Agent Academic: Towards an understanding of experiences in innovative practice for evolving academia

A thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Education by

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Abstract

The academic climate is challenging on so many levels arising from the research-teaching nexus, changes amongst the student body, appointments and distribution of resourcing, and an increasingly complex digitally connected world. To this extent, an innovative lens is necessary for evolving educational practice. It contributes to alternative perspectives in teaching and learning that ultimately seek to provide more effective means of doing so. Irrespective of its locale, novel and innovative educational solutions can advance knowledge and acquisition for learning, accreditation, and socialisation. Innovative practice is essential in higher education, but how does it evolve, and what contributes to this?

This research aims to explore this practice of innovativeness through the lens of individual academics and develop an understanding of alternative approaches in higher education and the processes and influences in that journey. How might an account of different experiences within higher education contribute to evolving ways of academic practice? How might this benefit higher education?

Assuming alternative experiences in evolving innovative practice exist, I used an interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA) to explore the phenomenon at an international level, including multiple disciplines, institutions, and locations. In addition, 15 online interviews with self-declared innovative practitioners were conducted via ZOOM. An existing innovation framework was used to design the interview schedule and lend structure to the investigation. Inductive and deductive analysis revealed key themes aligned with the individual, innovation, processes, and influences shaping new practice.

Academics, regardless of context, innovate in different ways. However, agency is revealed as critical to innovative practice and innovating, irrespective of the outcome. This study proposes extending the original framework to recognising recognise agency, awareness, and motivation as antecedents to achieving innovation. Enabling academics to develop high levels of agency alongside a culture of innovativeness can contribute to academia's sustainability in evolving meaningful practice. Furthermore, acknowledging agency has implications for how individual academics are managed, developed, and led, such that they can cultivate an agency that aligns with educational needs in this changing world. This study provides additional insights into variables and conditions for innovative practice and directions for future research.

Keywords: Agency, innovative practice, ways of innovating, innovation, culture of innovativeness, evolving innovative practice, innovation process, conditions for innovative practice

Statement of original authorship

The research contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for any other award or credit at this or any institution of higher education. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis is wholly original, and all material or writing published or written by others and contained herein has been duly referenced and credited.

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Acknowledgments

In 1996 I completed my last formal study as a Master of Commerce student, studying Marketing and International Business. Although I have attempted a PhD in Marketing on two previous occasions, neither time nor supervisor was right for me, and I did not continue beyond the initial stages. I have since endured significant challenges in my working environment, causing me to shift my focus away from marketing toward higher education practice. I am realising my passion lies within education and supporting learners in their journey of acquiring knowledge. It is not constrained to or by my interests in marketing. Ironically, I am rebuilding my sense of agency within academia via this research. I am evolving to recognise the contribution I must make to my work, department, university, and higher education. I was becoming lost, and through undertaking this doctoral journey, I am finding my feet again. I know I am on the right path.

I am immensely grateful to Dr. Rita Kop, my primary supervisor, for sharing this journey. She understands the challenges I endured and always encouraged me to take the time to find the opportunity for writing when it was right and not to force it. Allowing myself this breathing space was critical in navigating data collection during the Covid-19 pandemic and how I could make sense of it.

I am also grateful to Mariya Ivancheva, my second supervisor, who stopped me in my tracks at different times, as she should have. She challenged me to think more deeply and critically and opened my eyes to a level of inquiry that strengthened my work.

To my husband Vaughn, my children Jaxon and Senna, and my amazing mum, Julie. You all believed in me. You supported me at every stage and through every tear and success. Thank you.

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1. Introduction

As a senior lecturer in marketing at a public university in Auckland, New Zealand, I am also a career academic with over twenty years' teaching experience at the same university, teaching undergraduate and postgraduate marketing courses. At this milestone, I find myself in a challenging space of being taunted by producing quality research articles while attempting to remain current and passionate about marketing education.

The challenges exist in the pace of change, and I look around me at the various initiatives that our New Zealand based university offers to ensure academics are equipped with the tools and systems to support the practice of academia. These seem to be twofold; on the one hand, they are about the technology and resources to engage learners in education, while on the other, they are about the pedagogy and means by which learners learn and are assessed. Several committees relating to digital and teaching & learning have been established at my university to share learning experiences and initiatives. However, these are very much in their infancy, restricted to a single faculty focus, and largely attended by practitioner-oriented academics rather than research-oriented academics.

Marketing education has been changed by the digital era (Laverie et al., 2020). Yet, many marketing programmes still present the same general offering as when I first studied marketing more than 30 years ago. New technologies in marketing applications are examined at arm's length, as many academics have not had recent practical marketing experience. In efforts to reduce this knowledge gap, many marketing academics have sought applied research in favour of theoretical (Kohli & Haenlein, 2021). Such emphasis has implications for the orientation of courses and marketing programmes, particularly if academics are developing highly focused subdomains (topics). However, if this is how the role of education within marketing studies is evolving, are they wrong to do so? The call has been made (Wierenga, 2021) for marketing academics to innovate within the discipline by looking outside of it to adjacent business fields. This call suggests the need to consider alternative perspectives are important to how marketing education innovates, and perhaps that careful consideration of the role of digital applied practice is needed.

So how do academics develop new practices that lead to changes in education? Attendance at conferences, establishing learning communities or personal networks, and professional development workshops are commonly accepted practices for adopting new practices (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). However, the onus remains with academics to navigate various solutions and situate themselves in a practice of education where learning occurs. These decisions are compounded further by the pace of technological change, the gig economy, diversity amongst

learners, desire for work-life balance, orientation towards the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), and disruptions within education itself (Dede & Richards, 2020).

In some cases, the academics satisfice by applying the same tried and proven historical practices that enable greater resource allocation toward producing quality research outputs. Supporting this approach focuses on outputs as a measure of academic success and institutional prowess, together with government funding models based on research performance i.e. Performance-Based Research Funding (Curtis & Matthewman, 2005). Is this fundamentally wrong? It is the production of knowledge, which arguably underpins the purpose of higher education at its core, and academic research should be at the forefront of what is taught in universities.

However, from where I stand, there appears to be a growing divide, frustration, and exhaustion, as academics earnest in their attempts to manage quality research and quality educational practices are losing their passion for education (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016). I have spoken to several colleagues who know someone or have chosen to resign from academia due to these changes. Add to this decreasing student attendance and their increasing need for edutainment (education that entertains and enables learning) such that they are engaged, and academia is not what it used to be. A tired, disillusioned academic choosing to satisfice and 'tow the party line' is hardly a good advertisement for a positive learning environment.

So, how do we balance these demands? Can understanding how academics innovate and their mindset, process, and outcomes be reflected, enabling others to recognise opportunities to counterbalance some of these challenges? Are there commonalities in how academics are innovating, who they are, or what they are innovative in, contributing to how an academic department supports evolutionary practices to become more widely adopted? As an academic in marketing, I am curious about what can be understood by knowing how others inside and outside the discipline are evolving their educational practice. Are there differences in how academics innovate, and if so, what can we learn from this?

