to expand the boundaries of open education. It goes beyond the current focus on traditional content-centric aspects observed in OER. This distinction makes it an intriguing and pivotal research area for my project. OEP emphasises pragmatic practices like open pedagogy and multifaceted approaches to open teaching and learning, as well as the roles of those practitioners who aim at its implementation.

Realising the dominance of OER within open education literature and acknowledging the overlap between OEP and OER, I have found some significant distinctions that set my focus on OEP apart. Positioned within these distinctions, my literature review delves into exploring OEP perspectives within the literature, examining its definitions concerning content and beyond, and its implementation in relationship to *OER* and beyond, and evaluating the roles of its practitioners and beneficiaries. These unique distinctions, emerging as themes from my review of the literature, will be further elaborated upon in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

Given the extensive breadth of available literature, I could have explored additional areas such as social justice, instructional strategies, learning design, networked learning, and broader digital literacy as these relate to the issues of open education in higher education that I investigate. However, I chose not to delve deeply into these due to their expansive nature, which might not allow for robust contributions to my research. I also considered examining the literature on open universities, as they are often seen as pioneers in open education, specifically in OER. Yet, I refrained from this focus to ensure a comprehensive understanding of OEP across various university models, including both traditional and open universities. Although I am conducting my project in an open university, I do not see my research as only contributing to scholars writing about open universities, but instead as only contributing to a wider body of literature focused on OEP and OER. I believe that the three themes I have

reviewed offer rich scholarly discussions which have influenced my project and where my study can fruitfully contribute holistic perspectives and present a potential integrative approach to the OEP research area in HE.

2.1.2 Searching for literature

In the previous section, I discussed the location of my project, which is based on the literature in the OEP research area. I highlighted the overlap between OEP and OER and their connection under the broader research paradigm of open education in higher education research.

To contextualise the literature on OEP within HE, I specifically focused on studies on universities that address both OER and OEP. I recognized the existence of a broad body of literature solely dedicated to OER, which might predate the emergence of OEP or limit addressing some open practices within the domain of OER research. These issues of overlap with OER will be further explored within the discussion of the three emerging themes in the coming sections.

Moreover, I underscored the significance of empirical studies in the OEP research area, particularly those delving into the perspectives of OEP practitioners and their roles in its implementation, such as my empirical qualitative study. In addition, I highlighted various non-empirical studies which propose definitions and theoretical frameworks for OEP. I acknowledge that this selective approach narrowed down the pool of studies for review, but this process was essential in distinguishing the most pertinent literature for my review.

To identify relevant literature, I utilised the Scopus online database, a comprehensive repository of scholarly works. I conducted a targeted search using the term “open educational practices” (OEP), as this term is closely associated with the literature of both OEP and its relevance in OER literature. To avoid results predominantly related to OER, I refrained from using the term “open educational resources” or OER in my search. Moreover, I did not realise or read other synonyms for OEP in the literature. Therefore, the search query I employed was “Open Education* Practice*” OR

“OEP,” encompassing variations in the use of the term “open education practices”. I limited the search to peer-reviewed studies, chapters, and reviews. This initial search produced 192 studies. Subsequently, I carefully examined each abstract to determine the direct relevance of each study to OEP or if the term was mentioned in a general context with other focuses. Additionally, I excluded studies not focused on higher education, such as those pertaining to K-12 and elementary schools, as they fell outside the scope of my study. Following this process, 153 studies were considered eligible for inclusion in this literature review.

2.1.3 Analysing the literature

Upon obtaining the list of 153 studies resulting from the search process, I planned the analysis to discern how they could contribute to shaping the focus of my study on OEP. Exporting the search results to an Excel sheet, I organised the studies, incorporating details such as the number of citations, abstract, keywords, publication year, and article type. My examination commenced by carefully reading through abstracts and delving into the arguments presented in the downloaded studies.

In relevant to my study, my primary objective in searching the literature was to extract claims and findings from empirical studies related to OEP perspectives, scope, and implementation within various contexts of higher education. However, it became apparent that there was a scarcity of empirical studies specifically delving into practitioners' perceptions of OEP and their roles in its implementation. Furthermore, I observed a prevalence of non-empirical studies on OEP attempting to formulate theoretical frameworks and definitions, often lacking empirical evidence from practitioners.

In response, I recognised the need for my review to highlight key arguments, align them with the focus of my study, and critically assess their arguments. This involved identifying common themes across the selected studies of OEP research area and presenting aspects requiring further refinement, which my study could potentially address.

Having established the context for my project within the OEP literature and conducted a thorough review of research topics within this area among the selected studies, I have identified three key themes which are thematised from the literature as focal points for my literature review in this chapter. The three themes are:

- **Theme 1: Definitions of Open Educational Practices:** This theme has been raised in 85 articles, primarily within the set of non-empirical studies. This theme revolves around the various definitions and conceptualisations of OEP, exploring how OEP is understood and articulated within the academic discourse.
- **Theme 2: The relationships between OEP and OER:** This theme has been addressed in 138 studies, with most of them being part of the non-empirical studies and a smaller number in the empirical studies. This theme centres on the dependability between OEP and OER, examining how OEP relates to and builds upon OER.
- **Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners:** This theme has been explored in 24 empirical studies, as well as some other non-empirical studies. This theme delves into the roles and actions of individuals engaged in OEP, including educators, administrators, and other stakeholders within HE, and explores how their studies can contribute to the implementation and success of OEP.

The identified three themes are not mutually exclusive. In other words, a single study could contribute to multiple themes. Despite the valuable insights these themes provide, my study takes a unique approach by emphasising the practical implementation of OEP by exploring the perceptions of its practitioners. My study aims to offer pragmatic perspectives and practical applications for researchers and audiences interested in the effective implementation of OEP within HE.

Given these notable characteristics and trends evident in the literature concerning OEP, in the subsequent three sections, I will delve into discussions on the three

themes, including the pertinent literature within each theme, and outline how this research aims to contribute to these areas through the respective theme.

It is worth mentioning that the coming sections cite only a few papers among the selected ones in this literature and not the whole set of 153 studies. In selecting studies for my literature review, I prioritized relevance to my research question, focusing on studies with high methodological rigour and robust frameworks. I aimed for a comprehensive yet focused overview, synthesizing and integrating literature to contribute meaningfully to my field. Due to space constraints, I selectively included studies that best supported my argument, while remaining open to revisiting and incorporating additional literature as my research progresses.

2.2 Theme 1: Definitions of OEP

As discussed in Section 2.1.3, the first theme of the literature centres on examining various definitions of OEP e.g., (Andrade et al., 2011; Cronin, 2017; Ehlers & Conole, 2010; Havemann, 2016; Huang, Tlili, et al., 2020; Wiley & Hilton III, 2018). Researchers within these studies aim to establish new definitions or refine existing ones, with the hope of enhancing the understanding of OEP and creating comprehensive definitions to facilitate the development of implementation frameworks. In this section, I will delve into how OEP is comprehended and, therefore, defined in the literature, and explore the relevance of this theme to my study. Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 will introduce two sub-themes that categorise these perceptions of OEP, offering critiques that are relevant to my research. Section 2.2.3 will provide a summary of the argument put forth in Theme 1.

Regarding my thesis objectives, the strength of the literature lies in its examination of the meanings of open educational practices and their application from various dimensions. By definition, the concept of OEP originated from OER, a content-based approach that involves freely sharing resources like textbooks, course materials, and videos for the benefit of learners and educators in HE (Andrade et al., 2011). Collectively, the literature presents OEP as evolving due to the diversity of resources and associated practices, often causing debates about what these open practices are

and how they should be implemented. This debate revolves around whether open practices are conceptualised as the creation, sharing, or remixing of content-based OER, or as practices extending beyond content-based OER, including open teaching, learning, collaboration, and assessment, serving as a unified means to make HE more open and applicable in various educational contexts.

For example, the study by Huang, Tlili, et al. (2020) lists more than ten definitions from the literature of OEP. These definitions are described by Czerniewicz et al. (2017) as “varied and sometimes contested definitions of OEP” (p. 83) between content-based and other broader dimensions of OEP beyond content. On the other hand, Algiers (2020) sees empowerment as a common theme within the definitions of OEP by concluding that:

“Based on various definitions in the literature, OEP is an empowerment process for both the educators, by giving them greater control of which resources and how they use them” (p. 570).

Notably for my study, the emphasis on the importance of different ways of understanding OEP in the literature informs my research question. I am primarily interested in how authors in the literature discuss the definitions of OEP in various contexts, specifically the two prominent strands: perceiving OEP as practices used to enrich open content (a content-based approach) or perceiving these practices as extending beyond content (comprising open teaching, learning, collaboration, assessment, etc.). As my discussion in Section 2.1.1 outlines, the literature presents these two strands, as opposed to their definition and perception of OEP. My review below explores areas of disagreement and alignment within and between these opposing dynamics of defining and perceiving OEP in various studies.

Concerning the priorities of my thesis, however, the primary limitation of the literature is its relatively narrow perspectives on OEP, which can limit its potential. Additionally, there is a lack of actionable guidance provided by these definitions of OEP. The studies either present prescriptive definitions primarily limited to content-based approaches, often rooted in prior work on OER, or offer broad definitions that

provide little practical guidance, especially when implementing practices beyond content. For my study, these issues result in an incomplete understanding of OEP, prompting me to inquire about the perspectives of individuals who initially worked within a content-based approach and are now transitioning to OEP. To be fair, the studies' primary intent is generally to explore theoretical definitions and frameworks of OEP, either as extensions of the OER literature or as separate theoretical constructs beyond OER. However, in both approaches, the voices of those actively working to implement OEP in different contexts are often overlooked and various non-empirical studies have been taking place.

2.2.1 OEP within content

As noted in the introduction of Theme 1, the first strand highlighted is the prevailing perspective on OEP drawn from the literature. It asserts that OEP, by its very definition, is rooted in the utilisation of open content, such as OER. This particular interpretation of OEP holds a dominant position in the OEP literature. For example, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in their guidance concerning OEP during COVID-19 closure, adopted the definition of OEP as articulated by Wiley and Hilton III (2018) of OEP in their glossary terms. UNESCO explicitly stated that:

“Wiley and Hilton (2018) considered OEP as an OER-enabled pedagogy and defined it as a “set of teaching and learning practices that are only possible or practical in the context of the 5R permissions that are characteristic of OER” (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020, p. 2).

The framework of these 5Rs permission was proposed by Wiley (2014, March 5) for engagement with OER and encompasses the open practices of Retaining, Reusing, Revising, Remixing, and Redistributing content. This framework has gained widespread adoption in the literature.

Similarly, Ehlers and Conole (2010) define OEP as:

“The use of OER with the aim to improve the quality of educational processes and innovate educational environments” (p. 2).

These conceptualisations represent a positive and sustainable approach to launching OEP, firmly grounded in the well-established theoretical foundation of a content-based approach to OER. However, despite the utility of this perspective of OEP within content, these definitions have certain limitations. These limitations extend to the potential practices that can be envisioned beyond the content-based approach of OEP. Moreover, they give rise to other limitations in terms of the contexts in which these practices can be applied and the possible individuals or groups who can implement and benefit from such practices.

2.2.2 OEP beyond content

As noted in the introduction of Theme 1, the second strand promotes OEP as a philosophy of open education that people need to buy into (Naidu, 2016). Studies within this second strand offer a broader view of OEP (Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018), encompassing various dimensions of openness, including open teaching and learning, open assessment, open technology, and other aspects beyond the content-based approach of OER. From this perspective, OER serves as the starting point for OEP implementation. For example, Adam (2020) adopts Havemann (2016) definition of OEP, which states:

“OEP consist not only of creating and reusing OER, but also of other forms of transparency around academic practice, such as blogging, tweeting, presenting, and debating scholarly and pedagogic activities, in ways that promote reflection, reusability, revision, and collaboration.” (p. 7).

Similarly, a more comprehensive definition of OEP beyond the content-based approach and is widely adopted in the literature is proposed by Cronin (2017), considering OEP as:

“Collaborative practices that include the creation, use, and reuse of OER, as well as pedagogical practices employing participatory technologies and social

networks for interaction, peer-learning, knowledge creation, and empowerment of learners” (p. 4).

These definitions of OEP offer deeper insights into the potential open practices that can be encompassed when considering OEP, particularly those related to collaborative practices and pedagogic activities aimed at empowering learners. Yet, the way they are presented in the literature can be confusing for those aiming to implement OEP. This confusion is acknowledged by Czerniewicz et al. (2017), who notes that there are “varied and sometimes contested definitions of OEP” (p. 83) between OER and the broader dimensions of OEP that go beyond content. Additionally, another significant limitation is the scarcity of empirical studies in the literature demonstrating practitioners' understanding of these extensive aspects of OEP. Hence, this project seeks to address this contentious issue by exploring what OEP means for the individuals actively engaged in its implementation.

2.2.3 Summary of Theme 1: Definitions of OEP

Theme 1 of the literature review explores the definitions of OEP, a foundational theme in the research area of OEP, and my study, as it explores the different ways in which OEP is perceived by studies in the literature. The literature presents two primary strands in defining OEP, which offer both insights and limitations. The first strand, often described in my analysis as exploring OEP by focusing on content, grounds OEP in the utilisation of open content, notably OER, and emphasises some frameworks such as the 5R permissions. This strand provides a clear starting point for OEP but falls short in addressing the full spectrum of open practices possible beyond content.

The second strand, described in my analysis as exploring OEP beyond the content approach, portrays OEP as a broader philosophy encompassing various dimensions of openness in education, including open teaching, learning, assessment, technology, collaboration, and pedagogy. While offering a more comprehensive view of OEP, this perspective can be vague and challenging to implement in practice. Moreover, the literature lacks empirical studies that demonstrate how practitioners understand and

apply these extensive dimensions of openness through OEP. These issues underscore the need for research that delves deeper into the practical dimensions of OEP.

Despite these limitations, the literature contributes to theoretical discussions on OEP, but it often falls short of providing actionable guidance for educators and institutions seeking to implement OEP effectively. The absence of voices from those actively involved in OEP implementation in different contexts is a noteworthy drawback. To address these issues, my study will not seek to propose a new definition of OEP but instead will explore how practitioners understand the term, and this ought to be of interest to those scholars who write about these definitions.

The next section discusses Theme 2 where the relationship of OER and OEP is explored in detail as addressed in the literature, having more insights about the implementation aspects of OEP, within and beyond OER.

2.3 Theme 2: The relationships between OER and OEP

As outlined in Section 2.1.3, the second theme of the literature focuses on examining the relationships between OER and OEP. Specifically, it delves into how open practices are understood and implemented in this context, e.g., (Bozkurt et al., 2019; Karunanayaka et al., 2015; Mayrberger, 2020; Shareefa et al., 2023). Researchers within these studies aim to shed light on various aspects and dimensions of openness that can be integrated as part of OEP, either by regarding OER as a central dimension of openness or as a launching point towards the implementation of OEP as the primary focus.

Concerning my thesis, which seeks to investigate the perceptions of OEP practitioners regarding the implementation of open practices, the strength of the literature lies in its exploration of OER and OEP applications from various perspectives. The debate about OEP definitions in Theme 1, ranging from *within* to *beyond content*, is extended into Theme 2 as some studies align with one of these two strands. Studies that embrace *OEP within content* propose the implementation of *OEP within OER*, while those adopting *OEP beyond content* advocate for

implementing *OEP beyond OER*. For example, this debate about the relationship between OEP and OER is summarised by Bozkurt et al. (2019) as the following:

“The current focus in OER is mainly placed on building more access to digital content. There is little consideration of whether this will support educational practices, promote quality and innovation in teaching and learning.” (p. 90).

Importantly for my study, the diverse perspectives on the implementation of OEP in the literature, particularly in the context of the relationship between OEP and OER, provide valuable insights for my research question. I am particularly interested in how authors in the literature discuss the practical implementation of OEP in various contexts, both within OER and beyond. This interest is driven by the insights found from existing literature and is aligned with the experiential perspectives of the participants involved in this research. The literature presents these two strands of implementing OEP. In the review below, I will explore areas of agreement and contention within and between these contrasting dynamics regarding the practices associated with OEP implementation.

In terms of my thesis priorities, the main limitation of the literature lies in its limited consideration of how these practices are perceived or implemented by practitioners who have traditionally focused on OER in well-established ways. These practitioners are now transitioning towards implementing OEP. This transition raises intriguing questions about how they view OEP and their established OER practices. Do they see OEP as an integral part of the continuum of open practices, an extension of their OER initiatives, or an entirely distinct approach? Most studies in the literature that address these questions are primarily non-empirical studies aiming to propose frameworks for OEP within or beyond OER. To be fair, these frameworks provide valuable insights into some theoretical aspects to be considered in the implementation of OEP, which will be discussed in the following two subsections.

2.3.1 OEP within OER

As introduced in the discussion of Theme 2, the studies focusing on OEP within OER predominantly adopt the definitions and concepts proposed in the first strand of Theme 1, which perceives OEP as an approach rooted in content-based practices. This dimension heavily influences the literature, providing nuanced insights into dealing with OER as the primary approach for implementing OEP.

In my view, this approach of perceiving OEP within OER is advantageous in several ways. Firstly, it serves as an effective means to raise awareness of open content and significantly contributes to its dissemination (Stagg et al., 2023). Secondly, it empowers learners through their active participation in OER co-creation (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020) and by implementing non-disposable assignments as OER, as described by Wiley and Hilton III (2018):

“assignments which both support an individual student’s learning and result in new or improved open educational resources that provide a lasting benefit to the broader community of learners” (p. 137).

These conceptualisations present a potential for developing OEP drawing from the theoretical and practical perspectives of OER. Yet, it remains a subject of debate in the literature, mainly due to its narrow focus on content access and dissemination. For example, the article conducted by Karunanayaka et al. (2015) explicitly emphasises in its title the shift from OER to OEP. The study underscores the clear connection between OER and OEP, highlighting the notion that OEP often involves the utilisation of OER as a foundational component. This underscores their interdependence and the role of OER in facilitating OEP.

Although this approach of implementing OEP within OER is sustainable, the limitations of a narrow focus on content, coupled with the evolving debate regarding the relationship between OEP and OER, has prompted a shift towards the investigation of a more pragmatic and innovative approach – implementing OEP beyond OER. From the perspective of my study, this discussion is instrumental in

exploring more practical perceptions of OEP implementation instead of being confined to the realm of OER, which is often critiqued for predominantly focusing on expanding access to digital content without sufficient consideration of practices beyond that.

2.3.2 OEP beyond OER

As introduced in the discussion of Theme 2, the studies focusing on OEP beyond OER predominantly align with the definitions and concepts outlined in the second strand of Theme 2. This perspective characterises OEP as a multi-dimensional approach that extends beyond the confines of content, emphasising the potential to enhance access to HE. It encompasses not only content-based practices such as OER but also collaborative practices like open pedagogy, open collaboration, and open teaching and learning.

Studies within this theme promote open practices that encourage collaboration among learners, educators, and the broader HE community. They aim to empower those engaged in OEP through activities centred on knowledge creation and the cultivation of a culture of sharing, as exemplified in the work (Cronin, 2017). This perspective on OEP has a broader scope compared to the goal of empowering learners through the co-creation of OER, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, which mainly revolves around content-based practices.

For instance, a recent literature review conducted by Shareefa et al. (2023) emphasises the role of open scholarship within OEP in fostering a more inclusive, collaborative, and transparent approach to openness in HE. This approach advocates openly sharing knowledge and research for the benefit of the broader community, ultimately contributing to the democratisation of higher education and research.

These conceptualisations offer a pragmatic and collaborative approach to OEP, enabling the adoption of more open and effective practices with the potential to benefit not only learners and educators but also the entire higher education community. However, some difficulties and challenges need to be addressed when

conducting empirical studies. Such research should involve engaging those actively participating in these practices to gain insights into their perceptions of the goals, effectiveness, and challenges involved in implementing OEP and the beneficiaries of these open practices, hence the aim of this project.

This second theme provides a more comprehensive view of OEP than the previous one; the literature discusses this view more in the context of the role of practitioners in implementing and actualising these open practices rather than focusing solely on the resources, as previously discussed in terms of sharing and remixing content. Therefore, additional aspects within this comprehensive view will be explored in Theme 3 of the roles of OEP practitioners, detailed in Section 2.4.

From the perspective of my study, this exploration of OEP beyond OER is crucial for gaining insights into the diverse dimensions and relevant aspects of OEP. It serves as a vital step towards establishing a holistic and categorised understanding of how OEP is perceived and practised within the realm of scholarly research. Nevertheless, the extensive dimensions of openness articulated here, such as open scholarship and open pedagogy, warrant in-depth examination by engaging with individuals in HE who are tasked with its execution. This empirical approach is essential for assessing the feasibility of this comprehensive outlook and identifying the various understandings through which it can be effectively implemented.

2.3.3 Summary of Theme 2: The relationship between OER and OEP

The main points that summarise the literature on the relationship between OER and OEP are discussed below.

Studies that focus on implementing OEP within OER mainly focus on open practices related to the content, and what practitioners need to do to implement it is clear through following the proposed OER frameworks, such as the 5Rs permission. This approach is implemented and can achieve its goal by creating OER or something similar to MOOC or educational videos and then implementing some open practices on this open content, such as those in the 5R framework (remixing, redistributing, and so on). Although this approach is widely adopted due to the solid theoretical

foundation that emerged from the early OER movement, it is primarily bounded by content creation and sharing. This issue can be enhanced by considering the second approach of OEP beyond OER.

This second approach of OEP beyond OER is a recent movement in the literature that seeks to foster collaborative and pragmatic open practices, launching from content such as OER and extending beyond it. These practices, often termed “dimensions of openness,” include open scholarship, open pedagogy, open assessment, and open collaboration. The multitude of potential open practices and the lack of well-established implementation frameworks can make this approach challenging for those aiming to adopt it. Consequently, there is a need to consult individuals within academic institutions about how they perceive the comprehensive implementation of these practices. They should consider the dimensions of openness they believe are coherent and applicable for effective implementation, benefiting educators, learners, and the higher education community, rather than merely celebrating the creation or manipulation of open content.

In summary, Cronin (2017) observed that the relationship between OER and OEP is nuanced. While advocates often suggest that OER leads to OEP, it can also work the other way around: engagement with OEP, particularly through collaborative participation and open pedagogy, can raise awareness of and participation in OER. This understanding indicates that the interplay between OER and OEP is more complex than previously thought.

Therefore, this project aims to investigate this relationship by exploring how research participants who have extensive experience with OER perceive the implementation of OEP. This research could contribute to a more insightful understanding of this relationship, as presented in this PhD thesis.

2.4 Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners

As discussed in Section 2.1.3, Theme 3 of the literature review concentrates on research that investigates the roles of OEP practitioners, primarily educators and HE

stakeholders, in the implementation of OEP, e.g., (Baran & Alzoubi, 2020; Harrison & Devries, 2020; Huang, Tlili, et al., 2020; Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2020; Lee, 2020b; Nascimbeni et al., 2018; Truan & Dressel, 2022). This theme is particularly pertinent to my thesis, which aims to explore the perceptions of educators and academic administrators regarding OEP. The literature serves as a valuable backdrop and reference point for my study's participants' open practices. Therefore, this section consists of three main sections. Section 2.4.1 discusses the *classifications* and the *roles of OEP practitioners* as presented in the literature on OEP. Section 2.4.2 discusses the *beneficiaries* of OEP practitioners, and Section 2.4.3 summarises the key points of the third theme.

As established in the preceding themes discussing OEP definitions within and beyond content and the perspectives of its implementation within or beyond OER, the roles of OEP practitioners often align with intentions to maximise openness in HE. They engage in activities such as creating open content and participating in collaborative open practices. Therefore, delving into these roles offers insights into their motivations, understandings, and the intricate challenges they encounter. It also sheds light on how OEP practitioners navigate unclear instructions, heavy workloads, and broader tensions while implementing OEP within particular institutions.

The literature covers the involvement of individuals becoming practitioners in OEP, both within and beyond OER. However, what seems missing in this theme is that the literature advocates awareness of some guidelines and theoretical notions without gaining insight into how practitioners, including learners and researchers, understand their roles and how their roles develop within particular institutions. Therefore, the literature reveals three key issues concerning Theme 3 of the roles of OEP practitioners as the following:

Primarily, there is a lack of clear action guidelines for those seeking to engage in implementing OEP, contrasting the comprehensive guidelines available for creating OER, such as the well-structured 5Rs permissions detailing the roles of those involved in creating OER. This contrast is particularly evident in the absence of equivalent literature for individuals engaged in implementing OEP beyond OER,

which predominantly features non-empirical studies focused on proposing definitions and frameworks of OEP.

The second concern relates to the absence of voices and input from early adopters of open practices in HE, specifically practitioners from open universities. Their unique experiences and expertise in open education dimensions remain largely unexplored due to the lack of empirical studies and the evolving emphasis on online and distance education in traditional universities. Despite the shift in focus from serving disadvantaged learners to flexibility and collaboration in various educational contexts, insights from these early adopters, similar to the participants in this research, hold considerable value. Their experiences illuminate the role of practitioners in opening up HE through utilising pedagogy and technology within diverse contexts facilitated by the flexibility inherent in open education.

The third issue is the literature's tendency to classify OEP practitioners according to their professions rather than their level of engagement, which I consider a restriction to the vision of OEP practitioners' identities. While studies emphasise the significant burden on educators in implementing open practices like open teaching, learning, and collaboration (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020), the broader scope of OEP beyond content suggests a more inclusive participation within the HE community. This expansion may include greater agency for learners beyond co-creating OER (Baran & Alzoubi, 2020) and for researchers beyond enabling open access to their publications (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2020). In other terms, beneficiaries or audiences are considered recipients with a minimum contribution to the content creation. Even in their collaboration in open pedagogies, they are considered beneficiaries, and the question here, which is missing from the literature, is if there is a way to maximise the contribution of those beneficiaries to OEP in HE instead of considering them as recipients and celebrate their minimum contribution here and there.

2.4.1 OEP practitioners

In this section, I will explore the roles of OEP practitioners, including their classifications and their roles and responsibilities.

2.4.1.1 Classifications of OEP practitioners

OEP engage various practitioners within the HE community, categorised into two distinct groups in the literature. The first group comprises individuals directly involved in daily practices, including educators, learners, researchers, designers, and educational technologists (Harrison & Devries, 2020). Educators, especially, are often considered primary practitioners of OEP in the literature.

The second group involves stakeholders with interests or concerns regarding OEP's success, outcomes, or related policies. These stakeholders encompass administrators, policymakers, government agencies, educational institutions, non-profit organisations, publishers, advocacy groups, and others (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020).

For this project, a critical exploration involves examining whether practitioners within the same or across the two categories work cohesively as a unified entity to achieve specific objectives when implementing OEP. Do they collaborate and share a common goal in their efforts with OER or OEP? How do they see their cooperation for a successful implementation of OEP? Investigating these questions entails examining the perceptions and roles of educators and academic administrators, such as the participants in this project, representing categories one and two, respectively. Understanding their varied perspectives on OEP and how they identify their peers and beneficiaries forms a critical aspect of this investigation.

2.4.1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

Literature in the first category describes an individual's engagement in various open practices. Educators create, adapt, and share OER for use in the classroom, extending to collaborative and open pedagogies. Learners actively participate in creating and

enhancing OER and engaging in activities within the open education community (Baran & Alzoubi, 2020; Truan & Dressel, 2022). Researchers contribute through open access to their publications, thereby supporting the dimension of open scholarship (Huang, Tlili, et al., 2020; Shareefa et al., 2023). Curriculum and instructional designers focus on creating courses and learning materials and structuring educational content to facilitate engaging and effective learning experiences, aligning their designs with the practice of open pedagogies (Cronin, 2017). Educational technologists specialise in integrating technology to support OER and other open practices in technology-enhanced learning environments (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2017).

Literature in the second category argues that stakeholders shoulder the responsibility of supporting the success of OEP projects. Administrators, for instance, address challenges faced by educators, learners, designers, and educational technologists through professional development (Karunanayaka et al., 2015; Tualaulelei & Green, 2022) and capacity building (Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2020; Nascimbeni et al., 2018). Moreover, practitioners in this category formulate policies that endorse accreditation and flexibility, maximising openness in HE and fostering community engagement (Algers, 2020; Cronin, 2017; Murphy, 2013).

Although the literature has defined some roles for these OEP practitioners, the lack of clear action guidelines and the absence of perspectives from these practitioners regarding their roles in OEP are evident in this literature. Additionally, the literature falls short in suggesting integrative, more effective engagement approaches for these practitioners.

2.4.2 OEP beneficiaries

Beneficiaries is a term used in the literature to describe individuals within HE who profit from the increased accessibility and participation in educational resources and practices (Lee, 2020b; Tualaulelei & Green, 2022). Learners are the primary beneficiaries of these approaches in the literature, but educators, researchers, and communities can also benefit from the availability of resources and practices

(Tualaulelei & Green, 2022). Educators, whether OEP practitioners or not, benefit from the availability of educational resources in their teaching. Similarly, researchers benefit from free access to academic journals. All beneficiaries can benefit from open collaboration and open pedagogies (Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018; Nascimbeni et al., 2018).

However, the existing divide between practitioners and beneficiaries might limit the implementation of OEP because OEP should be open to engaging individuals or communities based on their interests and advantages rather than their professional roles or identities. Therefore, it is crucial to explore more integrative ways or contexts that engage beneficiaries to become practitioners of OEP rather than mere consumers, contributing to the maximisation of openness in HE. This is a critical issue that the participants in this project could help explore by sharing their diverse perceptions of OEP and its implementation.

2.4.3 Summary of Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners

Theme 3 of the literature review delves into the roles and beneficiaries of OEP, playing a foundational role in OEP research. It explores the categorisation of individuals engaged in implementing OEP and those who benefit from its execution. The literature categorises practitioners into two groups. The first comprises those involved in daily practices: educators, learners, researchers, designers, and educational technologists, with educators primarily identified as key OEP practitioners. The second group includes various stakeholders within HE responsible for facilitating the successful implementation of OEP, such as administrators, policymakers, government agencies, educational institutions, non-profit organisations, publishers, and advocacy groups.

Existing literature allocates specific roles and responsibilities to these groups, indicating a significant burden on educators in implementing OEP. However, the literature lacks clear action guidelines for OEP implementation, highlighting the need for more cohesive and engaging approaches to encourage collaboration among these practitioners, thereby enabling them to achieve their goals.

Furthermore, the literature identifies beneficiaries of OEP implementation, including educators, learners, researchers, and communities in HE. However, the existing dichotomy between practitioners and beneficiaries as two separate entities may not effectively engage individuals and HE communities in OEP, which is the core objective of openness in HE.

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review presents a comprehensive analysis of OEP, examining emerging themes such as the definitions of OEP, its relationship with OER, and the roles of practitioners and beneficiaries in implementing OEP. A reflective and critical summary of the key points and potential areas for further exploration are presented briefly in this section.

In Theme 1, the exploration of OEP definitions reveals two primary strands in defining OEP: within content (primarily rooted in OER) and beyond content (embracing a broader philosophy of openness in education). While both perspectives offer valuable insights, they come with limitations. The content-based approach, while having a solid theoretical foundation, is criticised for its narrow focus on content, which neglects other contexts where OEP can be implemented. Conversely, the broader view of OEP lacks clear perspectives and empirical evidence for its applications. The absence of input from those actively engaged in implementing OEP highlights the need to explore and establish a collective understanding of their perceptions regarding the essence of OEP.

Theme 2 delves into the relationship between OER and OEP, exploring the implementation of OEP within and beyond OER. The OEP within the OER approach heavily focuses on open practices related to open content, primarily due to the established theoretical foundation in OER. However, this approach is critiqued for its narrow focus on OER while implementing OEP. On the other hand, OEP, beyond OER, advocates for a more comprehensive approach to open practices but lacks established implementation guidelines and empirical studies, making adoption and

implementation challenging. The absence of active input from those involved in OEP implementation underscores the necessity of delving into a collective understanding of the pragmatic ways for OEP implementation and its implications in various educational contexts.

Theme 3 focuses on the roles of OEP practitioners and beneficiaries. The literature identifies two categories of practitioners: those directly involved in daily practices, such as educators, learners, researchers, and stakeholders, such as administrators, who are concerned with outcomes or policies. However, the classification of practitioners based on professions rather than their level of engagement restricts the vision of OEP practitioners' involvement. The delineation between practitioners and beneficiaries as separate entities might limit the comprehensive engagement of individuals and communities in OEP, hindering the core objective of openness in HE. Additionally, the absence of clear action guidelines for engaging in OEP, especially beyond OER, limits effective implementation.

Finally, this literature review highlights significant issues in the understanding and practical implementation of OEP, emphasising the need for more empirical studies, clearer action guidelines, and a more cohesive approach to encourage collaboration among practitioners. Integrating beneficiaries into the practice of OEP is essential for achieving the core objective of openness in HE. These identified issues offer ample scope for my research in exploring collective and various ways of perceiving OEP by those who were asked to do it. The next chapter presents an explanation of phenomenography and the ways it is applied to my project.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes my underpinning assumptions and the theoretical stances I adopted that frame this project. It consists of five main sections. Section 3.2 describes my ontological and epistemological stances, as well as the sources of my interests in addressing the qualitatively different perceptions of the studied phenomenon. It also sets out the reasons for choosing a phenomenographic research approach for the current study. Section 3.3 focuses on the philosophical principles and characteristics of phenomenography employed in this research. Section 3.4 illustrates some examples of other phenomenographic studies from the literature that influenced my research approach. Section 3.5 discusses the ways in which phenomenography frames this study, including the application of the main theoretical principles to the current project. In Section 3.6, I describe the notion of outcome space, which will be used to structure how I present my findings for the study later in this thesis. It also includes an example of an outcome space from one of the phenomenographic studies in the literature, with a detailed explanation of how the outcome space of a phenomenographic study is established. Finally, the conclusion summarises the key points from the chapter.

3.2 Ontological and epistemological assumptions

As discussed in the previous chapters, I aim to explore to explore practitioners' perceptions and experiences of OEP in an open university, and how these understandings of practitioners vary. My assumption of addressing OEP as a phenomenon comes from both its presentation in the literature as a new movement in open education and the *broadness* of its definitions. In the Cambridge dictionary, a phenomenon is defined as "*anything that is or can be experienced or felt, especially something that is noticed because it is unusual or new*"(Bunting et al., 2012, p. 320). For phenomenographers, a phenomenon means "to make manifest, or to bring to light"(Larsson & Holmström, 2007, p. 55) and the suffix "graph" is the research

approach that aims at presenting the different ways of peoples' understanding of a specific phenomenon. OEP is experienced by the people who try to enact it and implement its practices. This research investigates the understandings and experiences of some specific people from an open university, whom I refer to as OEP practitioners, as they try to enact OEP in practice.

Across the lifecycle of this project, I have adopted some phenomenographic ontological and epistemological core aspects. Dall'Alba (1996) concludes that “the challenge to those engaging in phenomenographic research, then, is to clarify and justify what their research involves ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically.”(p. 17). Therefore, these concepts are clarified in this section.

Adopting a phenomenographic approach means accepting a set of ontological and epistemological stances. The *ontological* stance adopted in this research states that *reality* is seen as subjective, multiple, and determined by the *internal relationship* between the word and the individual. (Marton, 1986). This internal relationship is described by Marton and Booth (1997) as the relationship between the “experiencer and the experienced, and it reflects the latter as much as the former” (p. 108). Realities arise from the *interactions* or the *experiences* of practitioners and the phenomenon, but not from the phenomenon itself. Phenomenography follows the ontological stance of *non-dualism*, which avoids the separation between the subject (people) and the object (experiences) of the study. Marton and Booth (1997) underscore the idea that our word is not separate from our experiences by saying: “*There is only one world, but it is a world we experience, a world in which we live, a world that is ours.*”(p. 13).

Regarding the *epistemological stance* of this study, phenomenography adopts a *second-order* epistemological perspective. It is based on the subjective perceptions and experiences of the people who experience the phenomenon being studied. In phenomenography, knowledge is generated based on how people are related to the phenomenon by focusing on the *relationship* between the people and the phenomenon, not on aspects of the phenomenon itself. Therefore, the *object* of this study is not the people nor the phenomenon but the *relation* between both, which is represented in the *understandings* and *experiences* of those people. Cousin (2008)

states that ‘second-order’ means “*Nobody has unmediated access to the world, it is always shaped by our experiences and our context*” (p. 184). Perceptions are formed based on practitioners’ understanding and experiences of the phenomenon in the specific context. Each practitioner may have a distinctive understanding of a particular aspect of the studied phenomenon, and different practitioners may potentially experience and perceive the phenomenon in different ways. Thus, according to Marton and Booth (1997), this “*way of experiencing something*” (p. 111) by practitioners is the unit of phenomenographic analysis and the “*variation in ways of experiencing the phenomenon.*” (p. 111) is the *object* of it. Therefore, the *focus* of this study is the relationship between OEP practitioners and the phenomenon of OEP, which is represented in the *holistic* and *various* understandings and experiences of the phenomenon of OEP.

Methodologically, a qualitative research paradigm is suitable for this research as it attempts to “make sense of phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Hennink et al., 2020). More specifically, this project aims to produce findings that reflect the qualitatively *different* ways people describe their experiences and understandings of the OEP phenomenon, phenomenography is selected as the research approach.

My interest in exploring the qualitatively different ways of experiencing OEP comes from my personal experience as an open educator and from reviewing the literature on the OEP phenomenon. As I describe in Chapter 1, I have noticed that OEP is perceived and practised in various ways by some practitioners, and therefore, I believe that those different experiences are worth further investigation in terms of meaning. In Chapter 2 of the literature review, I clarify that OEP is promoted as an umbrella term that includes many definitions and practices, which I believe is worth exploring in terms of what those definitions and practices actually mean to the people who are trying to enact OEP.

3.3 Selecting a research approach

For this project, I selected phenomenography as the research methodology. I considered phenomenology, phenomenography, and grounded theory due to my personal motivation to explore experiences and the effectiveness of these methodologies in such explorations. Additionally, I was inspired by some studies in the literature review that use these three methodologies to investigate experiences and understandings. These methodologies are commonly recommended for studies aimed at understanding individuals' lived experiences, perceptions, and conceptual understandings within educational settings. They are particularly effective in capturing the richness and depth of participants' experiences, making them ideal for exploring the multifaceted nature of experiences within OEP (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2014).

During my PhD study and based on my interest in exploring experiences in higher education as described in Section 1.2 on personal motivation, I became familiar with these methodologies and their effectiveness in addressing individuals' experiences and perceptions. This background influenced my consideration of phenomenography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. Additionally, while reviewing the literature for this project, I was inspired by several key studies on OER, OEP, and related educational innovations that employed these methodologies (Bell et al., 2018; Cutajar, 2014; Martin & Kimmons, 2020; Peng & Yang, 2022; Pulker & Kukulska-Hulme, 2020; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). The richness and usefulness of the findings in these studies underscored the relevance and potential efficacy of these three methodologies.

Based on these considerations, I determined that phenomenography, phenomenology, and grounded theory each offered distinct advantages for exploring the research questions of this study. Phenomenology's strength lies in its deep exploration of the essence of lived experiences. Grounded theory excels in generating theories grounded in empirical data, and phenomenography uniquely captures the variation in how individuals experience and conceptualise phenomena. Ultimately, I selected phenomenography as the most suitable methodology for this project and rejected phenomenology and grounded theory. In the following sections, I explore each

methodology in detail, explaining why I considered phenomenology, grounded theory, and phenomenography for this project. I will also clarify why phenomenography was chosen over the other two.

3.3.1 Phenomenology

The literature review of this research highlights a lack of clear guidelines and insights from open education practitioners experienced in OER and OEP, underscoring the need for methodologies that can delve into practitioners' lived experiences who their voices are missing from the literature. Phenomenology emerges as a viable option for this study, as it enables the exploration of these experiences, potentially offering deeper insights into OEP applications and interpretations. An exploration using phenomenology might offer clearer guidelines for implementing OEP from practitioners' perspectives, as opposed to creating more diverse definitions and frameworks of OEP.

However, the literature review also reveals that there is not a single or most common way of understanding and implementing OEP, but multiple valid theoretical perspectives as identified in the literature review. For example, there are two primary strands in defining OEP: within content and beyond content. Both perspectives provide valuable insights but also exhibit significant limitations. The content-based approach is critiqued for its narrow focus, while the broader view lacks clear perspectives from those actively engaged in implementing OEP. Therefore, I emphasised the need for insights from practitioners, exploring interpretations collectively, and advocating for consulting real practitioners to enrich the understanding and debate around OEP definitions and frameworks.

Phenomenology, though valuable for exploring individual lived experiences, may not align with the aim of this research. The absence of a single "correct" or "universal" way of understanding OEP and the variety of practices, such as open teaching, open learning, open pedagogies...etc., necessitates identifying patterns, similarities, and differences in how individuals perceive the phenomenon of OEP, not investigating the phenomenon aspects itself, as in phenomenology. Focusing on variation in OEP

experiences provides a nuanced understanding of its dimensions, enriching theoretical definitions and frameworks with practical insights from those who work on it. This emphasis on variation and collective understanding is essential for comprehensively grasping openness dynamics with OEP.

Acknowledging the diversity of approaches and perspectives toward OEP allows for capturing a fuller spectrum of its conceptualisation and implementation. By exploring variation, commonalities, differences, and underlying structures within collective OEP experiences can be identified, shedding light on OEP complexities. This exploration contributes to both theoretical and practical development, offering a more holistic understanding of OEP dynamics than phenomenology alone can provide.

From an ontological perspective, as outlined in Section 3.2, I view reality as subjective and relational, emphasising the internal relationship between practitioners and OEP. On the other hand, phenomenology typically adopts a realist ontology, which posits that phenomena exist independently of individuals' perceptions. This ontological stance is incompatible with my research goal of understanding the multiple, co-constructed realities of OEP as experienced by different practitioners. My approach necessitates a methodology that acknowledges and explores these varied subjective realities, which is not the focus of phenomenology.

From an epistemological perspective, phenomenology involves examining phenomena based on direct experiences or observations, often emphasising individual actions and immediate outcomes. While this perspective provides valuable insights, its focus may overlook the dynamic complexities inherent in OEP experiences, as identified in the literature of this study. OEP involves diverse stakeholders, socio-cultural contexts, and power dynamics, which shape its implementation and outcomes in nuanced ways. Therefore, to comprehensively understand and address these complexities of OEP dynamics, I advocate for a second-order perspective, which involves stepping back to examine and analyse how individuals construct their understanding of OEP holistically, considering underlying assumptions, values, and socio-cultural influences. By prioritising a second-order perspective, we can delve deeper into the relationship between practitioners and OEP

rather than into the immediate individuals' experiences themselves (Richardson, 1999), which is critical for revealing the diversity of understandings and implementations of OEP and goes beyond observing the immediate experience.

While phenomenology offers a valuable approach to exploring individual lived experiences and potentially providing clearer guidelines for implementing OEP, it may not fully align with the aims of this research project. The absence of a singular and most common way of understanding the phenomenon of OEP necessitates identifying patterns and variations in how practitioners perceive and enact OEP comprehensively. Additionally, phenomenology's realist ontology and focus on individual experiences may not fully capture the relational and co-constructed nature of OEP realities as holistically experienced by diverse practitioners. Therefore, after careful consideration, I have decided not to pursue phenomenology as the methodology for this project.

3.3.2 Grounded theory

Given that OEP is a relatively new research area with literature focusing on theoretical concepts and critical reflections, I considered grounded theory as a potential methodology for this research. Grounded theory is well-suited for exploring areas with limited existing research, such as OEP, where empirical studies on practitioners' perceptions and experiences are sparse. Grounded theory aims to generate new theories grounded in empirical data (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). By systematically gathering and analysing data from practitioners, grounded theory can yield pragmatic understandings and actionable guidance for implementing OEP, potentially leading to new definitions or frameworks based on practitioners' understandings.

However, the literature review also reveals numerous definitions and recent frameworks of OEP based on theoretical concepts from OER, with no single aspect or dimension of openness to focus on due to the diversity of practices. Therefore, I emphasised the need for a methodology that explores such diversity collectively,

providing a comprehensive overview rather than abstracting these into a generalised theory, definition, or framework.

Ontologically, grounded theory often operates from a constructivist stance, where reality is seen as constructed through social interactions and processes. It recognises multiple realities shaped by different social contexts and interactions. This ontological stance is not in line with my non-dualistic ontological stance that views reality and the individuals experience of reality as inseparable and focuses on the relationship between the individual and the world. This ontological stance is necessary for understanding the varied and subjective experiences of OEP.

Epistemologically, grounded theory emphasises first-order data collection and theory construction grounded in empirical evidence where knowledge is co-constructed between researchers and participants. It is emergent, contextual, and influenced by the researcher's perspective. My research, however, follows a relational, second-order epistemological perspective, which focuses on understanding the different ways in which practitioners collectively make sense of and experience OEP.

Grounded theory can help address the experiences and perceptions of OEP by allowing the development of a deep understanding of how practitioners engage with and interpret OEP in their daily work. Grounded theory can lead to the development of new, empirically based theories and frameworks that reflect the actual experiences and perceptions of those working with OEP, providing more actionable guidance for its implementation. However, my review of the literature reveals that adding more theoretical concepts, even if based on empirical data from practitioners, is not needed and may not be useful due to the numerous definitions and frameworks proposed by researchers. Therefore, referring to the need in the literature to capture the diverse perspectives and collective understanding of OEP practitioners, I rejected grounded theory for this research and adopted phenomenography, which allows me to highlight variation and collective understanding without the imperative to create a new theoretical framework or definition of OEP.

3.3.3 Phenomenography

This study addresses the inadequate understanding and practical implementation of OEP in higher education. My view, as established in Chapter 2, is that existing literature focuses too much on content-based definitions and theoretical frameworks, offering limited practical guidance from OEP practitioners. There is a need to expand OEP understanding beyond content and OER to include dimensions like open pedagogy, collaboration, and learners' agency, and to explore their interactions. Additionally, social aspects and the roles of individuals benefiting from and engaging in OEP must be considered. The study highlights challenges among OEP practitioners, especially overburdened educators and ineffective engagement approaches for other stakeholders. By consulting experienced practitioners, the research aims to provide practical insights for OEP implementation in diverse educational contexts, addressing the complexities of OEP practices and dimensions.

Exploring variation and collective understanding of OEP is crucial as it reveals diverse practitioner experiences, identifying gaps and opportunities that a singular view might miss, thereby informing more effective, inclusive, and pragmatic ways to enhance OEP in higher education. To capture the variety of experiences within the dimensions of OEP and arrive at a holistic account of how research participants perceive OEP and their roles in its implementation, I adopted phenomenography. This approach is essential because it captures the diverse and multifaceted ways individuals perceive and understand a phenomenon, recognising multiple valid perspectives. Phenomenography identifies patterns and levels of understanding, shedding light on the underlying structures of human experience. It has practical implications for tailoring interventions, educational strategies, and policies to meet diverse needs. Additionally, it deepens our understanding of a phenomenon's complexity and richness and fosters empathy and respect for different perspectives among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Adopting phenomenography for this research allows us to present the different experiences of practitioners and identify patterns of variation in how they holistically and elaboratively perceive and experience the studied phenomenon in a given context (Marton & Booth, 1997). This dual presentation of understandings and

experiences, recognised in the literature as the key strength of phenomenography (Marton, 1981), is highly effective for addressing the research problem discussed earlier.

In terms of ontology and epistemology, my interest in exploring the practitioners' relationship with the studied phenomenon is to find the structure of awareness or the dimensions of *variation*, which represents the totality of ways in which OEP practitioners experience the phenomenon of OEP "at each point in time. It is all that is present on every occasion" (Marton et al., 2004, p. 19). The aim is to represent the practitioners' experiences against the background of previous experiences in the structure of awareness. By focusing on the variation and relational aspects of practitioners' experiences, phenomenography offers a more suitable framework for capturing the diversity of perspectives essential to addressing the identified gaps in the literature.

In summary, phenomenology and grounded theory offer valuable insights into understanding individual experiences and generating theoretical frameworks, respectively. Phenomenology's strength lies in its deep exploration of lived experiences, while grounded theory excels in theory generation grounded in empirical data. However, the absence of a comprehensive understanding of OEP and the need to capture variation and collective understanding led me to select phenomenography for this study. Phenomenography uniquely captures diverse perspectives and identifies patterns of variation in how practitioners perceive and experience OEP, offering practical implications for its implementation in higher education.

Despite its strengths, phenomenography may present challenges in presenting findings to non-phenomenographers and may overlook individual accounts in its outcome space (see Section 3.8 for limitations of phenomenography). Nonetheless, its emphasis on variation and relational aspects of OEP makes it the most suitable methodology for this research, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of OEP experiences and perceptions.

3.4 The nature of phenomenography

As the object of the current study is the *relation* between the people and the phenomenon, which I refer to as the *experiences* and *understandings*, it is necessary to discuss the philosophical underpinnings for addressing this relation in a given context using phenomenography. What distinguishes phenomenography from other research approaches is summarized by Trigwell (2006) in five key features as shown in Figure 3.1. In this section, I present the meanings of those features and in section 3.5 I discuss how each feature is applied to this thesis.

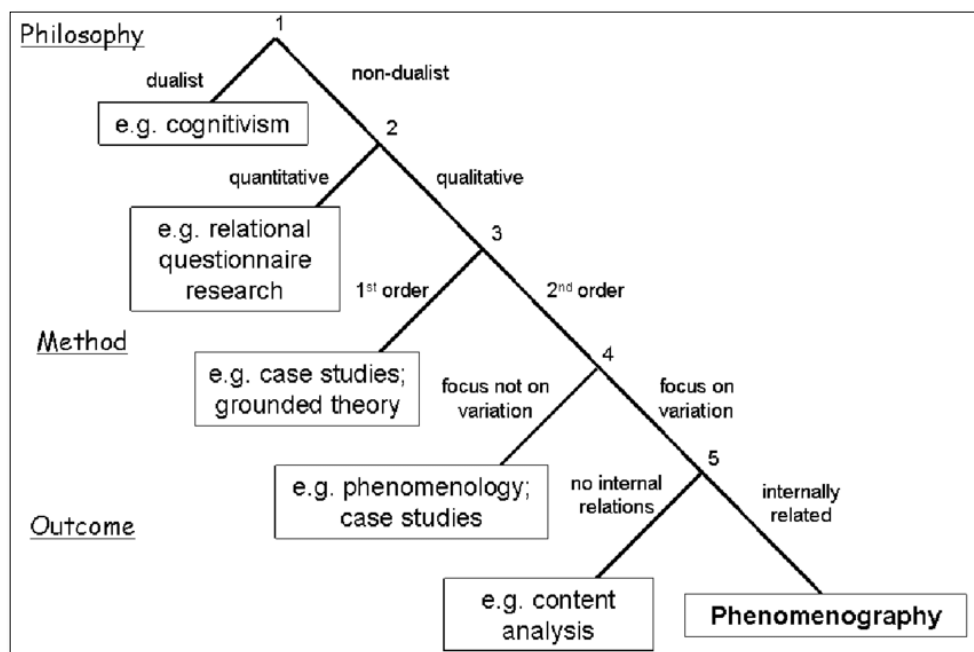


Figure 3.1 Phenomenography compared to other qualitative research approaches

(Trigwell, 2006, p. 369)

3.4.1 Non-dualist or Relational

As shown in Figure 3.2, adapted from Bowden (2005), this research takes the non-dualist ontological phenomenographic stance where the *relationship* between the OEP practitioners and their experiences and understandings of the OEP phenomenon in an open university is understood as *inseparable*, and the aim is to explore this relationship which represents the object of this study.

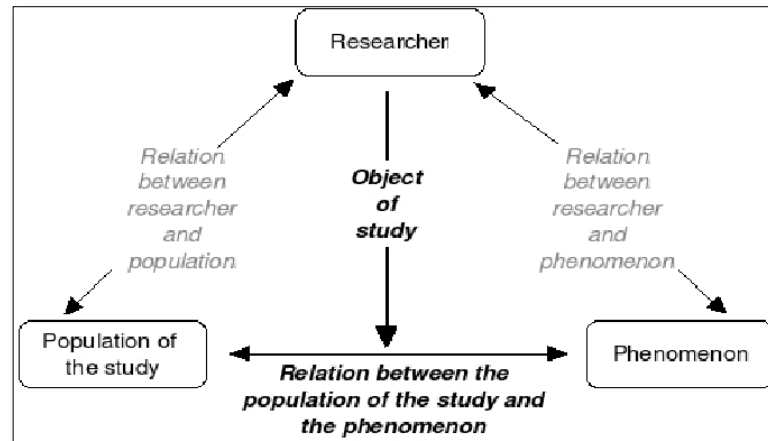


Figure 3.2 Phenomenographic relationality

(Bowden, 2005, p. 13)

3.4.2 Qualitative

Qualitative approaches aim at addressing multiple perspectives among a group of people, in addition to developing an understanding of concepts such as intersubjectivity, relational meaning, lived worlds, intentionality, and defensible knowledge claims (Åkerlind, 2005a). Seeking for variation in perspectives is mostly embedded in the philosophical underpinning of these qualitative approaches. Phenomenography is one of the research approaches within the qualitative research paradigm. It aims at addressing the different ways of experiencing and understanding a phenomenon by a group of people in a given, most often by using qualitative data collection methods such as interviews (Creswell, 1998).

3.4.3 Second-Order

In the second-order epistemological perspective, the researcher addresses how people experience and understand a phenomenon, as opposed to the first-order perspective where the researcher focuses on the phenomenon itself. Marton (1981) stresses that “from the first-order perspective we aim at describing various aspects of the world and from the second-order perspective we aim at describing *people's experience* of various aspects of the world” (p. 177). Moreover, Cousin (2008) states that a second

order means that “Nobody has unmediated access to the world, it is always shaped by our experiences and our context” (p. 184). Figure 3.3 illustrates this difference between first and second-order perspectives according to their usage in this research.

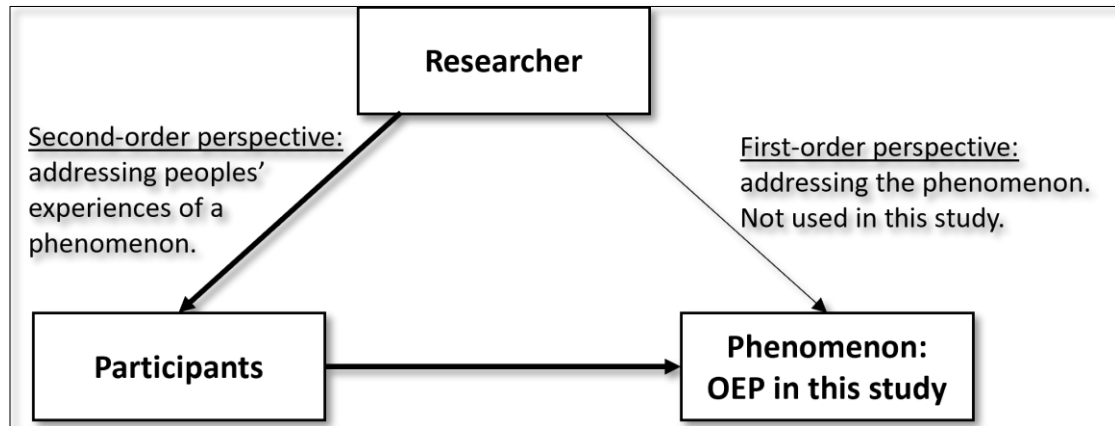


Figure 3.3 First-order and second-order epistemological perspectives

3.4.4 Focus on Variation

Phenomenographers do not only look for richness in differences in experiencing and understanding a phenomenon by the people. The term variation is central to phenomenography and has a specific meaning within it “searching for *structure* and *distinguishing aspects* of variation that appear *critical* to distinguishing qualitatively different ways of experiencing the same phenomenon from aspects that do not” (Åkerlind, 2005a, p. 72). This term is seen as important because it makes the different experiences useful and meaningful by providing insight to individuals about the powerful ways of understanding a phenomenon.

The outcome of a phenomenographic study needs to represent how those differences vary in *meaning*. In other terms, the findings should present the *dimensions of variation* across the collective ways of perceiving the aspects of a given phenomenon by a group of people (Marton & Booth, 1997). Therefore, this project explores the variation in experiencing and understanding the OEP phenomenon by some selected practitioners from an open university.

3.4.5 Internally related

The first output from the phenomenographic analysis should yield a finite number of categories that are internally related to each other. Each *category* describes one collective way of experiencing the phenomenon as interpreted by the researcher (s) (see examples in Table 3.1). Marton and Booth (1997) conclude that for any phenomenon being investigated, we can identify a limited number of qualitatively different and logically interrelated ways in which a phenomenon is experienced and understood by a group of people, which is generally called categories of description. In order to find the relation between categories of description, Marton and Booth (1997) develop an analytical framework called the *anatomy of experience* presented in Figure 3.4. with an example of students' experience and understanding of science learning phenomenon. The anatomy of experience describes two aspects of conscious awareness of an experience, namely the referential aspect (or meaning of an experience) and the structural aspect. A researcher needs to simultaneously analyse the categories of description (experiences) in terms of both structural and referential aspects in order to present useful and meaningful outcome space of the studied phenomenon. The referential aspect is formed by distinguishing *what* is the obtained *meaning* of each category of description. On the other hand, the structural aspect represents *how* this category of description varies in terms of internal and external horizons. The external horizon allows the experience to be distinguished from its background and context, whereas the internal horizon indicates the internal relationship of multiple elements of an experience and how they differ from one another.

The analytical principles of the anatomy of experience framework are applied to the example adapted from Tsai (2004) in Figure 3.4. The example shows how this framework is applied to one of the categories of description that emerged from learners' conceptions of science learning. This category concludes that learners perceive learning science as the memorization of definitions, formulae, laws, and special terms (Tsai, 2004, p. 1739). One of the learners says, "When learning science, I need to memorize many concepts, facts, symbols, and equations. Sometimes, I feel that I am learning social studies, such as history and language while learning science. There is often a lot to be remembered. I often need to

rehearse these concepts and equations again and again to keep them strictly in my mind.” (p. 1739). The researcher concludes that learning science for learners means *memorizing*, which is the referential aspect of the experience. The learners’ feeling of learning social studies while learning science is a distinction of the learning science experience from the background of learning other sciences, which is considered as an external horizon of the structural aspect. On the other hand, the learners’ descriptions of some combined elements within memorization, such as formulas, facts, symbols, and concepts, are considered multiple elements within the internal horizon of the structural aspect.

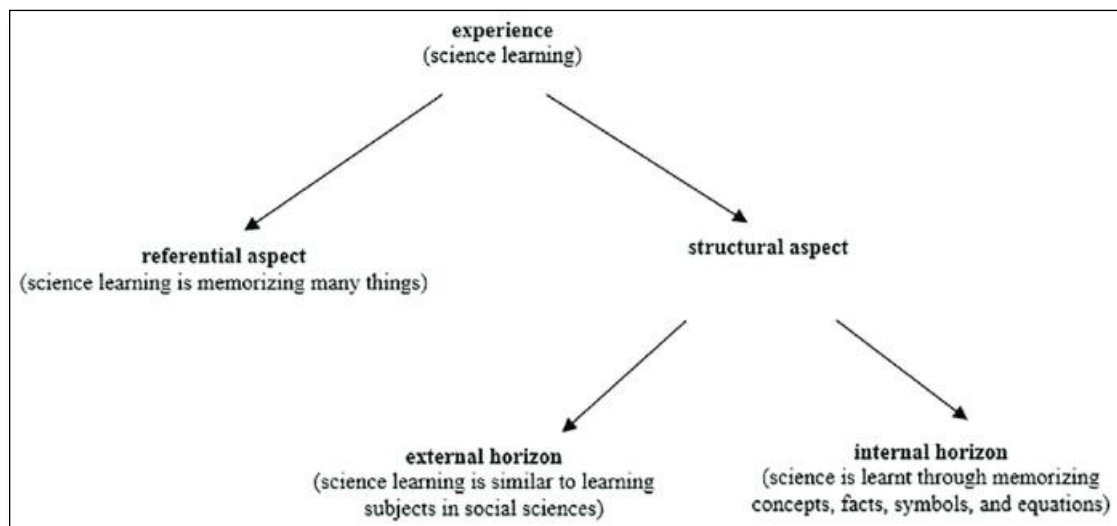


Figure 3.4: The anatomy of experience.

Adapted from Marton and Booth (1997, p. 88). The example is adapted from Tsai (2004, p. 1739)

3.5 Example of phenomenographic studies

This section presents a set of ten phenomenographic studies listed in Table 3.1, which I believe is a good example of how the main components of phenomenography are related to each other. First, I selected these studies for detailed review because they address various phenomena in Higher Education from the conceptions of learners or educators, which are relatively close to the research area and community of my study. While reviewing the literature on phenomenographic studies, I noticed that learners’ and students’ conceptions are addressed

interchangeably for some phenomena in HE. As a result, I include five studies concerned with learners' conceptions (Cutajar, 2014; Dearbhla, 2016; Khosronejad et al., 2022; Mimirinis, 2022; Nguyen, 2017) and five studies concerned with educators' conceptions (Ashwin, 2006; Daniel, 2022; Khan et al., 2016; Moffitt, 2020; Zou et al., 2022).

Every time I revisited the literature of phenomenography in higher education, I came upon some recent studies that not only contribute to many research areas in HE but also develop the phenomenographic approach in a way that influenced my choice to adopt phenomenography. My intention in conducting this review is to form a position on the common principles or features that are shared among all phenomenographic studies and how they are related to each other. This is useful for me to understand the best possible ways of achieving the research aims of my study, as well as to present a clear example of a phenomenographic approach in this thesis. There are several characteristics shared by all the examined studies that allow them to generate helpful knowledge which I believe is insightful. First, all these studies are concerned with *humans' experience* of some phenomena which researchers believe are vital to address. The second feature is the focus on *variation* in humans' holistic experiences in a way that is useful to understand the phenomenon as experienced by humans. Third, after the thematic analysis, all studies resulted in some *categories of description* that had clear answers to the RQs of their studies. This point where categories of description emerge represents the first finding of every phenomenography. Therefore, Table 3.1 focuses on those three common characteristics across all phenomenography in the literature:

- **Phenomenon:** represents human experiences, such as that of educators and learners.
- **Research Question(s):** focusing on variation and different ways of experiencing and understanding a given phenomenon.
- **Categories of Description:** The first finding that emerges from the analysis and presents clear answers to the RQs.

Study	Phenomenon	Research Question(s)	Categories of Description
1. (Ashwin , 2006)	Academics' accounts of tutorials.	1. What are the variations in tutors' accounts of tutorials? 2. What factors appeared to be related to variation in these accounts?	1. Tutors help students to develop an understanding of concepts. 2. Students see how to approach their disciplines. 3. Evidence is critically discussed. 4. New positions on the topic are developed and refined.
2. (Khan et al., 2016)	Teachers' Experience of Technology Integration in Teaching.	What are the different ways in which TVE teachers conceptualize the role of technology integration in their teaching?	1. Upgrading teacher knowledge. 2. Ease of communication. 3. Effective teaching. 4. Flexible teaching
3. (Moffitt, 2020)	Lecturers' conceptions of their scholarly interactions with theory in TEL.	What is the nature of variance in lecturers' conceptions of their scholarly interactions with theory in TEL?	1. Understand their own competence in TEL. 2. Exhibit their competence in TEL. 3. Critique the TEL change endeavours of others. 4. Undertake their TEL change endeavours.
4. (Cutajar, 2014)	Post-compulsory pre-university computing students' accounts of their networked learning (NL) experiences.	1. What are the qualitative differences in Maltese post-compulsory pre-university students' accounts of their Networked Learning experiences? 2. What are the qualitative differences in these students' accounts of teachers and other students as contributors to their experiences of Networked Learning?	1. Experiencing NL as the online accessibility of learning resources when required. 2. Experiencing NL as using the Internet to follow through individual self-managed learning. 3. Experiencing NL as using the Internet for learning in connectivity with others. 4. Experiencing NL as using the Internet for learning in a community with others.
5. (Dearbhla, 2016)	Transnational students' accounts of processes of networked learning.	1. In what different ways do these students describe their understandings of master's level learning? 2. In what different ways do they describe their processes of networked learning through their interactions and connections with peers, lecturers, and resources?	1.1 Master's level learning is a broad set of academic skills, a critical, investigative mindset, and innovative thinking. 2.1 Processes of learning with peers as insignificant, unproductive, supportive, conforming, independent, and teaching and learning interactions. 2.2 Processes of learning with resources as unproductive, consciously minimal, paradigm shifting, and critical interactions. 2.3 Processes of learning with lecturers as insignificant, unproductive, instructing, and developmental interactions.
6. (Nguyen , 2017)	Students' Conceptions of Networked Learning in a Developing Country Setting.	What is the extent of variation in how undergraduate students collectively experience networked learning phenomena when they are	a.1 Resource access. a.2 Knowledge transmission. a.3 Knowledge construction.

	<p>Four phenomena related to NL:</p> <p>a) learning about others and resources.</p> <p>b) the roles of technology in mediating learning through connections.</p> <p>c) cooperation with others in learning.</p> <p>d) working together towards a common goal.</p>	introduced to a higher education institution in a developing country?	<p>b.1 Flexibility.</p> <p>b.2 Tool.</p> <p>b.3 Medium.</p> <p>c.1 Group work.</p> <p>c.2 Exploratory learning.</p> <p>c.3 Directing learning.</p> <p>d.1 Benefits: diversity awareness, increased understanding, and increased performance.</p> <p>d.2 Challenges: technological availability, interpersonal differences, and unproductive learning.</p>
7. (Zou et al., 2022)	Understandings of academics' conceptions of excellent teaching.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers teach confidently and effectively. 2. Teachers guide students to achieve the intended learning outcomes in their courses and programmes. 3. Teachers empower students to develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values in their discipline holistically. 4. Teachers work with students to enable them to own their learning, make an impact on the community, and become lifelong learners.
8. (Mimirnis, 2022)	Undergraduate students' conceptions of what constitutes excellent teaching.	What are the different ways in which undergraduate students understand teaching excellence?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Excellent teaching is about the optimal presentation of the subject matter. 2. Excellent teaching is about being taught by an excellent teacher. 3. Excellent teaching is about enabling and achieving an understanding of the principles of the subject matter. 4. Excellent teaching is about questioning knowledge. 5. Excellent teaching is about bringing about change in the discipline.
9. (Khosronejad et al., 2022)	Students' conceptions of engineering (implied identities).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are students' conceptions of engineering in a course about sustainability? 2. How do students' conceptions differ across different contexts of the university, workplace, and society (implied identities)? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engineering as a practice for designing solutions. 2. Engineering as a pragmatic practice for the welfare of people. 3. Engineering as a knowledge-based practice. 4. Engineering as a communicative practice. 5. Engineering as a technology-mediated practice. 6. Engineering as thinking.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Engineering as an independent practice. 8. Engineering as learning.
10. (Daniel, 2022)	Academics' conceptions of lecturing.	What are the different ways of experiencing lecturing by academics?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lecturing as soliloquy. 2. Lecturing as connecting meaning. 3. Lecturing as cultivating individuals. 4. Lecturing as transformatively cocreating. 5. Lecturing as enacting research.

Table 3.1: Examples of phenomenographic studies from the literature

The studies in Table 3.1 cover a sample from an era in which the phenomenographic approach has been successfully used to contribute to exploring and understanding phenomena in HE. By reading some earlier phenomenographies and by snowballing from their references, I was able to identify some primary authors who established the theoretical principles of doing phenomenography in their articles which I refer to in framing my study. The diversity of the reviewed studies influences my way of framing the current project, especially the PhD theses of Nguyen (2017), Cutajar (2014), and Dearbhla (2016). For example, the three theses address a phenomenon in HE by asking about the different ways of experiencing and understanding this phenomenon by learners. My study follows the same approach in defining the phenomenon of OEP in HE but for different research communities namely, educators and academic administrators. The RQ of this project is also framed in a way that is consistent with the objectives of phenomenography in exploring the variation in the OEP phenomenon experienced by some practitioners. For example, all RQs of the studies in Table 3.1 ask about ‘different ways or variations’ of experiencing a phenomenon in HE by a group of people. The categories of description that emerge after the analysis represent the answers to those RQ(s). For this study, I also expect to present four to six categories of description, which is an approximate number of categories per study, as shown in Table 3.1.

The only part in which this literature presents little consensus is the presentation of the outcome space. Despite the coherency among all phenomenographies until the emergence of the categories of description, there is no one way of presenting the outcome space which represents the relationship between those categories. In my review, I have seen many ways of presenting the outcome space. Some studies present more than one outcome space, while others present only one. Within the outcome space, some studies focus only on finding referential and structural aspects among categories of description, whereas other studies go beyond that to present a structure of awareness (dimension of variation). Therefore, I avoid adopting one form of outcome space in the early stages of framing my study because I conclude that the characteristics of an outcome space depend on the emerging knowledge (data) from participants and how deep a researcher can delve into the analysis. This issue of presenting the outcome space is discussed in detail in section 3.6.

3.6 Applying phenomenography to my project

In section 3.2, I discussed my ontological and epistemological assumptions which I agree with after adopting phenomenography as a qualitative research approach for my study. This means that I need also to apply the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenography, which I present in section 3.3 to the current study. Figure 3.5 revisits the RQ of this project and presents an overview of how phenomenography frames the current study. The main RQ asks about the *practitioners' collective ways of perceiving and understanding OEP in an open university* and about *the different ways these understandings vary*. In this section, I revisit also the five philosophical principles of phenomenography from section 3.3 and discuss the application of each principle in this project.

3.6.1 Non-dualist or Relational

This ontological stance is applied to the current study by avoiding dualism between the OEP phenomenon and OEP practitioners. There is only one world of reality in which both exist. This world is explored through one internal relationship between the OEP phenomenon, including its aspects, and its practitioners who are educators and academic administrators in a given context (QOU). Figure 3.5 illustrates this relationship.

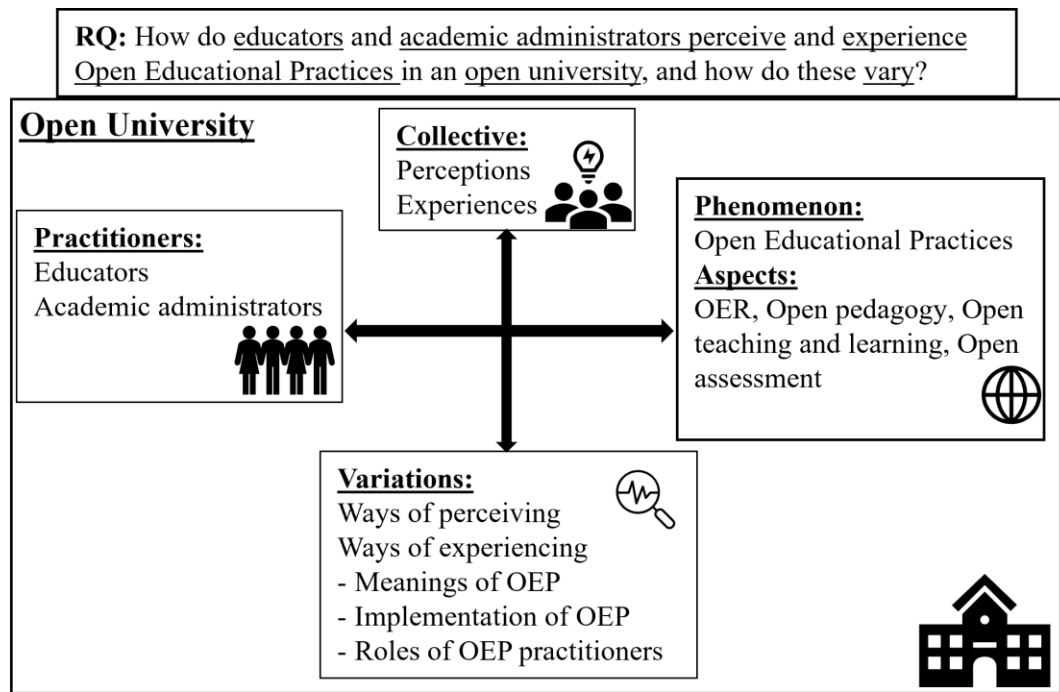


Figure 3.5 The structure of phenomenography in the current study

3.6.2 Qualitative

An interpretive research paradigm is applied to explore OEP practitioners' collective experiences and understandings of this phenomenon. This means that I will focus on collecting multiple perspectives among practitioners to put forward a set of categories in which each category describes a holistic way of perceiving and understanding OEP. From the collected qualitative data, I will produce holistic variations rather than different individual experiences. The qualitative analysis process will aim at developing an understanding of how OEP and its aspects are perceived and experienced by some practitioners and how those meanings and experiences vary in terms of the role of practitioners who are trying to enact it.

More details about the qualitative methods of data collection and analysis are discussed in Chapter 4 of the research design.

3.6.3 Second-Order

Phenomenography situated my intent of investigating the *collective* practitioners' experiences of OEP from their standpoint. Within this research, I have used

interchangeably the terms *perceive*, *understand*, and *experience* when referring to the knowledge interests or the *object* of the study. This second-order epistemological stance of describing the *experiences* avoids biased judgments such as positive, negative, right, wrong, good, or bad experiences. It implies a non-judgmental attitude and impartial way of describing the perceptions or the experiences, which represent the relationship between OEP practitioners and the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997)

3.6.4 Focus on Variation

The knowledge generated from this study seeks to present the different ways of perceiving, understanding, and *experiencing* the phenomenon of OEP by the participants who enact it. My assumption that there would be variations in practitioners' experience and perception of OEP comes from the existing broad range of OEP aspects proposed in the literature, as well as my individual experiences as an institutional practitioner. This diversity of practices may result in different understandings and experiences of open educators in approaching the same thing, such as the “aspects” shown in Figure 3.4 namely, OER, open teaching and learning, open collaboration, and open assessment (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020; Huang, Tlili, et al., 2020). My choice of using phenomenography for this study proceeds from the existence of this new phenomenon in open education, with a range of aspects, focusing on the phenomenographic aim of identifying a finite number “of qualitatively different and logically interrelated ways” (Cousin, 2008, p. 183) of how people *understand* and *experience* this phenomenon in all its aspects.

Across all participants, similarities and differences are identified to form a range of meanings in the ways they perceive OEP, the implementation of its aspects, and their roles as open educators in its implementation. As shown in the examples in Table 3.1, the aim is that *categories of description* emerge from this process, and each category represents or describes one way of experiencing OEP by a group of practitioners.

3.6.5 Internally related

Yet phenomenography aims at more than simply uncovering variation. In order to understand what those categories mean, I need to put forward *dimensions of variation*, in which categories are *logically related* to each other in terms of *structural* and *referential* aspects (meaning), because the aim is not to show the different descriptions for the sake of diversity itself. We need to find out the meanings of the descriptions (*referential aspect*) and how they perceive the phenomenon (*structural aspect*). The achieved outcome – comprising categories of description and dimensions of variation – is represented in an outcome space which is discussed more with examples in the following section.

3.7 Reporting phenomenographic outcomes

Phenomenographic findings are provided in an outcome space, which consists of two components: *categories of description* and *dimensions of variation*. In the literature on phenomenography, the purpose of an outcome space is seen as a ‘hierarchy of understandings’ or a “way of looking at the collective human experience of phenomenon holistically” (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116) The categories of description represent the hierarchical grouping of the holistic and different ways of experiencing the studied phenomenon by a group of practitioners. On the other hand, the dimensions of variation present the relationship in which those categories of description vary.

Figure 3.6 shows an example of phenomenographic outcome space taken from Ashwin (2006). In this example, the analysis reveals four categories of descriptions that show tutors’ perceptions of tutorials as a teaching method. The outcome space consists of two tables that show two different findings from the categories.

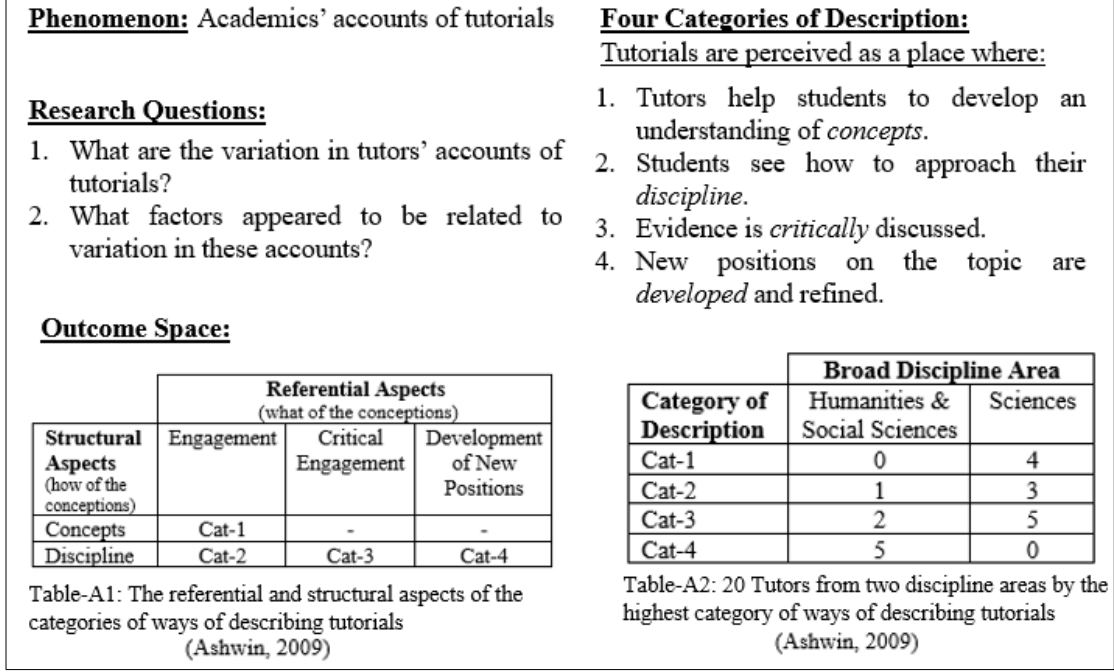


Figure 3.6: Example of phenomenographic outcome space by (Ashwin, 2006)

The first finding (Table A1 in Figure 3.6) presents the relations between the categories in terms of the *structural* and *referential* (meaning) aspects. The structural aspects are formed by presenting *how* the categories of description vary in terms of perception of the phenomenon so that those which have a common dimension are grouped. As listed in Table A1, the *structural aspect* consists of two prominent dimensions of what is in the foreground of each category, whether the perception is about concepts or discipline. This structural classification of the categories of description characterises Category 1 as the only one related to *concepts*, whereas the other three categories are characterised as related to *discipline*. The *referential aspects* are formed by differentiating the categories of description in terms of *what* they mean so that descriptions with a common meaning are grouped together. In Table A1, the referential aspects are characterised based on whether tutors' perceptions of tutorials refer to engagement, critical engagement, or the development of new positions. The author concludes that there is an inclusive and expanding hierarchy with each new category, in which category four includes the other three categories. For example, tutors' accounts of tutorials shift from tutors helping students to develop an understanding of the concept, as in Category 1, to tutors helping students to develop new positions on the topic, as in Category 4. This shift in the hierarchy of categories from category one to category four, which is the higher level, is explained by Tight (2016, p. 320) that "each higher level encompassing those below it,

and the highest level representing the most advanced or developed way of experiencing the phenomenon”.

In the same outcome space, Ashwin (2006) finds other qualitative different ways of perceiving tutorials as shown in Table A2 in Figure 3.6. This adds another dimension of variation between the categories of description and the discipline of the tutors. This table shows that only tutors from scientific-based disciplines perceive tutorials as a place where tutors help students develop an understanding of *concepts* (Cat-1). On the other hand, there was also variation in which only tutors from humanities and social sciences perceive tutorials as a place where *new positions on the topic are developed and refined* (Cat-4). Moreover, there is another variation in the same table within the same discipline that says most of the tutors from sciences disciplines perceive tutorials as a place where evidence is critically discussed (Cat-3), whereas most of the tutors from humanities and social sciences perceive tutorials as a place where new positions on the topic are developed and refined (Cat-4).

For my analysis, I might hypothetically come up with five categories of descriptions, each of which presents a holistic understanding of one aspect of OEP from both groups of practitioners. For example, the *first category* could be “*OEP is perceived as a place where students can contribute to course content through co-create, modify, and do renewable or non-disposable assignments*”. The *second category* could be “*OEP is perceived as a way of promoting connections between students, between students and teachers, and between class and the broader community*”. This example shows how practitioners could perceive OEP, which is students’ contribution to knowledge and connectedness.

In order to understand what my categories actually mean and the ways they are related, I need to form dimensions of variation where the categories are logically related to each other in terms of structural and referential aspects (meaning), because the aim is not to show the different descriptions for the sake of diversity itself. We need to find out the meanings of the descriptions (referential aspect) and how they perceive the phenomenon (structural). To continue my hypothetical example, the structural aspects could be, in this case, students’ contribution to knowledge and connectedness for categories one and two, respectively. The referential aspects could be *student contribution*, which means student-

centred learning, whereas *connectedness* means *application, access, or agency*. Another variation could emerge among the participants, where educators perceive some aspects of OEP in a different way than administrators, as shown in Table A2 in the example above.