1.1 Research Setting

I have chosen to set this research outside of my New Zealand university to understand international perspectives on innovative practices that might be adopted locally. In doing so, the results of this study will have the potential for a broader application beyond my institution. While New Zealand is a reasonably sizeable country, its population is small at only five million people, and educationally is limited to eight universities, all of which receive public funding. With minimal external funding sources available, opportunities to innovate may be restricted. However, it may be

possible to acknowledge variances in innovative practices without limitations across private and public institutions in looking to international practice.

Extending the literature review, I focused on four recent applications of innovative practice in marketing education to understand nuances within this discipline as they related to four key themes of andragogy, curriculum, industry relationships, and technology. These contexts are well documented in the literature as orientations of innovative practice (Hasanefendic et al., 2017). Concentrating on these themes gave boundaries for investigating how and where changes in educational practices were being introduced, especially individual academic roles. The focus on individuals is important given the general nature of this study to understand practice via an academic lens. Through this comprehensive review, an appreciation of factors contributing to innovative practice within marketing was established, including the notion of innovation as a mindset, process, and outcome (Kahn, 2018). This understanding then shaped my research inquiry when I explored the experiences of innovative practice by 15 academics. Half of this enquiry related to marketing education specifically, the discipline I teach. The remainder included academics from other business disciplines to ensure alternative practices in different fields were considered.

1.2 Overview of thesis

I have explored individual practitioners' experiences in innovating within higher education within this thesis research.

The chapters that follow reveal this investigation, beginning firstly with a review of the literature on the roles of higher education and educators. Next, innovative practice is introduced – what it is, why it is needed, where the drive comes from, and the challenges in achieving it. Finally, the review considers innovation in education and focuses on innovation examples specifically within marketing education.

Chapter Three details the research methodology, followed by the research findings, Chapter Four. The fifth chapter discusses the research findings and their alignment with the literature and develops a proposed conceptual framework for innovative practice. Chapter Six draws key conclusions alongside limitations, recommendations, and future research.

In this research, several key terms are introduced at different stages. It is important to this study that these terms are clearly defined at the outset to enable a more comprehensive examination of the topic. These include innovation and innovative practice, academic identity, motivation, mindset, and agency.

1.3 Key Terms

Innovation has been defined in many different ways in the literature but is commonly referred to as a meaningful change arising from a process or service improvement that provides greater value to stakeholders (Furst-Bowe & Bauer, 2007). It may be radical or disruptive or merely an incremental improvement (Sharma & Sharma, 2021). It has been described by Edwards-Schachter (2018) as both a process and an outcome of creating something new, extending the idea that innovation is all about process change. In this extension, innovation is the 'what' that changes to add value. However, this definition ignores the individual role in the introduction of change. In response, Kahn (2018) extended this 'what' to specify innovation as one of three different things: a mindset, process, or outcome associated with the change. In this study, I draw on this extended notion of innovation, particularly because of my interest in examining the involvement of individuals. Thus, my emphasis moves from solely looking at the change (innovation) and towards the journey of being innovative (the practice). For this study I applied the definition that innovative practice relates to new ways of educating that are not yet widely adopted and attempted by the academic subjects participating in this research.

Arising from this focus on the individual, it is relevant to consider who the individual is and their academic identity.

As roles and responsibilities continually evolve, the academic identity changes (Billot, 2010). A**cademic identity** has largely been referred to in the literature in relation to professional identity as opposed to specifically relevant to higher education personas (Drennan et al., 2017). In short, it is how academics perceive themselves (Taylor & Gollwitzer, 1995), which in the scope of higher education is predominantly defined by role, i.e., researcher, teacher, or service worker. However, these identities assume a singular focus. Briggs (2007) proposes that academic identity is not defined by a role; rather, it is determined by one's values, profession, and role within the organisation; it is a composite measure of who we are as academics. This is the definition applied in this study. Briggs (2007) further claims that individuals' interactions and experiences within their social systems continue to develop their identity. These individual experiences also result in differences in how academics react to change (Hasanefendic et al., 2017). This explanation is important in innovative practice to understand the values, roles, and experiences connected to individuals being innovative. Given this focus, the reasons individuals wish to evoke change should be understood, leading us to their motivation.

According to Hord (1997), academics' **motivation** is important to professional development and change, which supports the inclusion of this concept in this study. Baumeister (2016) claims motivation is a desire or want for change, either in ourselves or in our environment. Reeve (2016)

extends this notion beyond a state of 'wanting change' to include the search i.e. 'seeking change'. To understand motivation is to know what and how this state drives an individual to achieve an outcome or attempt a change. Acknowledging that individuals are motivated by different needs, internal and external, and the evolving complexity of roles and expectations in higher education, examining the role of motivation in being innovative is warranted.

Innovative practice cannot be explored without considering the internal functionality of the individual, namely their **mindset**. While academic identity is the culmination of role, value, and context in who the academic is, mindset narrows the focus to the explanatory factors used to understand personal actions (Nadelson et al., 2020). It is a combination of our thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs that connect to our choices. In this study, I draw on this definition and the notion that mindset influences how individuals respond to change. The importance of this concept becomes further relevant in determining the choice of research methodology, given the need to understand different approaches to being innovative and that mindsets vary across individuals and contexts (Yeager & Dweck, 2020).

Innovative practice involves change. **Agency** relates to the freedom to enact that change (Annala et al., 2021). Opportunities to determine how an individual's academic identity evolves can give rise to this sense of freedom, thus assumed level of agency (Vähäsantanen et al., 2008). However, it is more than the autonomy to do so; agency emphasises a capacity to enact the change (Giddens, 1986). Institutions can support or constrain this capacity at a macro level through either weak or strong structures and practices. An examination of the organisational environment can determine the capacity to enact change at a macro level; however, as this study focuses on understanding experiences in innovative practice, the emphasis is on the individual's capacity to enact that change.

2 Literature review

The higher education landscape has fundamentally changed (Schneckenberg, 2009), brought about by increased competition and the need to be both adaptable and responsive. This change is evident through curriculum development, focus on digital environments, use of technology in support of programme delivery, and adoption of initiatives such as design-led thinking (Catterall et al., 2019). In response to market needs to increase competitiveness, Chen and Huang (2017) assert that an orientation toward creativity and innovativeness is necessary within education. Likewise, Babić and Nedelko (2020) believe that innovation is crucial to educational institutions in the 21st century. Not everyone is ready for change or suited to innovative practice, yet the need for higher education to continually evolve knowledge necessitates that innovativeness is embraced and enabled more widely. To aptly cope with these continual shifts in knowledge, Christensen et al. (2012) propose that academics must be internally motivated. Yet, even if they are intrinsically driven to ensure quality education is provided, 'good scholarship' takes time and educators are often ill-enabled to respond effectively due to alternative prioritisations within academic circles (Berg & Seeber, 2016).