In summary, this project aims at constructing one outcome space that represents what the OEP phenomenon means in practice for practitioners, how they perceive its implementation within and beyond specific dimensions of open education, and how those practitioners understand their roles, as well as the ways those develop within institutions in order to accomplish OEP. In my work, I expect to describe different experiences and understandings of OEP among participants, who are educators and academic administrators. The outcome space of this study is expected to have rich descriptions and useful understandings of the different ways this group of people describes their roles and the relevant open practices in an open university context. Producing an outcome space that presents the variations of practitioners' perceptions of OEP means, implementation, and roles will allow me to contribute to the literature I reviewed earlier.

3.8 Limitations of phenomenography

Phenomenography is significant in higher education because it is the only methodology that has been developed specifically within the context of higher education rather than being borrowed from another field and then applied to higher education (Tight, 2016). However, as with any other research methodology, phenomenography has some limitations, and it has been critiqued mostly by phenomenographers themselves (Moffitt, 2020). In this section, I discuss four commonly perceived limitations of phenomenography, before reflecting back in Section 7.6 on the overall limitation of the study.

The four common limitations of phenomenography that I have identified from reading phenomenographic studies and articles about the methodology are:

-
-
- 1. Variability in presenting the findings and in using terminologies:** Although phenomenography's findings are presented in a specific way using the outcome space, there is a significant variation in how phenomenographic outcome spaces are presented, including differences in the use of terminology and the structure of outcome spaces. This lack of standardisation can make phenomenography seem opaque and confusing, especially for new researchers, and makes it difficult for non-phenomenographers to easily understand its findings compared to findings presented from qualitative thematic analysis (Dearbhla, 2016; Nguyen, 2017)

For example, some phenomenographers present their outcome space using only the anatomy of experience framework that consists of referential and structural aspects of the phenomenon. Others use the term "structure of awareness" to describe how people focus on certain aspects of a phenomenon while backgrounding others. This approach emphasises the internal relationship between the people and the phenomenon, highlighting the dynamic nature of awareness. Another common terminology is "dimensions of variation", which refers to the different aspects or features of a phenomenon that people discern and experience differently. This perspective focuses on identifying the critical aspects that vary across different experiences of the phenomenon.

- 2. Focus on collective, not individual perspectives:** This limitation arises from the methodological choice of emphasising collective experiences over individual ones, which may restrict the depth of understanding of unique or unexpected findings. While phenomenography offers a broad view of the phenomenon by focusing on collective experiences, some authors suggest that it tends to diminish individual voices (Dearbhla, 2016; Nguyen, 2017)

For instance, a research participant may bring up an aspect of experiencing the phenomenon that others haven't mentioned. Consequently, this experience cannot be categorised within any of the categories of descriptions because it lacks consensus and is thus excluded from the data analysis process.

- 3. Context dependence:** The findings in phenomenographic research are often highly context-dependent, which can limit the generalisability of the results.

What is true for one group in a particular context might not hold for another group in a different context. This means that the categories of description and the outcome space are deeply influenced by the particular context in which the study is conducted. This specificity of results means that while the findings are deeply insightful for that group, they do not automatically extend to others without careful consideration of contextual differences (Daniel, 2022; Dearbhla, 2016; Khan et al., 2016; Nguyen, 2017)

For example, a study investigating how university learners in a European country understand “effective learning” may yield different categories of description than a similar study conducted among university learners in Japan due to cultural, educational, and social differences. Moreover, in his PhD thesis on learners' perceptions of specific phenomena using phenomenography, Nguyen (2017) explicitly confirmed that the perception of a specific phenomenon in Vietnam was different to previous research in European and North American settings.

4. Research quality concerns:

As with any other qualitative research methodology, there are some quality criteria to be addressed for the research. In phenomenography, there are some concerns that need to be addressed throughout a phenomenographic project to ensure the trustworthiness, rigour, validity, and reliability of research (Cutajar, 2014; Dearbhla, 2016; Moffitt, 2020; Nguyen, 2017). Implementing these measures in phenomenographic research ensures that its outcomes are taken seriously. The research quality can be enhanced by applying the credibility recommendations discussed in Section 4.7.

There are also some limitations associated with using phenomenography, primarily due to misunderstandings of the methodology itself by some researchers. These misunderstandings have occasionally led to incorrect applications of the approach. As one of the main contributors to phenomenography, Åkerlind emphasises in her recent article that interest in phenomenography in higher education is “growing faster than the number of experienced researchers, some misunderstandings of the approach have arisen and been circulating in discussions and publications, becoming

self-reinforcing” (Åkerlind, 2023, p. 1). In her article, Åkerlind outlines eight misunderstandings that are important for researchers to consider if they are planning to adopt phenomenography or are interested in understanding it more comprehensively. These insights are valuable for ensuring that the methodology is applied correctly and effectively.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical basis adopted in this study and the philosophical principles of phenomenography as an interpretive qualitative research approach. It argued that phenomenography is a well-suited research approach for the present work because it can achieve the research aim of exploring the patterns of variation in how some practitioners, holistically and elaboratively, perceive and experience the studied phenomenon in a given context. Accordingly, the characteristics of phenomenography were presented, and how those principles are applied to this project was discussed, including non-dualism as an ontology and a second-order epistemology. In addition, some useful examples of phenomenographic studies from the literature were listed to show how the authors addressed the qualitatively different perceptions of people for a specific phenomenon in a given context. Finally, the final findings of this project will be presented and considered by showing some examples of how an outcome space is established to show the dimensions of variation among all categories of description in terms of the emerged structural and referential aspects. The next chapter discusses the research design process, which involves selecting the research site, recruiting participants, collecting data, analysing data, and determining research quality and its implications.

Chapter 4: Research Design

4.1 Introduction

Research design serves as a logical process for guiding the various stages of the study, encompassing data collection, analysis, and interpretation. In aligning with the phenomenographic approach adopted for this project, a qualitative research design was selected to shape the interview questions, the research questions, the data collection method employed, and the strategies for analysing and interpreting the gathered data. According to Cope (2004), phenomenography represents a specific qualitative research approach characterised by its meticulous attention to both data collection and analysis methods. This approach prioritises the exploration of meaning and necessitates the use of precise data collection methods to delve into the underlying meanings inherent in the collected data. Phenomenography, therefore, is regarded as a coherent and distinct qualitative research paradigm, offering a unique way of investigating the varied and collective human experiences and perceptions that will be discussed in this chapter.

This chapter is structured into eight main sections, each addressing distinct aspects of the research methodology and process. In Section 4.2, the focus is on elucidating the nature of the research site, AL Quds Open University (QOU), and delineating the rationale behind its selection as the focal point for this study. Section 4.3 delves into the issues of being an insider researcher within the chosen research site, emphasising the need to navigate this position conscientiously to mitigate potential biases. Section 4.4 discusses the recruitment method employed to select the research participants, offering insights into their demographics, qualifications, and pertinent experiences relevant to the research objectives. The interview process itself is explored in Section 4.5, aligning with the phenomenographic research approach and elucidating the strategies employed to gather qualitative data from the participants. Section 4.6 delves into the data analysis process, detailing the methods utilised to interpret the qualitative data collected and elucidating the establishment of a digital analysis environment to facilitate this process. Addressing concerns related to research

quality, Section 4.7 outlines the measures taken to ensure the credibility of the research findings. Ethical considerations are discussed in Section 4.8, where the standard ethical procedures mandated by Lancaster University are outlined. Finally, Section 4.9 summarises the salient points elucidated throughout the chapter.

4.2 Research Site

This section describes the research site of AL Quds Open University (QOU), where this research took place. It sets out the background of QOU, presenting its history and mission as an open university. For phenomenographers, a suitable research site is one that can provide access to a diverse group of participants in terms of experiences. This diversity increases the change of variation in experiencing the phenomenon by different people (Åkerlind, 2005b), which is the OEP phenomenon in this study. QOU has been pursuing openness since its establishment by being closer to the learners in establishing their regional branches and, recently, through developing open content and practices. This long history of pursuing openness in HE at QOU heavily influences how the OEP phenomenon will be viewed on this site. OEP is an emerging but increasingly important consideration at QOU, which influenced its selection as a research site (as elaborated in Section 1.5.1)

Next, this section closely examines the establishment of OER projects in the last decade by its practitioners, which is an important backdrop for the experiences because local practitioners have long been committed to OER principles, and that may influence their more specific experiences of OEP that this project aims to explore (as elaborated in Section 1.5.2). Finally, it focuses on the recent movement of QOU from OER to OEP, which is in line with the context of this project's investigation of the phenomenon of OEP.

QOU is an ideal choice for my project due to its history of open education and OER initiatives aimed at underserved learners. The university practices a content-centred approach, providing open access to digital learning content through platforms like Open edX.

QOU was established in 1991 in Palestine as a public university. The importance of QOU emerges from its establishment as the first open university in the Arab states and the 39th worldwide (Peters, 2008). The idea of establishing an open university in Palestine came from the urgent need of the Palestinian local community, which has been living in distracted geographical areas and a difficult economic situation since the 1948 Arab–Israeli war (Falah, 1996). The war’s persecution of the Palestinian community resulted in the deprivation of generations from HE due to the imprisonment of people and the diminished economic situation. Therefore, QOU has been exclusively offering flexibility for adult learners through open education which widens access to HE for the underserved Palestinian people living in Palestine and the diaspora.

QOU had great success in widening access to HE for the Palestinian people, and it has become the largest university in Palestine. It established 20 distributed educational branches in order to maximise openness by being physically closer to learners. It has about 1600 employees, including educators and academic administrators, and 50,000 learners that constitute more than one-third of the HE learners in Palestine (Matheos et al., 2007).

In order to achieve its mission of learning flexibility and accessibility as an open university, QOU has specialised in promoting openness through educational practices, including the implementation of OER and MOOCs. Therefore, QOU seeks to equip its learners from the beginning of their studies with the skills and resources they need to manage their learning and become independent learners. This open and individual learning environment stimulates QOU practitioners to adopt contemporary practices for teaching and learning which makes them suitable for addressing issues related to OEP.

As discussed earlier in the introduction chapter, OEP is an emerging term that refers to the practices of openness through online learning, including the content-centred approach of openness, such as OER, as well as the approach of openness beyond content, such as OEP. Open universities have adopted the shift in focus from OER to OEP, which employs not only resources but associated practices which are based on widening access to HE and serving disadvantaged learners through OEP (Lee,

2020b). In her article, Lee argues that open universities are classified as one of the main and only experienced actors of OEP. However, she concludes that few studies (N=7) addressed OEP in an open university context.

At QOU, OEP has been discussed to be enacted on top of the available OER and MOOC platforms in order to put into practice the resources that have been created for widening access to HE, as well as to utilize the unique experiences of its open educators who have been practising such approaches of openness. This initiative has been led by practitioners of educators and academic administrators who have been involved in such projects in the last decade. Those practitioners demonstrated their interest in OEP in the recent establishment of an international programme that aims to widen access to HE not only for Palestinian people but also for other learners from all over the world, including adult ones. In the international programme webpage, OEP is clearly mentioned in the vision section, where the emphasis is placed on “designing a student-centred teaching and learning process in accordance with the *open education practices* based on the most recent quality, excellence, and creativity standards, in terms of preparing qualified cadre in a variety of fields.” (QOU, n.d-c).

The aim of using OEP at QOU is to widen access to higher education, as well as broaden the scope of the university’s educational services and programs through diverse, integrated, and distinguished academic and educational programs.

Those properties of QOU are broadly reflective of what open university is supposed to do elsewhere in serving disadvantaged learners. Moreover, using phenomenography in this study, the various experiences of the people being involved in open education may contribute to the literature on OEP by presenting some unique practices within and beyond the content-centred approach of OER.

4.3 Insider Research

The issue of insider research needs to be carefully considered in this project because I work at the research site of QOU, where the research participants of this project exist.

My professional role at QOU was discussed early in Chapter 1, but in this section, I will discuss the issue of doing research within my working environment.

Insiderness has been raised in the literature of qualitative research in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider researcher. The advantages include familiarity with the site and participants, whereas the disadvantages concern researcher bias and the potential to overlook previously known issues because of familiarity. Thus, the main idea of this argument in the literature is to warn the researchers against possible biases and dilemmas that arise while conducting their research in a familiar research environment and population. In this context, most scholars argue that there are no clear boundaries between insider and outsider researchers; “the boundaries of such positions are always permeable.” (Taylor, 2011, p. 6), and both insiderness and outsidersness are “better understood as a continuum rather than dichotomy.” (Mercer, 2007, p. 3).

My position as a researcher at QOU can be discussed in terms of a spectrum of issues raised in the literature, namely, access, intrusiveness, familiarity, rapport, positionality, power, and representation (Mercer, 2007; Merriam et al., 2001; Taylor, 2011). The main reason I am considered an insider researcher is that I am an employee at the research site of QOU. Being an insider researcher at the research site creates some positive opportunities for this project. First, my familiarity with the context and culture of QOU allows me to identify particularly relevant potential research participants, grant permissions for conducting interviews, and talk broadly about my research with participants whom I know. Second, my relationship with the participants, because of our prior shared experiences, allows an authentic understanding of the culture being studied, and therefore, asking more meaningful questions about the studied phenomenon.

There are also some disadvantages for insider-researchers. First, familiarity could lead to a researcher *bias* because of the prior knowledge of the studied phenomenon (Merriam et al., 2001). Second, familiarity could also result in *taking things for granted* during my interview because of the prior shared experiences with the research participants (Mercer, 2007). Third, a *power imbalance* may exist between the researcher and the participants (Merriam et al., 2001).

The first two disadvantages are related to each other because being familiar with participants and the studied phenomenon could lead to superficial discussions in the interviews. The preconceptions of the research participants about the researcher could affect the depth of the discussion because both the participant and the researcher may have discussed the phenomenon on previous occasions. When interviewing participants, I was concerned about this issue of familiarity and aware that I needed to consider the possibility that participants may talk only about the technical aspects of OEP because of their preconceptions about my technological background when we worked together.

In order to address those disadvantages, I, therefore, sought to talk broadly about my research aims before the interview, which concerns both their technological and educational experiences of OEP by mentioning some of the OEP aspects presented in Figure 3.5. I kept reminding the participants from the beginning of each interview that I am concerned about their experiences and understandings, whether they are technological, managerial, educational, or anything else related to the phenomenon of OEP. Moreover, I sought to clarify that I'm not discussing any technical or technological issues related to my background as an ICT engineer (as discussed in chapter one).

This issue of familiarity occurred in the first couple of interviews when participants started to talk about the internet speed and the performance of the servers where the online tools and platforms are hosted and how it helped in implementing OER and OEP. Although the technological aspects could be an important part of the research outcome, I made sure that the participants elaborated on their educational experiences of OEP as well. As I adopted the phenomenographic interview protocol, which recommends minimal interruption of the participants, I worked towards setting their focus on exploring their experiences and understandings, regardless of what they have in their background about my technical and technological experiences. This issue was managed through some follow-up questions, which will be discussed in Section 4.5 of the interviews.

The issue of power imbalance takes a different form in the current project than is usually discussed in the literature because all participants from academic administrators are in a higher managerial line than mine. On the other hand, all participants from the academic staff are more experienced as open educators than I am as a novice educator. Therefore, the fear of not sharing “certain information with an insider for fear of being judged” (Merriam et al., 2001, p. 7) did not concern me greatly because I didn’t have the power to affect any of the participants either positively, such as by giving incentives, or negatively, such as asking for obligations. On the contrary, all participants were highly interested once I became concerned about the educational aspects of the projects we worked on together as well as the technical aspects, and they showed their willingness to contribute and share their understandings and experiences.

Since I was aware of the issues of access, intrusiveness, familiarity, rapport, positionality, power, and representation (Mercer, 2007; Merriam et al., 2001; Taylor, 2011) from the beginning of this research, I sought to investigate their existence and minimise their possible drawbacks by being committed to the phenomenographic research design that I will present in the following sections.

This issue of insiderness/outsiderness has been raised in three phenomenographic PhD theses similar to my current one at Lancaster University (Barker, 2021; David, 2020; Varma, 2019). The authors of those PhD theses were conscious of familiarity and power issues specifically because of their close relationship with the research participants. However, the authors showed their awareness of these ethical and quality issues as potential sources of bias and data distortion. Furthermore, they tried to be objective in both the interviews and data analysis by disengaging from the data to avoid biases, have a fresh perspective of the transcripts and avoid complacency. More details of how those concerns of insiderness were addressed in practice will be discussed in Section 4.5 of the interviews.

4.4 Participants

Selecting the participants for this project is profoundly significant. I recruited thirteen participants from AL Quds open university. The selection process was deliberate and critical, ensuring their experiences would vividly illustrate the essence of OEP within their institution. These dedicated practitioners, including educators and academic administrators, were chosen for their embodiment of openness and collaboration. Their extensive involvement in planning, designing, and implementing OEP projects highlights their deep commitment to democratising education and expanding access to higher education. Their diverse perspectives, developed through years of working with OER and innovative educational technologies, can provide invaluable insights into the practical realities and transformative potential of OEP. These collective experiences not only illuminate the challenges and successes of integrating open practices but also underscore the vital role that committed individuals play in driving educational innovation and accessibility. Through their narratives, this research captures the rich, multifaceted dimensions of OEP, offering a deeper understanding of its impact on the broader educational landscape.

The literature on phenomenography suggests the following issues for recruitment, including the number of participants to recruit. First, a research sample of thirteen to twenty participants is a recommended (Cousin, 2008; Trigwell et al., 2000) size for addressing people's experiences of a phenomenon. Second, it is recommended that the purposeful sampling procedure be used to "understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 10) from experienced practitioners. Third, the research sample needs to cover a range of experiences to achieve potential variation (Ashwin, 2006; Cousin, 2008) in how the phenomenon is holistically experienced by practitioners.

Regarding participants from open universities such as the sample of this project, the literature says that practitioners in open universities are more integrated than in many other kinds of universities because they usually work in teams with members from different expertise and backgrounds (Lee, 2020b). For example, instructional designers in open universities show empathy and cohesion while working together, which is "very similar to the interaction setting of an established Community of Practice" (Rapanta & Cantoni, 2014, p. 775). Moreover, they work collaboratively

with other team members, which makes them “an important group in open universities because they are positioned between instructors and students in online HE” (Lee, 2020a, p. 5).

The thirteen participants recruited for this study, categorised into four distinct groups, as shown in Table 4.1, collectively play pivotal roles in promoting openness, particularly OER and OEP, within their institution.

Gender	Pseudonym	Group	Roles	Experiences
3 Males	A2, A4, A7	One	Decision makers are involved in planning and need assessment of projects like OEP.	All participants hold PhD degrees in education with more than fifteen years of teaching and research in open education. All of them participated in both national and international projects in E-learning, OER, and MOOC.
3 Males	A8, A9, A10	Two	Decision-makers from the admission, registration, and examination departments.	One participant holds a PhD degree in education and two practitioners hold a master’s degree in curricula design and development. All participants are involved in implementing openness in admission and registration as well as open assessment practices of OEP in specific.
1 Female 2 Males	E1, E2, E10	Three	Educators are involved in designing and developing educational programs.	All of them hold PhD in different disciplines. They have experience in recently building the international learning program, which is based on OEP in its vision, mission, and practices.
1 Female 3 Males	E5, E6, E7, E8	Four	Educators who practice open pedagogy and open teaching and learning.	All participants are also involved in creating and publishing online OER platforms and collecting and addressing feedback from learners and researchers. All of them hold master’s degrees in different disciplines related to their work in educational pedagogies and technologies.

Table 4.1 Participant's profiles

One group of participants are decision-makers involved in planning and need assessment of projects like OEP. Those practitioners are aware of the broad aims of

implementing OEP projects and the importance of moving beyond the content approach of OER. They are members of the academic council of QOU, which includes all deans from different faculties and the vice president of academic affairs. These kinds of participants are from different educational backgrounds and are working together to achieve OEP aspects through implementing aspects that include access, pedagogy, leadership, and technology to open HE for everyone.

A second group are decision-makers from the admission, registration, and examination departments operationalise openness by integrating it into administrative processes. They facilitate the adoption of open assessment practices, ensure equitable access to educational opportunities, and support evidence-based decision-making.

A third group are educators involved in designing and developing educational programs such as the international learning program, driving curriculum integration and pedagogical innovation. This international programme is exclusively accredited for QOU by the Palestinian Ministry of HE because it is built based on open education in its mission, resources, and practices. Therefore, the roles and experiences of those practitioners are worth deep exploration because they are aware of the phenomenon of OEP and have worked hard to enact a recent project on OEP.

A fourth group are educators who practice open pedagogy and open teaching and learning. Those participants have experience undertaking work with OER and will likely have some emerging interest and engagement with OEP to move forward toward creating collaborative and innovative practices and activities using the open online content of QOU that they have already worked in.

I recruited 13 participants: six participants from academic administrators and seven participants from educators. This could explore the participants' experiences of the different stages of the studied phenomenon as their efforts are focused on achieving the same goal of implementing OEP. Therefore, I believe that the recruitment of both groups is fairly representative because implementing OEP in a university requires those people to work on it. Table 4.1 contains the participants' profiles according to their gender and profession as educators or academic administrators. All participants'

identities are protected using pseudonyms (“E#” for educators and “A#” for academic administrators).

Participants were recruited after I contacted them by invitation email, which includes an attachment of a one-page summary of my research in both Arabic and English. Most participants replied with positive feedback, showing their willingness to participate. Appointments were made for each participant, and they all preferred to have a face-to-face interview at their offices in QOU.

4.5 Interviews

In this project, I undertook interviews. The reason is that interviews are the most commonly used method of data collection in phenomenographic studies (Åkerlind, 2012).

Phenomenographic interviews have these types of characteristics. First, they are designed with minimum, pre-defined questions and details and not well-defined questions as in other qualitative research approaches. This design allows the researcher to explore the participant’s experiences of the studied phenomenon and its aspects as perceived by participants (Bowden, 2005). Second, the phenomenographic interview is supposed to be unstructured and starts with general questions to “tease out how the interviewee conceptualises and experiences” (Cousin, 2008, p. 192) the phenomenon. Third, phenomenographic interviews involve follow-up questions that “encourage further elaboration of the topic or to check the meaning that interviewees associated with keywords that they used” (Åkerlind, 1999, p. 3).

I, therefore, sought to design interviews that would accomplish the exploration of participants’ experiences and understandings of the studied phenomenon by designing and enacting interviews in ways that fit with the phenomenographic research approach. These are described in the subsections below.

4.5.1 Creating an Interview Guide

In order to remember the important topics to cover in exploring the aspects of the OEP phenomenon during the interview, I created the interview guide shown in Table 4.2. The reason for that is that phenomenographic interviews are unstructured, and therefore, there is a need for a strategy to follow up with the discussion during the interview based on the focus of each participant. This idea of an interview guide was proposed by Cope (2004), who states that “In phenomenographic studies, interview guide questions need to be designed to provide data which will help establish critical variation in a group of participants’ ways of experiencing a phenomenon” (p. 12). Moreover, this interview guide was used by three phenomenographic PhD theses, which I refer to when designing the interviews for my current project (Baughan, 2019; Nguyen, 2017; Varma, 2019).

The interview guide was created based on the research aims of this project to explore practitioners’ experiences of OEP aspects during the interview as the following:

- 1- The aspects of the OEP phenomenon (which are presented in Section 3.5 of applying phenomenography to my project).
- 2- The practices or activities that participants tend to focus on for every aspect.
- 3- The research aims relevant to each aspect. Those aims are mainly the three parts of the RQ of this study, namely:
 - Practitioners’ perceptions of OEP (definitions of OEP area in the literature)
 - Practitioners’ experiences (relationship between OER and OEP, and the practitioners’ roles in doing OEP)
 - Variation in practitioners’ perceptions and experiences
- 4- Follow-up questions that could be used based on the flow of the discussion during the interview.

The majority of aspects in the interview guide of this project were adapted from Huang, Tlili, et al. (2020), which is a recent study about OEP aspects. The authors promoted an OEP framework that uses both OEP and OER together as an effective educational solution to overcome challenges revealed by disrupted classes, such as the ones that emerged from the outbreak of the pandemic. This OEP framework was designed mainly to understand and support educators' role in implementing OEP; therefore, some optimisation was made while creating the interview guide in order to suit both educators and academic administrators of the current project. Moreover, some of the OEP aspects of this framework were considered in the interview guide, as well as other aspects from the literature, in order to see if they were raised or not by OEP practitioners and to explore the different ways practitioners perceive and experience each raised aspect.

OEP aspect	Practices	Relevant research aim	Possible Follow-up Questions
Meaning of OEP	<p>List of possible participants <u>focuses of meaning</u>:</p> <p>Content-Centred Practice-Centred Co-create knowledge Learners-focused Educators-focused Admins-focused Community-focused</p>	Perception and understanding of educators and academic administrators.	<p>Based on the participants' <u>focus on meaning</u>, a follow-up question could be asked about the meaning as follows:</p> <p><i>Do you mean that OEP is more (focused)?</i></p> <p><i>What other meaning do you encounter?</i></p> <p><i>Do you always think this way?</i></p> <p><i>What might make you think differently?</i></p>
OER	<p>Content-Centred <u>practices</u>:</p> <p>Creating, re-using, re-mixing, revising, and redistributing.</p>	Educators and academic administrators have experience in content-centered approaches.	<p>Based on the participant <u>focus on practices</u>, a follow-up question could be asked about practices of <u>OER</u>, <u>Open Teaching</u>, <u>Open Learning</u>, <u>Open Assessment</u>, <u>Open Collaboration</u>, and others, as follows:</p>
Open Teaching	<p>Educator allows learners to make connections that can last after the course such as updating a web blog, writing reports as OER on a given topic, or creating new exercises for a specific chapter in an open textbook using references and resources.</p> <p>Educators ask learners to contribute to developing the OER content by searching for new ideas or problems and presenting them during the course.</p> <p>The educator encourages learners to use search engines, such as Google Scholar and Scopus, or interactive social platforms, such as Telegram and</p>	Educators and academic administrators have experience in the practice-centered approach of OEP, such as the educator's role in applying open teaching.	<p><i>I want to make sure I understand this. Can you explain it further?</i></p> <p><i>Can you give me an example?</i></p> <p><i>You mentioned (practice). Is there anything else you do when you apply this?</i></p> <p><i>What other practices do you encounter?</i></p> <p><i>When you say (practice), what are you actually doing?</i></p>

	<p>Instagram.</p> <p>The educator acts as a facilitator, suggesting some references and guiding learners on how to use the search engines.</p>		<p><i>How do you do that?</i></p> <p><i>What was significant about this to you?</i></p>
Open Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educator builds open learning communities where the learners can openly exchange ideas, create discussions, and collaborate on different tasks. - Learners interact actively through using social networks during the learning process, such as - WeChat, and Facebook. - Educator can share questions related to specific course materials, and learners can discuss them to determine specific answers. - Learners learn by exchanging ideas and opinions. Jigsaw classroom pedagogy may be used online by breaking the assignment into numerous parts and assigning each team to a specific task, allowing them to engage with one another via social media and delivering their assignments. 	<p>Educators and academic administrators experience the practice-centered approach of OEP in applying open learning.</p>	<p><i>What motivates you to do this?</i></p> <p><i>What influences your thinking about this?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any other people involved in this process?</i></p> <p><i>How did (learners/educators/admins) respond to that?</i></p> <p><i>Do you always do this?</i></p> <p><i>What challenges do you encounter?</i></p>
Open Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educator allows learners to evaluate one another (peer assessment). - The educator proposes a problem and uses formative assessment and timely feedback by creating an online public learning community in which learners can answer one another freely. 	<p>Educators and academic administrators have experience in the practice-centred approach of OEP, such as open assessment.</p>	

	<p>The educator encourages learners to exchange opinions in order to have a trustful and open learning environment where learners can answer questions and comment to each other freely and safely.</p> <p>Learners create non-disposable assignments from the collected materials of learners and present them as supplementary material to the course with open access. Others will profit from this, and educators and learners will be more likely to reuse or enhance similar assignments in the future.</p> <p>Learners work in teams, and each team can present an open presentation on Zoom where educators, learners and other community members can attend and participate. Record sessions and share them under open license.</p>		
Open Collaboration	<p>Learners work in groups, summarise what they learn from the course, create material, and present their opinions as a team.</p> <p>Learners use online collaborative platforms such as Google Docs and Zoom.</p> <p>Educator builds open communities using social media platforms and blogs.</p> <p>The educator helps learners work in teams to carry out a particular task and exchange ideas and discussions related to this task.</p> <p>Educator motivates learners to share their ideas</p>	Educators and academic administrators have experience in the practice-centred approach of OEP, such as creating an open, collaborative environment.	

	<p>so that all team members may reach a common conclusion.</p> <p>The educator invites other educators and stakeholders to participate in these discussions as well to further assist learners.</p>		
--	--	--	--

Table 4.2: Interview guide for this project

The interview guide aims to apply the strategy of unstructured interviews using follow-up questions. The strategy of follow-up questions was adapted from Åkerlind (1999) who conducted a phenomenographic unstructured interview and stated that “In many cases, the unstructured follow-up questions were more important in eliciting underlying meaning than the pre-determined questions” (p. 3). Therefore, the interview guide was designed not to be used to interrupt participants during the interview but for intervention that aims to focus on experiences mentioned by the participant during the interview.

Referring to Table 4.2 of the interview guide, the follow-up questions were designed to ask for several aspects when they are mentioned during the interview. For example, some of the questions ask for more elaboration and clarification, such as “*Can you tell me more about that?*” or “*When you say (something), what are you actually doing?*”. Other follow-up questions ask for thoughts and emotions such as “*What motivated you to do this?*” and external factors like “*How did other people respond to that?*”. Variation is also included in the follow-up questions such as “*Do you always think this way?*”, “*What might make you think differently?*”. These types of follow-up questions could reveal data that help answer the main RQ of this thesis about participants’ perceptions, understandings, and variation.

Therefore, while creating the interview guide, I tried to include follow-up questions that focus on the important experiences related to aspects of OEP and its practices when they are raised by the participants themselves. I do not expect an individual participant to have experiences with all the OEP aspects and their practices. I expected that a participant would discuss one or two aspects with one or two practices from each aspect. Hence, I listed those aspects and practices in order to interfere with a relevant follow-up question once those are mentioned by the participant. This strategy is more of an engaging strategy than an interrupting one because the elaboration is based on the experiences that were raised by the interviewees themselves, and at the same time, they are relevant to the studied phenomenon of OEP.

In the next section, I will discuss how this interview guide was used to manage the unstructured interview by recognising the key statements during the interview and focusing on them in the follow-up question.

4.5.2 Managing the Interview

The interviews of this project seek to explore the variety of perceptions within two groups of participants about the OEP phenomenon, namely educators and academic administrators. My strategy was to make sure that, from the beginning of the interview, the participants understood that the interview was aimed at exploring their experiences of the OEP phenomenon as well as OER and MOOC. This strategy was applied by mentioning some OEP aspects at the beginning of the interview which could be relevant to the participants' experiences. Using this strategy at the beginning of each interview allowed the participants to elaborate, talking about their experiences, which they believe are highly relevant to the studied phenomenon of OEP.

At the beginning of each interview, I started by asking one initial question, which was, "*Could you please tell me what OEP means to you?*". The answer to this question explored the focus of meaning each participant has for OEP. It allows exploring whether this participant focuses on describing the OEP meaning of content, practices co-creation of knowledge, learners, educators, administrators, community, or something else not mentioned in the interview guide. Based on the participant's focus, which is mentioned in answering the first question. In the second half of the interview, if I found that there were some aspects of OER, open teaching and learning, open assessment, and open collaboration, not mentioned by a participant, I asked another relevant main question to make sure that we explored as many aspects as possible in the interview.

An example of this strategy is the interview with participant A1, who is the dean of admission and examination. At the beginning of the interview, I tried to present some aspects of OEP, such as open pedagogy, open teaching and learning, and open assessment. He immediately started to talk about the examination procedures at QOU in general as an open university. He elaborated by talking about his past experiences

in establishing the examination procedures in the last decade and his current experiences in moving toward more open and flexible assessment practices within open education.

An additional strategy used for managing interviews is to interrupt the participant only when I see that there is a need for more clarification. Otherwise, I kept listening to the participant as recommended for the unstructured format of the phenomenographic interview. This strategy was adapted from Cope (2004), which states that “the aim at all times was to provide opportunities for the interviewees to reveal their experience of the phenomenon as fully as possible without the interviewer introducing any new aspects not previously mentioned by the interviewee.” (Cope, 2004, p. 3). Therefore, my interruption took place by picking a specific point mentioned by the participant, which is usually an aspect of the phenomenon, and asking about one or more follow-up questions from the listed ones in the interview guide in Table 4.2.

An example of this strategy is when educator E3 said that she allowed learners to contribute to the OER of an English language course. I tried to understand more about her experience in terms of both meaning and practice. Therefore, I asked her, “*When you say you allow learners to contribute to the OER, what are you actually doing?*”. I tried to understand the details of the experience and the meanings of this practice for her by continue asking her, “*What was significant about this to you?*” At the end of this part of the interview, I asked her, “*Do you always think this way?*” Also, I focused on her role if this practice of modifying OER by learners is based on clear instructions from her, or she acted as a facilitator, which is one practice of open teaching, listed in the interview guide in Table 4.3. Without this interview guide, I would not be able to identify if the mentioned experience is categorised within OEP and to which aspect this experience is related.

In managing the interviews, I tried to remain focused on the goals of the project and not discuss any ideas from previous interviews. This way, I realised that there are some common perceptions among participants, such as that most participants agreed that a shift in focus is needed for open assessment, but the challenges raised by educators are different from those of academic administrators. Perceptions do not

contradict each other but complement each other. Educators are concerned about learners' culture in opening assessments, and more efforts are needed to prepare our learners for such open assessment practices. On the other hand, academic administrators are concerned about the quality of the learning outcomes from this shift to secure the accreditation of the programme regionally and internationally. Therefore, both experiences complement each other but vary in their dimension of understanding the aspect of open assessment within the studied phenomenon of OEP.

These are some examples of how I managed the interviews as events using the interview guide and some management strategies. In addition, before the beginning of each interview, I did my best to make sure that participants understood and accepted the consent form and the ethical issues. This includes their right to withdraw from the interview at any time during the discussion or at any time later without any reason. Also, I was trying to keep reminding the participants that the discussion was recorded, and I made sure that they were comfortable with that.

All participants accepted the protocol written in the participant information sheet before the interview started. The average time for interviews in this study is between 30-40 minutes totalling 11 hours and 36 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Arabic language which is the mother language of the interviewees where they can elaborate comfortably in describing their perceptions and experiences of the studied phenomenon.

I was also trying to address the insiderness issue from the beginning of the warm-up discussion of each interview. Therefore, I decided to start talking about my shift in focus from technical to education and about the PhD programme in general and my thesis in specific. I tried also to address insiderness during the whole process of data collection.

4.6 Data Analysis

This section presents the iterative stages of analysing the transcripts and the process of constructing the phenomenographic findings. Data analysis for my

phenomenographic project started by setting up a digital analysis environment to manage the research data, the analysis process, and the supporting documents. The process of analysis started by iteratively reading through the transcripts and interrogating the data by annotating, coding, sorting, grouping, articulating, and contrasting until the categories of description are stabilised in terms of presenting the different ways of perceiving and experiencing OEP by the research participants.

There is no one official way of doing data analysis in phenomenography. By exploring a range of literature sources, including Marton (1986); Prosser et al. (1994), Bowden and Walsh (2000); and Åkerlind (2012), it can be seen that the phenomenographic analysis aims to explore collective experiences and understandings. However, studies and authors differ in their approaches to data interpretation. Looking at these examples, I made my own assessment of the potential for using each approach in my own project. For example, Marton's strategy of constructing pools of meaning from interview transcripts is initially beneficial but poses challenges in shifting focus towards holistic understandings later in the process. Conversely, Bowden's method suggests analysing entire transcripts from the start, which proves difficult when returning to specific quotes as evidence, especially with diverse participant groups. I found Akerlind's recommendation to explore the collective range of meanings within sample groups rather than individually a more suitable approach to my study. Additionally, Akerlind emphasises establishing a structural relationship between categories post-analysis, which I found suitable after I became familiar with the data. In addition, I employed her recommendation of creating mind maps for each transcript, noting structural and referential aspects, which aids in uncovering shared meanings across transcripts and facilitates comprehensive analysis.

The application of principles from the literature and practical insights from Cutajar (2014) and Nguyen (2017) PhD thesis also guided my data analysis and inspired me to try to ensure a comprehensive exploration of collective understandings of OEP. Specifically, Cutajar's detailed exploration and focus on structural relationships informed my decisions regarding the progression and organisation of data analysis. Furthermore, Nguyen's systematic approach offered a structured way for data organisation and analysis, demonstrating the examination of variations in participants'

experiences. Throughout the process, I attempted to maintain an open-minded perspective, prioritise collective experiences over individual perspectives, and iteratively refine the analysis to achieve a holistic understanding of OEP. Despite my awareness of variations in approach, the ultimate objective remained consistent: to elucidate the diverse ways in which participants perceive and experience OEP, contributing to the phenomenographic findings of the study.

In summary, my process of analysis started by iteratively reading through the transcripts and interrogating the data by annotating, coding, sorting, grouping, articulating, and contrasting until the categories of description were stabilised in terms of presenting the different ways of perceiving and experiencing OEP by the research participants. The final stage of analysis was to construct the outcome space, which included the categories of description and the dimensions of variation that emerged from the participants' focus on OEP. The process of creating the data analysis environment, interrogating data, exploring the collective perceptions, and constructing the outcome space is discussed further in the following sub-sections.

4.6.1 Creating the data analysis environment

4.6.1.1 Organizing transcripts

My goal in organising the transcripts was twofold: first, to ensure accessibility, making it easy to locate and reference them during each iteration of analysis, and second, to facilitate clear differentiation between transcripts across different phases of analysis. I recognised the need to revisit these transcripts multiple times throughout various stages of analysis, and thus, I prioritised a way that would allow for efficient retrieval and comparison.

After each interview and when the audio file was checked for clarity, I carefully translated each audio file of every interview by transcribing what I listened to from Arabic voice to English text in a Microsoft Word file. As I still remember the conversation, I made sure to carefully translate and transcribe the files myself within 24 hours of each interview. When all the interviews were transcribed into 15 text files in English, I used a naming convention for the text files in a way that indicates

each participant's type, number, and group based on participants' profiles in Table 4.1. For example, the file name A2-G1 refers to the data of the second interviewee from the first group of academic administrators, and the file name E5-G4 refers to the data of the fifth interviewee from the fourth group of educators, and so on.

While phenomenography does not track individual participants or analyse data based on individual responses (Åkerlind, 2012), it is crucial to recognise that initially, the data is organised per participant. Since interviews were conducted individually, the analysis began by examining each transcript individually. As the analysis progressed through subsequent iterations, the focus shifted towards synthesising collective perspectives and identifying broader patterns across all participants. This iterative process allowed for a gradual evolution of the analysis, moving from individual experiences towards a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon as a whole.

There is another reason for tracking individual transcripts is to find a manageable way to refer easily to an individual transcript for adding quotes that support the explanation of the categories of description so that the quotes represent evidence in the transcripts that at least some of the interviewees perceive the studied phenomenon in that way. On the other hand, descriptions or focuses with minimum supporting excerpts from the text could be removed during the refinement process. Adding to this, staying connected as a researcher with the individual transcript from the beginning of the analysis process to the end is important as a protective measure against abstraction in the final analysis stages.

4.6.1.2 Incorporating essential resources for analysis

Consolidating useful resources in a centralised location during the analysis can be instrumental in maintaining a structured approach and keeping track of essential steps. By having access to relevant materials in one place, I can easily reference theoretical aspects, which aids in contextualising emerging findings within the broader theoretical basis of OEP. This practice enables me to promptly identify connections between empirical data and established theoretical perspectives,

facilitating a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, having resources readily available streamlines the analysis process and ensures consistency in considering various theoretical perspectives throughout the analysis journey. The process of phenomenographic analysis is non-linear and often involves iterative cycles, with occasional time gaps between iterations. To effectively manage and explore the data in my study, I have incorporated several important resources into NVivo, which serves as a Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS). These resources include the components that were previously established in the previous sections, such as the RQ, the conceptual framework, the interview guide, and the aspects related to the OEP phenomenon. Additionally, I have integrated relevant literature from previous phenomenographic PhD theses (Cutajar, 2014; Nguyen, 2017; Rotar, 2021) and reference articles on data analysis by early adopters of the phenomenographic approach, such as Marton, Åkerlind, Trigwell, Sälö, and Bowden.

Once I imported all the transcripts and relevant resources into NVivo, I created memos and descriptions for each resource. Notably, I maintained a project diary memo where I record timely project notes, including reflections on my progress and thoughts on future steps. This helped maintain a systematic line of thought throughout the analysis cycles. I also established links between each memo and its corresponding resource. For example, the memo containing key statements from the transcript of participant A7-G1 is linked to the original transcript file, which helped group and differentiate participants according to their perceptions.

In managing the participants' transcripts, I attributed everyone based on the criteria outlined in section 4.4. This ensures that different groups, such as administrators and educators, are recognised for their distinct perceptions of the studied phenomenon. It is important for the analysis environment to support such variation in perceiving the phenomenon, as it is a key aspect of the analysis process given the diversity of perceptions and their theoretical grounding to different aspects of the phenomenon. As discussed earlier, while the ultimate goal of the analysis is to derive collective perspectives, it's essential to begin with individual data sets. These individual transcripts serve as the foundation for the analysis, allowing for a thorough examination of each participant's perspectives and experiences. Careful organisation

of this initial data ensures that as the analysis progresses, holistic viewpoints can be synthesised from individual contributions. This systematic arrangement is crucial for verifying that the emerging collective perspectives are not merely aggregations of individual viewpoints but genuine representations of the broader phenomenon of interest. Additionally, maintaining easy access to individual transcripts facilitates the retrieval of specific evidence or quotations during later stages of analysis, ensuring the integrity and accuracy of the findings.

4.6.2 Interrogating data

4.6.2.1 Annotating and coding

After setting the data analysis environment and ensuring the availability of the essential resources, the analysis process started with a careful reading of the transcripts. The objective was to develop familiarity with the participants' experiences and understandings of the OEP phenomenon. During the initial cycle of transcript reading, I employed a systematic annotation approach. I carefully examined each transcript and recorded the meaningful expressions from the participants alongside the corresponding aspects of OEP being experienced. This process resulted in the creation of 15 annotation files, including my interpretations of individual understandings of OEP and the diverse ways in which it manifests.

These interpretations initially focused on new aspects of OEP that emerged through the participant's accounts, such as open scholarship, open data, open science, open-source software, open Artificial Intelligence (AI), and open platforms that support sharing of quantifiable user experiences. I highlighted the important parts of the transcripts, including the new expressions surpassing the existing literature, as significant statements. Moreover, the first iteration of the analysis shed light on participants' varying levels of awareness and understanding of OEP. Some participants demonstrated familiarity with advanced modes of experiencing OEP, such as interconnected open platforms and sharing AR/VR learning environments, while others confined their understanding solely to content-related aspects, such as OER and MOOC creation. Consequently, the annotation cycle facilitated the

mapping of participants' unique understandings and experiences about the predetermined OEP aspects. This mapping process also laid the groundwork for subsequent stages of analysis, allowing for the grouping of participants who share similar perceptions or levels of experience with the phenomenon because phenomenography focuses on “the range of meanings within a sample group, as a group, not the range of meanings for each individual within the group” (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 117).

The second iteration of the analysis consists of reading and examining both the transcripts and the previously written annotations, with the aim of identifying and aggregating statements about the participants' understandings and experiences of OEP. This process entailed coding, which differs from annotation as it involves grouping segments with similar meanings across the transcripts under one code. Each code was carefully defined and accompanied by a collection of relevant quotations, which were selected based on recognisable patterns and recurring meanings across all transcripts. The codes represented a diverse range of meanings in the participants' perceptions of their understandings and experiences of OEP within specific groups. For example, course delivery is one of the common aspects of OEP addressed by most participants, and therefore, a code is created for this aspect. All significant statements from participants related to course delivery are included under this code.

Various types of codes were created to capture different aspects of the data. Some codes were descriptive, capturing participants' perceptions of specific aspects of OEP. For example, when participants describe learners' agency, there are no hierarchical-related aspects to it. Other codes were structural, providing a hierarchy of conceptual structure to understand the various ways in which OEP is experienced and understood. For example, when the participants talk about OER, it includes inner aspects such as course design, course delivery, and technology used. These aspects are also collected under the code OER because they all contribute to the overall experience of OER. Additionally, interpretive codes were used to uncover underlying meanings and messages within participants' experiences. An example of such codes includes those where participants talk about their roles and the roles of others in engaging practitioners. The coding process was iterative in nature, involving periodic

reorganisation and restructuring of the codes to enhance clarity and coherence. For example, statements that described content were included under OER, but those that described the process of creating such content were included under the roles of practitioners. Furthermore, "new codes" or "reflexive codes" were created to accommodate quotations that emerged as new themes during the analysis, such as when the participants talked about the challenges they faced within OEP. All coding procedures were conducted within the NVivo software, which served as the designated data analysis environment.

4.6.2.2 Uncovering meanings and relationships

During the second iteration of analysis, a comprehensive collection of 43 codes was developed, each representing a distinct set of statements sharing a common understanding or similar experience of OEP among specific groups of participants. This open coding process was subsequently followed by a detailed revision and refinement phase, aligning each code with the research objectives aimed at exploring the relationship between the OEP phenomenon and its practitioners. An example of the initial coding structure is presented in Figure 4.1.

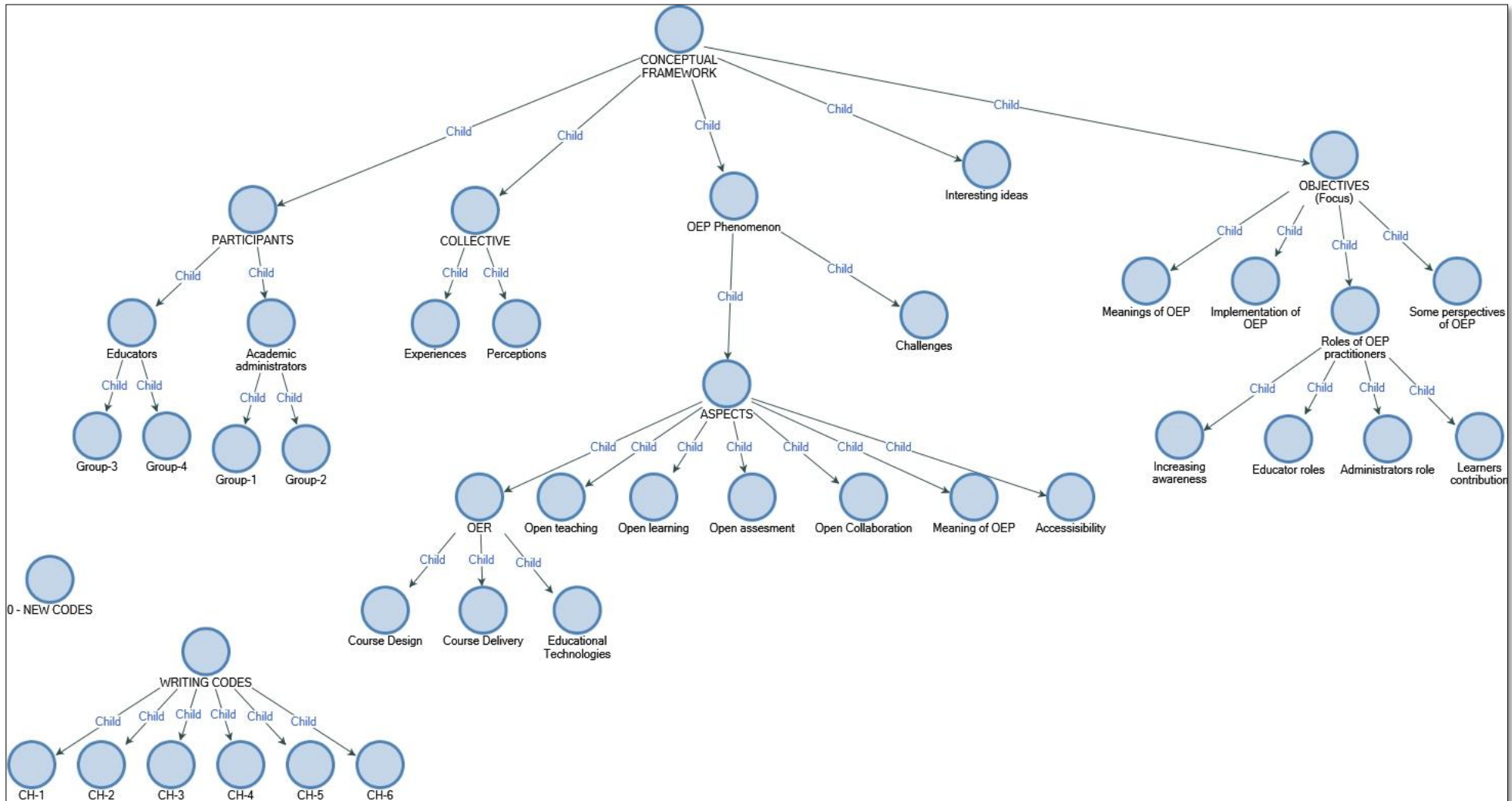


Figure 4.1: Initial coding

The third iteration of analysis involved an in-depth examination of the transcripts alongside the relevant codes, with a particular focus on uncovering the underlying meanings within each code and exploring the connections between codes. Some codes demonstrated practitioners' conceptualisations of OEP, while others provided detailed descriptions of their experiences in implementing OEP. Notably, a relationship emerged between practitioners' awareness of OEP and the broadness of their experiences across different aspects. For example, those who perceived OEP simply within content-related dimensions, such as creating and modifying OER, tended to practice OEP accordingly and within learners of a classroom. In contrast, practitioners who adopted a broader understanding of OEP as including open practices beyond content, such as sharing experiences and developing open pedagogies, demonstrated a more advanced level of engagement reflective of their comprehensive understanding.

Guided by these observations, the third iteration of the analysis required a detailed process of revision and refinement, leading to a reduction in the number of codes to 17. These codes condensed the diverse understandings of OEP and the varied experiences of its aspects, as described by the participating practitioners of OEP.

4.6.2.3 Grouping, structuring, and querying

At the beginning of the fourth iteration of data interrogation, attention was directed toward grouping similar perceptions and structuring them based on the explored aspects of OEP. Shifting the focus from individual transcripts to a more holistic approach presented challenges during this stage of analysis. Each stage required careful consideration to ensure that every code contained a sufficient number of statements from a diverse range of participants while avoiding an over-reliance on a small subset of individuals. Examples of codes that did not meet this criterion and are mentioned by individuals only are cheating in open assessment implementation and financial resources for implementing OEP. Each of these codes was mentioned only by one participant, and therefore, they are discarded from the holistic experience. Navigating through the interconnectedness of codes and transcripts became increasingly complex as codes expanded across multiple transcripts and vice versa. Despite encountering difficulties along the iterative process, most of the

necessary components to construct descriptive categories gradually became available.

During the fourth iteration of data interrogation, NVivo's mapping and querying tools proved valuable in visualising the relationships between codes and exploring commonalities and differences in participants' perceptions. Utilising the mind map tool facilitated the visualisation of code structuring ideas, while the project map tool facilitated the exploration of the connections between various components within the data analysis environment, such as linked memos and documents associated with each code. Consequently, the analytical focus shifted from individual transcripts to groups of participants. Establishing a cohesive code structure was prioritised, wherein each code consisted of statements from a group of participants describing a particular aspect of the OEP phenomenon in a similar manner. Below are some examples of visualisation. Figure 4.2 presents the shared codes among 7 participants, and in Figure 4.3, a mind map is presented for codes related to an individual participant A10.

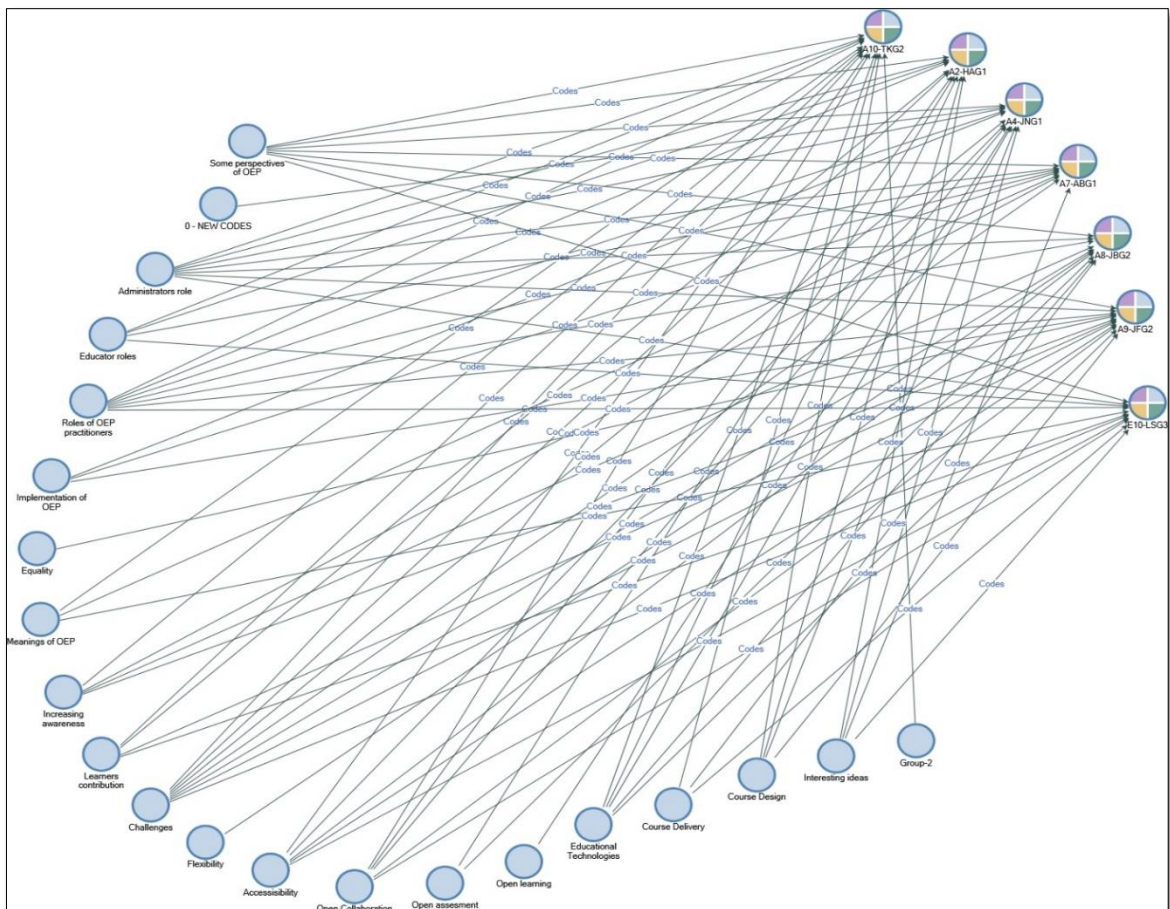


Figure 4.2: Example of commonalities of codes among 7 participants

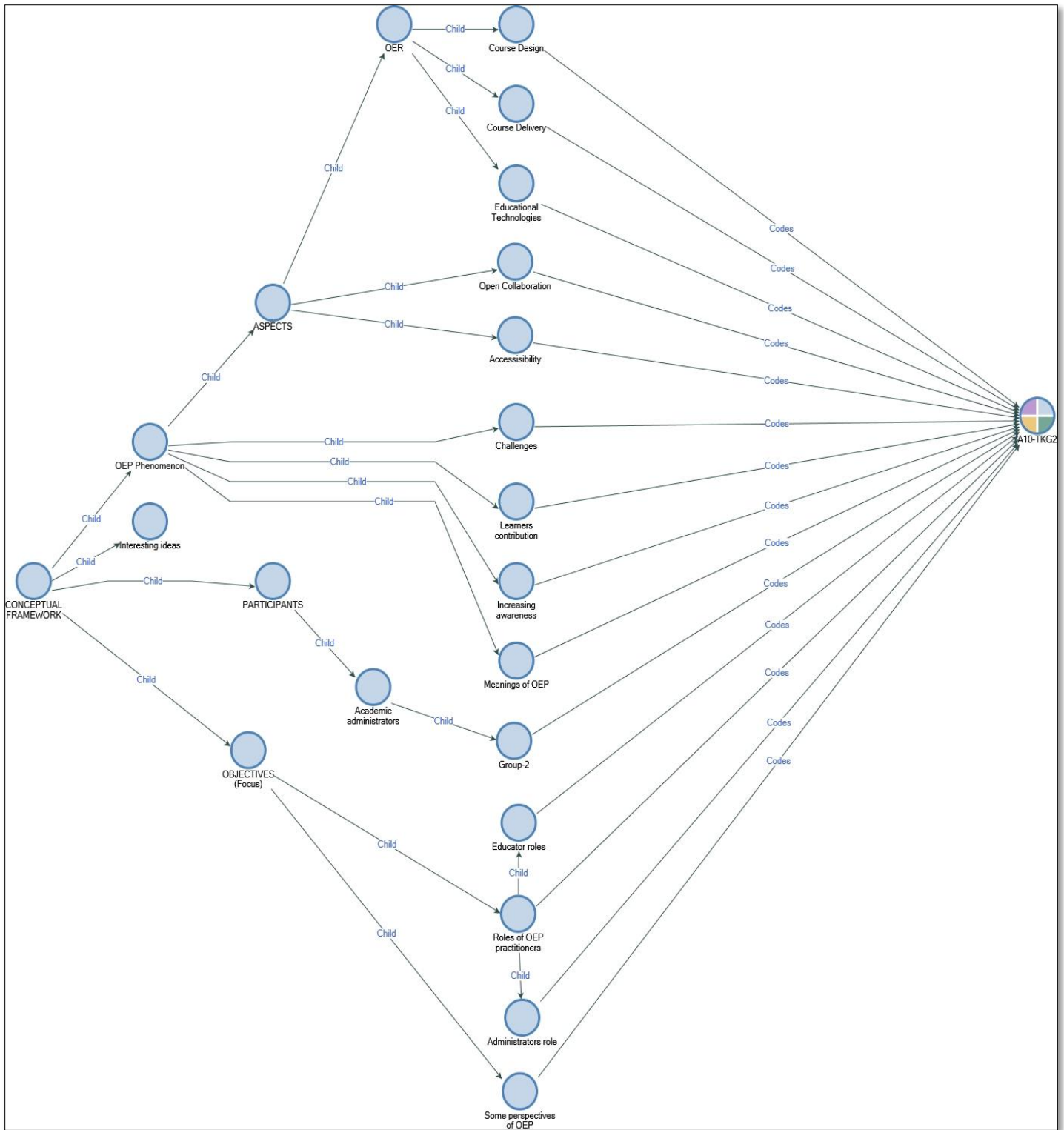


Figure 4.3: Example of mind map of codes related to participant A10

In the fifth iteration of data interrogating, a well-defined set of 17 codes, representing their relationships to the OEP phenomenon, was organised within the framework matrix in NVivo. This matrix encompassed all codes and participant statements,

enabling the examination of relevant statements under each code to initiate the categorisation of similar codes based on their perceptions of the OEP phenomenon. Through this process, several categories emerged as distinct ways of perceiving OEP among different participant groups. Figure 4.4 represents the matrix framework where all participants are listed across all codes, to be filled with relevant statements from each participant and then looking for holistic accounts per code.

To facilitate further categorisation and comparison of codes and statements in constructing descriptive categories, the framework matrix was exported to Microsoft Excel, as shown in Figure 4.4. Early categories of description related to perceiving and experiencing OEP were temporarily labelled as “Meaning of OEP”, “Implementation of OEP”, and “Roles of OEP Practitioners”. However, during this stage, I was conscious of premature judgment, and I was aware to consider collective structural awareness across common codes.

	A	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
1		F : Meanings of OEP	G : OER	H : Course Design	I: Educational Technologies	J : Open assessment	K: Open Collaboration	L : Open learning	M : Open teaching	N : Challenges	O : Increasing awareness	P : Learners contribution	Q : 0 - NEW CODES	R : COLLECTIVE	S : Ways of experiencing OEP	T : Ways of perceiving their own roles	U : Interesting ideas	V : Implementation of OEP	W : Equality	X : OEP Phenomenon	Y : ASPECTS	Z
2	1 : A2-HAG1																					
3	2 : A4-JNG1																					
4	3 : A7-ABG1																					
5	4 : A10-TKG2																					
6	5 : A8-JBG2																					
7	6 : A9-JFG2																					
8	7 : E2-AKG3																					
9	8 : E1-RNG3G4																					
10	9 : E10-LSG3																					
11	10 : E5-KDG4																					
12	11 : E6-ABG4																					
13	12 : E7-KRG4																					
14	13 : E8-YSG4																					

Figure 4.4: Structure of the matrix framework, including participants and codes

4.6.3 Exploring the collective perceptions

The risk at this stage was the potential to lose sight of the specific objectives of the phenomenographic data analysis process due to an excessive focus on details. As cautioned by Åkerlind et al. (2005), an overly strong emphasis on complex details can lead to a deviation from the main path of analysis. Phenomenography, in its methodology, does not involve coding in the traditional sense of content analysis as described by Marton (1986). However, it incorporates the practice of annotating the generated data, as highlighted by Åkerlind (2005b). Therefore, in the sixth iteration, I realigned my focus by revisiting the RQ, the conceptual framework, and the interview guide, which includes relevant aspects of the OEP phenomenon. The current focus is to diligently understand the collective participants' meanings and intentional attitudes towards OEP, looking beyond their specific words with an open-minded approach. This effort aims to uncover deeper perspectives and beliefs expressed by the participants, leading to a collective and nuanced analysis of their OEP experiences.

During the construction of categories of description, several key considerations were taken into account. Firstly, it was recognised that an emerging category may not apply to all transcripts, and conversely, a specific transcript may not align with all categories (Åkerlind et al., 2005). Each category represents a holistic perspective of how a particular group of participants perceives the OEP phenomenon at a given time, supported by relevant quotations as evidence.

Secondly, it was crucial to establish structural relationships among the emerging categories to form an inclusive set. This ensured that the final category of description encompassed and built upon the preceding categories in terms of perceiving OEP.

Thirdly, the stabilisation of categories resulted in a concise and logically structured set, drawing from both the data itself and the researcher's interpretation. This process, as highlighted by Åkerlind (2005c), contributed to the establishment of a coherent set of categories of description.

Fourthly, as a researcher, it is important to acknowledge that access for the researcher is limited to participants' accounts rather than the actual person-phenomenon relationship (Ashwin, 2006; Cutajar, 2014; Säljö, 1997). This perspective aligns with the bracketing of pre-suppositions and focuses on mapping a comprehensive description of the relationship between participants' accounts and the OEP phenomenon, as discussed further in Section 4.7 of the research quality.

The stabilised categories of descriptions embody structural and referential relationships and form a theme of expanding awareness. The structural relationship directly addresses the first part of the RQ, which explores how practitioners perceive the OEP phenomenon. The second part of the RQ delves into what practitioners perceive within each category and across all categories, reflecting the referential relationship. Articulating how the phenomenon is perceived, what practitioners perceive, and the dimensions in which those perceptions vary, both structurally and referentially, are captured within the outcome space.

4.6.4 Constructing the outcome space

In the literature of phenomenography and previous phenomenographic PhD theses, it became clear to me that there is no single prescribed way to present an outcome space. However, the majority of outcome spaces typically consist of two main components: categories of description and dimensions of variation. In this research, the final version of the categories of description captures the distinct understandings and perceptions that emerged from the data analysis process. The categories of description which emerged from the data analysis process described above are presented in an outcome space in Chapter 5, Figure 5.1. This outcome space consists of four categories that describe OEP holistically, as it is perceived by the research participants, and in which categories are organised based on their inclusiveness in perceiving the phenomenon of OEP.

Throughout the data interrogation and articulation of collective perceptions, I aimed to thoroughly understand the meanings of each category, the relationships between categories, and the aspects that emerged across all categories, along with the

dimensions in which they varied. Thirteen aspects were identified across the categories of description, and their presence and changes were observed as the focus shifted from one category to another. These aspects, along with their variations across the categories, form the dimensions of variation. They illustrate the relationships and variations among the categories, providing insights into the differences between categories and the varying perceptions of practitioners across these dimensions.

It is important to note that the categories of description in this research form an inclusive and hierarchical outcome space, where “more sophisticated conceptions will logically include the lower ones” (Laurillard, 2002, p. 30). They do not represent a developmental progression where one perception is considered better or worse than another (Nguyen, 2017). The categories of description, along with the list of aspects and their changes across categories, form the initial version of the outcome space.

The iterative process of reviewing and refining the components of the outcome space is similar to constructing a two-dimensional matrix of perceptions. Each element within the matrix is interconnected and varies in its level of awareness horizontally from lower to higher categories. Vertically, the matrix demonstrates the referential aspects and how their level of awareness varies within each category and across all aspects. This iterative refinement process allows for a comprehensive and nuanced representation of the relationships and variations within the outcome space.

4.7 Research quality

In a phenomenographic study such as mine, the criteria for evaluating the research quality are mainly concerned with trustworthiness, which includes three types of credibility related to content, research method, and communication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is important for phenomenographic research because it supports the research outcome and “makes the research have an impact in terms of being able to effect change in the original research setting, the transformation of those participating in the research, as well as having the potential to contribute to a broader knowledge base” (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 13). Trustworthiness adds rigour to

research when applied to the entire research process, which involves research design and context (Collier-Reed et al., 2009). This section discusses the meaning of each criterion, and the subsequent sub-sections then discuss how those criteria were considered throughout this project.

Credibility is described in the literature in terms of *content-related credibility*, *research method credibility*, and *communicative credibility*. Applying those measures to phenomenographic study ensures “that the outcome of phenomenographic research can be taken seriously” (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 7). The three credibility criteria will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

Therefore, this project sought to achieve trustworthiness by considering the criterion of credibility, which is recommended by Collier-Reed et al. (2009). How those criteria were considered and applied will be presented in the sub-sections below.

4.7.1 Content-related credibility

Content-related credibility is a quality measure that concerns the negative effect of a researcher’s *familiarity* and *understanding* of the phenomenon under investigation. This issue is important to consider in both interviews and data analysis because phenomenography seeks to explore “other’s way of experiencing a phenomenon, which may turn out not to be related at all to the scientific (or other) ways of understanding it.” (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 8).

Therefore, Collier-Reed et al. (2009) stress that this issue of content-related credibility can be addressed in two ways. First, during interviews, phenomenographic researchers should allow for an *open understanding* of different ways of experiencing the phenomenon rather than being leading experts on the phenomenon under investigation. Second, in data analysis, researchers should bracket their presuppositions to avoid biases that could arise from the researcher’s familiarity with the studied phenomenon (Ashwin, 2009; Collier-Reed et al., 2009).

In this project, I tried to meet the two criteria of content-related credibility in two ways:

First, for interviews, open understanding is considered through talking broadly with participants about the project at the start of the interview. During the interview, I tried to minimise interrupting participants to freely express their perceptions and experiences without being constrained. Moreover, I used follow-up questions in a way that prompted the participants to provide more information when they talked about issues they raised during the interview that seemed pertinent to the research topic.

Second, for data analysis, I tried to disengage from the data to avoid complacency and data distortion, as well as to have a fresh perspective of the transcripts. Therefore, I bracketed my preconceived ideas and perceptions of the studied phenomenon, which came from my own experiences or the literature on OEP, in order to avoid bias in forming the categories of descriptions

In addressing content-related credibility throughout the project, I sought to be open in looking for different ways of experiencing the phenomenon in order to reveal the variations in what is already known about the phenomenon or if there are new different ways of perceiving it by the research participants.

4.7.2 Research method credibility

The credibility of the research method looks at how the research aims match its design and conduct. This criterion concerns the research sample composition, the interview context, structure, and content, as well as the researcher's attitude towards data analysis (Collier-Reed et al., 2009). Research method credibility is important to consider in order to ensure that the full extent of variation in ways of perceiving and experiencing the studied phenomenon is considered.

Collier-Reed et al. (2009) describe how to accomplish the criterion of research method credibility. The authors recommend that the researcher needs to ensure that the participants' sample is pertinent to inform the research question of the studied phenomenon. The authors also stress that the interviews need to be unstructured in order to ensure that the "content of the interviews is richly reported" (p. 8). Moreover,

the existence of a shared experience of the studied phenomenon most likely establishes “a joint definition of what is being talked about” (p. 8). This ensures the credibility of the results of the analysis. Finally, the authors state that research method credibility requires researchers to have an open and comprehensive attitude towards analysis in order to reveal meanings from the collected data by keeping a sense of the whole while focusing on the particular.

In my project, the credibility of the research method is applied to sample composition, interviews, and data analysis in the following ways:

First, recruiting participants from different disciplines within educators and academic administrators as shown in Table 4.1 of the participants’ profile. This diversity of the research sample aims at addressing the full extent of the variations in experiencing the phenomenon, as well as to quote some of the significant statements revealed by participants.

Second, regarding the unstructured interviews, I managed the interviews in three ways. First, I mentioned some broad aspects of the phenomenon and allowed the participants to elaborate in describing their experiences, which they believe are highly relevant to the studied phenomenon. Second, minimal interruption of participants with a follow-up question for more clarification. Third, be objective and avoid discussing any aspect from previous interviews or the literature rather than the ones raised by the participant during the interview.

Third, in data analysis, I aimed to form the categories of description in open-minded by looking at commonalities and differences in the range of meanings revealed from participants’ perceptions. This might result in obtaining “rich, meaningful data from which credible categories of description can be constituted during analysis.” (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 8).

4.7.3 Communicative credibility

This criterion means that the outcome space of a phenomenography needs to be discussed with a wider community of interest and not through member-checking of

individuals. Collier-Reed et al. (2009) recommend that this criterion can be met in two ways.

First, through internal communicative credibility, the findings of the study are represented and discussed with some of the research participants. This is important because it “allows the research community to recognise and judge for themselves the credibility and legitimacy of the researcher’s interpretation of the results” (p. 9).

Second, through external communicative credibility, the findings of the study are represented and discussed with other researchers of interest in the studied phenomenon, either by approaching them directly or through a conference or workshop. External communicative credibility is important because it ensures that the researchers can argue their interpretations with the actors from the outside world and allows for auditing the study as a whole in an open way (Åkerlind, 2005c; Collier-Reed et al., 2009).

The approach of individual validates the outcome space, such as member-checking is “inherently problematic in a phenomenographic study and runs counter to its methodological underpinning” (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 9; Nguyen, 2017). Therefore, both communicative credibility approaches are suitable for phenomenographic studies because the categories of description represent the experiences of all participants and not the individual experiences that could not be recognised by them.

In this study, both approaches will be applied by presenting the outcome space to a representative sample of educators and academic administrators, as well as two researchers with similar interests who are “able to recognise the legitimacy of the interpretation made of the data” (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 9).

In summary, one implication for my study is to ensure the trustworthiness of the research by applying the mentioned quality criteria throughout the study, which is more difficult in phenomenography than other approaches, but “this will inevitably take the results further than the formal endpoint of phenomenography” (Collier-Reed et al., 2009, p. 12) if addressed deeply by the researcher. In this chapter, I discuss how

I have worked on strengthening the trustworthiness of my project by addressing insiderness and quality concerns. I will return to consider research quality again in the conclusion chapter of this thesis to summarise quality concerns and implications throughout the project.

4.8 Ethics

To conduct an ethical study, I followed an institutional procedure of research ethics from Lancaster University, the research site, and the participants which will be discussed in this section. Before discussing the formal institutional procedures ethics, it is crucial to shed light on my principles of ethical conduct related to insiderness and quality concerns.

4.8.1 Ethical principles

Being an insider researcher facilitated the process of acquiring permission at the research site to conduct my research and recruit participants as well. However, the most challenging issue for me was to set a formal relationship with participants, at least during the research interval, and to shift their minds from focusing only on technology, as they knew my technological background, to focusing on all aspects, including educational ones. Technology aspects do need to be discussed, but they cannot be the only aspects considered important in the discussion. This was a difficult issue to balance, and therefore, it was carefully conducted.

This issue of insiderness became even harder with the unstructured interview which is adopted in the current phenomenographic study. The process of the interview could be easier if the phenomenon under investigation is addressed by an educator without a technological background. However, from an ethical perspective, I keep focusing on the recommendations that the findings of my research must be transparent and accurately presented, and I must avoid misrepresentation of experiences. Therefore, as I discussed in Section 4.3 of the insider researcher, there are no ethical constraints relating to power imbalances with participants, but there is a relationship between me and the participants while working together on some OEP

and OER projects. I therefore sought to talk broadly about my research aims before the interview, which concern both their technological and educational experiences of OEP through mentioning some of the OEP aspects, and I kept reminding the participants that I am concerned about all their experiences of OEP whether they are educational, managerial, technological, or any other related experiences to the OEP phenomenon.

I made sure to be aware of some ethical constraints from the beginning of my project, through the interview process, and in data analysis as the following:

First, as this project is guided by a phenomenographic approach, I decided not to embed myself in the researched practitioners' culture in order to avoid biases that could arise from taking things for granted because of *familiarity*, *rapport*, and *intrusiveness*.

Second, while recruiting participants and during the interview, I engaged with the research participants by presenting my *position* as an educational researcher who aims to explore their different experiences of the studied phenomenon. This was important to minimize the negative effect of the prior shared experiences between us while I was working as an IT engineer.

Third, during the analysis, I tried to disengage from the data and ensure trustworthiness as I discussed in the previous section of the research quality, to avoid complacency and data distortion, as well as to have a fresh perspective of the transcripts. As with any other qualitative research, I followed some procedural ethical guidelines which are presented at the end of this section.

4.8.2 Formal ethical approval

As the type of this qualitative research includes direct involvement by human subjects through interviewing people, ethical issues arise and need consideration. Before conducting interviews, I follow the ethical approval procedures and guidelines declared by Lancaster University, which include the following:

First, submitting the ethics application form to the Educational Research Department at Lancaster University through my PhD supervisor. In this form, I identified all ethical concerns and provided all supporting documents, such as participant information sheets and consent forms.

Second, the ethics committee of the Educational Research Department at Lancaster University approved my ethical application form, based on the identified risk of the study.

Third, before each interview, every participant was informed about any potential ethical or discomfort issues, such as audio recording of the interview, frustration or upset feelings. Participants were reminded that they don't have to divulge anything they do not wish to, that they can take a break from the interview, or that they can withdraw without any repercussions.

Finally, all participants were informed that their identity be protected by using pseudonyms to address anonymity. At this stage, I discussed with each participant the aims of this project and the reason for approaching the participant. All participants showed interest in participating in this project and they were comfortable to participate. Moreover, a form was signed by every participant which represents an agreement called the consent form. In this form, the participant is informed that all responses will be recorded and will be kept confidential and anonymous.

4.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the research design, including the methodological approach, data analysis process, quality criteria, and ethical considerations employed by participants from QOU in the investigation of the OEP phenomenon. The chapter began by contextualising the study within the research site of QOU and its commitment to openness in education, emphasising the institution's history, mission, and emphasis on OEP and OER. The subsequent discussion on insider research illuminated the advantages and challenges

associated with conducting the research as an insider at QOU, addressing concerns of bias and power dynamics while leveraging insider status for access and rapport.

The recruitment process targeted a diverse group of participants involved in various OEP projects, ensuring a rich pool of insights and perspectives. Phenomenographic interviews conducted in Arabic facilitated in-depth exploration of participants' experiences with OEP, while the iterative data analysis process ensured a systematic and nuanced understanding of the data. I focused on quality criteria, including content-related credibility, research method credibility, and communicative credibility, underscoring the commitment to rigour and trustworthiness in the research outcomes. Finally, I discuss the ethical principles that guided every stage of the research process, from obtaining institutional approval to ensuring participant consent and protection. By adhering to these principles and methodological considerations, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights to the field of open education in general and OEP in specific while upholding the highest standards of research integrity and ethical conduct.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the outcome of the project designed in Chapter 4, as well as the results of the data analysis process presented within the same chapter. It is divided into six main sections, alongside an introduction and a conclusion. In section 5.2, the four categories of description will be presented. This will be followed by the presentation of the outcome space in subsection 5.2.1.

The subsequent four sections, from 5.3 to 5.6, will discuss the individual categories of description. Each of these sections will comprehensively cover the category's meaning, structure of awareness, dimensions of variation, and a summary table. These categories of description are presented systematically in alignment with a particular order of the analysis, allowing for the identification of commonalities and variations in the perception of OEP. It is worth noting that each category serves as a potential building block within the overarching structure of the outcome space. Section 5.7 will present a summary of the findings in a comprehensive table. The conclusion will review the main ideas presented in this chapter. The relationships between the categories of description will not be discussed within this chapter but instead in Chapter 6 because these relationships represent a core contribution of this project to the literature.

5.2 Research findings

This project asks the following research question:

What are the qualitative variations in the perceptions of educators and academic administrators of Open Educational Practices in an open university?

The analysis process in this research unveiled four categories of description, which represent the qualitatively different ways in which the phenomenon of OEP is

perceived by the research participants. The four categories of description show that educators and academic administrators perceive the OEP phenomenon as follows:

1. Recontextualizing open resources and methods.
2. Collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities.
3. Empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness.
4. Engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences

5.2.1 Outcome space

The outcome space of this project is presented in Figure 5.1. It encompasses four inclusive categories of description; each represents a categorisation of perception that is more complex and comprehensive than the preceding categories. This progression in complexity and comprehensiveness occurs because each category captures a deeper and more nuanced way of experiencing or understanding the phenomenon being studied. As we move from each category to the next in the outcome space, increasingly sophisticated aspects of how participants perceive and make sense of the phenomenon are identified. In this context, the higher categories, culminating in Category 4, not only encompass the aspects covered in the earlier categories but also incorporate additional layers of meaning, detail, and complexity. Each category builds upon the previous ones, refining and expanding the understanding of the phenomenon. The categories of description represent a hierarchy of qualitative variations, with each higher category offering a richer and more comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon, making the study more nuanced and complete. This progression allows for capturing the full spectrum of ways in which people perceive and experience the phenomenon in question.

When reading Figure 5.1, readers should bear in mind that the outcome space consists of the *structure of awareness* within each category and across all categories. This structure of awareness encompasses three main parts representing different levels of awareness within the structure. The three parts are defined as the following:

-
-
- The *theme* represents the main focus of the awareness and captures a common understanding shared by participants of the OEP phenomenon within a category.
 - The *thematic field* comprises aspects from the surrounding context of the theme and highlights broader ways of understanding.
 - The *margin* represents fewer common ways of understanding, and therefore, it exists at the edges of the structure of awareness.

These three parts together offer a comprehensive view of the relationship between participants' perceptions within a category of description.

Additionally, the outcome space incorporates two overarching dimensions passing across all categories, and they form the dimensions of variation, which are key aspects or features of a phenomenon that exhibit different qualitative variations among participants' experiences or understandings. These dimensions are used to categorise and analyse the various ways people perceive or make sense of the phenomenon under study. that pass across all categories.

Referring to Figure 5.1, the dimensions of variation are *OEP Implementation* and *OEP Beneficiaries*. Within each category, these dimensions show varying aspects, contributing to the nuanced interpretation of participants' perceptions of the OEP phenomenon. These dimensions are illustrative of the variation present in how participants perceive OEP across the diverse categories; they are called the *dimensions of variation*. Referring to the outcome space in Figure 5.1, exploring OEP implementation captures the different ways in which participants perceive and interpret their work in implementing OEP. In other words, it shows what open practices or resources participants conceive when asked to implement OEP. Second, exploring the dimension of the OEP beneficiaries uncovers the different ways participants perceive and interpret the recipients of their OEP implementation. These two dimensions will be discussed within the section of each category.