These assumptions and needs have been significantly challenged with the 2020 worldwide health pandemic, Covid-19. An influenza-like virus closed entire economies and forced many educational providers worldwide to move entirely to emergency remote teaching (ERT) via online technologies (Hodges et al., 2020). Whether educationalists were familiar with distance education, many educators and institutions scrambled overnight. They pivoted from face-to-face classes to purely online teaching as entire populations were forced into home isolation, and international borders, university campuses, and businesses were closed. While the pandemic itself is not the topic of this thesis, it certainly supports the need for academics to be adaptable, for education to be agile, and for us to understand how evolving innovative practice can be supported and enabled in an ever-changing educational and social landscape.

Existing challenges in student attendance, diverse populations of learners, and variability in engagement in learning are not solely aligned with marketing education but are very noticeable in my environment. These challenges provide a period of uncertainty for learners and educators, which Siddiqui and Adams (2013) claim ideally suits transformative learning but is also difficult. The emergence of ghost writers' use and prevalence of ineffective or inauthentic assessment tools for learning are confounding education (Anteby & Occhiuto, 2020). Furthermore, economic challenges shaping class size and technology integration as responses to managing the supply and demand of

education present complexity to educators. Can understanding the interactivity and change involved in introducing new practices provide insights and benefits for marketing education?

There is no doubt complications exist in evolving innovative practice, as evidenced by recent surveys of UK academics (Erickson et al., 2020) revealing very concerning (low) levels of satisfaction in how academics were governed and managed. Thematic issues arising from this highlighted considerable pressure academics are under within their role, arising from deepening chasms between those that 'manage' and those that 'do' (Erickson et al., 2020). Murphy (2017) refers to the evolution of a 'zombie' environment with academics functioning but nothing more, which hardly supports the innovative practice. However, alternative viewpoints maintain that academics who love their work are willing participants in devotion to shaping what they do and the time spent on it (Christensen et al., 2020).

Thus despite the high levels of independence commonly associated with the role of an academic (Schneckenberg, 2009), this changing world presents us with wicked problems inside and outside of education that require attention. For example, even within the organisational structure of higher education, historical academic appointments and recruitment processes have not typically aligned with strategic human resource development plans, described by Schneckenberg (2009) as indispensable for innovativeness to occur. Alternatively, some managerial approaches align strongly with metric and audited performance criteria to the extent that attempts to innovate or be creative are stifled. Downs (2017) assertion that higher education's single focus of 'skills for employment' instead of education for love or societal benefit is an example of this. Lynch and Ivancheva (2015) acknowledge pressures on new academics to gain external funding, research outputs, academic supervision, teaching, and service balanced alongside lower-income and job security, further adding to education's problems. Christensen et al. (2020) advocate using targeted means and reward structures to manage the teaching-research conflict better and avoid adverse trade-offs.

In contrast to newly employed educators, the massification of higher education in the early 2000s stimulated some providers to respond quickly with academic appointments that have, according to Enders and Musselin (2008), left their mark on academia in uncontrolled and questionable ways appointments. In some cases, this remains problematic in constraining the ability of institutions to respond effectively to ongoing challenges, especially when long-established employment contracts protect such stalwarts. Therefore, time is needed to evaluate higher education provisions, both role and content, to best respond to changing world of learners and the teaching environment (Enders & Musselin, 2008).

According to Palmer (1997), as academics, we tend to focus on teaching according to our perspectives, identity, integrity, and soul. However, if our educational core is manipulated by exhaustion, challenged to continually innovate without support, or restricted through staff ability (Chonko, 2003), then academia risks self-destruction in this digital age.

It is with these thoughts in mind that this literature review developed. How could an understanding of innovative practices contribute to evolving academic practice in my context and other academics?

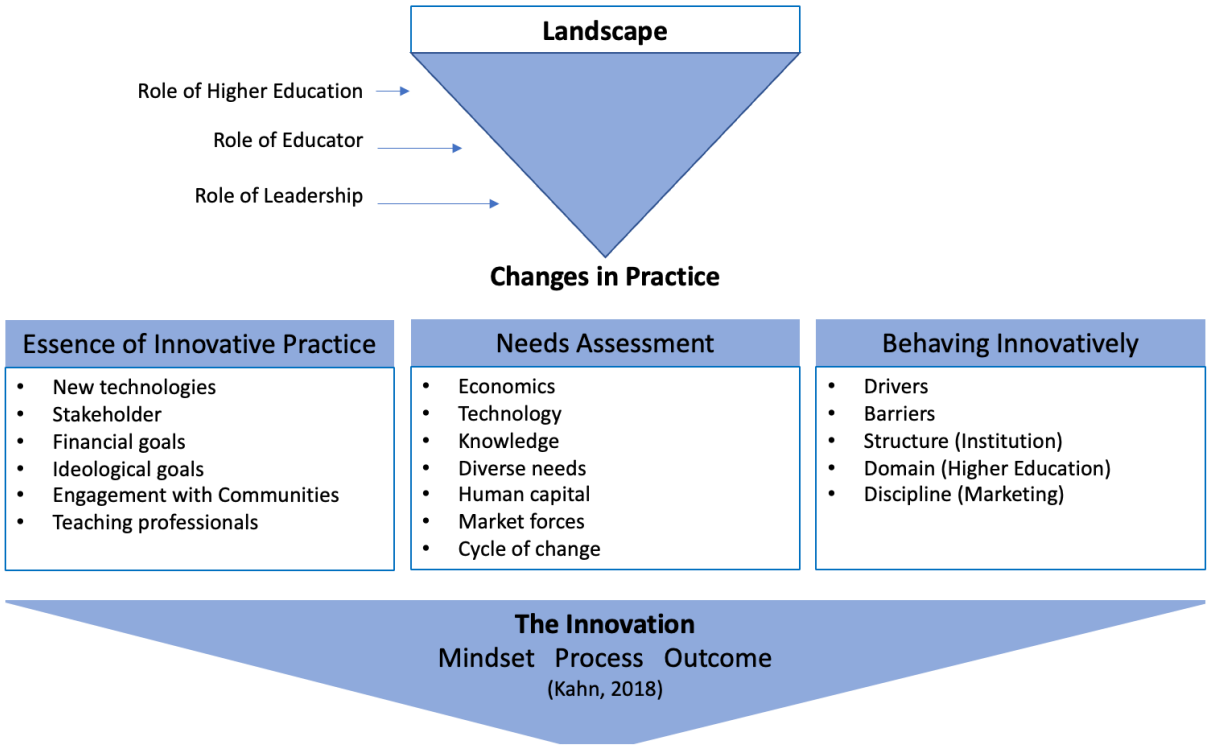

Figure 1: Overview of literature review

In the review, I look to establish context through the roles of higher education, educators, and leaders; I examine what is meant by innovative practice and changing educational needs and establish viewpoints based on new approaches. I introduce different perspectives on innovation processes and factors influential in shaping marketing education. I then propose using a conceptual framework (Kahn, 2018) to investigate how new academic practice might lead to an enriched understanding of higher education. *Figure 1: Overview of literature review*

illustrates this review.