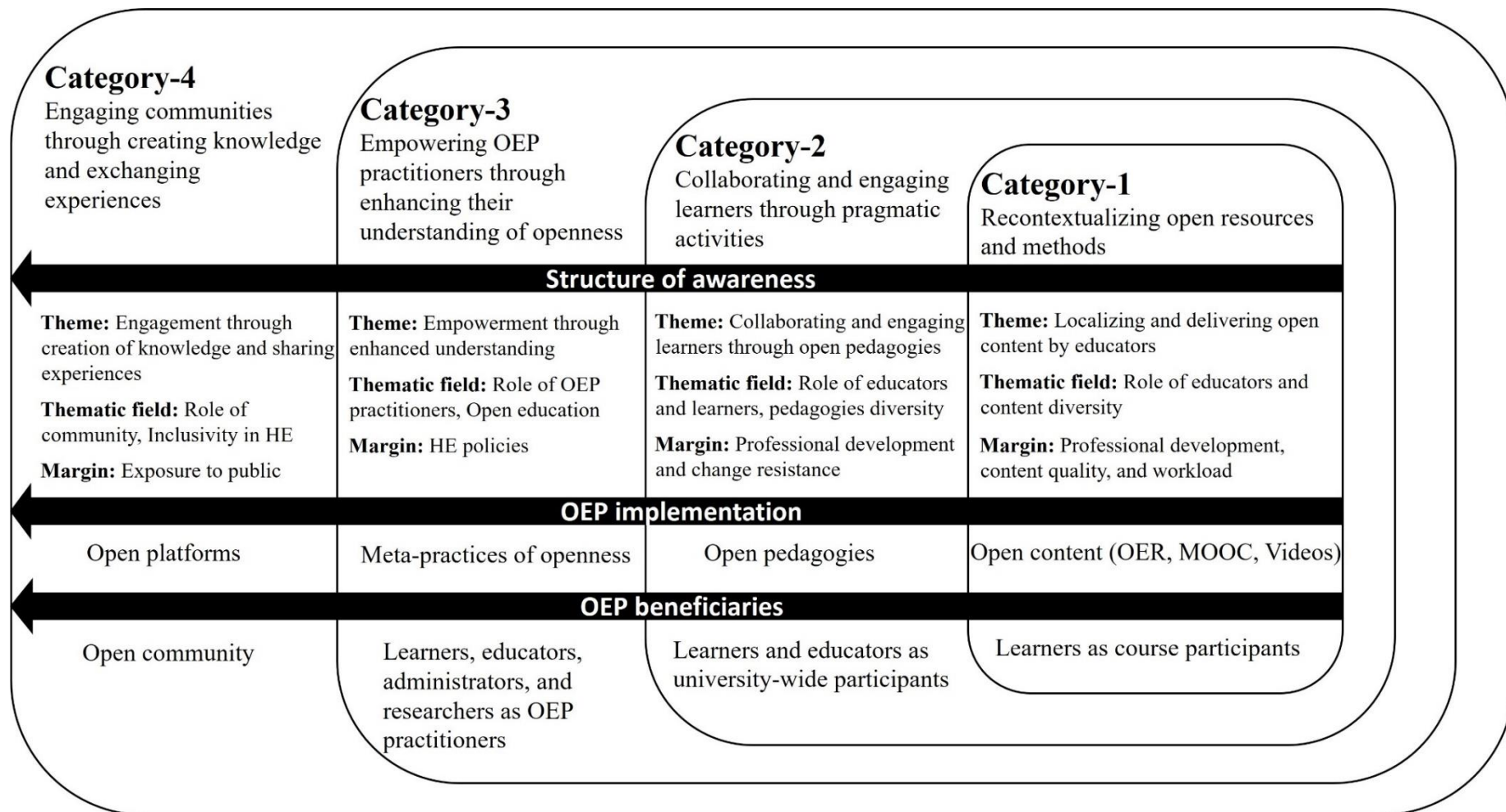


Figure 5.1: The outcome space of this study

5.3 Category 1: Recontextualizing open resources and methods

In this category, educators and academic administrators perceive OEP as recontextualising open resources and methods. Their perceptions underscore the inherent flexibility and adaptability that OEP affords educators in utilising or creating course materials, aligning more coherently with the course objectives, and ensuring accessibility to learners, often through open resources like OER.

In this section, the results from data analysis of Category 1 will be presented, namely, meaning structure, structure of awareness, dimensions of variation, and a summary of the section.

5.3.1 Meaning structure

The meaning structure section concerns unpacking the meanings of the description of this category, which consists of three parts, "recontextualising", "open resources", and "methods" that define this category. Supported by relevant quotations from the transcripts, the emphasis on recontextualising involves localising practices made by educators, specifically to match course objectives, fit learners' needs, and cater to various educational contexts. For instance, recontextualising serves as a means to promote a learner-centred approach. These practices of localisation are applied to *open resources* such as the open content of OER, MOOC, and videos, as well as to *methods* of teaching, learning, and content creation and delivery.

Table 5.1 illustrates the meaning of the category of description, including the meanings of the three parts of the description itself. This includes some key quotes about *localising* practices, as well as the involved *open content* and *methods* that contributed to the overall practices of recontextualising open resources and methods.

Educators and academic administrators elaborate on the diverse practices of recontextualising open resources and methods. Among transcripts, these practices appeared to be the most used ones, being coded in 13 transcripts. This makes Category 1 the most frequently encountered category in the data.

Category 1: OEP is perceived as recontextualising open resources and methods	
Meaning of the category	
The practices of localising and delivering open content to match course objectives, fit learners' needs, and suit diverse educational contexts, particularly within an open university setting.	
Recontextualising meaning	Practices quoted from transcripts
Localising	"customising", "reusing", "integrating", "accommodating", "remixing", "adapting", "modifying", and "creating".
Open resources meaning	Resources involved
Open content	OER, MOOC, and Videos
Methods meaning	Methods involved
Teaching methods	- Incorporating open content into teaching - Matching course objectives
Learning methods	- shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred approach
Content creation methods	- Multimedia-enhanced - Professional production
Course delivery methods	- Digital and open

Table 5.1: Meaning structure of Category 1

Descriptions of OEP in this category emphasise recontextualising *teaching methods* by incorporating *open content* into teaching, such as:

"OEP means that learning is supported with high quality open educational resources, open courseware, learning modules, open textbooks and content, recorded lectures, and digital learning objects and educational videos...this will help me record an explanation of some specific points...the explanation is supported by images and drawings to simplify concepts." E6

With regard to recontextualising *teaching methods* matching *course objectives*, one participant framed the issue in the following way:

"Rooted in my course objectives and open to change. To me, OER is effectively integrated into my classroom by implementing all or some of these steps...try to edit my resources and teaching methods to accommodate the use of OER to my course objectives" E1

Some examples from the descriptions highlight the recontextualising of *learning methods*, signifying a *shift from a teacher-centred to a learner-centred learning approach*.

“This will shift learning to be more student-centred than teacher-centred learning and students be integrated and more active.” E6

“OER should be dynamic, learner-oriented based” E1

Proceeding with the methods meaning and methods involved in Table 5.1, other examples show advancement in *content creation methods* by utilising *multimedia-enhanced* resources and *professional production*. This shows forward-thinking approaches to OEP beyond a rigid reliance on pre-existing OER.

“These practices [OEP] can take on multiple forms simultaneously, involving self-generated educational resources and immediate practices performed by teachers in the digital space or through live streaming. When I engaged in open-home education during the COVID-19 pandemic, I did not solely rely on OER. I established a comprehensive home studio and incorporated the curriculum according to the requirements of the open educational environment in the digital space during the pandemic. I feel that I cannot confine myself within a specific framework when practising open digital education.” E2

Involving *professional development* in *content creation methods*, participants’ objective is not merely about the tools used, but about leveraging those tools effectively through producing content that is open and appealing to digital natives.

“We built dedicated studios for OER with professional production settings for cameras, editing software, and recording to be in line with the digital and visualised media content. The main goal in our work is not the tools, but using this tool, we succeeded in competing with the most modern videos on social media because we use high standards in production and because this is the type of content that the digital natives usually watch on social media.

Learners and educators used to propose supporting materials related to the OER such as audio, video, text, article, game, compiler for programming...etc.” A10

With regard to recontextualising *course delivery methods* to be *digital* and *open* to course participants in terms of accessibility and modifications, participants describe the issue in the following ways:

“The recordings can be sent to students to comment on before lectures, so students come to class having an idea about the topic and what it means (blended learning).” E6

“Using OER means that much of our course material will be available online, allowing it to be developed and updated.” E1

In summary, the meaning structure discussed in this section, including the excerpts from transcripts, collectively serves as a means for educators and academic administrators to recontextualise open resources and methods to be more open and localised to match course objectives, fit learners’ needs, and suit diverse educational contexts within an open university setting. This meaning structure represents the referential aspects of Category 1. In the next section, the structural aspects of this category will be discussed.

5.3.2 Structure of awareness

The structure of awareness within the category concerns the relationship between emerging aspects that show how participants perceive the phenomenon of OEP. In the previous section, the discussion concludes that the obtained meanings of this category of description focus on the practices of creation and dissemination of open content to learners, utilising a range of open resources and methods across diverse educational contexts. In this section, we will see how those meanings are related to each other and to the context of this category in a structural form called the structure of awareness.

Figure 5.2 presents the structure of awareness with its three main parts, namely, theme, thematic field, and margin, which are defined before in Section 5.2.1.

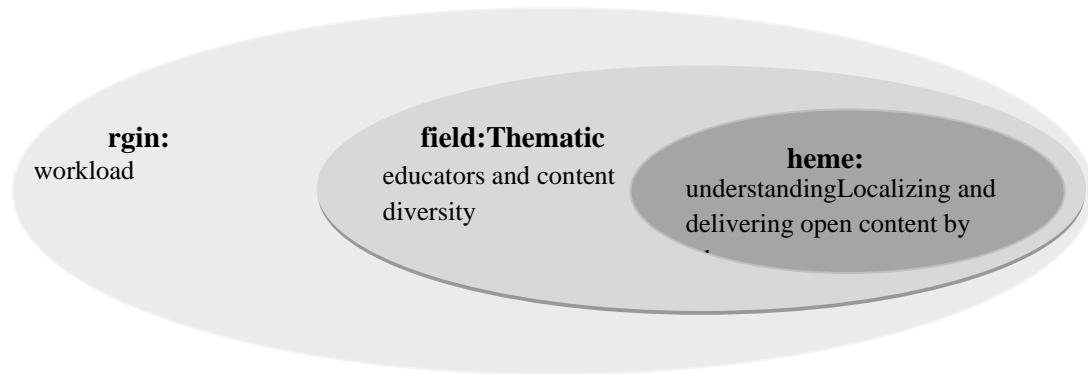


Figure 5.2: Structure of awareness for Category 1

The theme of this category is localising and delivering open content by educators using open resources and methods. This focus was discussed in detail in the previous section supported by some quotations from the transcripts.

The thematic field of awareness within this category is an emerging part and was not discussed before because it is not part of the meaning structure. The thematic field of this category encompasses two distinct aspects: a) Role of Educators and b) Content Diversity.

The margin of awareness in this category encompassed three key aspects: a) Professional Development, b) Content Quality, and c) Workload. While these aspects are tangentially related to the theme and the thematic field, they are not considered essential components of them. As such, they occupy the margin of awareness, co-existing alongside the theme and the thematic field but not constituting their integral part.

Below are some excerpts where participants focus on the aspects of the *thematic field* and the *margin* in turn.

Referring to Figure 5.2, the aspect *role of educators* was thematised from the surrounding context of the participants' description of the theme of localising and delivering open content by educators. Two participants highlighted this issue in the following ways:

“The teacher should be allowed the freedom to choose and develop the course material he/she presents in their class... be able to customise materials and add my own reflection or remix several sources and create OER tailored modules.” E1

“I have learnt recently how to produce video-recorded digital materials. This will help me record an explanation of some specific points... The explanation is supported by images and drawings to simplify concepts” E6

The other aspect of the thematic field concerns *content diversity*, where educators engage in diversifying open content and administrators embrace the appealing content to learners as digital natives:

“I feel that I cannot confine myself within a specific framework when practising open digital education... I did not solely rely on OER. I established a comprehensive home studio...These practices [OEP] can take on multiple forms simultaneously” E2

“...because this is the type of content that the digital natives usually watch on social media.” A10

Moving now to consider the *margin*, an important aspect is *professional development*. Descriptions show that educators and academic administrators encounter some challenges in embracing OEP due to their unfamiliarity with the tools and platforms required.

“We need to keep developing the educators and administrators using training and workshops to create qualified digital content.” A2

“We need qualified administrators to lead the development and change in open practices... Many of our teachers need development.” A8

Regarding *content quality*, descriptions of OEP highlight some issues related to content copyright and violation, as well as curriculum updates and enhancements to ensure the provision of high-quality digital and open content.

“They need to be aware of the copyright and not to include any music or information from others because this is a violation and will result in blocking the whole video course. The main issue is to keep an eye on the content in terms of violating rules such as biasing either national or international because it is available for everyone.” A10

“Occasional inadequacy of the curriculum and the need for updates, and the need for continuous monitoring” E2

“The open learning centre at our university created the content, and I see this as a double-edged sword; technically, the content is great, but scientifically, it needs some enhancement from subject-matter experts more than focusing on design and technicalities.” A9

Finally, regarding the *workload* aspect of the margin, descriptions highlight that the adoption of OEP in teaching and learning could demand more time and effort from educators than traditional teaching methods.

“I work on this project, and I know that the effort I put in while working in OEP is twice the amount I put into teaching the same course in the traditional way.” E7

“The teacher load should be considered when planning for such practices.” E6

In summary, the structure of awareness consists of three main parts, each featuring its relevant structural aspects and excerpts from transcripts. Collectively, these parts and aspects form a hierarchy that helps in understanding the varying levels of perceptions among educators and academic administrators in recontextualising open resources and methods. These structural aspects revolve around the *theme* of *localising and delivering open content by educators*, with the *role of educators* and *content diversity* aspects forming the *thematic field* in the background of these perceptions. Additionally, certain relevant aspects related to *professional development*, *content quality*, and *workload* form the *margin* of the structure of awareness, representing peripheral perceptions. In the next section, the two dimensions of variation, namely, OEP implementation and OEP beneficiaries within this category, will be discussed in the sub-sections 5.3.3.1 and 5.3.3.2.

5.3.3 Dimensions of Variation

Uncovering the dimensions of variation for this category results in a range of possible variations within each dimension, revealing a breadth of understandings among participants and presenting the structural relationship between these dimensions within the outcome space. This section explains the distinct aspects of both dimensions within this category, as shown in Table 5.2. In the context of Category 1, where OEP is perceived as recontextualising open resources and methods, the dimension of OEP implementation focuses on *open content*, whereas the dimension of OEP beneficiaries focuses on *learners as course participants*.

Category 1: OEP is perceived as recontextualising open resources and methods	
Dimensions of variation	Aspects of Category 1
OEP implementation:	Open content (OER, MOOC, Videos)
OEP beneficiaries:	Learners as course participants

Table 5.2: Dimensions of variation of Category 1

5.3.3.1 OEP Implementation

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP implementation conception of Category 1 is *open content* such as *OER*, *MOOC*, and *videos*. In the context of recontextualising open resources and methods, this dimension underscores the integration of educators' open-content practices, which are characterised by accessibility and adaptability. One participant highlighted the aspect of *open content* in the following way:

“...using high quality open educational resources, open courseware, learning modules, open textbooks and content, recorded lectures, and digital learning objects and educational videos” E6.

Within this dimension of *OEP implementation*, the concept of openness in the aspect of *open content* embodies unrestricted access to content such as:

“...educational practices through including freely available online content, and services” E6

Also, *open* in terms of flexibility to tailor content in alignment with the course objectives such as:

“...create OER tailored modules” E1

“I gave learners the material and the resources, they went and studied and came back for assessment.” E8

Moreover, descriptions underscore implementing *open content* that extends beyond traditional course materials:

“...to customise materials and add my reflection or remix several sources and ...where learning materials goes beyond traditional textbooks.” E1

They embrace the implementation of *OER*, demonstrating a commitment to implementing professionally localised content suited for digital native learners.

“...to propose supporting materials related to the OER such as audio, video, text, article, game, compiler for programming...this is the type of content that the digital natives usually watch on social media.” A10

This embracement manifests forward-looking approaches to OEP that go beyond a rigid reliance on OER:

“I did not solely rely on OER.” E2

5.3.3.2 OEP Beneficiaries

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP beneficiaries' conception of Category 1 is *learners as course participants*, which means the beneficiaries are learners who enrolled in a university course and thus are direct recipients of the practices involving the recontextualising open resources and methods. The significance of this aspect is exemplified through some excerpts presented in this section.

Descriptions within this dimension of *OEP beneficiaries* emphasise openness in engaging with *learners* throughout their entire educational journey through virtual curriculum delivery:

“You can also deliver the curriculum in a violin completely virtual way. So, this means that when we are talking about the open approach, we are talking about openness in dealing with students from the beginning of their acceptance until the moment of graduation” E8

Also, descriptions highlight that OEP provides an opportunity for diverse and engaging ways of presenting topics to *learners as course participants*, encouraging them to engage critically with open content provided by educators:

“...also, the diversity of presenting the topic to students, OEP offers such opportunity to motivate and engage students to present the same content in different ways.” E7

“Teaching my students not just to absorb the OER material that they read and listen to. But to think critically and evaluate, and if possible, update” E1

In summary, the section on the dimensions of variation is derived from two main sources. Firstly, it draws upon the obtained meanings in the meaning structure section. Secondly, it incorporates the structural relationships between these meanings that are outlined in the structure of awareness section. The analysis reveals that both dimensions of variation capture two ways of participants’ perception of recontextualising open resources and methods. Both dimensions emphasise the use of *open content* as a means of *OEP implementation* for learners as course participants and *OEP beneficiaries*.

5.3.4 Summary

Table 5.3 summarises the findings of Category 1, where OEP is perceived as recontextualising open resources and methods implemented by educators using open content for learners as course participants. This involves localising and delivering open content to match course objectives, fit learners' needs, and suit diverse educational contexts. The focus is on the flexible use of open resources like OER and innovative teaching methods to promote learner-centred approaches. In this category, participants emphasise the importance of customising, reusing, integrating, accommodating, remixing, adapting, modifying, creating, and delivering open content. They aim to make educational materials more accessible and aligned with course objectives. Educators also highlight the need for professional development to effectively implement these practices and ensure content quality. However, they acknowledge that this may increase their workload. The structural aspects include a central theme of localising and delivering open content by educators, with a thematic field encompassing the role of educators and content diversity. The margin addresses

issues like professional development, content quality, and workload, which are peripheral but relevant to the theme.

Category 1: OEP is perceived as recontextualising open resources and methods	
Meaning structure	Key Quotes
The practices of localising and delivering open content to match course objectives, fit learners' needs, and suit diverse educational contexts, particularly within an open university setting.	“customising”, “reusing”, “integrating”, “accommodating”, “remixing”, “adapting”, “modifying”, “creating”, and “delivering”.
Structure of awareness	
Theme: Localisation and delivering open content by educators	
Thematic field: Role of educators and content diversity	
Margin: Professional development, content quality, and workload	
Dimensions of variation	
OEP implementation: Open content	
OEP beneficiaries: Learners as course participants	

Table 5.3: Summary for Category 1 of Recontextualizing open resources and methods

The two dimensions of variation within Category 1 are OEP implementation (focused on open content) and OEP beneficiaries (centred on learners as course participants). Educators implement OEP by utilising open content like OER, aiming to engage learners throughout their educational journey and encouraging critical thinking and engagement with open materials.

In the next section, the second category of description will be discussed using the same format deployed in this section.

5.4 Category 2: Collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities

In this category, educators and academic administrators perceive OEP as collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities. Their perceptions

underscore the inherent activities that OEP affords educators to engage learners and increase their contribution to the teaching and learning process using open pedagogies. These pedagogies include learners' co-creation of OER, learners' contribution to course creation, open teaching and learning, open assessment, and open collaboration.

5.4.1 Meaning structure

The meaning structure section concerns unpacking the meanings of the description of Category 2, which consists of two parts, “Collaborating and engaging learners” and “pragmatic activities” that define this category. Supported by relevant excerpts from the transcripts, the emphasis on collaborating and engaging learners involves practices where educators and learners work together and contribute to the teaching and learning process collectively. For instance, collaborating and engaging learners as a means to *co-create OER*, which refers to Open Educational Resources designed to promote open and accessible education, such as educational materials, textbooks, videos, or software that are released to the public under licenses that allow anyone to use, modify, and share without cost. These practices of collaborating and engaging learners are implemented using *pragmatic activities* such as *open pedagogies* of open teaching and learning, open assessment, and open collaboration.

Table 5.4 illustrates the meaning of the category of description, including the meanings of the *two parts* of the description itself. This includes some key quotes about *collaborating and engaging practices*, as well as the involved *open pedagogies* that contributed to the overall practices of collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities.

Category 2: OEP is perceived as collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities	
Meaning of the category	
The practices of collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies for university-wide participants.	
Collaborating and engaging learners, meaning	Practices quoted from transcripts
Educators and learners work together and contribute to the teaching and learning process collectively.	“communicating”, “interacting”, “supporting”, “training” “connecting”, “sharing”, “participating”, “contributing”, “cooperating”, and “following-up”.
pragmatic activities meaning	practices involved
Open pedagogies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - OER co-creation - Learners’ contribution - Open teaching and learning - Open assessment - Open collaboration

Table 5.4: Meaning structure of Category 2

Educators and academic administrators provide detailed insights into diverse practices involving collaboration and engagement with learners through pragmatic activities. Among transcripts, these practices were the second most used ones after Category 1, being coded in 10 transcripts. This makes Category 2 the second most frequently encountered category in the data, but (as previously explained in Section 5.4.1) this is different from the reason for it being the second category presented.

Descriptions of OEP in this category emphasise collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies such as *OER co-creation*:

“Allow my students to collaborate to create their own content and (re)using OER in innovative ways, such as via social networks. Develop activities for students to evaluate or revise OER in the subject area.” E1

“A student can create or participate in creating OER, for example, and as an educator, you can see the progress of every student and evaluate accordingly and send feedback, which is very important and much easier in its digital form.” A2

With regard to employing pragmatic activities of open pedagogies to increase *learners' involvement*, one participant framed the issue in the following way:

"...we also train some learners from the media college to present the lectures. This idea motivates learners to participate because it is a required skill for their professional work in the future." A10

"...students need to contribute to the shape of the product (course or assignment)." E8

"...students should be involved in creating resources that can be used in classes. This can help students to see the impact of their work" E1

Some examples from the descriptions highlight *open teaching and learning* as open pedagogies within the involved pragmatic activities:

"I have engaged in open-access publishing by creating a YouTube channel and sharing educational lessons through it, reaching students worldwide in certain courses such as Production and Operations Management, Principles of Management, and other university courses. The responses were received either through social media, email, or phone calls, and most of them were positive. There were requests for recording and producing more episodes for academic and scientific enrichment." E2

"From my practical experience, I saw some supporting material for the OER from other educators who were not involved in the production of OER, discussing issues about the content and the ideas and designing activities and assignments related to the OER. They also summarise some ideas that complement the ideas that were briefly discussed in the OER." A10

Proceeding with open pedagogies as a means for implying pragmatic activities. Table 5.4 also includes *open assessment* for collaborating and engaging learners. This open

practice is described by some participants using non-disposable assignments as follows:

“...means that open assessment should be non-disposable assignments that can benefit others and attract teachers and learners to further reuse or improve these assignments in the future.” E1

“I tried to practice some practices of OEP such as creating non-disposable assignments... I started to make groups of students and assigned the students to prepare specific sections in each lecture so that each group discuss the assignment and present it in the lecture. For me, I plan to collect these assignments, review them, and publish them as OER, and I returned the whole assignments as a package for the students to learn from this collective and cumulative experience.” E8

Finally, *open collaboration* was described as one of the pragmatic activities for collaborating and engaging learners within open pedagogies. Participants highlighted the use of social media platforms to collaborate with learners.

“...we use the modern interactive platforms to deliver the content and collaborate with them on Facebook, YouTube...etc. because they are already there... On our OER platform of e-courses, we add collaboration about the course topics among learners” A10

“I started designing a course that allows faculty participation members as well as students, a range of collaborative pedagogical practices that include the use, reuse, and creation of materials with the ability to modify, adopt or approve any previous experience.” E1

One participant underscored the use of project-based learning and mobile learning as a means of open collaboration:

“I was in the process of using YouTube to find out supplementary materials to help the learners. I also employed project-based learning and mobile learning where students were allowed to use their smartphones to send me their products.” E5

In summary, the practices discussed in the section, including the excerpts from transcripts, collectively serve as a means for educators and academic administrators to collaborate and engage learners through pragmatic activities of open pedagogies such as OER co-creation, learners’ contribution, open teaching and learning, open assessment, and open collaboration. This represents the referential aspects of Category 2. In the next section, the structural aspects of this category will be discussed.

5.4.2 Structure of awareness

The structure of awareness within this category delves into the relationship between emerging aspects that describe participants' perceptions of the OEP phenomenon. As discussed in the previous section, the findings indicate that the meanings obtained from this category revolve around the practices of collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies, extending beyond open content. In this section, we will explore how these meanings are interrelated within this category and in the broader context, presenting them in a structural framework referred to as the structure of awareness. Referring to Figure 5.3, the *theme* of Category 2 is collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies. This focus was discussed in detail in the previous section, supported by some quotations from the transcripts

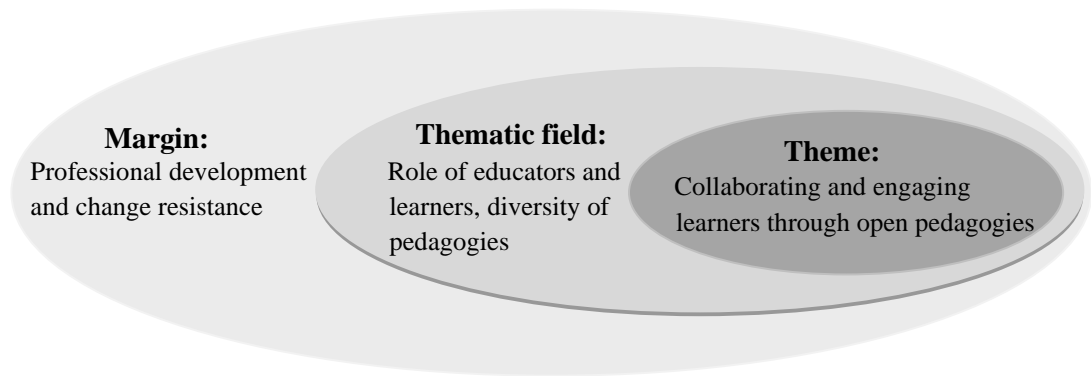


Figure 5.3: Structure of awareness of Category 2

The thematic field of this category encompasses two distinct aspects: a) Role of Educators and learners and b) the Diversity of pedagogies.

The *margin* of awareness within Category 2 encompassed two key aspects: a) Professional Development and b) Change Resistance.

Below are some excerpts where participants focus on the aspects of the *thematic field* and the *margin* of Category 2 in turn.

Referring to Figure 5.3, the aspect *role of educators and learners* was thematised from the surrounding context of the participants' description of the theme of collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies. Two participants highlighted this issue in the following ways:

“For OEP, I use so many practices with my students, especially during COVID-19. The happiest moment for me was when I received an email from the university saying that we can reach and collaborate with our students freely upon your choice using the available resources.” E7

“I use available tools to communicate with students and allow them to share monitored knowledge and help each other complete tasks and provide immediate feedback... Recently, I have been integrating my students in groups in online activities to develop the quality of education” E6

The second aspect of the thematic field concerns the *diversity of pedagogies*, where educators and learners engage in practising OEP through open pedagogies. One participant elaborated in describing the diversity of pedagogies such as:

“Open teaching implies that teachers should implement teaching methodologies that can allow learners to actively contribute to the co-creation of knowledge and be self-regulated...Open collaboration implies that teachers should build open communities to foster teamwork and social interaction...Open collaboration empowers teachers and students to transform their ideas and interests into powerful learning experiences that are shared with everyone...Open assessment implies that teachers design learning tasks where students can participate and contribute. This can emphasise reflective practices and improve learning outcomes...Open assessment, such as blogs, enables students to demonstrate the relevance of their field of study and share their scholarship in real-world contexts while at the same time contributing to the global open knowledge.” E1

Moving now to consider the *margin* of the structure of awareness of Category 2, an important aspect is *professional development*. Descriptions show that educators and academic administrators encounter some challenges in adopting and practising open pedagogies due to the high skills needed in designing and practising such pedagogies. Two participants highlighted this issue in the following way:

“But other teachers, I noticed, have a problem engaging with such practices because of some difficulties in dealing with the platforms and applying the pedagogy they want when using the platform. They refer to me sometimes. If the institution stops supporting those teachers and says that we gave them training, this will not lead to a development in their skills. The educator needs to have the skills to motivate and engage students to enter and work. This has special pedagogies that teachers need to be aware of...Practising this is not easy; it needs high commitment from the teacher in practising his/her values and beliefs in teaching and learning” E7

“The main challenge for us is to develop educators and to keep focus on how learners will engage with our practices. Some educators need little guidance, but others face some problems such as language and religious courses...Some educators used to stand and keep talking in one way, teaching without using any tools to support the idea they are teaching, although the technology is available for them to use.” A10

Continuing with the margin aspects in Figure 5.3, the *change resistance* is thematised as the final aspect in the structure of awareness of Category 2. This aspect concerns a lack of engagement and commitment from learners in practising open pedagogies. Two participants framed this issue by practising open assessment and open collaboration as follows:

“I tried to practice some practices of OEP such as creating non-disposable assignments, but the main problem I face is the learners’ commitments... the problem here is with the commitment of the students, some of them do not attend either online or in class, or neither listen to the recordings, so this is the main problem I face, the collaborative learning part is missing.” E8

“In my opinion, the biggest challenge that faces an educator in implementing OEP is the student engagement and motivation...you need to add this collaboration to the final grade as incentives for students. This exists in the mentality of the students asking themselves about what benefit they will get from this engagement.” E7

In summary, the structure of awareness of Category 2 consists of three main parts, each featuring its relevant structural aspects and excerpts from transcripts. Collectively, these parts and aspects form a hierarchy that helps in understanding the varying levels of perceptions among educators and academic administrators in collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities. These structural aspects revolve around the theme of collaborating and engaging learners through *open pedagogies*, with the *role of educators and learners* and the *diversity of pedagogies* aspects forming the *thematic field* in the background of these

perceptions. Additionally, certain relevant aspects related to *professional development* and *change resistance* form the *margin* of the structure of awareness, representing peripheral perceptions.

5.4.3 Dimensions of Variation

This section explains the distinct aspects of both dimensions within this category, as shown in Table 5.5. In the context of Category 2, where OEP is perceived as collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities, the dimension of OEP implementation focuses on *open pedagogies*, whereas the dimension of OEP beneficiaries focuses on *learners and educators as university-wide participants*.

Category 2: Collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities	
Dimensions of variation	Aspects of Category 2
OEP implementation:	Open pedagogies
OEP beneficiaries:	Learners and educators as university-wide participants

Table 5.5: Dimensions of variation of Category 2

5.4.3.1 OEP Implementation

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP implementation conception of Category 2 is *open pedagogies*, where educators and administrators implement OEP for collaborating and engaging learners through some pragmatic activities such as OER co-creation, learners' contribution, open teaching and learning, open assessment, and open collaboration. Descriptions within this dimension concern implementing OEP beyond open content to practising *open pedagogies* in the design of teaching and learning approaches. These descriptions emphasise the use of technology to enhance pedagogy through open practices online, such as communication, collaboration, and assignments, in implementing OEP. One participant highlights this issue as the following:

“Using educational technologies, we need to focus on developing our pedagogy to include open practices online because we have the resources, experiences, and knowledge to do that...the practice of OER and online classroom, in general, is course delivery at the end. What is more important are the practices that follow this classroom or content creation. Sending notifications, collaborating with students, sending assignments, all these tools are important in implementing OEP.” A2

Furthermore, descriptions underscore that the motivation for OEP implementation lies in engaging digital-native learners through interactions and assignments. It also notes that the availability of resources and technology from the administration is a key driver for implementing *open pedagogies*, shifting the focus away from traditional one-way teaching reliant on textbooks. One participant framed this issue in the following way:

“Our learners are digital natives now and this is a motivating factor in terms of implementing OEP. Our focus is not only on delivering content but also on engaging learners with content and the educational environment by adding some interactions and assignments to the OER. The most motivating factor to implement OEP is the availability of resources and technology from the administration. Content is important, but it is not as dominant as it was before the traditional learning, which is one-way teaching and limited to the textbook for information.” A10

5.4.3.2 OEP Beneficiaries

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP beneficiaries’ conception of Category 2 is *learners and educators as university-wide participants*, which means the beneficiaries are learners beyond the enrolled ones in a university course. Within the context of this category of collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities, learners are considered practitioners of OEP when they actively engage and contribute to open knowledge instead of being only recipients of what is implemented. One participant perceives this issue as follows:

“Learners themselves can also be considered practitioners of OEPs if they actively engage in open educational resources, contribute to open knowledge, and openly share their knowledge with others.” E2

Moreover, OEP, including open assessments, enable learners to demonstrate the significance of their studies, benefiting mainly their peers, *learners and educators as university-wide participants*:

“Open assessment, such as blogs, enables students to demonstrate the relevance of their field of study and share their scholarship in real-world contexts while at the same time contributing to the global open knowledge. That means that open assessment should be non-disposable assignments that can benefit others and attract teachers and learners to further reuse or improve these assignments in the future.” E1

In summary, the analysis reveals that both dimensions of variation within Category 2 capture two ways of participants’ perception of collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities. Both dimensions emphasise the use of *open pedagogies* as a means of OEP implementation for *learners and educators as university-wide participants*.

5.4.4 Summary

Table 5.6 summarises the findings of Category 2, where OEP is perceived as collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities, implemented by educators with the involvement of learners, using open pedagogies for learners and educators as university-wide participants. This involves how educators and academic administrators view OEP as a way to engage learners through pragmatic activities using open pedagogies like co-creating OER, open teaching and learning, open assessment, and open collaboration.

In the structure of awareness, the central theme is “Collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies.” The thematic field emphasises the importance of educators and learners collaborating effectively and employing diverse pedagogical approaches to enhance learning. There are aspects at the margin of awareness, including professional development and resistance to change, which can influence the adoption of OEP.

Category 2: OEP is perceived as collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities	
Meaning structure	Key Quotes
The practices of collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies for university-wide participants.	“communicating”, “interacting”, “supporting”, “training” “connecting”, “sharing”, “participating”, “contributing”, “cooperating”, “following-up”.
Structure of awareness	
Theme: Collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies	
Thematic field: Role of educators and learners, diversity of pedagogies	
Margin: Professional development and change resistance	
Dimensions of variation	
OEP implementation: Open pedagogies	
OEP beneficiaries: Learners and educators as university-wide participants	

Table 5.6: Summary for Category 2 of collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities

Within Category 2, two dimensions of variation are identified. The first, OEP implementation, emphasises the use of open pedagogies in teaching and learning to engage digital-native learners. The second OEP beneficiaries recognise learners and educators as university-wide participants.

5.5 Category 3: Empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness

5.5.1 Meaning structure

The meaning structure section concerns unpacking the meanings of the description of Category 3, which consists of two parts, “empowering OEP practitioners” and “enhancing their understanding of openness”. These parts define this category and are supported by pertinent quotations from the transcripts. The emphasis on empowering OEP practitioners suggests that participants perceive that active engagement in OEP has a positive impact on those who practice it, enhancing their participation and effectiveness. Descriptions within this category encompass a diverse range of OEP practitioners, including learners, educators, academic administrators, and researchers. Moreover, the perceived empowerment stems from an improved understanding of the principles and practices associated with openness in education. For instance, practitioners may attain a deeper understanding of OEP by engaging in meta-practices that involve discussions about open content and open pedagogies. This engagement in meta-practices constitutes the obtained meaning of “enhancing their understanding of openness.”

Table 5.7 illustrates the meaning of the category of description, including the meanings of the *two parts* of the description itself. This includes some key quotes about *empowering OEP practitioners*, as well as the involved *Meta-practices of openness* contributed to the overall practices of empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness. The term Meta-practices will be defined below in section 5.5.3.1 of the OEP implementation within Category 3.

Category 3: OEP is perceived as empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness	
Meaning of the category	
The practices of empowering practitioners who engage in OEP by enhancing their understanding of the concept of openness in education	
Empowering OEP practitioners, meaning	Practices quoted from transcripts
Empowering learners, educators, administrators, and <i>researchers</i> as OEP practitioners.	“Enabling”, “Enhancing”, “Encouraging”, “Motivating”, “Fostering”, “Promoting”, “Strengthening”
Enhancing their understanding of openness, meaning	Practices involved
Enhancing awareness of OEP practitioners through Meta-practices of openness	- Open scholarship - Discussing openness-related topics

Table 5.7: Meaning structure of Category 3

The research participants elaborate on the diverse practices employed to empower OEP practitioners by enhancing their understanding of openness. First, they acknowledge that *researchers* are themselves OEP practitioners. This idea underscores that a wider community within HE can benefit from engaging with OEP.

Second, the importance of researchers is highlighted in conducting research on OEP and engaging in OEP themselves through *open scholarship*. This entails the practice of conducting and sharing scholarly research and knowledge openly and transparently, thereby making it freely accessible to the global academic community. It embodies principles of openness, collaboration, and inclusivity within the academic and research realms. One example from the transcripts describes this idea in the following way:

“Researchers in the field of open education play a significant role in developing and promoting OEPs...Researchers in the field of open education can also contribute by studying the effectiveness of OEPs and working on the development of standards and indicators to assess the success of these practices.” E2

Moreover, the descriptions emphasise the value of practitioners Discussing *openness-related topics*, which we refer to as meta-practices, both in general and with a specific focus on OEP. Collaborative efforts help raise awareness about these practices and their practical applications. Two participants framed this issue as the following:

“I also like to think of open practices as those related to the discussion about education, whether it is what education should be for, how we should teach and research, manage, and so on. So, my take is very broad. I do not limit my thinking on open practices to just content or just teaching and learning.” E10

“We also produce content to increase their awareness of using these practices and of other things related to the philosophy of open education.”

A10

In summary, the meaning of Category 3 underscores the practices of enhanced understanding of openness in empowering various OEP practitioners and illustrates the diverse ways in which this empowerment can be achieved. This represents the referential aspects of Category 3.

5.5.2 Structure of awareness

As discussed in the previous section, the findings indicate that the meanings obtained from this category revolve around the practices of empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness, extending beyond practices of open content and open pedagogies to meta-practices of openness. In this section, we will explore how these meanings are interrelated within this category and in the broader context, presenting them in a structural framework referred to as the structure of awareness.

Referring to Figure 5.4, the *theme* of Category 3 is empowerment through enhanced understanding or meta-practices of openness. This focus was discussed in detail in the previous section supported by some quotations from the transcripts.

The *thematic field* of this category encompasses two distinct aspects: a) Role of OEP practitioners and b) Open Education.

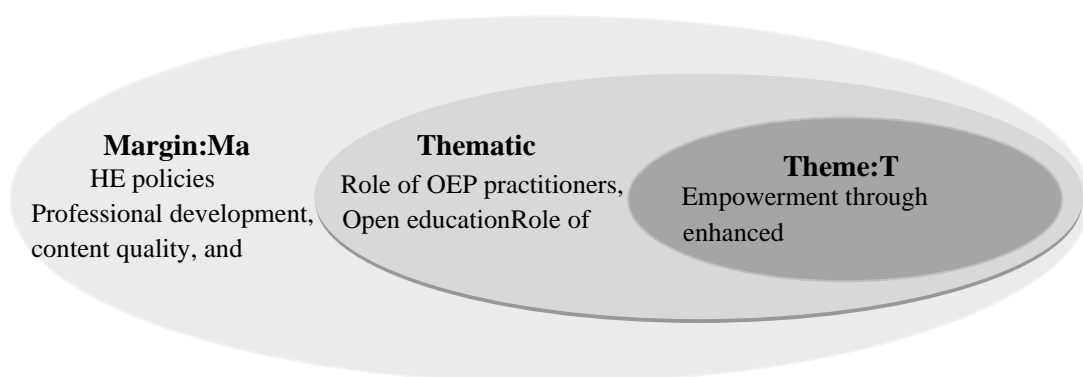


Figure 5.4: Structure of awareness of Category 3

The *margin* of awareness within Category 3 encompassed one aspect, which is HE policies.

Below are some clarifications supported by excerpts where participants focus on the aspects of the *thematic field* and the *margin* of Category 3 in turn.

Referring to Figure 5.4, the aspect *role of OEP practitioners* was thematised from the surrounding context of the participants' description of the theme of empowerment through enhanced understanding. In this context, participants perceive their own roles as multi-faceted. They see themselves as role models, actively practising OEP to set an example. Furthermore, participants emphasise their strong commitment to promoting OEP not only among university staff but also within the broader higher education community. Their eagerness to dedicate significant efforts to OEP establishment reflects their profound belief in the importance of fostering such open practices. These perspectives are underscored by the following statements from three participants:

"I also facilitated a workshop for university staff, funded by UNESCO, on open educational resources some years ago." E10

"We also targeted the local and the regional community to promote openness including OEP...most of the participants put huge effort without looking for incentives, at least in this stage of implementation, because they believe that this environment is much better than the traditional environment of teaching and learning." A10

"I also believe that self, as persons, can be an OER and thus those who see themselves as an OER inherently demonstrates OEP...I do not put much effort into persuading the university or educators around me. Instead, I am trying to be a role model by showing my open educational practices." A7

The second aspect of the thematic field concerns *open education*. Descriptions highlight that OEP practitioners consider open education as a fundamental philosophy that underpins their beliefs and efforts to foster and promote OEP. This philosophical foundation is particularly significant when practitioners engage in

meta-practices that involve examining and advancing openness in education. Given that the participants of this research are from an open university, they framed this issue in the following ways:

“Advocates of open education can assist in launching open educational projects and provide resources, financial support, and technical assistance to develop OEPs in educational institutions.” E2

“I don’t have a problem using all the available practices nowadays because open education by definition and practices may change soon” A8

Moving now to consider the *margin* of the structure of awareness of Category 3, an important aspect is *HE policies*. Descriptions highlight that universities sometimes face some challenges in the accreditation of their certificates from the Ministry of HE because of the “increased” flexibility in teaching, learning, and assessment using OEP, implying the need to increase awareness of OEP among HE policymakers. Two participants highlighted this issue of accreditation in the following way:

“Honestly, in this experience, we faced many challenges, such as the immaturity of the national standards of E-learning and the unrecognition of this high flexibility of learning from the Ministry of HE, until COVID-19 came, which turned this refusal into a requirement.” A8

“Open education took different aspects and non-suitable explanations such as distance learning or E-learning. This causes some implications with the accreditation of our degree.” A2

In summary, the structure of awareness of Category 3 consists of three main parts: the theme of empowerment through enhanced understanding, the role of OEP practitioners, and the open education aspects that form the *thematic field* in the background of these perceptions. Additionally, one relevant aspect related to *HE policies* forms the *margin* of the structure of awareness, representing peripheral perceptions.

5.5.3 Dimensions of Variation

This section explains the distinct aspects of both dimensions within this category as shown in Table 5.8. In the context of Category 3 where OEP is perceived as empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness, the dimension of OEP implementation focuses on *meta-practices of openness*, whereas the dimension of OEP beneficiaries includes *learners, educators, administrators, and researchers*.

Category 3: Empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness	
Dimensions of variation	Aspects of Category 3
OEP implementation:	Meta-practices of openness
OEP beneficiaries:	Learners, educators, administrators, and researchers

Table 5.8: Dimensions of variation of Category 3

5.5.3.1 OEP Implementation

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP implementation conception of Category 3 pertains to *Meta-practices of openness*. In this dimension, OEP practitioners are empowered through the implementation of OEP practices that emphasise the promotion of open education philosophy through discussions about its approaches to content and practices. This involves not only implementing open content and open pedagogies to benefit learners but also engaging in practices that discuss the benefits and efficiency of OEP. This issue is highlighted in some statements from the transcripts mentioned previously within the explanation of this category, such as:

“We also produce content to increase their awareness of using these practices and of other things related to the philosophy of open education. We also targeted the local and the regional community to promote openness including OEP, and they used to interact to discuss the content on those platforms using comments and chats.” A10

5.5.3.2 OEP Beneficiaries

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP beneficiaries' conception of Category 3 is *Learners, educators, administrators, and researchers*, which means OEP beneficiaries are not bound within a university community but go further to include researchers as OEP practitioners. Within the context of this category of empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness, researchers are considered practitioners of OEP when they engage in conducting studies about OEP and publishing them using open scholarship. This statement is an example from the transcripts about the researchers' role:

“Researchers in the field of open education play a significant role in developing and promoting OEPs.” E2

It is worth noting that within this category, the implementation of OEP goes beyond teaching and learning; it also extends to raising awareness of OEP among the university and higher education community. Additionally, the beneficiaries of OEP have expanded to include researchers. Their research work is viewed as a significant avenue for empowering OEP practitioners through increasing awareness of open education in general and OEP in particular.

The analysis reveals that both dimensions of variation capture two ways of participants' perception of empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness. Both dimensions emphasise the use of *meta-practices of openness as a means of OEP implementation to empower learners, educators, administrators, and researchers as OEP beneficiaries*.

5.5.4 Summary

Table 5.9 summarises the findings of Category 3, where OEP is perceived as empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness, which is implemented by OEP practitioners from learners, educators, administrators, and researchers. This category centres on the positive impact of OEP on

practitioners, encompassing learners, educators, administrators, and researchers. This empowerment stems from a deepened understanding of openness in education, fostered through discussions and engagement with open content and pedagogies.

Within this category, the structure of awareness comprises a thematic field and a margin of awareness. The thematic field revolves around the role of OEP practitioners and the foundational philosophy of open education. Practitioners, whether learners, educators, or administrators, actively contribute to open education projects, fostering their growth. The margin, on the other hand, touches upon higher education policies and inclusivity in the higher education landscape, factors that can influence the practice of OEP.

Category 3: OEP is perceived as empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness	
Meaning structure	Key Quotes
The practices of empowering practitioners who engage in OEP by enhancing their understanding of the concept of openness in education	“Enabling”, “Enhancing”, “Encouraging”, “Motivating”, “Fostering”, “Promoting”, “Strengthening”
Structure of awareness	
Theme: Empowerment through enhanced understanding	
Thematic field: Role of OEP practitioners, Open Education	
Margin: HE policies	
Dimensions of variation	
OEP implementation: Meta-practices of openness	
OEP beneficiaries: Learners, educators, administrators, and researchers	

Table 5.9: Summary of Category 3 of empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness

Furthermore, the dimensions of variation within Category 3 highlight two significant aspects. First, OEP Implementation emphasises meta-practices of openness that extend beyond the mere utilisation of open content and pedagogies. Practitioners engage in discussions and initiatives that promote the understanding and dissemination of OEP. Second, OEP Beneficiaries expand the circle of those who benefit from OEP to encompass learners, educators, administrators, and researchers.

Researchers, in particular, contribute to OEP by engaging in open scholarship, thus furthering the reach and impact of OEP.

In the next section, the fourth category of description will be discussed in the same structure as Category 3.

5.6 Category 4: Engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences

5.6.1 Meaning structure

The meaning structure section aims to delve into the meanings within Category 4. This section consists of two key components: “Engaging communities” and “Creating knowledge and exchanging experiences”, which collectively define the essence of this category.

Supported by relevant excerpts from the transcripts, the emphasis on OEP as *engaging communities* involves practices that actively engage broader educational communities beyond traditional classrooms or universities by fostering knowledge creation, encouraging collaboration and promoting the sharing of experiences within open and inclusive educational platforms. For example, *knowledge creation* implies practices of building open communities of practice beyond the classroom and learning management systems. Additionally, an example of *exchanging experiences* is sharing digital credentials and badges earned by OEP practitioners or inviting domain experts from the open community to a discussion with learners in an open platform.

Table 5.10 illustrates the meaning of the category of description, including the meanings of the *two parts* of the description itself. This includes some key quotes about *engaging communities*, as well as the practices on *open platforms* involved in creating knowledge and exchanging experiences.

Category 4: OEP is perceived as engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences	
Meaning of the category	
Practices of openly involving community engagement through the creation of knowledge and the exchange of experiences	
Engaging communities meaning	Practices quoted from transcripts
Collaboration in an open community beyond classroom and university	“Building”, “Communicating”, “Personalizing”, “Inviting”, “Practicing”, “Sharing”, “Opening”, “Immersing”, “Adopting”
Creating knowledge and exchanging experiences, meaning	Practices involved
The practices of generation and sharing of new knowledge collaboratively involving multiple stakeholders and sharing experiences among individuals or communities involved using <i>open platforms</i>	Building open communities of practice Building open platforms Adopting personalised learning Sharing immersive learning experiences

Table 5.10: Meaning structure of Category 4

Educators and academic administrators elaborate on the diverse practices of engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences. Among the transcripts, these practices of Category 4 appeared to be the least mentioned ones but the most sophisticated in terms of OEP vision and implementation, implying a high level of awareness in perceiving OEP by participants.

Descriptions of OEP in this category emphasise *building open communities of practice* to maximise openness for the benefit of learners. One participant framed this issue in the following way:

“For example, in the risks management course, we invite insurance experts to collaborate with students in class; this can be applied online, which is supposed to be much easier than in class. We are working on a project to develop the idea of online visits or to build a community of practice online for some important fields such as marketing and finance in order to exchange expertise between students, teachers, and the market.” A2

Moreover, descriptions also foster the importance of *building open platforms* for engaging communities and sharing knowledge beyond the LMS. This implies the effectiveness of such platforms in openly sharing and exchanging knowledge to engage communities and highlights the limitations of LMS in this regard. Two participants framed this issue in the following way:

“Inside LMS, an educator cannot share knowledge freely and easily with others unless they are part of the community or a colleague. However, if we think of OEP, we need to find a way to share content and activities using open platforms without limitations, such as creating a blog or a personal website or whatever people can access freely and easily. This idea by itself changes the participants’ perceptions of how OEP practices can open opportunities for them to share and generate knowledge.” A9

“So, we are not now talking about blackboard or LMS because it’s a closed learning environment and black boxes, we are talking about platforms that we can create and share knowledge and user experiences.” A4

Descriptions highlight the practices of *adopting personalised learning* as one way to engage communities in OEP beyond communicating on open platforms. This can be achieved through building professional profiles and sharing stories of educators and learners on open platforms. One participant highlights this issue in the following way:

“A modern OEP which enables students to build their professional profile by starting with micro-credentials and digital badges and to tell their stories. This can unlock careers for learners, promote HE institutions, and boost learners’ engagement through sharing. The main goal now is to reach personalised learning in which not only many platforms are open for learners and educators, but also personalised to their specific needs based on the data they share about themselves.” A4

Furthermore, descriptions underscore the practice of *sharing immersive learning experiences* as a means of engaging communities within OEP. For example, a community of practice is communicating and learning in an augmented or virtual reality environment. Also, another example of a community of practice working openly in a virtual laboratory. Two participants highlighted this issue in the following way:

“Today, my colleague and I are using the virtual labs to teach some programming courses. We are working on a virtual lab for statistics course.”

E7

“We also have some OEP with AR/VR where sets can collaborate and share data based on specific course design rather than using these sets for fun.”

The practices mentioned in the perceptions above are considered immersive learning experiences because they involve the use of virtual labs, Virtual Reality (VR), and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies to create highly engaging and interactive educational environments. The mention of these technologies indicates the use of technology to provide learners with immersive, hands-on experiences for learning some courses. This aligns with the notion of immersive experiences as it involves using virtual environments to facilitate learning. For example, when learners collaborate and share data in augmented or virtual reality settings, they are doing so within a digitally created environment. In these environments, learners often use digital representations of themselves, interact with 3D objects and environments, and engage in real-time interactions with peers. This sense of presence and interaction within a digitally constructed world creates an immersive learning experience.

In summary, the practices discussed in this section, including the excerpts from transcripts, collectively serve as a means for educators and academic administrators to engage communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences using some practices, such as building open communities of practice, building open platforms, adopting personalised learning, and sharing immersive learning

experiences. All these practices can better be achieved using open platforms. This discussion represents the referential aspects of Category 4.

5.6.2 Structure of awareness

As discussed in the previous section, the findings indicate that the meanings obtained from this category revolve around the practices of engagement through the creation of knowledge and sharing experiences. In this section, we will explore how these meanings are interrelated within this category and in the broader context, presenting them in a structural framework referred to as the structure of awareness.

Referring to Figure 5.5, the *theme* of Category 4 is engagement through the creation of knowledge and sharing experiences. This focus was discussed in detail in the previous section supported by some quotations from the transcripts.

The *thematic field* of this category encompasses two distinct aspects: a) Role of Community and b) Inclusivity in HE.

The *margin* of awareness within Category 4 encompassed one key aspect which is exposure to the public. This aspect concerns distractions in social media collaboration and anxiety from exposure to a wider audience.

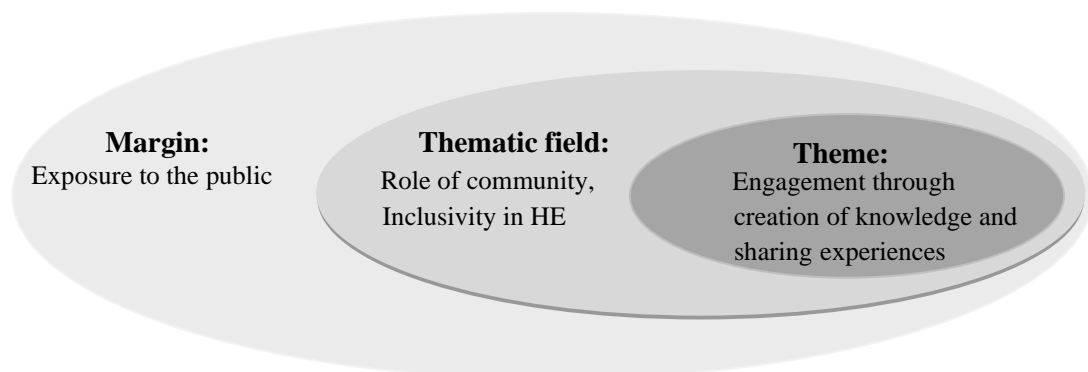


Figure 5.5: Structure of awareness of Category 4

Below are some clarifications supported by excerpts where participants focus on the aspects of the *thematic field* and the *margin* of Category 4 in turn.

Referring to Figure 5.4, the aspect *role of community* was thematised from the surrounding context of the participants' description of the theme of engagement through the creation of knowledge and sharing experiences. In this context, participants describe the role of community within OEP mainly in fostering the culture of openness in general and the OEP opportunities in specific, indicating that more collective efforts are needed in this direction, which has been led by open universities. Two participants highlighted this issue in the following ways:

“This vision of OEP needs to proceed in terms of culture because people need to be convinced by the idea to put more effort into learning the needed skills to participate in developing OER. Therefore, OEP is an evolving culture.”
A10

“OEP means any practices motivated by the idea of openness in Education. more efforts are needed to move beyond content. OEP is a term beyond OER and encompasses other openness-related initiatives such as open scholarship, open science, open data, and, most importantly, open universities. Indeed, many of the open universities are the pioneers that applied OEP much before the term has become popular.” A7

The second aspect of the thematic field concerns *inclusivity in HE*. Descriptions within this category underscore that engaging communities within OEP ensures inclusivity in HE where all individuals, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities, have equal access to educational opportunities and feel a sense of belonging within the academic community. Inclusivity in HE goes beyond access to content; it focuses on fostering practices where everyone, or every organisation, can thrive, contribute, and participate fully in all aspects of academic life. In this context, participants elaborated in describing the relevant practices of inclusivity in HE within OEP in the following ways:

“What encourages me the most is having a clear vision of providing education to everyone for free and believing that everyone has the right to equal educational opportunities. With the involvement of more stakeholders

in open education, such as administrators, governments, and the public, understanding open educational practices can facilitate collaboration and communication among these diverse groups. In fact, a conceptual design that considers open educational practices from multiple and unified dimensions can help ensure the availability of open, equitable, and effective education for all learners.” E2

“Open education is capable of reaching all students everywhere and delivering learning to everywhere for everybody in the easiest ways and many available ways.” A8

Inclusivity in HE also implies that open education has the potential to be a future global system that replaces traditional education, emphasising openness and accessibility in all aspects of learning. This aligns with the goal of inclusiveness in higher education, where educational opportunities are extended to a broader and more diverse population. One participant highlighted this issue in the following way:

“So, we are talking about openness in all the details of learning. Open education is a future global system. In fact, this is my view of open education from the day I started working at this university that one day, there will be such a thing as we have launched that will replace the traditional education system as if everything is open,” E8

Moving now to consider the *margin* of the structure of awareness of Category 4, an important aspect is *exposure to the public*. In this category, where OEP is seen as having the potential to involve participants from the broader open community, the descriptions bring attention to certain concerns. These concerns revolve around the potential for distractions during collaboration on social media platforms, given the vast and diverse audience and various interests. One participant framed this issue in the following ways:

“On social media, there are also many distractions that are not educational, so we need to implement our platform, which is open but dedicated to

education, to reduce restrictions within the educational environment. Distraction comes from Ads, irrelevant comments from non-learners, discussing issues not related to the course...etc.” A10

Furthermore, descriptions expressed anxiety about potential criticism when engaging with the public community and a lack of interest in being exposed to a wider audience. One participant described this issue in the following way:

“The most significant thing remains the fact that most people, students, and educators resist most things open...there is a resistance to being open, I suppose because one is putting oneself out in public, which could open up yourself to criticisms etc. Lack of interest and understanding would be the main challenge. I think people are too accustomed to being closed, private, and not working openly.” E10

In summary, as presented in Figure 5.5, the structure of awareness of Category 4 consists of three main parts, each featuring its relevant structural aspects and supported by some excerpts from transcripts. Collectively, these parts and aspects construct a hierarchy that helps in understanding the varying levels of perceptions that revolve around the central *theme* of engagement through the creation of knowledge and sharing experiences. *Role of community* and *Inclusivity in HE*, are aspects forming the *thematic field* and collectively underpin the contextual background of these perceptions. Additionally, the margin of the structure of awareness encompasses the aspect of *Exposure to the Public*, representing peripheral perceptions.

5.6.3 Dimensions of variation

This section explains the distinct aspects of both dimensions within this category as shown in Table 5.11. In the context of Category 4 where OEP is perceived as engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences, the dimension of OEP implementation focuses on *open platforms*, whereas the dimension of OEP beneficiaries focuses on *open community*.

Category 4: Engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences	
Dimensions of variation	Aspects of Category 4
OEP implementation:	Open platforms
OEP beneficiaries:	Open community

Table 5.11: Dimensions of variation of Category 4

5.6.3.1 OEP Implementation

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP implementation conception of Category 4 is *open platforms*, where OEP practitioners engage in practices such as building open communities of practice, adopting personalised learning, and sharing immersive learning experiences. Descriptions within this dimension concern implementing OEP using *open standards*, which provide the technical foundation for creating open and interoperable educational platforms and systems. By adhering to these standards using some guidelines, OEP implementation can ensure that educational content, pedagogy, and technology are accessible, shareable, traceable, and adaptable, ultimately promoting open and inclusive learning practices. One participant elaborated in describing this issue as the following:

“Open in terms of anybody can connect to services, can take it and contribute on it, not only to content but to platforms...so you can relate to standards, build your own kind of solution, and then you can even build it further or connect other services or other people to it...practitioners need to follow international standards for sharing user experiences within those online activities such as XAPI which enables you to capture and track user experiences in multiple online environments and platforms...content is not limited to course material but includes collected data from dashboards about experiences that matter, recording activities and delivering data that is quantifiable, sharable, and trackable and measuring KPIs using Individual Competency Index (ICI) a more organised way of sharing experiences where

competencies are classified based on basic, intermediate, advanced and expert.” A4

This example from the transcripts implies the participants’ advanced understanding of the OEP implementation practices within the context of engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences. The subsequent section delves into the discussion about the beneficiaries of those practices.

5.6.3.2 OEP Beneficiaries

One dimension of variation inherent in the OEP beneficiaries’ conception of Category 4 is an *open community*, which means the beneficiaries are the community of HE in general and not limited to specific practitioners within a university. The significance of this aspect is exemplified through some excerpts presented in this section.

Descriptions within this dimension of *OEP beneficiaries* emphasise openness in engaging with the community, which encompasses learners, administrators, HE stakeholders, designers, researchers, private and public sectors, and government entities. Participants’ perceptions highlighted that several benefits emerge from creating knowledge and sharing experiences among these beneficiaries. They emphasise the promotion of lifelong and personalised learning. Additionally, perceptions show that these practices of knowledge creation and experience sharing serve as an incentive for others, such as researchers and lifelong learners, to become involved in OEP. Furthermore, perceptions underscore that these practices can potentially create job opportunities for individuals who actively engage in these open practices. Participants described these issues as follows:

“The practices we adopted from day 1 that are based on urging the students to be independent learners, starting from our rhetoric to them in our home-made curricula, and ending with our graduate positions in the market.” A2

“Many communities exist for OEP. Such as Open EdTech, the community aims at implementing open educational technology so that learners, educators, and organisations can share and contribute to knowledge on an open infrastructure...this can engage learners and motivate them to learn and to get better job opportunities or incentives.” A4

“We need them to think about OEP as a way of thinking, a way of working, a way of trying, regardless of the used technology. This idea by itself changes the perceptions of how OEP practices can open opportunities for them to share and generate knowledge.” A9

“Therefore, if OEP succeeds, the returns from those practices will be incredible.” E7

The analysis reveals that both dimensions of variation capture two ways of participants’ perception of engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences. Both dimensions emphasise the use of *open platforms* as a means of *OEP implementation* and for engaging the open community within HE as the *OEP beneficiaries*.

5.6.4 Summary

Table 5.12 summarises the findings of Category 4, where OEP is perceived as engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences, using open platforms for open community. Participants’ perceptions emphasised that engaging communities in OEP involves practices that extend beyond traditional education settings, fostering collaboration, knowledge creation, and experience sharing within open and inclusive educational platforms. Moreover, perceptions highlighted that creating knowledge and exchanging experiences within this category encompasses practices like building open communities of practice, creating open platforms, adopting personalised learning, and sharing immersive learning experiences. These practices are perceived as sophisticated and aligned with a forward-looking vision of OEP.

The structural aspects of Category 4 include two main aspects within the thematic field: *Role of Community* and *Inclusivity in HE*. The role of the community is perceived as pivotal in fostering openness and expanding OEP opportunities. Inclusivity in higher education is also highlighted in the perceptions, ensuring equal access to educational opportunities regardless of background or identity.

Within Category 4, participants expressed concerns about *Exposure to the public*, particularly related to distractions in social media collaboration and anxiety about potential criticism when engaging with the broader public community.

Category 4: OEP is perceived as engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences	
Meaning structure	Key Quotes
Practices of openly involving community engagement through the creation of knowledge and the exchange of experiences	“Building”, “Communicating”, “Personalizing”, “Inviting”, “Practicing”, “Sharing”, “Opening”, “Immersing”, “Adopting”
Structure of awareness	
Theme: Engagement through the creation of knowledge and sharing experiences	
Thematic field: Role of community, Inclusivity in HE	
Margin: Exposure to the public	
Dimensions of variation	
OEP implementation: Open platforms	
OEP beneficiaries: Open community	

Table 5.12: Summary of Category 4 of engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences

In terms of dimensions, OEP implementation in Category 4 focuses on *Open Platforms*. These platforms, aligned with open standards, enable practices like building open communities, personalised learning, and immersive experiences.

The dimension of OEP beneficiaries emphasises an *Open Community*. This includes a broad spectrum of stakeholders beyond universities, encompassing learners,

administrators, researchers, and various sectors. Perceptions highlighted that engaging in this open community promotes lifelong learning, motivation, and potential job opportunities.

5.7 Summary of the findings

Table 5.13 serves as a concise summary of the key findings derived from this research project. It organises the analysis into three main sections: meaning structure, structure of awareness, and dimensions of variation. These sections help to illustrate the holistic participants' perceptions of OEP within an open university setting across the four categories of descriptions in an attempt to answer the RQ of this project.

Meaning Structure: This section provides an overview of the central *meaning* of each category of description and delves into the specific meanings obtained from its constituent parts. These meanings represent the referential aspects of each category, offering insights into how participants perceive OEP.

Structure of Awareness: In this section, the structural aspects of each category are presented. It includes the core *theme* of each category, expanded by the *thematic field* and the *margin*. These structural aspects provide a deeper understanding of how participants conceptualise and relate to OEP within each category.

Dimensions of Variation: The final section introduces two dimensions of variation: *OEP implementation* and *OEP beneficiaries*. These dimensions highlight the unique aspects emphasised by participants within each category. They also illustrate how participants' perceptions of these dimensions change across all categories.

By organising the findings in this way, Table 5.13 offers a comprehensive overview of the diverse ways in which educators and academic administrators within an open university context perceive and engage with OEP.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter presents the findings of this project, which was conducted using phenomenography. The analysis revealed four categories of descriptions representing four qualitatively different ways of perceiving the phenomenon of OEP in HE within open university settings.

Category 1 highlights the dynamic nature of OEP, where educators adapt and customise content to benefit learners as course participants within diverse educational contexts.

Category 2 explores how OEP fosters collaboration and engagement among learners through practical activities using open pedagogies. It emphasises the role of educators and learners, the diversity of pedagogies, and the need for professional development while also addressing resistance to change. The two dimensions of variation highlight the implementation of OEP through open pedagogies and the active involvement of learners in the learning process.

Category 3 underscores how OEP is perceived as a means of empowering practitioners including learners, educators, administrators, and researchers—by enhancing their understanding of openness. This category emphasises the positive impact of OEP, which arises from engaging with open content and pedagogies, fostering a deeper understanding of openness in education.

Category 4 highlights the significance of engaging broader communities through OEP, promoting knowledge creation and experience sharing. The advanced practices discussed here demonstrate a commitment to open platforms and inclusivity in higher education.

The four categories of descriptions represent evolving, inclusive, and holistic perceptions of OEP, where each category encapsulates the insights of the previous one. In Category 1, there is a foundational awareness of OEP, primarily focused on providing learners access to learning materials as course participants. Category 2

builds upon this foundation by recognising OEP's role in enhancing teaching and learning methods, thereby expanding the scope of awareness and inclusivity. In Category 3, this understanding deepens further as OEP empowers practitioners through a richer understanding of openness in education, continuing the trajectory of inclusivity from Category 2. Category 4 demonstrates the highest level of awareness, where OEP is regarded as a means to engage diverse communities, collaboratively create knowledge, and openly share experiences. This progressive model underscores the evolving recognition of OEP's potential, with each category being inclusive of the previous one. It reflects a holistic approach fostering innovation, empowerment, and inclusivity within higher education.

In the next chapter, an in-depth exploration of the relationship between the categories of description will be discussed. This exploration aims to provide insights into how these findings address the main research question of this project. Additionally, we will delve into how these findings contribute to the research areas of OEP, outlined in the literature review chapter.

Open educational practices are perceived as:			
Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Recontextualising open resources and methods	Collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities	Empowering OEP practitioners through enhancing their understanding of openness	Engaging communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences
Meaning structure			
Meaning of the category			
The practices of localising open content to match course objectives and suit diverse educational contexts, particularly within an open university environment.	The practices of collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies for university-wide participants.	The practices of empowering practitioners who engage in OEP by enhancing their understanding of the concept of openness in education.	Practices of openly involving community engagement through the creation of knowledge and the exchange of experiences
Recontextualising meaning:	Collaborating and engaging learners meaning:	Empowering OEP practitioners meaning:	Engaging communities meaning:
Localising	Educators and learners work together and contribute to the teaching and learning process collectively.	Empowering learners, educators, administrators, and researchers as OEP practitioners.	Collaboration in an open community beyond classroom and university
Open resources meaning:	Pragmatic activities meaning:	Enhancing their understanding of openness meaning:	Creating knowledge and exchanging experiences meaning:
Open content	Open pedagogies	Enhancing awareness of OEP practitioners through Meta-practices of openness	The practices of generation and sharing of new knowledge collaboratively involving multiple stakeholders and sharing experiences among individuals or communities involved using open platforms
Methods involved:	Practices involved:	Practices involved:	Practices involved:
Teaching methods: - Incorporating open content into teaching - Matching course objectives Learning methods: - Shift from teacher-centred to learner-centered approach Content creation methods:	- OER co-creation - Learners' contribution - Open teaching and learning - Open assessment - Open collaboration	- Open scholarship - Discussing openness-related topics	- Building open communities of practice - Building open platforms - Adopting personalised learning - Sharing immersive learning experiences

- Multimedia-enhanced - Professional production Course delivery methods: - Digital and open			
Structure of awareness			
Theme:			
localising and delivering open content by educators	Collaborating and engaging learners through open pedagogies	Empowerment through enhanced understanding	Engagement through the creation of knowledge and sharing of experiences
Thematic field:			
Role of educators and content diversity	Role of educators and learners, diversity of pedagogies	Role of OEP practitioners, Open education	Role of community, Inclusivity in HE
Margin:			
Professional development, content quality, and workload.	Professional development and change resistance	HE policies	Exposure to the public
Dimensions of variation			
OEP implementation			
Open Content (OER, MOOC, Videos)	Open pedagogies	Meta-practices of openness	Open platforms
OEP beneficiaries			
Learners as course participants	Learners and educators as university-wide participants	Learners, educators, administrators, and researchers	Open community

Table 5.13: Summary of the findings

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

My thesis aims to explore the variations in educators' and academic administrators' perceptions of open educational practices in higher education. In this chapter, therefore, I discuss the significance of my research outcomes as presented in Chapter 5. Section 6.2 discusses how the outcome space of this thesis answers my research question by exploring the variations in perceiving OEP by the participants of this research. In Section 6.3, I discuss the dimensions of those variations in perceiving OEP. Section 6.4 argues how my research outcomes contribute to the themes of literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and Section 6.5 concludes the key points of this chapter.

The analysis of this chapter involved a thorough examination of my research outcomes to address the research question. The central focus of my study, aimed at exploring the diverse perspectives on OEP among those tasked with its implementation, guided a concentrated examination of their comprehension of the term OEP. My emphasis extended to scrutinising their perceptions regarding its implementation, as well as their roles, the roles of their peers, and the beneficiaries of such implementation. The overarching objective was to contribute to the literature on OEP, discussed in Chapter 2, by presenting an integrated and holistic understanding and implementation of OEP by HE practitioners, with the ultimate aim of benefiting the HE community and maximising openness in HE. This strategic focus underscores the primary goal of OEP within the specific context and broader landscape of open education.

In the concluding remarks of Chapter 5, it is evident that the research participants exhibit an evolving, inclusive, and holistic perception of OEP, encapsulated in the outcome space of this thesis. Their awareness of OEP is foundational and centered on providing access to learning materials for course participants. This foundational understanding serves as a springboard for recognising OEP's broader role in

enriching teaching and learning methods, thereby broadening awareness and inclusivity. As practitioners delve deeper into OEP, it becomes a source of empowerment, offering a more profound comprehension of openness in education. This evolving understanding culminates in the highest level of awareness, wherein OEP is seen as a tool to engage diverse communities, foster collaborative knowledge creation, and openly share experiences. This progressive model underscores the evolving recognition of OEP's potential, with each tier of understanding building upon the previous one, reflecting a holistic approach that promotes innovation, empowerment, and inclusivity within higher education.

6.2 Variations in perceiving OEP

This section addresses the research question of this study, which aims at exploring variations in collective perceptions of open educational practices in an open university. As outlined in Chapter 1, the research question guiding this study is *“What are the qualitative variations in the perceptions of educators and academic administrators of Open Educational Practices in an open university?”*.

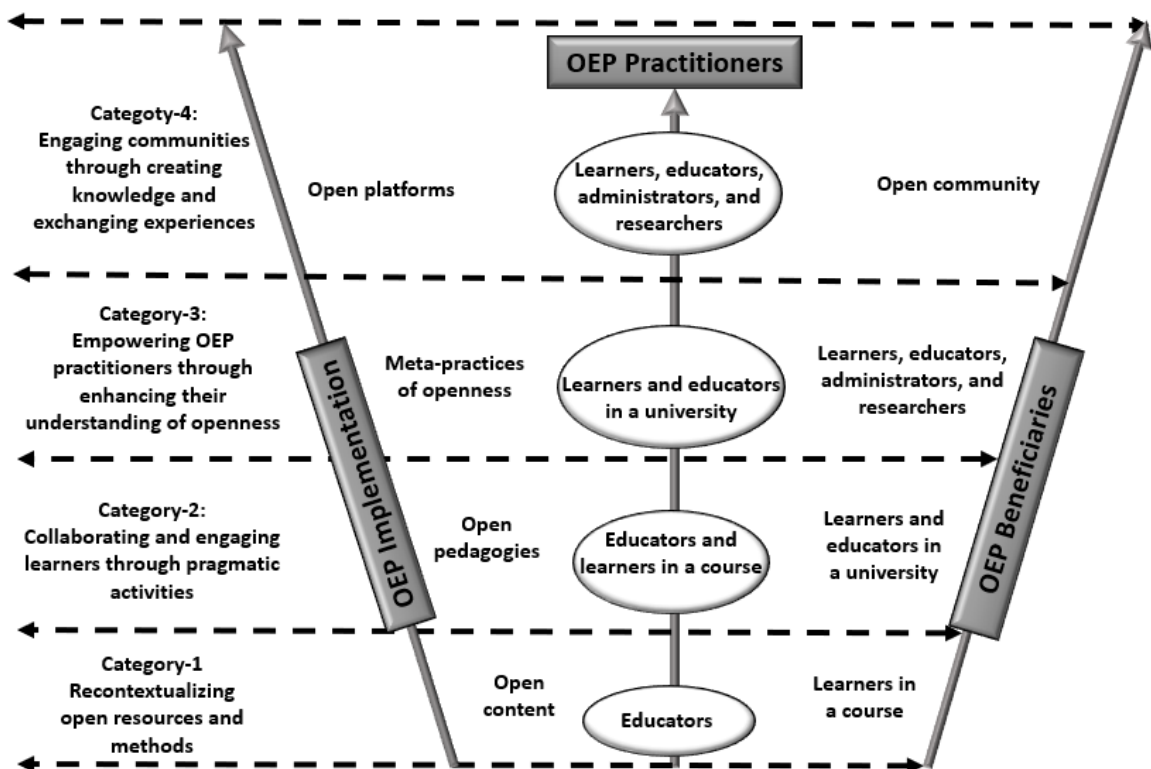


Figure 6.1: Variation in the perceptions of OEP meaning, beneficiaries, and implementation

The data analysis led to the identification of four distinct categories of description, each offering a unique perspective on the perception of OEP. These categories differ in their interpretations of OEP in terms of practitioners, beneficiaries, and implementation in which these OEPs are put into practice. These categories do not differ in a binary or contrasting manner but rather exhibit a progression, signifying an expanding awareness as we move from the lowest to the highest category of description, as presented in Figure 6.1. Together, these categories form a comprehensive view of how OEP is experienced and understood by the participants within an open university environment, as presented in Figure 5.1 of the outcome space. Figure 6.1 illustrates a hierarchical representation of these four categories, showcasing the variations in participants' interpretations of OEP between categories. This hierarchy encompasses the *meanings of OEP*, the *beneficiaries of OEP*, and the specific aspects of *OEP implementation* that characterise each category.

As illustrated in Figure 6.1, the categories of descriptions are systematically organised within a hierarchical structure. Each category is closely linked to the phenomenon of OEP, offering unique insights into distinct ways of perceiving it. These categories establish a logical relationship with one another, often in a hierarchical manner. The goal is to maintain simplicity, using as few categories as necessary to capture the essential variations in the data effectively. These categories are built upon the most distinguishing descriptions that differentiate one perception from another, forming a hierarchy that represents increasing levels of perceiving the phenomenon of OEP. This hierarchy among the categories reveals their interrelated nature, demonstrating how some categories encompass others. It is important to note that this hierarchy does not imply value judgments of better or worse understanding but rather highlights the inclusivity of certain categories over others, forming a hierarchal inclusiveness (Åkerlind, 2023; Bowden & Walsh, 2000; Marton & Booth, 1997). This structure is visually depicted in Figure 6.1, featuring three vertically directed axes: OEP practitioners, OER beneficiaries, and OEP implementation. As we ascend the hierarchy to higher categories of description, the category of description encompasses an expanded perception about each of these axes, signifying a broader population of OEP beneficiaries and OEP practitioners, as well as more effective and open practices of OEP implementation at the culminating Category 4.

Applying these principles of the formulation of categories of description and the relationships between them to Figure 6.1 of this project, the following relationships emerge regarding the perceptions of the OEP phenomenon:

6.3 Dimensions of variations in perceiving OEP

Chapter 5 of this study comprehensively examines the research outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. The figure delineates the four categories of description, the structure of awareness within each category, and the dual dimensions of variation, namely OEP implementation and OEP beneficiaries. In this section, the subsequent analysis seeks to explore the diverse dimensions uncovered in the findings and clarify the qualitative variations, addressing the research question that explicitly probes into the nuanced qualitative perspectives on OEP as perceived by the research participants.

6.3.1 OEP beneficiaries' dimension

The axis labelled “OEP beneficiaries” in Figure 6.1 illustrates the variation in individuals or groups within the HE community who are perceived to benefit from open educational practices, as perceived by the participants of this research. As we ascend the axis to the higher categories of description, The perceptions of OEP beneficiaries expand to encompass a broader population within higher education, extending beyond the classroom to embrace the open community.

In Category 1, as perceived by the research participants, OEP beneficiaries are primarily learners in a course. However, in Category 2, the scope of perceptions widens to include educators as university-wide beneficiaries. Progressing to Category 3, OEP beneficiaries are perceived to encompass not only learners and educators but also administrators and researchers. Finally, in Category 4, OEP beneficiaries are perceived to expand even further to encompass the open community, which includes learners, educators, administrators, and researchers. According to the perceptions from the research participants, this shift in dimension towards inclusivity and the expanding population of OEP beneficiaries implies that

participants' deep understanding of the meaning of OEP in terms of its beneficiaries and that it is characterised by a high level of flexibility, accessibility, and openness in the people who benefit from these open practices.

6.3.2 OEP practitioners' dimension

The axis labelled "OEP practitioners" in Figure 6.1 illustrates the variation in individuals or groups within the HE community who are perceived to engage in implementing open educational practices as described within each category and as perceived by the participants of this study. As we progress along this axis towards the higher categories of description, the cohort of OEP practitioners is perceived by the research participants to structurally broaden to encompass the beneficiaries identified in the previous category. Effectively, those who benefited in the lower category now become practitioners of OEP in the higher categories.

In Category 1, the research participants perceive OEP practitioners as primarily represented by *educators*. However, as we transition to Category 2, perceptions indicate that this group extends to include both educators and learners within a specific course, underscoring the active involvement and contribution of learners in implementing OEP. Advancing to Category 3, OEP practitioners are perceived by the research participants to encompass not only educators and learners within a course but also learners and educators on a university-wide scale. Finally, in Category 4, the perceptions reveal that OEP practitioners encompass administrators and researchers, in addition to learners and educators. As perceived by the research participants, this expansive shift in the population of OEP practitioners and the corresponding evolution of their roles indicate a more profound and all-encompassing understanding of the roles played by OEP practitioners in an open university setting.

6.3.3 OEP implementation dimension

The axis labelled "OEP implementation" in Figure 6.1 illustrates the variation in the resources, practices, and technologies employed by practitioners, as perceived by the

research participants when they engage in implementing open educational practices. As we ascend the axis to the higher categories of description, perceptions show a broader spectrum of open practices being integrated into OEP implementation, beyond open content until open platforms.

In Category 1, OEP is perceived as primarily implemented using resources sourced from open content, such as OER, MOOCs, and videos. In Category 2, the implementation of OEP is perceived to involve the utilisation of open pedagogies, which encompasses pedagogical practices that leverage open content and extend beyond it. Advancing to Category 3, perceptions of the research participants show both open content and open pedagogies are harnessed to implement meta-practices of openness, which aim to raise awareness of openness among groups in HE. Finally, in Category 4, the perceptions reveal that OEP reaches its summit of implementation through open platforms. Here, all these resources and practices from open content, open pedagogies, and meta-practices of openness are perceived to be interconnected through open platforms, facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experiences. This category indicates the highest level of perceptions regarding OEP implementation among the research participants.

6.3.4 Categories of description dimension

The black dashed horizontal lines depicted in Figure 6.1 illustrate the perceptions of the interplay between OEP beneficiaries, OEP implementation, and OEP practitioners within each category. As we move horizontally in each category, we gain insights into how OEP implementation is perceived by the research participants concerning its practitioners and beneficiaries.

In Category 1, OEP is perceived as relying on open content, which is implemented by educators and designed for the benefit of learners within a specific course. As we progress to Category 2, OEP is perceived as relying on open pedagogies, extending beyond open content, and involving the active participation of both educators and learners, benefiting not only course-specific learners but also learners and educators throughout the university. Advancing to Category 3, OEP is perceived by the

research participants to be rooted in meta-practices of openness, which utilise both open pedagogies and open content from the previous categories. These meta-practices are seen to be implemented by educators and learners across the university and are intended to benefit a wider range of individuals, including learners, educators, administrators, and researchers within the higher education community, shifting towards reliance on open platforms. In this last category, OEP is perceived by the research participants as implemented collaboratively by learners, educators, administrators, and researchers, and its benefits extend to the broader open community within higher education. This representation of perceptions across the horizontal axes within each category highlights that the dimensions of variation between the aspects of the OEP phenomenon are not confined solely to structural variations across categories but also encompass nuanced referential meanings within each category itself.