2.1 The role of Higher Education

Understanding experiences in innovative practice necessitates that perspectives on the relevant roles within higher education are examined as they relate to change. Firstly, what is the role and purpose of higher education? Secondly, how does this direction impact developments in the role of the educator? Thirdly, what are the implications in how the change in education is led?

The outcomes of reducing inequality and increasing social mobility can result in views that higher education serves the public good (Hazelkorn & Gibson, 2019), even more so when providers are publicly funded. In being publicly funded and positioned as a public good, higher education is arguably more available to a wider population of learners, which should enrich society, if students' achievements equip them to do so. Education enables modernisation and progress by society, yet some claim it hinders such outcomes through inequalities in productivity and efficiency arising from governments' increasing investment in education (OECD, 2016). In funding education and creating a public good, more learners have access to higher education. But is it a public good? Interest-free student loans and first-year free study initiatives have contributed to increased student access (Salmi & D'Addio, 2021), yet true academic success remains elusive for many. Having access to education is not the same as becoming educated. Including learners who might otherwise not have chosen to attend higher education but, through funding initiatives, have gained access to this public good may be creating wider disparities and greater challenges in learning environments and beyond. Many claim the educational sector is in a state of crisis – irrespective of more recent challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic (Altbach & de Wit, 2020). As a testament to this, the OECD (2016) refers to data illustrating that student achievement has not increased despite advances in technology. It cannot be a surprise that many of the highest-ranked universities are privately funded; however, most university providers worldwide favour publicly funded (QS, 2022) and therefore orient towards being a public good.

As a public good, this notion of education contributes toward calls for solutions to the increasing social problems impacting society, shifting the focus of higher education away from 'ivory tower' knowledge creation (Buckley, 2012) to a more societally responsive purpose. That is not to say that private universities do not support similar ideals, only that public institutions are more fundamentally oriented to this role. Serdyukov (2017) asserts education is "indispensable" (p.4) for society to survive and thrive and that continuous evolution is necessary to achieve this outcome. Thus, if education's role is to meet its purpose, it must evolve and innovate to respond to such demands, manage diversity in learners, and create sustainable futures in both public and private domains.

Buckley (2012) advocates academics must learn to share knowledge and new practice and have time and support to do so, particularly if the organisation seeks to remain competitive and sustainable within the market of higher education (Du Toit, 2000). Organisations need to be cognisant of the ways innovative practices are enabled. Are they? This thesis seeks to understand the experiences of individual academics in their attempts to introduce new practices. To what extent organisational factors enable this to occur is one of the key questions underpinning the study.

Current driving forces behind the need to evolve academic practice include changing student profiles, urbanisation, economic shifts, and capacity imbalances (Choudaha & van Rest, 2018), all of which are impacting the provisions of higher education as either a public or private good. The implications of these changes must be considered by HEI in how their role evolves, such that elitism and disparities within and between societies are not further heightened, that mobility and lifelong learning are enabled, and society itself can ultimately avert failure.

According to Wick (2000), the university's role is to equip individuals to generate and innovate additional knowledge, enabling, as Biesta (2016) identifies, the achievement of socialisation, accreditation, and personal development. This definition supports a public good focus. Scruton (1987) further extends this role to encouraging and sustaining good citizenship, acceptable habits, and the duality of effort by learner and academic, an acknowledgement of the growing interest in 'soft skills' and 'life skills' necessary in education for the 21st century (Harrigan & Hulbert, 2011). Such a perspective also weighs the role of higher education toward a societally responsive purpose. Applying this emphasis on higher education as a public good would sit well with an openness towards innovative practice to enable a responsive educational practice that is agile in the wake of environmental changes. It becomes valuable to consider the implications for educators.

2.2 The developing role of the educators

The role of academic staff, or faculty, is changing. Not all these changes are positive.

Institutional perspectives in managing staff can significantly influence the academic view (Enders & Musselin, 2008). For example, in linking back to higher education's role in developing knowledge, the issue concerns whether management supports ways to enable this or is process-oriented in the return-on-investment from a productivity viewpoint. Societal advancement favours the former, while many audits and financial support mechanisms favour production oriented. Contextually the public vs. private in-situ may also contribute to this disparity simply through levels of financial aid available. This orientation has implications for how academics might be encouraged, supported, or motivated to develop effective new practices. Depending on the nature of change they wish to see, the availability of resources, internal and external, can enable or disable attempts by academics to innovate.

Traditional roles of the academic as learned professor and conduit of knowledge are changing. Recent research points to managerial practices of unbundling academic roles (Macfarlane, 2011b) in moves towards developing independent research, teaching, and administrative functions. Brew et al. (2018) propose an unbundling and evolution towards 'artisanal' roles, operating as an

adjunct to teaching and research wherein educational experts support positions to facilitate university functioning, thereby enabling teachers or researchers to focus on their strengths. While, in theory, emphasis is on best practice as an expert, it's possible to lose contextual understanding. Consider administrators who request specific rubrics be adopted university wide, without comprehension of nuances within disciplines or programme levels. How does such unbundling support innovative practice, does it enable or constrain ways academics might look to introduce variability in the way they approach their role?

Beyond changes in the capacity of the role, the educational environment is also being impacted. Bottrell and Manathunga (2019) stated that the currency of culture in Neoliberalism equips education with a toxic environment. They cite casualisation of the academic workforce, low pay, vulnerable labour, and 'invisibilisation' as contributing to restrictive employment pools, work-to-rule practices, and closed-door environments, none of which are openly conducive to creative or innovative environments. Depending on how an individual is impacted, their perspective on higher education and its roles will also likely be affected. A UK 2020 report from University and College Union (UCU) discusses the dehumanisation of academics (second class academics) through labour casualisation. A practice they claim extends beyond the UK (Megoran & Mason, 2020). In business, casualisation leads to a flexible and agile organisation (Jadhav, 2018), ably responsive to demand and supply needs. However, casualisation in higher education is, according to the authors of the report, creating an academic divide that is destructive, segregating academic communities. This claim assumes that tenured academics are concerned or negatively impacted by the casualisation. In some cases, this may not be the case.