6.4 Contributing to the research area of OEP

In this section, I discuss how the research outcome of my study builds on and contributes to the three themes of the literature review in Chapter 2:

- **Theme 1:** Definitions of OEP
- **Theme 2:** The relationship between OEP and OER
- **Theme 3:** The roles of OEP practitioners

In relation to Theme 1, this study contributes by drawing attention to the collective perceptions of the qualitative ways of understanding OEP from practitioners tasked with its implementation, adding different insights to the researchers who write about OEP definitions. In Theme 2, the study's contribution lies in the exploration of OEP implementation, specifically delving into the interplay between OEP and OER as collectively perceived by those who are experienced in OER and asked to implement OEP, adding holistic insights to the integration between existing resources and practices under OEP. In Theme 3, the study's contribution extends to exploring participants' perceptions of their roles, the roles of their peers, and the beneficiaries

of OEP, adding collaborative insights into how they think OEP can enhance openness in HE.

In summary, the overall discussion of this research contribution revolves around the practitioners' perceptions of the understandings of OEP, the implementation of OEP including the resources and practices, and the people involved in OEP, whether the roles of practitioners or the nature of its beneficiaries. In the coming sections, a list of contributions will be discussed within each theme.

In general, the three themes from the literature provide valuable insights into a particular educational phenomenon in HE, such as openness, OEP, and OER. However, my analysis of the three themes in the literature highlighted that the prevailing trend across these themes from the literature is a preponderance of non-empirical studies on OEP, often focused on formulating theoretical frameworks and definitions without reference to the understandings or perceptions of practitioners.

For all three themes of the literature, therefore, the overarching contribution of this study is to delve into the collective qualitative perspectives of research participants, exploring various ways they understand OEP and its relevant aspects within the context of an open university. In the subsequent sections, I link the presented findings in the outcome space in Figure 5.1, the summary in Table 5.13, and the dimensions of variation in perceiving OEP in Figure 6.1 to my specific contributions to these three literature themes.

In total, this thesis has nine contributions to the literature of OEP. Three contributions to the theme of *definitions of OEP*, three contributions to the theme of *the relationship between OEP and OER*, and three contributions to the theme of *the roles of OEP practitioners*. These contributions will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

6.4.1 Contributing to Theme 1: Definitions of OEP

My findings make three contributions to the area of literature on the definitions of OEP by exploring the following understandings:

- 5. Pragmatic understanding of OEP through practitioners' perspectives:** My findings emphasise the importance of incorporating practitioners' perspectives, offering insights into how those actively engaged in OEP interpret the concept.
- 6. Holistic Understanding of OEP:** My findings emphasise a more comprehensive understanding of OEP, as perceived by the research participants, moving beyond narrow or overly broad conceptualisations of OEP.
- 7. Nuanced understanding of OEP dimensions beyond content:** My findings expand the breadth of knowledge on various aspects of OEP, as perceived by the research participants, offering a richer tapestry of insights into the multifaceted nature of OEP.

In each of the subsections below, I will discuss each contribution by highlighting its meaning, its relation to the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2, how it arises from my findings, and its importance to researchers and OEP practitioners.

6.4.1.1 Contribution 1: Pragmatic understanding of OEP through practitioners' perspectives

This contribution underscores how the research participants interpret the meaning of OEP in practical ways based on their real experiences in working at an open university and the achievable outcomes of their actions. Rather than adhering to theoretical or idealistic principles, the research participants understand OEP as applicable to be applied in various contexts such as working with open content such as OER, utilising the available resources and platforms, and collaborating to engage people in OEP. This pragmatic understanding emphasises the importance of

practicality and real-world effectiveness in the way that those engaged in OEP interpret the term.

In terms of the literature review, studies within Theme 1 concern formulating detailed definitions and theoretical frameworks of OEP, either within content or beyond, as I discussed in Section 2.2. My criticism of these studies in that section was that they lack real understanding of OEP from those undertaking it in practice. I underscored that there is a need for more practical understanding, not through the introduction of new definitions and theoretical frameworks, but by exploring how practitioners, whose perspectives are often absent in the literature, collectively interpret the term. For example, the study by Huang, Tlili, et al. (2020) lists more than ten definitions from the literature of OEP. These definitions are described by Czerniewicz et al. (2017) as “varied and sometimes contested definitions of OEP” (p. 83). With regard to this theme, my argument was that referring to real practitioners and asking them about their understanding of OEP could contribute to these contested definitions and to the debate of understanding OEP within or beyond content.

This understanding of OEP I found is different from the literature because it sheds light on the lived experiences, interpretations, and practices of those undertaking OEP in practice. For example, in Section 5.3 of the findings chapter, I found that the research participants perceive OEP as a means of recontextualising open resources and methods. The practices associated with this pragmatic understanding of OEP are summarised in Table 5.3. These practices highlighted by the research participants encompass OEP as offering various ways for educators to localise and incorporate open content into their teaching practices, embracing learner-centred approaches, and utilising multimedia-enhanced, professionally produced content delivered openly and digitally to their learners. Another example of pragmatic understanding I found is that the research participants perceive OEP as a means of collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities, which I discussed in my findings in Section 5.4 of the second category of description. The practices associated with this pragmatic understanding of OEP are summarised in Table 5.6. These practices highlighted by the research participants encompass OEP as offering various ways for educators to engage learners through pragmatic activities using open pedagogies like co-creating

OER, open teaching and learning, open assessment, and open collaboration. This pragmatic understanding emphasises the importance of educators and learners collaborating effectively and employing diverse pedagogical approaches to enhance learning. There are two more pragmatic understandings I found in the third and fourth categories of description, which I discussed previously in the rest of the findings chapter and which are included under this contribution.

This important understanding is missing from the literature, and I found it by talking to the research participants about how they perceive OEP in practice. This contribution is important because it is based on a practitioner-centric lens, offering a practical firsthand account of how OEP is perceived, interpreted, and applied in real-world educational settings, rather than traditional, often theoretical, perspectives on OEP definitions, as I discussed in Theme 1 of the literature review chapter.

6.4.1.2 Contribution 2: Holistic understanding of OEP

The second contribution to the theme of literature on definitions of OEP is the exploration of a holistic understanding of OEP. This contribution underscores the dynamic nature of OEP, advocating for a holistic understanding that surpasses conventional content-focused definitions. It emphasises how OEP's potential extends far beyond established frameworks, embracing diverse practices such as open pedagogies and collaborative knowledge creation. Derived from phenomenographic exploration, this perspective reveals the evolutionary trajectory of OEP, shedding light on its transformative impact within higher education. By broadening the discourse beyond content-centric approaches, this contribution offers invaluable insights into fostering innovation and empowerment in the realm of open education.

In terms of the literature review, studies within Theme 1 concern OEP as practices rooted within content, as I argued in Section 2.2.1. This perspective of understanding OEP within content is exemplified by frameworks like the 5R framework (reusing, remixing, retaining, revising, and redistributing) applied to educational content (Ehlers & Conole, 2010; Wiley, 2014, March 5; Wiley & Hilton III, 2018). My criticism of these studies in that section was that they offer relatively narrow

perspectives that limit the potential of OEP to such definitions and frameworks of content-based approaches. I argued in Section 2.2.1 that talking to OEP practitioners is valuable in terms of understanding how they perceive such dominant content-based approaches of OEP and other approaches that might come from them.

This holistic understanding of OEP I found arises from the outcome space of this thesis shown in Figure 5.1 in the findings chapter. This outcome space consists of four categories of descriptions, each representing a unique understanding of OEP by the research participants. For example, in the first category, participants are aware of such an approach of content based in the early stages of OEP. The participants' awareness gets broader in subsequent categories in a way that goes beyond content-based approach to practices such as open pedagogies, practices of enhancing awareness, and practices of open platforms in the fourth category, where OEP is seen as a means to engage diverse communities, collaboratively create knowledge, and openly share experiences. This evolving and holistic understanding of OEP, with each category building on the insights of the previous one, represents wide perspectives of OEP beyond content and contributes to these studies that are dominant in the literature of understanding OEP within the content-based approach, presented in Section 2.2.1.

This important understanding is missing from the literature, and I found it by talking to practitioners while they were elaborating on their previous experiences of content-based approach in describing OEP. This holistic understanding is important because it underscores wide perspectives not limited to content that might benefit researchers and practitioners interested in understanding OEP.

It is important to note that the research methodology I employed, phenomenography, played a crucial role in reaching this holistic understanding of OEP, as presented in the categories of description that constitute the outcome space of this thesis. Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 6.1, this exploration using phenomenography contributes to unveiling some dimensions in which this holistic and inclusive understanding may vary. The nuanced and varied perspectives revealed through this exploration enhance the overall comprehension of OEP, contributing to a more encompassing and insightful view of its various dimensions.

6.4.1.3 Contribution 3: Nuanced understanding of OEP dimensions beyond content

The third contribution to the theme of literature on definitions of OEP delves into the practical dimensions of OEP beyond content, offering tangible guidance for practitioners seeking to embrace its diverse facets. It acknowledges the ongoing debate regarding OEP's conceptualisation, advocating for a comprehensive approach that transcends mere content-based frameworks. Through engagement with research participants, this perspective illuminates the interconnectedness between various dimensions of OEP, providing actionable strategies for adopting open pedagogy, scholarship, and collaboration. By bridging theory with practice, this contribution paves the way for practitioners to navigate the complexities of open education, fostering a more nuanced and adaptable approach to OEP implementation.

In terms of the literature review, I discussed in Section 2.2.2 that some studies expand the understanding of OEP beyond content, such as the mentioned dimensions and various other forms of openness dimensions in HE (Andrade et al., 2011; Cronin, 2017; Havemann, 2016; Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018; Naidu, 2016). I argued in the same section that the ongoing scholarly debate revolves around the question of whether open practices should be conceptualised solely as content-based practices or as a comprehensive approach to enhancing openness and applicability across diverse educational contexts in HE. My criticism of these studies in that section was that they ambiguously propose broad definitions of OEP beyond content that offers limited practical guidance from practitioners. I concluded that talking to OEP practitioners is insightful in terms of how they perceive the meanings and the implementation of such dimensions of OEP in HE.

This nuanced understanding of OEP I found arises from the intricate tapestry woven by participants in connecting aspects within and beyond content, as presented in Figure 5.1 of the outcome space in the findings chapter. For example, the research participants demonstrated, in the first category of descriptions, a content-based approach, recontextualising open content and ensuring learner accessibility. However, their understanding expands in subsequent categories, encompassing open pedagogy, open scholarship, and open collaboration. The research participants

transcended specific definitions or frameworks in the literature and emphasised interconnected relationships between various elements. Their guidance extends beyond a content-based focus, offering practical insights into embracing open pedagogy and other dimensions, contributing significantly to the broader literature on OEP, especially studies addressing OEP beyond content.

This nuanced understanding is important because it significantly broadens knowledge about various facets of OEP, as perceived by the research participants. It highlighted the ways they reconciled the established content-based approach with the emerging approach of OEP beyond content. It also avoids the pitfalls of being overly narrow within content or excessively broad beyond it. This contribution is particularly valuable for practitioners and researchers entrenched in a content-based openness approach, offering insights and pathways for extending their expertise into broader dimensions of OEP. It acts as a bridge, fostering a more holistic and adaptable understanding of OEP that can benefit those aiming to diversify their practices within the realm of open education.

6.4.2 Contributing to Theme 2: The relationship between OEP and OER

In addition to the three previous contributions to Theme 1, my findings have three contributions to Theme 2 of the literature on *the relationship between OEP and OER* by exploring the following understandings:

8. Appreciating the role of OER as foundational for implementing OEP: My findings emphasise the foundational aspects of OER when implementing OEP by the research participants, offering insights into how OER principles underpin and influence the broader implementation of open practices.

9. Highlighting how OER and OEP frameworks are dynamically integrated when implementing OEP: My findings emphasise a practitioner-centric, integrative approach to OEP implementation, highlighting a more comprehensive understanding of OEP beyond narrow OER perspectives. Moreover, it delves into the dynamics of transitioning between OEP and OER, elucidating the intricate

interplay between these two dimensions of open practices in educational settings, as perceived by the research participants.

10. An understanding of OEP implementation as platform-oriented rather than content-centric: My findings emphasise the exploration of OEP implementation beyond open content, encompassing open platforms. This expands the scope of open practices, considering a broader range of educational elements beyond traditional content-based approaches.

In each of the subsections below, I will discuss the details of each contribution.

6.4.2.1 Contribution 4: Appreciating the role of OER as foundational for implementing OEP.

This contribution to Theme 2 of the literature on the relationship between OEP and OER underscores that the research participants perceive the implementation of OEP based on OER as the elemental underpinning of OEP practices, appreciating the pivotal role of OER in shaping and influencing the navigation into the broader landscape of OEP.

In terms of the literature, studies within Theme 2 concern the implementation of OEP, whether within OER or beyond, as I discussed in Section 2.3. My criticism of studies concerning OEP within OER in Section 2.3.1 was that they limit the implementation of OEP to OER frameworks which concern content access and dissemination. I underscored in the section that there is a need for more understandings of OEP implementation from practitioners who have been long working with OER and are aware of its theoretical and practical basis. My analysis of this literature raised intriguing questions about how they view OEP in relation to their established OER practices. Do they see OEP as an integral part of the continuum of open practices, an extension of their OER initiatives, or an entirely distinct approach?

This understanding of appreciating the role of OER as foundational for implementing OEP contradicts the perspective of implementing OEP within OER in the literature and considers OER as a foundational step within OEP implementation. For example, in Section 5.3 of the findings chapter, I found that the research participants utilised their experiences of OER in the first stage of implementing OEP and went in their perceptions beyond the confines of OER, contributing to such limitations exist in this literature in Section 2.3.1.

This contribution I found is important because it highlights how the collective experiences of OER by the research participants are utilized in the early stages of implementing OEP and employs such collective experiences to move beyond OER. Such insights are valuable for practitioners and researchers alike, providing a clear understanding that OER serves as the basic foundation for OEP implementation and offering guidance on how to proceed beyond OER, as illustrated in Figure 6.1 of the findings.

6.4.2.2 Contribution 5: Highlighting how OER and OEP frameworks are dynamically integrated when implementing OEP

This contribution to the theme of literature on the relationship between OEP and OER highlights the integration of both OEP and OER theoretical and practical concepts in order to implement OEP. It shows how the research participants draw upon their well-established knowledge of OER, grounded in existing literature, to seamlessly integrate it with the open practices they actively implement.

In terms of the literature, studies within Theme 2 propose a second perspective of OEP beyond OER. These studies of the second strand view OEP as a multi-dimensional approach extending beyond the content-based practices of OER, encompassing collaborative elements such as learners' agency, open pedagogy, open collaboration, and open teaching and learning (Cronin, 2017; Shareefa et al., 2023). However, my criticism of these studies in that section was that the multitude of potential open practices they propose, coupled with the absence of well-established

implementation frameworks similar to those for OER, can present challenges for those aiming to implement this approach.

When I talked to the research participants and analysed their answers regarding OEP implementation, the analysis showed that they have different perspectives from that in the literature because it is neither within OER solely nor beyond OER ambiguously, as discussed in the literature review in Sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2. For instance, in Section 5.4, my findings show how the research participants collectively recontextualised open content based on OER and subsequently developed the implementation strategy in a way that integrates content, pedagogy, empowerment, and engagement as presented in the outcome space of this thesis. This nuanced understanding underscores the integration of both OEP and OER theoretical and practical concepts in order to implement OEP. It shows how the research participants draw upon their well-established knowledge of OER, grounded in existing literature, to seamlessly integrate it with the open practices they actively implement. It offers a fresh perspective on practitioners' perceptions of implementing OEP in conjunction with OER, introducing a new approach delineated in the outcome space of this thesis. Moreover, this understanding delves into the dynamics of transitioning between OEP and OER, elucidating the intricate interplay between these two dimensions of openness in educational settings, as perceived by the research participants.

This understanding highlights the intrinsic links between OEP and OER, offering valuable insights for researchers exploring and writing about the relationship between these two dimensions in open education.

6.4.2.3 Contribution 6: An understanding of OEP implementation as platform-oriented rather than content-centric:

This contribution to Theme 2 of the literature on the relationship between OEP and OER highlights the research participants' experience of the potential of implementing OEP using open platforms, rather than just using content-centric approaches of OER. The research participants proposed an understanding where

multiple open platforms can be interconnected together to share immersive learning experiences and enable knowledge creation within OEP.

In terms of the literature, as I discussed earlier in Section 2.3 of Theme 2 about studies proposing OEP within or beyond OER, my overall criticism of these studies in that section is that they lack clear guidance on how to implement OEP. I argued in the same section that talking to practitioners could provide some pragmatic insights into the ways of implementing OEP in relation to OER.

This understanding of implementing OEP that I found is different from that in the literature because it explores the potentials of OEP using educational technology, as opposed to the narrow perspectives proposed in understanding OEP within OER discussed in the literature in Section 2.3.1. Moreover, this understanding set some clear guidance for OEP implementation as perceived by the research participants in how to implement OEP beyond OER, contributing to the lack of clear guidance proposed in studies that adopted the implementation of OEP beyond OER in Section 2.3.2. For instance, the findings of this research, as depicted in Figure 6.1, illustrate a hierarchal understanding of the research participants starting from open content, which is then used to implement open pedagogy in Category 2. Subsequently, these open resources and practices are harnessed to enhance awareness of openness using meta-practices in Category 3, and collectively, they contribute to the implementation of open platforms in Category 4. In these open platforms, systems, content, and practices are open, shared, and interconnected to facilitate the implementation of OEP.

This understanding is important because it highlights the evolution in perceiving the implementation of OEP by the research participants signifies a broader perspective that transcends static resources, encompassing dynamic, interactive, and collaborative platforms. Such an expansion reflects the evolving nature of OEP beyond content-centric approaches. This insight can prove valuable to practitioners, designers, and researchers interested in implementing OEP, guiding them on how to leverage what they have from OER and educational technology in various contexts within HE.

6.4.3 Contributing to Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners

My findings contribute to the literature on the roles of OEP practitioners by exploring three understandings as the following:

11. An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in widening the range of

OEP beneficiaries: My findings emphasise how practitioners understand their roles within OEP as widening beneficiaries in HE beyond the confines of a classroom to include the entire HE community.

12. An understanding of how the roles of OEP practitioners develop over time:

My findings emphasise the dynamic nature of the roles undertaken by OEP practitioners, recognizing that their responsibilities, practices, and innovative approaches are subject to evolution over time.

13. An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in recruiting other such

practitioners: My findings emphasise how the research participants perceive their roles in recruiting practitioners in OEP, including learners, educators, administrators, researchers, and the HE community.

In each of the subsections below, I will discuss the details of each contribution, as elaborated in the previous section.

6.4.3.1 Contribution 7: An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in widening the range of OEP beneficiaries

This contribution underscores how the research participants understand their role in widening the range of OEP beneficiaries. The research participants perceive their role as not only engaging learners within the classroom in OEP but also engaging other individuals and groups in HE to benefit from their implementation of OEP. This understanding considers all HE communities as beneficiaries of OEP.

In terms of the literature review, studies within Theme 3 of the roles of OEP practitioners concern engaging beneficiaries of OEP, who gain from increased accessibility and participation in educational resources and practices (Koseoglu & Bozkurt, 2018; Nascimbeni et al., 2018; Tualaulelei & Green, 2022). As I elaborated in Section 2.4.2, for example, most of the studies within this theme consider learners as primary beneficiaries of OEP, while educators, researchers, and other stakeholders can benefit from the availability of such resources and practices of OER and OEP (Lee, 2020b). My criticism of these studies in that section was that their approaches of OEP focus mainly on learners as the main beneficiaries of OEP, falling short of developing effective engagement approaches and contexts beyond learners within the classroom. My argument in that section was that OEP as an approach to maximising openness in HE, as presented in the literature, should provide more pragmatic ways for engaging individuals and groups in HE, and therefore, this could be achieved by asking those who have been working on OER and now working on OEP about their perceptions in terms of the beneficiaries of OEP.

This understanding of OEP I found while talking to the research participants is different from the literature. The research participants consider all individuals and groups in HE as beneficiaries of OEP, and they propose various contexts for engaging them beyond learners in the classroom. I discussed their perspectives of OEP beneficiaries in Section 6.3.1 as one dimension of OEP that varies to engage different people in different contexts in HE. This OEP beneficiaries dimension presented in Figure 6.1 shows that the research participants perceive learners within the classroom as the first beneficiaries of OEP. As we ascend the axis of OEP beneficiaries to the higher categories of description, their perceptions of OEP beneficiaries expand to encompass a broader population within higher education, extending beyond the classroom to embrace university-wide learners and educators, as well as researchers, administrators, and the HE community.

This important understanding of widening the base of OEP beneficiaries in various contexts is missing from the literature, and I found it by talking to participants about their perceptions of who can benefit from their implementation of OEP and the ways to engage beneficiaries in OEP. This understanding is important for HE stakeholders, researchers and OEP practitioners because it shows one approach to maximising

openness in higher education using OEP through engaging individuals and groups in different contexts.

6.4.3.2 Contribution 8: An understanding of how the roles of OEP practitioners develop over time

This contribution to Theme 3 of the roles of OEP practitioners in the literature underscores how the research participants perceive their roles and how the roles of other OEP practitioners develop over time. This understanding shows how the research participants recognise the dynamic nature of the OEP landscape, wherein they are not static in their roles but are actively adopting new responsibilities based on the change in time and context of implementing OEP.

In terms of the literature, in Section 2.4.1, I emphasised that studies within this theme concern classifying OEP practitioners and identifying their roles. Two primary groups emerged from the literature: one involves practitioners directly engaged in daily activities, such as educators, researchers, designers, and educational technologists (Harrison & Devries, 2020). Educators are recognised as key OEP practitioners, and learners are potential participants. The second group comprises stakeholders concerned with OEP's success, outcomes, or policies, including administrators, policymakers, government agencies, educational institutions, non-profit organisations, publishers, and advocacy groups (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020). In exploring practitioners' roles, the literature discusses educators creating, adapting, and sharing OER, learners enhancing OER and participating in open education community activities, researchers supporting open scholarship, curriculum designers aligning with open pedagogies, and educational technologists integrating technology for OER support. In the second category, literature underscores the crucial role of stakeholders, particularly administrators, in supporting OEP success through professional development, capacity building, and policy formulation to endorse accreditation, flexibility, and community engagement in HE (Baran & Alzoubi, 2020; Cronin, 2017; Huang, Tlili, et al., 2020; Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2017; Shareefa et al., 2023; Truan & Dressel, 2022).

My criticism of these studies in Section 2.4.1 was that they give high burdens to the role of educators in implementing OEP, and they lack clear action guidelines of how individuals from practitioners within the same or across the two groups work cohesively as a unified entity to achieve specific objectives when implementing OEP. My argument in that section was if they collaborate and share a common goal in their efforts with OER or OEP. How do they see their cooperation for a successful implementation of OEP? These issues in the literature entail examining the perceptions and roles of educators and academic administrators, such as the participants in this project, representing categories one and two, respectively. Understanding their varied perspectives on OEP and how they identify their roles and the roles of their peers.

This understanding of the roles of OEP practitioners is different from the literature because it explores their roles and the ways it is changing and adapting over time and content. For instance, I discussed the research participants' perspectives of OEP implementation in Section 6.3.3 as one dimension of OEP that shows how the roles of OEP practitioners vary with time and context. This OEP implementation dimension presented in Figure 6.1 shows that the research participants perceive educators within the classroom as the first practitioners of OEP whose roles are elaborated in Category-1 of recontextualising open resources and methods. As we ascend the axis to the higher categories of description, the roles of practitioners evolve and build upon the previous category. In Category 2, the role of practitioners is to collaborate and engage learners through pragmatic activities, whereas, in Category 3, their role is to empower OEP practitioners by enhancing their understanding of openness. Finally, in Category 4 their roles are to engage communities through creating knowledge and exchanging experiences. This hierarchal understanding of OEP by the research participants reflects their perceptions about their evolving roles over time and context. Each category of description is discussed in a separate section in the findings chapter which I elaborated in presenting clear actions of the roles of OEP practitioners as presented by the research participants.

This important understanding of the evolving roles of OEP practitioners seems missing from the literature, and I found it by talking to practitioners about their roles

in implementing OEP. This contribution adds to the existing literature a clear action guideline as perceived by the research participants and provides how they perceive their roles and how their roles and the roles of others evolve within a particular institution, hence contributing to Theme 3 of the literature. This contribution sheds light on the forward-looking vision of these practitioners and the associated roles, which are often overlooked or assumed in some theoretical studies within the literature.

6.4.3.3 Contribution 9: An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in recruiting other such practitioners

This contribution underscores how the research participants understand their role in recruiting other such practitioners. The research participants perceive their role as engaging OEP beneficiaries to become OEP practitioners. This understanding builds on the one of widening OEP beneficiaries I found in contribution 7 in terms of considering all OEP beneficiaries as potential OEP practitioners, including learners, educators, researchers, administrators, and the HE community.

In terms of the literature review, I discussed in Section 2.4 and contributions 7 and 8 in this section that studies within Theme 3 concern mainly the role of educators in implementing OEP and highlight some roles of other practitioners such as researchers and administrators, advocating for learners' agency in the implementation of OEP. My criticism of these studies in that section of the literature review was that the division presented in the literature between beneficiaries and practitioners limits OEP implementation, as it should be open to engaging individuals or communities in higher education based on their interests and advantages rather than their professional roles or identities. Moreover, I underscored that their focus mainly on educators as practitioners limits the potential of recruiting other practitioners beyond educators. My argument in that section was that there could be more effective engagement approaches and contexts for recruiting more practitioners rather than just setting guidelines to be done by educators, as taken for granted in studies within Theme 3. I also added that these issues could be addressed by asking those who work in OER and OEP, such as the participants of this research from educators and administrators.

This understanding of OEP I found while talking to the research participants is different from the literature in terms of recruiting OEP practitioners. This understanding emerges from my findings, which I discussed in Section 6.3.2 about OEP practitioners. This is one important dimension that varies in recruiting different people in different contexts in OEP implementation. In Figure 6.1, this dimension is labelled as “OEP practitioners”, and it shows how the research participants perceive OEP practitioners initially to be educators. As we progress along this axis towards the higher categories of description, the cohort of OEP practitioners is perceived by the research participants to structurally broaden to encompass the beneficiaries identified in the previous category. Effectively, those who benefited in the lower category now become practitioners of OEP in the higher categories.

This important understanding is missing from the literature, and I found it by talking to the research participants about how they understand the roles of OEP practitioners. Their collective understanding represents an expansive shift in the population of OEP practitioners and a corresponding evolution of their roles. This understanding highlights a more profound and all-encompassing perspective of the roles played by OEP practitioners in a university setting, adding clear action guidelines for recruiting more practitioners in OEP within HE, hence contributing to studies within Theme 3.

6.4.4 Summary of the research contributions

This section summarises the nine contributions of this research to the three themes discussed in the literature review chapter, as presented in Table 6.1:

Contribution Title	Relation to the literature	Description
Theme 1: Definitions of OEP		
<p>Contribution 1: Pragmatic understanding of OEP through practitioners' perspectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Section 2.2, I explored studies concerned with crafting detailed definitions and theoretical frameworks for OEP. • I criticised these studies for their limited practical understanding of OEP from practitioners. • I emphasised the need for insights from practitioners, exploring interpretations collectively, and advocating for consulting real practitioners to enrich the understanding and debate around OEP definitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research participants, working at an open university, interpret OEP practically, focusing on lived real experiences. • They prioritise working with open content, utilising resources, and collaborating through pragmatic activities rather than adhering to theoretical ideals. • This pragmatic approach underscores the significance of practicality and real-world effectiveness in their understanding of OEP.
<p>Contribution 2: Holistic understanding of OEP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Section 2.2.1, I explored studies concerning understanding OEP within content. • I criticised these studies for providing limited perspectives that confine OEP to content-based definitions and frameworks. Suggesting a broader approach, • I emphasised the value of engaging with OEP practitioners to understand their perspectives beyond dominant content-based approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise a more comprehensive understanding of OEP, underscoring a broad perspective beyond content, as perceived by the research participants. • This contribution arises from the categories of description that evolve from content-based awareness to collaborative practices. • Unlike dominant content-based approaches, this holistic view emphasises diverse perspectives, filling a gap in the literature and providing valuable insights for researchers and practitioners interested in OEP.
<p>Contribution 3: A nuanced understanding of OEP dimensions beyond content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Section 2.2.2, I explored studies concerning expanding OEP beyond content to include various dimensions of openness. The ongoing debate questions whether OEP should be confined to content-based practices or beyond across diverse HE contexts. • My criticism focused on studies offering broad, ambiguous definitions of OEP beyond content, providing limited practical guidance. • I concluded that gaining insights from OEP practitioners is crucial for understanding the meanings and implementation of such dimensions in HE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise a nuanced understanding beyond content, exploring dimensions like open pedagogy, teaching, learning, scholarship, and collaboration. • Participants offer practical guidance, moving beyond a content-based approach to embrace interconnected relationships and various OEP elements. • This nuanced view, depicted in Figure 5.1 of the outcome space, expands knowledge, reconciles content and broader OEP dimensions, and provides valuable insights for practitioners and researchers. It acts as a bridge, fostering a nuanced understanding for those aiming to diversify their OEP.
Theme 2: The relationship between OEP and OER		

<p>Contribution 4: Appreciating the role of OER as foundational for implementing OEP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Section 2.3, I explored studies concerning the implementation of OEP, whether within OER frameworks or beyond. • My criticism in Section 2.3.1 targeted studies linking OEP exclusively to OER frameworks, emphasising the need for broader insights from practitioners with extensive experience in OER. • I raised questions about how these practitioners perceive OEP about their established OER practices - whether as an integral part of OER, an extension of OER initiatives, or a distinct approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise that research participants view OEP implementation based on OER as foundational. • Contrary to existing literature suggesting OEP within OER, participants see OER as a pivotal first step, utilising their experiences to navigate beyond OER limitations. • This insight is crucial, guiding practitioners and researchers on OEP implementation, recognising OER's foundational role and offering a pathway for progression beyond OER, as depicted in Figure 6.1 of the findings.
<p>Contribution 5: Highlighting how OER and OEP frameworks are dynamically integrated when implementing OEP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Section 2.3.2, I explored studies concerning the implementation of OEP beyond OER. These studies portray OEP as a multi-dimensional approach, extending beyond content-based OER to include elements like learners' agency, open pedagogy, collaboration, and open teaching. • However, my criticism in that section highlighted the challenge posed by the absence of well-established implementation frameworks akin to those for OER, given the multitude of potential open practices proposed by these studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise the integration of theoretical and practical concepts for OEP implementation. • Research participants, diverging from existing perspectives, seamlessly blend their well-established OER knowledge with open practices. This understanding underscores the dynamic interplay between OEP and OER, offering fresh insights and a new approach delineated in the outcome space. • It provides valuable perspectives on practitioners' perceptions, highlighting intrinsic links between OEP and OER for researchers exploring their relationship in open education.
<p>Contribution 6: An understanding of OEP implementation as platform-oriented rather than content-centric</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My overarching criticism of Section 2.3 is their deficiency in offering clear implementation guidance for OEP. • I argued in the same section that consulting practitioners could yield pragmatic insights into implementing OEP in connection with OER. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise the potential of implementing OEP through open platforms rather than content-centric approaches of OER. • The research participants propose an innovative understanding, highlighting the interconnected use of multiple open platforms for immersive learning experiences and knowledge creation. Unlike literature focusing on OEP within OER, this perspective explores the potential of OEP using educational technology, providing clear guidance for implementation. • The hierarchical evolution depicted in Figure 6.1 showcases a broader, dynamic perspective on OEP beyond content-centric approaches, offering valuable insights for practitioners, designers, and researchers in higher education.
<p>Theme 3: The roles of OEP practitioners</p>		

<p>Contribution 7: An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in widening the range of OEP beneficiaries</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Theme 3 of the literature review, studies on the roles of OEP practitioners concern benefiting learners through increased accessibility and participation. As detailed in Section 2.4.2, most studies within this theme primarily consider learners as the main beneficiaries while acknowledging benefits for educators, researchers, and other stakeholders from OER and OEP practices. • My criticism in that section highlighted the limited focus on learners, urging for more effective engagement approaches for beneficiaries beyond the classroom. • I argued for a more comprehensive approach to OEP in HE, seeking insights from practitioners who have transitioned from OER to OEP regarding their perceptions of beneficiaries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise how the research participants perceive their role in expanding OEP beneficiaries beyond classroom learners. • Unlike existing literature, they consider the entire higher education community as beneficiaries, proposing diverse contexts for engagement. The OEP beneficiaries' dimension, presented in Figure 6.1, reveals an ascending expansion from classroom learners to university-wide individuals, educators, researchers, administrators, and the broader HE community. • This understanding, absent in current literature, is crucial for HE stakeholders, researchers, and OEP practitioners, showcasing an approach to maximise openness in higher education through diverse engagements.
<p>Contribution 8: An understanding of how the roles of OEP practitioners develop over time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Section 2.4.1, I highlighted that literature within this theme centres on classifying OEP practitioners and delineating their roles. Two primary groups emerged: one involving educators, researchers, designers, and educational technologists, with educators recognised as key practitioners, and the second comprising stakeholders like administrators and policymakers. • While the literature discusses various roles within these groups, my criticism focused on the burden placed on educators and the lack of clear action guidelines for cohesive collaboration between the two groups in implementing OEP. • I questioned how practitioners within and across these groups collaborate and share common goals for successful OEP implementation, emphasising the need to examine practitioners' perspectives and roles in this context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise how the research participants perceive their roles evolving over time and context. • Unlike current literature, which often presents static roles, participants recognise the dynamic nature of the OEP landscape. Explored in Section 6.3.3, the OEP implementation dimension in Figure 6.1 illustrates practitioners' roles ascending from recontextualising resources to empowering practitioners and engaging communities. • This hierarchical understanding, absent in existing literature, offers clear action guidelines for practitioners, shedding light on their forward-looking vision and evolving roles within institutions. This contribution enriches Theme 3 of the literature by providing insights into practitioners' perceptions and actions, contributing valuable guidance often overlooked in theoretical studies.

<p>Contribution 9: An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in recruiting other such practitioners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Section 2.4 and Contributions 7 and 8, I discussed that studies within Theme 3 primarily focus on the role of educators in implementing OEP, occasionally highlighting the roles of researchers and administrators while advocating for learners' agency. • My critique emphasised the literature's dichotomy between beneficiaries and practitioners, limiting OEP to professional roles rather than engaging individuals or communities based on their interests. • I underscored that an exclusive focus on educators restricts the potential recruitment of diverse practitioners and proposed exploring more effective engagement approaches beyond established guidelines. I suggested addressing these issues through insights from OER and OEP practitioners, such as the participants in this research comprising educators and administrators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My findings emphasise how the research participants perceive their role in recruiting OEP practitioners by engaging beneficiaries to become practitioners. • Differing from existing literature, this understanding, discussed in Section 6.3.2, originates from findings that reveal a dimension in OEP practitioners illustrated in Figure 6.1. Initially labelling educators as practitioners, this dimension evolves as beneficiaries in lower categories become practitioners in higher ones. • This comprehensive perspective, absent in the literature, offers clear action guidelines for recruiting a diverse cohort of OEP practitioners within higher education. It contributes significantly to Theme 3 studies by providing insights into practitioner roles and recruitment strategies often overlooked in the existing theoretical literature.
--	---	---

Table 6.1: Summary of contributions

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter comprehensively discusses the research findings and their substantial contributions to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Section 6.2 articulates how the findings presented in Chapter 5 address the research question of this research. Illustrated in Figure 6.1, this discussion delineates the diverse perceptions among the research participants concerning the phenomenon of OEP within an open university setting.

In Section 6.3, I discuss the critical dimensions of variation in participants' perceptions, a key aspect of phenomenographic outcomes. These dimensions - OEP practitioners, OEP implementation, and OEP beneficiaries - highlight the significance within each category of description. The evolving awareness and inclusive perspectives of the participants regarding OEP are emphasised.

Section 6.4 is an exploration of the research findings' contributions to the three main themes from the literature review. Nine contributions, three per theme, are discussed. These contributions enhance the understanding of OEP by presenting diverse perspectives, aligning with the study's goal and its broader impact on the HE community.

For Theme 1, which centres on the definitions of OEP, the study offers three contributions providing pragmatic, holistic, and nuanced understandings of OEP from practitioners, enriching the literature with perspectives beyond prevailing definitions. These contributions are significant as they include voices of practitioners, offering wider perspectives on OEP within and beyond content.

For Theme 2, which centres on the relationship between OEP and OER, the study presents three contributions on foundational understanding, OER-OEP integration, and platform-oriented implementation. These insights offer practical guidance beyond OER-centric approaches in the literature, emphasising platform-oriented rather than content-centric methods.

For Theme 3, which centres on the roles of OEP practitioners, the study provides three contributions on widening OEP beneficiaries, the development of practitioner roles, and recruiting OEP practitioners. These insights highlight how participants perceive their roles and those of their peers, differing from the literature that often lacks clear action guidelines. The contributions emphasise inclusive engagement with a diverse range of practitioners and beneficiaries.

Finally, Section 6.4.4 presents a comprehensive summary in Table 6.1, encompassing all contributions and associated themes from the literature, along with my critiques of each theme.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the project is reflected upon, with a focus on practice implications, research implications, and policy implications. Additionally, the study's limitations are discussed, and recommendations for future research are provided.

7.2 Personal reflections

My personal motivation for undertaking this project stemmed from my dual roles as an ICT Engineer and educator at QOU. In my capacity as an ICT Engineer, I have been deeply involved in implementing educational technologies, particularly those related to OER, and leveraging various ICT tools to open up education for learners and educators across different locations in Palestine and beyond. The diverse geographical distribution of QOU's branches presented significant challenges in ensuring access to suitable and stable educational technologies and resources for all stakeholders involved. These technical challenges sparked my initial motivation to explore ways of maximising openness in higher education.

Concurrently, my experiences as an educator provided further impetus for this project. I observed first-hand the dedicated efforts of educators in developing educational resources atop the technological infrastructure tailored to meet the diverse needs of learners. Educators demonstrated remarkable creativity in designing OER, digital collaborative activities, and pedagogies suited to the blended learning environment, with a recent shift towards embracing OEP. Additionally, the supportive administrative framework at QOU, which prioritises investment in educational technologies and personnel engaged in OER and OEP initiatives, further reinforced my belief in the value of exploring these collective efforts and extensive experiences. Consequently, I embarked on this project to gain insights into the perspectives of educators and administrators concerning their experiences of the emerging concept of OEP built upon OER foundations.

In deciding to embark on this project focused on the experiences surrounding OEP, my primary motivation stemmed from the belief in the practical utility of such insights for advancing this emerging approach. OEP represents a novel paradigm that builds upon the foundations laid by OER and related initiatives like MOOCs, introducing new dimensions of openness such as open pedagogies and collaboration. Recognising the potential significance of these dimensions, I felt compelled to delve deeper into the lived experiences of educators and administrators who have been actively involved in OER projects, as I discussed in Chapter 1. Moreover, my exploration of the existing literature revealed a conspicuous absence of practitioner voices in discussions about OEP, with theoretical concepts often lacking real-world grounding (see Chapter 2).

Given the need to bridge this gap between theory and practice, I opted for phenomenography as the methodological approach for this research endeavour. Phenomenography offered a suitable approach for exploring the collective perceptions and experiences of practitioners regarding OEP, aligning with the ontology and epistemology discussed earlier in Chapter 3. By employing phenomenography, I sought to uncover the various ways in which individuals collectively perceive and engage with the phenomenon of OEP. This methodology guided the formulation of my research question and the careful design of my interview protocols, ensuring minimal distractions during data collection to facilitate rich and focused discussions with the research participants (see Chapter 4).

Conducting phenomenographic interviews was an interesting experience for me as well as the participants. At the beginning of each interview, the participant expected a list of questions over the specified time, but the interview ended up with one or two main questions and a few follow-up questions based on aspects raised by the participants themselves during the interview. They expressed their interest in the ways that they kept talking about their experiences not my focus as a researcher as they expected, which is exactly what I aimed for in this project. I also felt satisfied and impressed by the amount and quality of experiences I collected from practitioners, but at the same time, I was concerned about how to present useful, various, and yet holistic insights from these experiences. When I finished analysing the data, I realised how the collective dataset provided the insights, not the individual

interviews. Those insights include experiences and perceptions that vary in some dimensions such as the implementation of OEP, the beneficiaries of it, and the roles of OEP practitioners in engaging individuals in OEP.

Conducting this research has been instrumental in fulfilling my overarching motivations. Firstly, it has provided a comprehensive understanding of how the technological infrastructure I am involved in implementing can be leveraged for OEP. As an ICT engineer deeply engaged in educational technology implementation, I was keen to explore how these tools and resources are utilised by educators and administrators within the framework of OEP. Moreover, the research has not only allowed me to delve into the diverse experiences of my peers but has also shed light on the varying dimensions through which these experiences collectively shape the perception and implementation of OEP. This holistic view encompasses the meaning of OEP, the strategies for implementation, and the roles of practitioners in fostering openness in higher education. Furthermore, it has underscored the importance of engaging the broader higher education community in OEP, extending beyond mere resource utilisation within the confines of a classroom.

While this research has significantly contributed to the literature on OEP, it has also highlighted the pressing need for further exploration in the realm of educational technologies and the potential open practices. Given the rapid evolution of these technologies, there is an imperative to adapt pedagogical approaches such as open pedagogies and open collaboration, to fully capitalise on their potential. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and augmented/virtual reality offer unprecedented opportunities for immersive learning experiences beyond traditional classroom settings, sharing the same vision of OEP. Thus, future research endeavours must delve deeper into these intersections between technology and pedagogy to ensure that educational practices remain relevant, open, and effective in the digital age.

7.3 Research implications

This project answers the research question about the variations in perceiving OEP by educators and academic administrators in an open university. Employing a meticulous phenomenographic analysis, the results unveil a comprehensive outcome space delineating four distinctive ways in which research participants conceptualise OEP. Progressing through four increasingly inclusive categories, OEP is interpreted as (1) Recontextualizing open resources and methods; (2) Collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities; (3) Empowering OEP practitioners by enhancing their understanding of openness; (4) Engaging communities by creating knowledge and exchanging experiences. These categories, intricately interconnected in a logical and hierarchical structure, provide a holistic perspective on how OEP is perceived in the context of the open university. The developmental progression illustrated between categories emphasises an expanding awareness across three dimensions of variation: OEP beneficiaries, OEP practitioners, and OEP implementation. The analysis within each category underscores the nuanced and evolving nature of participants' interpretations, offering a structured framework that captures the diversity of perspectives on OEP within the academic community.

Consequently, this research yields nine notable contributions to the existing literature on OEP, with three contributions aligning with each literature theme - definitions of OEP, the relationship between OEP and OER, and the roles of OEP practitioners. These contributions have been set out in more details in Chapter 6. Table 7.1 presents the nine contributions and the sections where each is described in this project.

#	Contribution name	Described in section
Contributions to Theme 1 of the literature: Definitions of OEP		
1.	Pragmatic understanding of OEP through practitioners' perspectives	6.4.1.1
2.	Holistic Understanding of OEP	6.4.1.2
3.	A nuanced understanding of OEP dimensions beyond content	6.4.1.3
Contributing to Theme 2 of the literature: The relationship between OEP and OER		
4.	Appreciating the role of OER as foundational for implementing OEP	6.4.2.1
5.	Highlighting how OER and OEP frameworks are dynamically integrated when implementing OEP	6.4.2.2
6.	An understanding of OEP implementation as platform-oriented rather than content-centric	6.4.2.3
Contributing to Theme 3 of the literature: The roles of OEP practitioners		
7.	An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in widening the range of OEP beneficiaries	6.4.3.1
8.	An understanding of how the roles of OEP practitioners develop over time	6.4.3.2
9.	An understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in recruiting other such practitioners	6.4.3.3

Table 7.1: Summary of the thesis contributions

This research makes significant contributions across three key areas in the literature. Firstly, it delves into the collective *understanding of OEP* as perceived by those who work on them, transcending content-based approaches to offer a more comprehensive view beyond content. This enriches the theoretical basis within the theme of defining OEP, which often relies on limited and non-pragmatic perspectives. Secondly, the study offers collective insights into *OEP implementation*, drawing from the practitioners' foundational experiences within OER. This broadens perspectives on implementation from the traditional content-centric approach of OER to encompass open platforms, facilitating knowledge sharing and creation often overlooked in the existing literature. Lastly, the research introduces a *social dimension* by elucidating the roles of OEP practitioners and their engagement with stakeholders beyond the confines of the classroom. By expanding the scope to inclusive participation and collaboration within the broader higher education community, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of OEP's impact.

7.4 Policy implications

In this section, I set out how the findings of my research contribute to the ongoing policy discourse surrounding OEP, their relationship with OER, and the roles of OEP practitioners, an issue I first discussed in Chapter 1.

In Section 1.3, I discussed the various dimensions of OEP and their intersection with the policy frameworks worldwide. For example, I discussed the growing interest among policymakers in OEP's transformative potential that is influenced by the following three policies:

- The OPAL's early definition of OEP underscored the role of policy in promoting OEP within educational institutions and communities, reflecting a broader trend of policy interest in OEP's transformative potential (Andrade et al., 2011).
- The UNESCO Recommendation on OER (UNESCO, 2019, November 25)
- The UNESCO guidance on OEP, advocating transformative policies from the content-centred approach of OER to the practice-centred approach of OEP (Huang, Liu, et al., 2020)

With regard to the example of OPAL definitions of OEP, the findings of this research suggest that the experiences of practitioners engaged in OEP, particularly those with a background in OER, can significantly influence transformative policies in the transition from OER to OEP. By tapping into the perspectives of practitioners who have long been immersed in OER initiatives and are now embracing OEP, policymakers gain valuable insights into how existing resources and infrastructure can be effectively leveraged to foster more pragmatic and inclusive educational activities. For example, Figure 6.1 illustrates the evolution of the *OEP implementation*, as perceived by the research participants, progressing from its foundation in *open content* to embracing *open pedagogy*, *meta-practices of openness*, and, ultimately, *open platforms*. Moreover, this study emphasises the pivotal role of administrators and researchers as both beneficiaries and practitioners

of OEP, thereby expanding the scope of stakeholders involved in shaping transformative policies. For instance, Figure 6.1 delineates how *OEP beneficiaries* transition from being solely *learners within a course* to actively engaging as part of an *open community*, while *OEP practitioners* evolve from *educators* to encompass roles as *learners, administrators, and researchers*. In essence, this research can benefit policies surrounding OEP by suggesting the incorporation of the perspectives of a diverse range of practitioners. By recognising administrators, researchers, and the higher education community as integral components of the OEP ecosystem, policymakers can craft more comprehensive and nuanced policies that reflect the evolving landscape of open education. This inclusion of new practitioner types underscores the multifaceted nature of OEP and underscores the importance of embracing a holistic approach to policy development in the realm of open education.

Regarding the example of UNESCO Recommendation on OER, this policy urges member states to develop supportive policy environments at institutional and national levels for effective OER practices. This includes promoting teacher professional development, creating communities of practice, fostering cross-border collaboration, and recognising OER creation as a professional or academic merit. It is imperative for policies to shift their focus from mere advocacy to practical implementation strategies, emphasising the empowerment of OEP practitioners and fostering awareness of OEP's potential. By delving into the experiences of OER and OEP practitioners, this study elucidates crucial implementation aspects, delineating a trajectory from OER adoption to the integration of open pedagogies. Additionally, such policies should prioritise the development of open platforms that facilitate immersive learning experiences by interconnecting diverse resources and platforms across institutions, promoting knowledge creation and exchange. Moreover, policies must underscore the importance of social inclusion within OEP, recognising that all members of the higher education community, beyond just learners, stand to benefit from open practices. Acknowledging OER as the foundational cornerstone of OEP, policies should aspire to cultivate an interconnected environment conducive to open knowledge-building and experience-sharing, ultimately maximising openness in higher education. For instance, this can be done by unifying the expertise and resources available under different names such as OER and MOOC, building open communities of practice, and integrating open and interconnected platforms using

international open standards such as the “Experience API” (XAPI). This approach can adopt personalised learning and is capable of capturing and tracking user experiences in multiple online environments and platforms. This example of implementing OEP beyond content requires policy agreements among institutions and governments to be implemented.

Regarding the UNESCO guidance on OEP at COVID-19 closure advocating for a shift from a content-centred approach of OER to a practice-centred approach of OEP as illustrated in Figure 1.1, this research explores significant implications to such kind of policies that predominantly revolve around theoretical definitions and frameworks, often within the context of content-based approaches to OER. This study illuminates a paradigm shift wherein educators and academic administrators draw from their past experiences with OER to envision a broader scope for OEP. They emphasise the utilisation of existing resources and technologies to implement open practices that transcend mere content consumption, incorporating collaborative pedagogies and social engagement within higher education. Despite the aspirations outlined in existing policies, there remains a dearth of clear guidelines for navigating the trajectory towards comprehensive OEP implementation. This study posits OEP as a process of recontextualising open resources and methods, enabling practitioners to leverage available resources and teaching methodologies to initiate OEP. Additionally, it highlights utilising OEP and OER to raise awareness of openness through meta-practices that empower practitioners and beneficiaries to understand the purpose and benefits of openness. These insights can be useful for prioritising and enhancing awareness of OEP's potential through policies.

In conclusion, it is important to recognise that the previous policies surrounding OEP often overlook the social dimension, placing undue emphasis on capacity building or theoretical concepts. This narrow focus can inadvertently burden educators and learners while neglecting the significant contributions of various stakeholders beyond the classroom. To bridge this gap, my research participants advocate for a more inclusive approach, one that acknowledges learners as potential practitioners of OEP and actively engages a broader community of stakeholders. By broadening the scope to include peers, administrators, researchers, and the higher education community as a whole, educators can foster an environment conducive to OEP. This

research underscores the importance of viewing the wider community as essential participants in the co-creation and utilisation of OEP. By recognising their roles as potential practitioners, policies can shift towards a more collaborative and holistic approach, promoting active involvement and collective ownership of OEP initiatives.

7.5 Practical implications

My study has implications for practice in QOU and other university settings. In this section, I connect the findings with the broader objectives of the project for the institution and the broader higher education community, as outlined earlier in Section 1.4. I summarise three implications for practice that arise from my findings and some possible avenues in which they might be considered for practice.

First, this study implies the potential of OEP to serve disadvantaged learners in different pragmatic ways beyond the traditional approaches of content accessibility and dissemination. My study underscores some practical understandings that are useful for universities aiming to adopt OEP beyond the traditional reliance on OER. This shift to open practices is particularly crucial in addressing the diverse needs of disadvantaged learners within higher education, including adult learners, individuals with limited financial resources, learners residing in remote or rural areas, or any learners seeking flexibility in learning within higher education. To effectively operationalise OEP, my findings suggest that it may be useful for practitioners to develop a nuanced understanding of its principles and objectives grounded in practical, real-world experiences. For example, the research participants in this project perceived OEP as a way to recontextualise open resources and methods when talking about open content in Category 1 and a way of collaborating and engaging learners through pragmatic activities when talking about open pedagogy in Category 2. This understanding entails moving beyond theoretical frameworks and embracing a pragmatic approach that aligns open content delivery with course objectives, learner requirements, and the varied contexts of educational settings.

Second, this study implies the social aspect of OEP in engaging beneficiaries and practitioners beyond practices among educators and learners within a classroom. The

research findings imply that OEP extends far beyond educators alone; it encompasses a broader community of learners, peer educators, administrators, and researchers within university environments. This holistic approach requires collaborative efforts to engage individuals and groups actively in open pedagogies and practical activities, thereby empowering them to contribute meaningfully to the educational process. By embracing a broader conception of OEP, practitioners can cultivate a culture of openness that transcends traditional boundaries and fosters a more inclusive and participatory learning environment, as explored in the findings of this study.

Third, this study implies the potential of OEP to enhance awareness of openness as a philosophy in higher education. The research findings imply that practitioners can leverage OEP as a catalyst for broader community engagement and knowledge exchange within higher education. This entails embracing meta-practices of openness that go beyond content-focused approaches and emphasise the importance of social interaction and collaboration. By adopting platform-oriented strategies and practices, practitioners can create environments that facilitate the sharing of resources, ideas, and experiences among diverse stakeholders. This inclusive approach not only enriches the learning experience for all participants but also promotes a culture of innovation and continuous improvement within higher education institutions.

In conclusion, my study highlights the transformative potential of OEP at QOU and other universities, underscoring the importance of a practice-oriented approach to its implementation. By embracing the principles of openness and collaboration, practitioners can create more inclusive and dynamic learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of learners and contribute to the advancement of the broader objectives of the practice context.

7.6 Limitations of the study

This project, like any research endeavour, has its limitations, which I will address in this section in order to identify the boundaries within which the study was conducted and enhance the research's credibility by critically evaluating the work and

identifying potential weaknesses. Moreover, this discussion of research limitations can help guide future research in the field by highlighting areas where further investigation is needed.

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that conducting this project immediately following the COVID-19 closure may introduce some limitations regarding the generalisability of the findings to different contexts. The challenges faced by practitioners during the COVID-19 pandemic were exceptional and unprecedented, representing a unique set of circumstances not comparable to any other difficult period in recent history. Consequently, the experiences shared by practitioners regarding OEP in the aftermath of this crisis may be highly contextualised and not easily applicable to other periods or situations.

On the other hand, exploring practitioners' experiences during this challenging period of COVID-19 provides a unique opportunity to uncover a wide array of diverse experiences within OEP. Practitioners were suddenly thrust into the realm of distance teaching, a mode of instruction that was previously optional. In response, they were compelled to search and recontextualise the available open resources and adapt their teaching and learning methods using the available open content to match their course objectives. These practices were elaborated upon in Category 1 of Section 5.3. However, their focus extended beyond mere content and resources; they also delved into implementing open pedagogies, collaborating with learners, and engaging peer educators in university-wide practices, as discussed in Category 2 of Section 5.4, among others. These examples highlight practitioners' varied strategies for effectively engaging learners, adapting pedagogical approaches to cater to diverse needs, and utilising digital resources and platforms. This demonstrates their adaptability and resourcefulness in navigating unprecedented circumstances. These experiences offer not only immediate relevance but also enduring lessons for future generations. They underscore the importance of creativity and adaptability in leveraging OEP to facilitate effective teaching and learning. By showcasing practitioners' ability to innovate and adapt in the face of challenges, these experiences serve as valuable insights for shaping future educational practices.

As a phenomenographer, I would like to acknowledge that we should not claim to generalise the outcome of this project to other findings but also to emphasise that this was never the purpose of my project. Exploring these experiences immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic closure may pose challenges in terms of replicability to other contexts because phenomenography thrives on capturing snapshots of experiences within specific timeframes. In this regard, Marton says findings of phenomenography are a form of discovery and may not be easily replicable (Marton, 1986). The findings of this project, as in any other phenomenography, are very localised, and it is not easy to generalise findings on other contexts straightforwardly. From the vantage points of some readers, the issue of transferability of findings from one context to another may appear to be a limitation, a common critique encountered by all phenomenography projects. The context dependence limitation of phenomenography, previously discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.7 of the theoretical framework, could not be avoided in this study.

Nevertheless, I believe phenomenography offers a unique opportunity to delve into diverse and comprehensive experiences from practitioners, particularly post the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this interval, participants enthusiastically shared their various experiences in navigating teaching and learning during university closures using OEP. Marton's insight that phenomenography focuses on participants' evolving awareness of phenomena over time, contextualised against their previous experiences (Marton et al., 2004), holds particularly true in this case. The backdrop of the COVID-19 closure presents a distinct challenge, underscoring the significance of exploring these dynamic perspectives of the evolving phenomenon of OEP in teaching and learning.

Secondly, there might be a limitation of this study that lies in the exclusion of certain experiences that could not be integrated into the outcome space because they were not holistic; they were only mentioned by individual participants. As I discussed in Sections 3.2 and 3.6 of Chapter 3, the importance of capturing a holistic account was emphasised within the theoretical framework of this study. It was elucidated that the aim was to construct holistic variations within an outcome space rather than capturing individual experiences. As articulated by many phenomenographers, an outcome space is seen as a “way of looking at the collective human experience of

phenomenon holistically” (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 116). Consequently, the inability to incorporate these individual viewpoints may be perceived as a limitation, given phenomenography's focus on holistic rather than individual experiences. For example, one educator raised concerns about cheating in open assessment, presenting it as a challenging aspect of implementing this open practice within OEP. Another educator suggested that only enthusiastic educators and for-profit companies are the main practitioners of OEP so far. Additionally, an administrator discussed the financial resources needed for OEP implementation and staff development, a dimension not touched upon by other participants. Since these experiences were not mentioned by other participants, they cannot be integrated into the overarching experiences of OEP. While these individual perspectives are valuable, they fall outside the scope of the holistic approach inherent in phenomenography. This limitation of focusing on collective rather than individual perspectives was previously discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.8, and it is inherent to phenomenography and cannot be avoided. However, these ideas are potentially useful for future projects or studies focusing on different phenomena or aspects of higher education.

In Section 3.8, two other limitations of phenomenography were identified, which I was able to ameliorate in this project.

First, I was able to address the limitation related to variability in presenting findings and using methodological terminologies. I was aware of this issue from the beginning of my project while exploring the literature. Since the aim of phenomenography is to explore both the different perspectives and the dimensions in which those perspectives vary, I employed a range of relevant methodological concepts of phenomenography, such as the anatomy of experience framework, including referential and structural aspects, the structure of awareness, and the dimensions of variation to achieve this aim. In my research, I regarded these methodological concepts as strengths for presenting useful and interesting findings. Therefore, I endeavoured to understand and apply them, and I made an effort to explain their meanings to the reader where necessary in the thesis. My goal was to fully utilise the potential of phenomenography, not only in capturing the variation in

perceiving and experiencing OEP but also in identifying the dimensions in which these variations occur, as presented in the outcome space of this thesis.

The second limitation I deliberately ameliorated concerns the quality of research when conducting phenomenography. I was mindful of this issue while studying the phenomenography literature and took steps to minimise it throughout the project. For instance, I addressed this limitation by adopting various recommendations. Firstly, I recruited participants from diverse disciplines (see Section 4.4) to ensure a comprehensive exploration of the variations in experiencing OEP. Secondly, during the interviews, I conducted unstructured interviews with follow-up questions based on the aspects raised by interviewees, allowing for open understanding without leading the participants. I also avoided interruptions during the interviews. During data analysis, I aimed to form categories of description with an open mind, practising bracketing and reflecting on my own beliefs and values to disengage from the data during analysis, thus avoiding biases that could arise from my familiarity with the studied phenomenon. Lastly, I discussed the outcome space of this study both internally and with my PhD supervisor. Internally, I presented the outcome space to some participants, who expressed admiration and confirmed the validity and authenticity of the findings. Externally, I engaged in discussions about the outcome space with my PhD supervisor.

Lastly, there was another limitation that I had not previously considered, which is the challenges in conducting data analysis (Cutajar, 2014), and particularly the iterative process involved in phenomenography. This process proved to be emotionally taxing and created a sense of instability at the beginning as I grappled with identifying similarities and differences and seeking holistic perspectives. I struggled with the constantly evolving categories and their structural relationships, which initially appeared unclear to me. However, while I recognise that this was a daunting task, I managed to overcome it by engaging more deeply with the data and by using Nvivo to help me map out different transcripts, annotations, quotations, and relevant literature documents, aiding in the analysis process.

7.7 Future research directions

This section explores potential research directions for new studies in the literature on OEP and suggests new approaches that researchers could undertake based on the contributions and findings of this project.

Research directions on the definitions of OEP: New approaches to the first theme of definitions and understandings of OEP should focus on the following:

- **Evolving definitions and perceptions:**

Building on Contribution 8 regarding the development of OEP practitioners' roles over time, studies should focus on how various stakeholders' definitions and understandings of OEP evolve. This research is crucial for examining how practitioners' perceptions change, providing insights into the factors driving these transformations. Tracking these changes will help develop more comprehensive and inclusive definitions of OEP, moving beyond initial content-centric approaches and expanding on the descriptions presented in this study.

- **Cultural and contextual influences:**

Investigating cultural and contextual influences will reveal how different educational environments shape and redefine OEP. This comparative approach can highlight universal principles and context-specific nuances, enriching the understanding of OEP across various settings, as discussed in Section 6.4.1.

- **Interdisciplinary approaches and ethical considerations:**

Examining interdisciplinary approaches to OEP will uncover how various academic disciplines adopt and transform OEP practices. This research can identify discipline-specific challenges and opportunities, enhancing the overall OEP framework by integrating diverse academic perspectives. Additionally, exploring ethical considerations such as intellectual property, privacy, and the digital divide, as established in Section 7.4 of the policy

implications, is essential for developing guidelines and best practices that ensure responsible and equitable OEP implementation.

Research directions on the relationship between OEP and OER: New approaches should explore the interplay and mutual support between OEP and OER by focusing on the following:

- **Technological integration:**

Building on Contribution 6, which promotes platform-oriented OEP implementation, research on the role of technology in OEP will provide insights into how emerging technologies like AI, VR, and AR can enhance or transform the integration of OEP and OER. This perspective is crucial for developing innovative OEP strategies that leverage the full potential of OER.

- **Sustainable models:**

Investigating sustainable models for OEP, as discussed in Section 7.5 of the practical implications, addresses the long-term viability of integrating OEP with OER. This research can explore funding mechanisms, institutional policies, and collaborative networks that support enduring OEP implementation, developing strategies to ensure sustainable and scalable adoption.

- **Impact on knowledge co-creation:**

Studying the impact of OEP on knowledge co-creation and exchange, as presented in Category 4 of the outcome space, will highlight how OEP and OER together foster collaborative learning environments. This research can elucidate how these practices promote active participation and knowledge sharing among educators, learners, and stakeholders.

- **Evaluation frameworks:**

Developing and validating metrics and evaluation frameworks for OEP will provide tools to assess the effectiveness and impact of these practices. Establishing robust evaluation methods will help measure OEP's integration

with OER and identify areas for improvement, ensuring that OEP strategies effectively support educational goals and enhance learning experiences.

Research directions on the roles of OEP practitioners: New approaches investigating the roles of OEP practitioners, pivotal for the successful implementation and expansion of OEP, might focus on the following:

- **Impact on learners' outcomes:**

Based on Category 2 in the outcome space of this research, which describes OEP as engaging learners through pragmatic activities, studies should focus on the impact of OEP on learners' outcomes. This research will provide insights into how practitioners' efforts influence learners' engagement, learning outcomes, and satisfaction, guiding practitioners to refine strategies to better meet learners' needs.

- **Professional development:**

Research on professional development for OEP practitioners aims to enhance the skills and understanding of those involved in OEP. By studying various professional development programs' effectiveness, researchers can identify best practices and design targeted training to support the growth of OEP competencies, ensuring practitioners are well-equipped to implement and sustain OEP initiatives.

- **Social inclusion and equity:**

Inspired by Category 4, which describes OEP as engaging communities through knowledge creation and exchange, research should explore OEP's role in promoting social inclusion and equity. This research can identify barriers faced by underrepresented populations in accessing OEP and provide strategies to engage diverse and marginalised groups.

- **Case studies of successful implementations:**

Building on Contribution 9 which adds an understanding of the role of OEP practitioners in recruiting other such practitioners, examining successful case

studies of OEP implementations will offer practical examples of how practitioners effectively engage beneficiaries and foster inclusive educational environments. These case studies will provide valuable insights and strategies that can be replicated and adapted in various contexts, demonstrating OEP's transformative potential in achieving broader educational and social goals.

7.8 Conclusion

This project underscores the practitioners' experiences of the phenomenon of the OEP in higher education. It offers a set of pragmatic understandings that are useful for utilising the huge content being created by practitioners in OER projects in the last decade and moving beyond a content-based approach by putting these resources into real-world practices using OEP. In conducting this research, I have produced a comprehensive outcome space that captures the holistic perspectives of OEP by educators and academic administrators. This outcome space contributes to the literature on OEP by presenting diverse understandings of the meaning of OEP, its implementation, and the roles of OEP practitioners.

Overall, this PhD project has been a fulfilling endeavour, and I take pride in conducting it at an institution where I have worked for several years, exploring unique experiences in open education that can benefit the wider higher educational community.

Chapter 8: References

- Adam, T. (2020). Open educational practices of MOOC designers: embodiment and epistemic location. *Distance Education*, 41(2), 171-185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757405>
- Åkerlind, G. (1999, July). *Growing and developing as an academic: what does it mean?* HERDSA Annual International Conference, Melbourne. https://www.academia.edu/26173262/Growing_and_developing_as_an_academic_what_does_it_mean
- Åkerlind, G. (2005a). Learning about phenomenography: Interviewing, data analysis and the qualitative research paradigm. In J. A. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography* (pp. 63-73). RMIT Press.
- Åkerlind, G. (2005b). Phenomenographic methods: A case illustration. In J. A. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing Developmental Phenomenography* (pp. 103-127). RMIT Press.
- Åkerlind, G. (2005c). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 24(4), 321-334. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360500284672>
- Åkerlind, G. (2012). Variation and commonality in phenomenographic research methods. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 31(1), 115-127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2011.642845>
- Åkerlind, G. (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., 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). RMIT Press.
- Algers, A. (2020). Open Textbooks: A Balance Between Empowerment and Disruption. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, 25(3), 569-584. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-019-09426-5>
- Andrade, A., Ehlers, U. D., Caine, A., Carneiro, R., Conole, G., Kairamo, A.-K., Koskinen, T., Kretschmer, T., Moe-Pryce, N., Mundin, P., Nozes, J., Reinhardt, R., Richter, T., Silva, G., & Holmberg, C. (2011). *Beyond OER: Shifting focus to open educational practices*. O. E. Q. Initiative. <https://www.oerknowledgecloud.org/record36>
- Ashwin, P. (2006). Variation in academics' accounts of tutorials. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(6), 651-665. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070601004234>
- Ashwin, P. (2009). *Analysing Teaching-Learning Interactions in Higher Education : Accounting for Structure and Agency*. Bloomsbury Publishing. <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/analysing-teaching-learning-interactions-in-higher-education-9780826432391/>
- Baran, E., & Alzoubi, D. (2020). Affordances, challenges, and impact of open pedagogy: examining students' voices. *Distance Education*, 41(2), 230-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757409>
- Barker, C. (2021). *Video as a tool in the development of oral presentation competence among undergraduate law students: An activity theory based analysis*. [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University. <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/thesis/1429>
- Baughan, P. (2019). *"The Sociological Imagination": researching sustainability, using phenomenography*. [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University. <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/thesis/1310>

-
- Bell, D., Morrison-Love, D., Wooff, D., & McLain, M. (2018). STEM education in the twenty-first century: learning at work - an exploration of design and technology teacher perceptions and practices. *International Journal of Technology and Design Education*, 28(3), 721-737. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10798-017-9414-3>
- Bell, R. E., & Tight, M. (1993). *Open Universities: A British Tradition?* Open University Press. <https://books.google.co.il/books?id=n4qfAAAAMAAJ>
- Bligh, B. (2019). Physical Learning Spaces and Teaching in the Blended Learning Landscape. In M. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Teacher Education*. Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1179-6_60-1
- Boote, D. N., & Beile, P. (2005). Scholars Before Researchers: On the Centrality of the Dissertation Literature Review in Research Preparation. *Educational Researcher*, 34(6), 3-15. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x034006003>
- Bowden, J. A. (2005). Reflections on the Phenomenographic Team Research Process. In J. A. Bowden & P. Green (Eds.), *Doing developmental phenomenography* (pp. 11-31). RMIT University Press.
- Bowden, J. A., & Walsh, E. (2000). *Phenomenography*. RMIT University Press. <http://search.informit.com.au/browsePublication;res=IELHSS;isbn=0864590199>
- Bozkurt, A., Koseoglu, S., & Singh, L. (2019). An analysis of peer reviewed publications on openness in education in half a century: Trends and patterns in the open hemisphere. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 35(4). <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.4252>
- Bunting, J., Reppen, R., & Diniz, L. (2012). *Grammar and Beyond Level 4 Student's Book B*. Cambridge University Press. https://books.google.co.ke/books?id=Vv2sYeB_lrAC
- 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>
- Conole, G. (2015). Designing effective MOOCs. *Educational Media International*, 52(4), 239-252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523987.2015.1125989>
- Cope, C. (2004). Ensuring Validity and Reliability in Phenomenographic Research Using the Analytical Framework of a Structure of Awareness. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 4(2), 5-18. <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:214800292>
- Cousin, G. (2008). *Researching Learning in Higher Education : An Introduction to Contemporary Methods and Approaches*. Taylor & Francis Group. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lancaster/detail.action?docID=380854>
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design : Choosing Among Five Traditions*. Sage Publications Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (4 ed.). Pearson.
- Cronin, C. (2017). Openness and Praxis: Exploring the Use of Open Educational Practices in Higher Education. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 18(5), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v18i5.3096>
- Cutajar, M. (2014). *Qualitative differences in post-compulsory pre-university Maltese students' accounts of their networked learning experiences*. [Doctoral

- Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University.
<https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/72904/>
- Cutajar, M. (2019). Teaching Using Digital Technologies: Transmission or Participation? *Education Sciences*, 9(3), 1-13. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/9/3/226>
- Czerniewicz, L., Deacon, A., Glover, M., & Walji, S. (2017). MOOC—making and open educational practices. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 29(1), 81-97. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-016-9128-7>
- Dall'Alba, G. H. B. r. (1996). *Reflections on phenomenography: toward a methodology?* Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.
- Daniel, S. (2022). A phenomenographic outcome space for ways of experiencing lecturing. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41(3), 681-698. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1872055>
- David, W. (2020). *Art and design course leaders' perceptions of, and approaches to the curriculum and the implications of these approaches for students.* [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University. <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/thesis/960>
- Dearbhla, C. (2016). *Transnational students' accounts of processes of networked learning: A phenomenographic study.* [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University. <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/thesis/51>
- Edraak. (n.d). *Edraak.* <https://www.edraak.org/programs/course/rs100-v2018-sp/>
- Ehlers, U.-D., & Conole, G. C. (2010). *Open Educational Practices: Unleashing the power of OER.* [Paper presentation]. UNESCO Workshop on OER, Namibia. <https://www.oerknowledgecloud.org/record1328>
- Falah, G. (1996). The 1948 Israeli-Palestinian War and Its Aftermath: The Transformation and De-Signification of Palestine's Cultural Landscape. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 86(2), 256-285. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2564005>
- Harrison, M., & Devries, I. (2020). Open Educational Practices Advocacy: The Instructional Designer Experience. *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*, 45(3), 1-4. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21432/cjlt27881>
- Havemann, L. (2016). Open Educational Resources. In M. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory* (pp. 1-7). Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-532-7_218-1
- Hennink, M. M., Hutter, I., & Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative research methods* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Huang, R., Liu, D., Tlili, A., Knyazeva, S., Chang, T. W., Zhang, X., Burgos, D., Jemni, M., Zhang, M., Zhuang, R., & Holotescu, C. (2020). *Guidance on Open Educational Practices during School Closures. Utilizing OER under COVID-19 Pandemic in line with UNESCO OER Recommendation* [Guidance]. Smart Learning Institute of Beijing Normal University, Beijing. https://iite.unesco.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Guidance-on-Open-Educational-Practices-during-School-Closures-English-Version-V1_0.pdf
- Huang, R., Tlili, A., Chang, T.-W., Zhang, X., Nascimbeni, F., & Burgos, D. (2020). Disrupted classes, undisrupted learning during COVID-19 outbreak in China: application of open educational practices and resources. *Smart Learning Environments*, 7(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-020-00125-8>
- Kaatrakoski, H., Littlejohn, A., & Hood, N. (2017). Learning challenges in higher education: an analysis of contradictions within Open Educational Practice. *Higher Education*, 74(4), 599-615. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0067-z>

-
- Karunanayaka, S. P., & Naidu, S. (2017). A design-based approach to support and nurture open educational practices. *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, 12(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1108/aaouj-01-2017-0010>
- Karunanayaka, S. P., & Naidu, S. (2020). Ascertain impacts of capacity building in open educational practices. *Distance Education*, 41(2), 279-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757406>
- Karunanayaka, S. P., Naidu, S., Rajendra, J. C. N., & Ratnayake, H. U. W. (2015). From OER to OEP: shifting practitioner perspectives and practices with innovative learning experience design. *Open Praxis*, 7(4), 339-350. <https://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.7.4.252>
- Khalil, A. (2021). Students' Engagement in English as a Foreign Language Course: Literature Review of Flipped Learning. *Palestinian Journal for Open Learning & e-Learning*, 9(15), 9-23. <https://doi.org/https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/jropenres/vol9/iss15/12>
- Khan, M. S. H., Bibi, S., & Hasan, M. (2016). Australian Technical Teachers' Experience of Technology Integration in Teaching. *SAGE Open*, 6(3), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016663609>
- Khosronejad, M., Markauskaite, L., & Reimann, P. (2022). Investigating university students' conceptions of engineering: an implied identity perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41(5), 1586-1602. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1928001>
- Koseoglu, S., & Bozkurt, A. (2018). An exploratory literature review on open educational practices. *Distance Education*, 39(4), 441-461. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2018.1520042>
- Lane, A. (2020). Fostering open educational practices: communities or networks? In J. Potter & C. Devecchi (Eds.), *Delivering Educational Change in Higher Education* (pp. 44-54). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429053405-4>
- 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>
- Laurillard, D. (2002). *Rethinking University Teaching: A Conversational Framework for the Effective Use of Learning Technologies* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203160329>
- Lee, K. (2019). Rewriting a History of Open Universities. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 20(4), 21-35. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v20i3.4070>
- Lee, K. (2020a). Openness and innovation in online higher education: a historical review of the two discourses. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, 36(2), 112-132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2020.1713737>
- Lee, K. (2020b). Who opens online distance education, to whom, and for what? *Distance Education*, 41(2), 186-200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757404>
- Li, K. C., & Wong, B. Y. Y. (2018). Revisiting the Definitions and Implementation of Flexible Learning. In K. C. Li, K. S. Yuen, & B. T. M. Wong (Eds.), *Innovations in Open and Flexible Education* (pp. 3-13). Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7995-5_1
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. SAGE Publications. <https://books.google.co.il/books?id=2oA9aWlNeoC>

-
-
- Luckin, R., Bligh, B., Manches, A., Ainsworth, S., Crook, C., & Noss, R. (2012). *Decoding Learning: The Proof Promise and Potential of Digital Education*. Nesta.
- Martin, T., & Kimmons, R. (2020). Faculty Members' Lived Experiences with Choosing Open Educational Resources. *Open Praxis*, 12(1), 131-144. <https://doi.org/10.5944/openpraxis.12.1.987>
- 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. *Journal of Thought*, 21(3), 28-49. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42589189>
- Marton, F., & Booth, S. A. (1997). *Learning and Awareness*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Marton, F., Tsui, A. B. M., Chik, P. P. M., Ko, P. Y., & Lo, M. L. (2004). *Classroom Discourse and the Space of Learning* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410609762>
- Matheos, K., MacDonald, M., McLean, C., Luterbach, B., Baidoun, S., & Nakashhian, S. (2007). *A Comprehensive Evaluation of Al-Quds Open University*. E. M. Europe. <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.7463&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Mayrberger, K. (2020). Open Educational Practices (OEP) in Higher Education. In M. A. Peters (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory* (pp. 1-7). Springer, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-532-7_710-1
- Mercer, J. (2007). The challenges of insider research in educational institutions: wielding a double-edged sword and resolving delicate dilemmas. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980601094651>
- Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M.-Y., 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>
- Mimirinis, M. (2022). What do undergraduate students understand by excellent teaching? *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41(2), 466-480. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1847048>
- Moffitt, P. (2020). Engineering academics and technology enhanced learning; A phenomenographic approach to establish conceptions of scholarly interactions with theory. *Studies in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 1(1), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.21428/8c225f6e.3aaef24b>
- Murphy, A. (2013). Open educational practices in higher education: institutional adoption and challenges. *Distance Education*, 34(2), 201-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2013.793641>
- Naidu, S. (2016). The case for open educational practice. *Distance Education*, 37(1), 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2016.1157010>
- Nascimbeni, F., Burgos, D., Campbell, L. M., & Tabacco, A. (2018). Institutional mapping of open educational practices beyond use of Open Educational Resources. *Distance Education*, 39(4), 511-527. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2018.1520040>

-
- Nguyen, T. (2017). *A Study of Students' Conceptions of Networked Learning in a Developing Country Setting* [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University. <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/thesis/46>
- Noble, H., & Mitchell, G. (2016). What is grounded theory? *Evidence Based Nursing*, 19(2), 34. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2016-102306>
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating Theory and Practice* (4th ed.).
- Peng, J., & Yang, H. (2022). Perspectives on Open Educational Resources by University Students in Jiangxi Province of China: An Interview Analysis With UTAUT2 Model Framework. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 22(3), 186-198. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v22i3.5094>
- Peters, O. (2008). Transformation through open universities. In T. Evans, M. Haughey, & D. Murphy (Eds.), *International Handbook of Distance Education* (pp. 279-302). Emerald Publishing Limited. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lancaster/detail.action?docID=573366>
- 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](https://doi.org/10.1016/0959-4752(94)90024-8)
- Pulker, H., & Kukulska-Hulme, A. (2020). Openness reexamined: teachers' practices with open educational resources in online language teaching. *Distance Education*, 41(2), 216-229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757412>
- QOU. (n.d-a). *International Program*. <https://ilp.qou.edu/about/>
- QOU. (n.d-b). *Open Learning Center (OLC)*. <https://www.qou.edu/en/olc/index.jsp>
- QOU. (n.d-c). *QOU*. <https://qou.edu/en/viewCmsContentDtlEn.do?contentId=63572>
- Rapanta, C., & Cantoni, L. (2014). Being in the users' shoes: Anticipating experience while designing online courses. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 45(5), 765-777. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12102>
- 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>
- Rotar, O. (2021). *Phenomenographic research on adult students' experiences of learning and conceptualisations of success in their online postgraduate programmes*. [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University. <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/thesis/1374>
- 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>
- Shareefa, M., Moosa, V., Hammad, A., Zuhudha, A., & Wider, W. (2023). Open education practices: a meta-synthesis of literature. *Frontiers in Education*, 8, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1121739>
- Sloan, A., & Bowe, B. (2014). Phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology: The philosophy, the methodologies, and using hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate lecturers' experiences of curriculum design. *Quality and Quantity*, 48(3), 1291-1303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-013-9835-3>
- Stagg, A., Partridge, H., Bossu, C., Funk, J., & Nguyen, L. (2023). Engaging with open educational practices: Mapping the landscape in Australian higher education. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 39(2), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.8016>
- Tawil, S. (1997). *Educational Destruction and Reconstruction in Disrupted Societies: Final report and case studies*. International Bureau of Education. <https://doi.org/https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED418912.pdf>

-
- 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>
- Tight, M. (2016). 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>
- Tlili, A., Garzón, J., Salha, S., Huang, R., Xu, L., Burgos, D., Denden, M., Farrell, O., Farrow, R., Bozkurt, A., Amiel, T., McGreal, R., López-Serrano, A., & Wiley, D. (2023). Are open educational resources (OER) and practices (OEP) effective in improving learning achievement? A meta-analysis and research synthesis. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 20(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00424-3>
- Trigwell, K. (2006). Phenomenography: An Approach to Research into Geography Education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(2), 367-372. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/03098260600717489>
- Trigwell, K., Martin, E., Benjamin, J., & Prosser, M. (2000). Scholarship of Teaching: A model. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 19(2), 155-168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/072943600445628>
- Truan, N., & Dressel, D. (2022). Doing Open Science in a Research-Based Seminar: Students' Positioning Towards Openness in Higher Education. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 23(3), 153-170. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v23i3.6201>
- Tsai, C. C. (2004). Conceptions of learning science among high school students in Taiwan: a phenomenographic analysis. *International Journal of Science Education*, 26(14), 1733-1750. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950069042000230776>
- Tualalelei, E., & Green, N. C. (2022). Supporting educators' professional learning for equity pedagogy: the promise of open educational practices. *Journal for Multicultural Education*, 16(5), 430-442. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JME-12-2021-0225>
- Tur, G., Havemann, L., Marsh, J. D., Keefer, J. M., & Nascimbeni, F. (2020). Becoming an open educator: towards an open threshold framework. *Research in Learning Technology*, 28. <https://doi.org/10.25304/rlt.v28.2338>
- UNESCO. (2017). *LIST OF PARTICIPANTS*. <https://www.oercongress.org/congress/list-of-participants/>
- UNESCO. (2019, November 25). *Recommendation on Open Educational Resources (OER)*. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-educational-resources-oer>
- Varma, S. (2019). *Conceptions of teaching and learning interactions among industry practitioners taught by practitioner-tutors: a case study of part-time MBA students in Singapore*. [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University. <https://doi.org/10.17635/lancaster/thesis/735>
- Wiley, D. (2014, March 5). *Defining the "Open" in Open Content and Open Educational Resources*. opencontent. <https://opencontent.org/definition>
- Wiley, D., & Hilton III, J. L. (2018). Defining OER-Enabled Pedagogy. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 19(4), 133-147. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v19i4.3601>
- Wimpenny, K., Nascimbeni, F., Affouneh, S., Almakari, A., Maya Jariego, I., & Eldeib, A. (2022). Using open education practices across the Mediterranean for intercultural curriculum development in higher education. *Teaching in*

Higher Education, 27(1), 54-69.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2019.1696298>

Zou, T. X. P., Harfitt, G., Carless, D., & Chiu, C. S. T. (2022). 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>