The UCU claims that casualisation is not an erroneous side effect of 'progress' in higher education but rather a purposeful outcome resulting from adopting managerial practices and business models within the sector (Megoran & Mason, 2020) toward leaner operations. However, in adopting this flexibility, an uncoupling of research and teaching is likely to occur could impact the value that learners place on higher education. Given internal and external factors can influence their role, educators need to find effective responses to impediments. Depending on the level of concern, power, or agency of an individual and others akin to them, including those in managerial roles, the answer will vary considerably.

The role of knowledge is changing in society, and arguably so too have conceptions about how that knowledge evolves from an educational perspective (Mateo & Vlachopoulos, 2013). In looking outwards beyond the inner functioning of the sector, Kunnari and Ilomäki (2016) claim 'extensive changes' (p167) are impacting the traditional roles of higher education in readying students for intellectual life. This changing role presupposes a moving away from solely acting as a

critic of society towards a more inclusive part, learning in and of society for a greater social good. Institutional decisions will influence these changes in how they manage the creative tension in discerning between teaching vs. research, primary vs. applied, and scholastic vs. entrepreneurial orientations (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). These decisions challenge current academic practices in being suitably aligned to meet the changing needs of society and its demands for an agile workforce (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016). In observing this, one might argue the traditional role of higher education has not fundamentally changed, only that the function is open to broader interpretation.

Ehlers (2020) believes that education's role is to enable students to gain the ability and competency to adapt to society and contribute to others' well-being successfully. Such claims support developing more robust economic relations and triple-helix arrangements (academic, industry, government) that drive and support innovative practice (Etzkowitz et al., 2000). However, realising these outcomes and evolving education requires understanding the factors reshaping higher education (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016).

Advancements in technology, big data, and knowledge acquired through its' analysis, the massification of higher education through open/free access, and organisations acting as specialised educators, e.g., McDonald's University, are some of the ways the role of the educator is impacted. Such confrontations put additional pressure on educators to be suitably responsive, reframing their roles and workload. Hence further supports the 'artisanal' roles identified by Brew et al. (2018) and arguably the need for innovation in and of teaching. Given that the generation and acquisition of knowledge are ongoing, the assumption that educational environments evolve in tandem is presented. Yet, again, contextual and managerial constructs impact how those responses occur. Coined 'limiting situations' by Freire (1972), these conditions restrict transformation. Further complications exist with increased emotional labour and tolls on university leaders battling administrative tasks over guiding research and teaching as institutions move to more business-like ways of working (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2020). It could be that these developments lend themselves to managers in more of a gatekeeper type role wherein they inadvertently enable individual academic freedom to innovate through being removed from direct involvement in daily practice, focusing more on the institutional needs.

Acknowledging the context is helpful when seeking to understand experiences of new practice so that academics can fully explore ways of 'defying' the normalisation of education.

According to Fullan (2007), effective education comes via "professional development, pedagogical improvement and student learning" (p4). However, it is naive to think that research does not play a role in this. If the traditional connection between research and teaching is broken,

how education and knowledge are created must also change. A key factor in strategizing how effective education is managed is likely through funding decisions made within the institution, leadership, and the resources available to academic staff to be innovative. Making the best use of available resources requires an effective and efficient educational system (Serdyukov, 2017). One contributing factor to this is how the individual institution is managed structurally, namely its' administration.

One of the concerns arising from the neoliberalisation of academia, according to Navarro (2017), is the financial sustainability (profitability) of the institution and its effect on limiting academic freedom. According to Leslie and Rhoades (1995), between 1973 & 1974 and 1985 & 1986 the share of administrative costs rose dramatically and disproportionately compared with educational expenses resulting in an 'administrative bloat' (Hedrick et al., 2009), also confirmed by Hogan (2011). For this reason, it is relevant to consider staffing, given how this might influence academics' willingness and involvement in the new practice. de la Torre et al. (2019) also claim that understanding ways institutions prioritise collaborations with stakeholder agencies may go some distance toward knowing more about how HEIs are driving socio-economic development. The concept of a triple helix approach in drawing on the HEI, society, and business has been recognised as one new practice to acquire and develop knowledge without the need for external university funding (Yonezawa et al., 2020). Knowing more about individual academics' experiences in such collaborations might reveal insights into the drivers and realities of these relationships. This study will seek to explore this.

If the higher investment in administrative costs is due to freeing up time for academics to teach, research, and provide service, then shifts in cost allocation may be warranted. Educators can invest in innovative practices that then support the enhancement of education. This decision is at the behest of institutions and may or may not support such practices, particularly if it builds on the tension between academic and administrative staff (Altbach & Lewis, 1995). This is notwithstanding internal competition for funding by different individuals, departments, or schools and the institution's overall core mission (Aamodt et al., 2016). However, management's desire to acquire multiple rankings or measure activities according to accreditation standards may increase administration support.

Although Blair and Briggs (2019) argue that this unbundling may only be an interim practice, resulting in the re-bundling of academic identity in the near future. It may also be driving the unbundling and creation of tribes, such as the instructor, within the educational institution. Thus, rather than academics completing fewer administrative tasks, evidence, even from my own experience, suggests policies and practices require even more time spent on these activities.

The developing role of the educator is one driven by the need for sustainability in themselves, their academic identity and level of agency as a researcher/academic/service-oriented faculty member, and their responsiveness and adaptability to evolving educational needs. However, role development is complicated by both the organisational needs and characteristics aligned with neoliberalisation. On this basis, understanding the context of individuals in the study or the extent to which internal and external factors influence their mindset concerning new practice will be helpful to explore.

2.3 Leading innovative practice

There is also value in understanding the form of leadership under which academics are managed. Typically, this might vary between softer non-coercive approaches to more evidence-driven quit-pro-quo styles.

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that seeks to move employees beyond self-interest toward achieving organisational vision through a softer non-coercive approach that activates internal triggers (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). This form of leadership is commonly discussed in conjunction with innovative behaviour (Nusair et al., 2012). It is a necessary antecedent to support and encourage the innovative practice by staff, particularly within participative environments where they influence factors affecting them (Owusu-Agyeman, 2019). This style differs from transactional leadership, which focuses on exchange in managing behaviour (Burns, 1978). In practice, managers might use both approaches to lead their staff, responding according to the individual or the task and outcome sought. The Hansen and Pihl-Thingvad (2019) study established that as long as verbal rewards were included in the leadership style, there is no difference in innovative practice outcomes under transformational, transactional, or combined leadership styles. However, Al-Husseini et al. (2019) recently confirmed a direct and positive relationship between a transformational leadership style, the sharing of insights, and innovative behaviour. This relationship indicates that transformational leadership is more appropriate for innovative practice, particularly when verbal rewards are present. Perhaps more emphasis must be given to the individual being led rather than relying on a certain leadership style being more effective than others. In place of leadership, facilitation and mentoring may be better suited towards change, neither of which must be provided for by managers. Peers, colleagues, and personal networks could provide this just as readily. Innovative practice is likely to succeed when the innovator is empowered to enact change (De Silva et al., 2018) and connected to the practice. Thus,

in moving beyond the leadership style, the management of staff functions and their agency to innovate requires consideration.

Hairon and Goh (2015) claim that a necessary factor in innovative practice is distributing labour so individuals can harness their expertise and explore new knowledge, processes, or opportunities. Ta (2018) claims that leadership should be facilitatory. Others suggest that leadership style is important to affecting innovations because of the role that many have in producing ideas and creating a culture for innovation (Elrehail et al., 2018). However, this ignores the importance of the individual academic in the process. The individual license, i.e., mindset, identity, and agency to progress innovative, creative solutions, enables innovative practice (Owusu-Agyeman, 2019). It may not matter how academics are led in so far as their capacity for change, which may be more valuable in understanding innovative practice. While leadership may factor into this process, greater emphasis is likely to be needed to understand their level of agency within the structure and applications of academic experiences. Perhaps it is more the individuals' self-leadership that has greater importance in evolving new practices.

Given the changing landscape of higher education, it is evident that responsive or anticipatory changes in educational practice are necessary to assure institutions and educators of their sustainability in providing what is largely a public good. Leadership is relevant to how this might occur but appears to be less critical to its emergence. Rather leadership is best understood in a faciliatory, supportive role (Ta, 2018).

In knowing this, the concept of innovative practice needs to be examined, particularly regarding technology, which many have recognised as critical to innovation (Godin, 2015; Lazowska, 2016; Serrano et al., 2019). Therefore, this next section in the literature examines the essence of innovation and innovative practice in higher education.

2.4 The essence of innovative practice

Much of the literature around innovativeness and innovation in education has centred on the impact of change brought about by digital technologies (Godin, 2015). A 2016 OECD report (OECD, 2016) claims there is enormous potential for fostering and enhancing learning but criticises that, at best, the application has only been at a superficial level.

Since 1960 when innovation centred on the production era and concepts of research and development (R&D), technology was at its' centre (Edwards-Schachter, 2018). Even today, the range of technological innovations impacting learning environments is varied and substantial (Zafar, 2019). Depending on the stage of development, experience, and resources of both educator and institution,

the integration of technological innovation will differ. For some, innovative best practices via technology can enhance learners' engagement and empowerment (Kopcha et al., 2016). But for others, the outcome can be confusion, distraction, and disengagement. According to Kavnaugh (2018), technology has both “solved and created instructional problems” (p.19). Therefore, technology need not be the sole basis of innovative practice. Instead, it mustn't be (Tidd & Bessant, 2018). This realisation is important to acknowledge from an institutional perspective, in that the fundamentals of education must underpin choice in adopting new practices, particularly in the case of technology. This relationship is referred to in the context of ‘fit’ and ‘organisational courage’ (Chatterjee et al., 2020), in how technology aligns with the role and purpose in education and in the agency (individual and groups) to enable change. Chatterjee et al. (2020) further claim that human agency is essential in fuelling change sought through technology. Innovative practice relies on the agential capacity of people, as individuals or collective communities of practice, i.e. managers for change to be imbedded. This acknowledgment supports the call for ‘responsible innovation’ (Edwards-Schachter, 2018, p.67) in how new practice evolves and is adopted, particularly considering the technological advances and desires to enact social outcomes. Epistemologically, change is necessary to innovate education. While innovation refers to implementing improved ideas, knowledge, or practices (Cerna, 2014), it means different things to different people. It largely depends on the individual's viewpoint, the subjective and changeable prioritisation afforded to the values, policies, and goals guiding them, and the institution or policymakers. Innovating can result in changes in process or outcomes, be they significant or incremental.

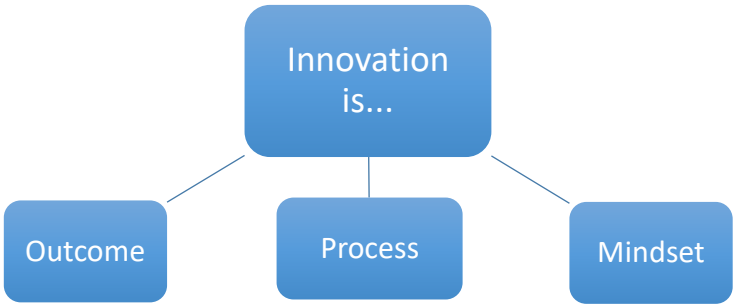

Figure 2: Kahn (2018) Framework of Innovation

According to Kahn (2018), innovation is defined as a mindset, a process, or an outcome (**Error! Reference source not found.**). This framework is important to consider in understanding i nnovative practice and gives a broader consideration to what it might look like in higher education, beyond simply an outcome or process, which has largely been the focus of previous attempts to

define it. Kahn (2018) proposes that innovation might become more attainable through how it is supported or enabled in acknowledging this framework. However, in instilling what is needed (mindset) and knowing how to make things happen (process), and in knowing what change is wanted (outcome), does innovation necessarily occur, and how does it occur at the individual level? Is this categorisation of innovation sufficient to understand it well enough for 'being innovative'? In his review of this overall concept, limited attention is given to the relative importance of key terms, their components, or to the externalities that might influence them. A broader examination of innovative practice is warranted to understand this application in higher education.

At the heart of innovation in higher education, according to Cai (2017), is the notion of sustainability through transformation for the benefit of an extensive social system, reinforcing the belief of higher education as a public good. Indeed, Schröder and Krüger (2019) maintain that social innovation to tackle societies' wicked problems is gaining more focus worldwide and is no longer solely aligned with more advanced or wealthier economies. Innovation is shifting, in essence, from an economic productivity-driven basis to one that is focused on sustainability (Edwards-Schachter, 2018). This orientation towards social innovation is evident within my University, where its' mission has more recently publicly adopted social impact as a core driver (AUT, n.d.). While understanding respective social systems relevant to individual economies supports an appreciation of variances in innovative practice in different socio-economic contexts, much can be gained from understanding practices applied in various settings and by other parties. This consideration may reveal what some have coined 'dark innovations' (Martin, 2013, p. 11) i.e. newly adopted practices that are not necessarily visible, e.g. new approaches benefitting the practitioner but not noticeable to others. Blair (1998) confirms that innovative approaches may be enabled in contrasting ways and by different drivers, for instance, via stakeholder value i.e. the institution, and shareholder value, i.e. students. This observation raises questions about the importance of driver origins and if this impacts the outcome, further expanding on the work by Kahn (2018).

Schumpeter and Stiglitz (2010) argue that commercial goals underpin the development of innovations alongside innovative practice, yet such goals are not typically present in higher education. Academics are not financially rewarded for innovative practice, although it may raise their profile or contribute to promotion cases. Even when financial incentives are available, the basis for allocation is not consistent, and thus the drivers and mechanisms to support innovative practice will likely differ. Does this matter, or is academic identity and agency more important in evolving new practice than the drivers themselves?

This consideration of values and roles causes me to consider the ideological assumptions underpinning academics' innovation attempts. The literature (Dallyn, 2011) supports that

innovations beyond financial purposes may be more successful in achieving social transformation. This confirms the assertions Biesta (2015) made relating to the role of education in socialization and personal development, not only qualification. An example of this is in introducing work-integrated learning to higher education practice. Towards the end of the last century, Boyer (1996) proposed a then-innovative notion calling for closer engagement with communities so that higher education might be more adept at solving 'social, civic, economic, and moral problems (p18). Many institutions have subsequently picked this up via the nature of service-based or work-integrated learning, arguably a once-innovative practice that has achieved widespread adoption and integration over time. Another example is the proposed evolvement of "shokunin" or "artisans" (Brew et al., 2018, p. 119). These innovative practitioners seek to work effectively for the benefit of society, drawing on resources, attitudes, and skillsets to do so. Their research pointed to this teaching professional (as opposed to the research academic) as having a more significant role in introducing innovative practices, mainly by their conscientious commitment to ensuring smooth operations. An artisans' broader lens of what is required to activate and enable education and their sense of agency facilitates innovative practice. Without such glue holding departments together, the opportunity to see and respond innovatively may be overlooked or remain out of reach.

If we consider developments in academic research and teaching practice towards social impact, the emphasis is shifting towards a greater good, minimising the importance of financial rewards or costs. At the same time, seeing the bigger picture value of making an impact on society may provide a greater personal return to academics and how they approach their role. However, as introduced earlier, multiple situational factors can impede how an individual might embody the innovative practitioner mindset. Irrespective of the social impact mission of the institution, if the individual is ill-equipped to respond, evolving practice will likely remain elusive to them.

With an understanding of the essence of innovative practice, how prevalent is this need for it within higher education? The next section examines aspects of economics, technology, knowledge, diversity, human capital, i.e. agency, market forces, and change cycles, underpinning the value gained through innovative practice.

2.5 The need for innovative practice

Innovation is economically and strategically crucial, with many countries and individual organisations assigning significant funding towards remaining competitive and sustainable (Tidd & Bessant, 2018). However, as previously suggested, financial directives are not and should not be central to innovative practice in higher education.

Couros (2015) mandates that education innovation is not a luxury but a necessity. Zhu et al. (2013) agree that innovative teaching is necessary to meet the needs of current students and new generations. But this too is challenging, as discussed earlier concerning the dehumanisation of academics through casualisation (Megoran & Mason, 2020). Moreover, in the context of increased job pressure and limited time, how is it even possible to develop an innovative mindset, let alone apply it?

There is a changing educational profile toward non-traditional students, estimated to be 4.3 million more students in higher education between 2015 and 2030 (Choudaha & van Rest, 2018). Yesterday's tried and trustworthy academic practice may not be the best solution in preparing for tomorrow's knowledge economy or tomorrow's society. Unprecedented global events such as the extensive fires in Australia (2019) and the more recent Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak in 2019/20 necessitate different perspectives on the provision of education and how learners might access it (Smellie, 2020). My university, for example, requires students from China (the centre of the outbreak) to quarantine themselves for the first two weeks of their class. The Dean of the Business School asked academics to develop solutions in how those students might not be disadvantaged in their learning. However, as time passed, it became evident that this issue was not solely linked to international students stuck overseas, but all students of my university as the government imposed a mandatory lockdown.

Regarding all educational providers, this meant moving to a fully distance-based teaching model with no face-to-face classes. Numerous issues emerged that needed addressing, ranging from the preparation of academics for teaching online; to the consideration of resources (internet connections, access to computers); the situational and living environments of learners and educators; and evolving all participants from traditionally offline to online learning. The socio-economic constraints of learners have been identified as a significant link to social inequities (Schröder & Krüger, 2019). An innovative practice would benefit from acknowledging how these differences might impact solutions for transformational or evolving education advances.

The need for a new practice in today's educational environment is evident. However, in guiding this, knowing how it is evolving in practice and the kinds of innovations emphasised must be fully understood to begin to imagine the necessary conditions required to enable this.

Economics of innovating

Biesta (2015) claims that three pillars underpin the role of higher education, socialisation, accreditation, and personal development. It is valuable to assess the impact of not innovating in considering these purposes. Serdyukov (2017) states that failure to innovate can have 'profound

economic and social repercussions' (p6). As our society becomes more complex and more diverse, so will the demands on individuals to accommodate such shifts in their knowledge and understanding. Choudaha and van Rest (2018) suggest that while there will be more exclusivity in higher education due to global competition and consolidation, there will also be an increasing need for new models or modes to extend learning beyond traditional thresholds. Unless educational providers find innovative and more economical ways of delivering education, they cannot survive (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Cai (2017) claims an addiction to the status quo and inertia to change may result in the dearth of educational systems, especially when the 'third mission' (p.598) or social engagement orientation of higher education is ignored.

However, economically, the individual academic is assuming considerable risk in introducing the innovative practice. Fraser (2019) highlights academics' personal and job risk-taking on extra work, focusing on new andragogical practices over discipline research, and potentially failing before their colleagues and students. Institutionally, world events such as the Covid-19 health pandemic are also challenging higher education to conceive of different ways to provide for learning or risk cancellation of course enrolments due to the immobility of international students to travel to attend universities. In New Zealand, China alone accounted for approximately 30% of all 111,000 international fee-paying students in 2018 (Smellie, 2020).

Advances in technology

Technology is changing society, and there is no doubt about that. However, the notion and extent to which it might affect society via education require significant consideration, especially within educational systems. For example, technology is changing how students look for resources themselves rather than relying solely on academic guidance on what to read. Arguably any learner can source information they require. As technological systems develop further via artificial intelligence and analytics, students will be more readily able to find their information (Pardo & Kloos, 2011). However, what is missing in this may be the understanding and comprehending of the links in data, such that knowledge and the ability to grow knowledge are generated within the individual instead of answers being automated or a function of an Internet search. There is also concern over the quality and reliability of those sources. Research suggests students benefit from the Internet for learning (Apuke & Iyendo, 2018), but the quality of learning depends on the resources used (Ilo & Ifijeh, 2010).

According to Kirkwood and Price (2013), much literature about innovative practice draws on technology as a primary mechanism behind the new approach; however, this should not be the limit of consideration. Educators are challenged with having and maintaining an integral role in managing

what and how technology is used for education yet may not have enough experience or understanding of these applications, falling short of organisational aspirations and resulting in less than ideal learning situations (Liu et al., 2020). Furthermore, reactive conditions are becoming normalised, with the 'quick let's use this new system' rather than considered strategic planning, which critiques how educators might adopt innovative practices for transformative learning.

Kantar (2013) extends this further, advocating that educators understand the learning theories behind their choice of new practice to enable educational shifts and transformation to progress. But do they? Are educators knowledgeable in their consideration of learning theories as they reflect on the potential for innovative practice, or is the newness of solutions more prevalent in driving change?

Evolution of knowledge

Higher education must acknowledge and respond to complexities and advancements to allow society to continue evolving. Innovative practice, borne of an alignment between individuals' beliefs and values, underpinned by educational learning principles, will enable that to happen (Kantar, 2013). Ultimately, students' success relies on education and education systems that innovate (Mintz, 2019), as evidenced by growing numbers of policies and professional development opportunities to nurture competencies for innovative teaching. The innovative focus should not rely solely on the drive by formal structures and organisational missions. Informal approaches driven by individuals' norms, values, and beliefs are necessary to achieve change (Cai, 2017). Exceptional managerial practices that encourage, enable, and support creative and innovative practices are undoubtedly desirable, albeit not the norm (Kantar, 2013).

Widening lenses & diverse perspectives

Literature suggests (Mintz, 2019; Siddiqui & Adams, 2013) innovative practice may be one solution to evolving education, mainly when the new practice includes differing perspectives aligning with a wider audience's beliefs and values. Much of today's literature on the evolution or transformation of higher education speaks to the notion of inclusivity, equality, and diversity in the need for new practice, particularly as it relates to pedagogy and curriculum (Summerlee, 2018). In addition, educators are expected to embrace qualities supporting a global world in how they act and think (Bowl, 2018) and how they approach educating others, knowing that learners are not only school leavers (Summerlee, 2018).

These changes are evident through curriculum moves towards learning outcomes, individual specialised papers, e.g., sustainability in marketing, and entire programmes related to growing societal concerns. These changes further attest to the individuals' role, values, and beliefs in seeding

innovative practice. Educational transformation leads individuals to an advanced knowledge state by examining their positionality, wherein such reflections result in personal restructuring for navigating society, western or otherwise (Siddiqui & Adams, 2013). Such a transformation is needed to ensure that societies cannot only draw on "cultural commons" (Etherington, 2019, p. 105), i.e. historical practices to inform response, but that innovative practice also considers such influences. Etherington (2019) maintains innovation can encourage social segregation and cautions innovative practice to be mindful of "education as a social institution" (p.109), for education nourishes society and vice versa (Serdyukov, 2017).

Leading out, from within, and the role of agency

Olsson (2018) proposes for transformative change to occur, a process of 'unselfing' needs to happen. That is, individuals need to become considerate of other ways and means to accomplish outcomes. In the context of education, this suggests academics should, in a sense, 'let go' so they might be open to currently unrecognised practices, which may be tricky according to the academics' or learners' cultural background. However, recent research (Ho, 2020) has suggested that cultural values can positively impact new pedagogic practice, refuting previous perceptions of culture as a barrier to innovative practice. It might further be tricky wherein an individual does not feel they have the capacity to 'let go' in terms of the level of agency they have assumed so that they can reflect on and see opportunities for differences. Agency relates to the capacity to enact change (Giddens, 1984). Agency has been recognised (Ketelaar et al., 2012) as having a key role in developing academics and their ability to be responsive to changing environments. If an individual has an assumed low level of agency, they have a diminished capacity for being innovative. They are more akin to following others and good practice than initiating novel practices themselves.

In contrast, high levels of agency could result in resistance to innovative practice if it does not align with their values and beliefs (Sannino, 2010). However, Litomitz (1997) claims resistance can manifest some degree of agency. This observation suggests in the case of followers of innovative practice, consideration of negativities in new practice that create resistance to their use of it can potentially move them to an increased level of agency, which could seed them into being more innovative at an individual level.

This notion of 'unselfing' might then differ depending on academics' orientation towards aspects of their role in teaching, research, and service. Indeed, it will likely vary according to their passion for their role (Busso & Rivetti, 2014), which is shaped by multiple factors. According to their appointment, e.g., tenured or casual; position, e.g., professor or lecturer; or status, e.g., research or teaching professional, the interest and agency of the individual academic to innovate or consider

new practices will vary. In a further testament to this, according to Palmer (1997), “We teach who we are,” and to be open to a new practice, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual pathways of the individual cannot be ignored. The individuals' inner landscape must be considered when reflecting on pedagogical discourse (Palmer, 1997). Yet, there are significant challenges in managing and enabling this, particularly considering how these individual identities are manipulated through organisational expectations and culture. Claims of increased academic labour and occupational stress have been the price some have paid in attempts to introduce change (Woo, 2019). The individual’s confidence in their assumed agency level can contribute to how these challenges can be navigated and how an impact is experienced.

Involvement and experience in innovative practice may lead to an enhanced ability to successfully manage and respond to complexities within academic environments, including advances in technology and its increased use by learners. Of course, it does not mean that technology should underpin all innovative practices, but it should be one consideration. Serdyukov (2017) has gone so far as to state that technological innovation will eventually drive innovations in pedagogy in the future, but this may not be the case across all academia.

There is an ongoing concern (Selwyn, 2012) over the role technology has in academia and society as different users, and learners of new mediums evolve their understanding of the relationship between technology, knowledge, and society. Sancho-Gil et al. (2020) caution us to carefully manage visions of technology in education that ignore its complexity, thereby wasting resources and preventing transformative education. So too could be said for innovative practice and the necessity for logic to underpin its’ introduction. In considering this, we are largely concerned with who we are as academics and our capacity to be an academic, which brings us to agency.

Market forces

In most cases, drives for profitability and continuous refinement of business processes instigate the need for change. But in higher education, these profitability motives are not immediately evident, only output maximization, primarily due to views of education as a public good (Marginson, 2013). MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) could further disrupt any profitability motives that enable learners to study online at little to no cost, thus delivering education as a public good. However, despite many MOOCS enrolments for traditional bricks-and-mortar educational providers have remained relatively strong. The motivation to attend learning in-person and on-campus may lie beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge (or qualification) alone towards socialisation and personal development (Biesta, 2015). Stackhouse et al. (2020) suggest resistance

may be due to more fundamental protectionist principles of culture, effectiveness, fit, and job threat.

With appointments of industry experts at market rates, the notion that HEI needs to focus on financial sources and sustainability belies their ability to afford such expertise. In addition, the current economic crises facing institutions due to closed campuses, reductions in income streams, debt servicing, and falling high-paying student numbers arising from Covid-19 (Friga, 2020). Thus, regardless of the institutional drive towards public or market orientation, new practices cannot be sustained without successful financial management, nor potentially the institution. Similarly, without successful and evolving academic practice, the financials (and therefore, institution) cannot be managed through supply and demand. Thus, there is a balancing act in managing the response (new practice) against the need for high-quality teaching, learning and engagement, and resources.

Personalisation of learning, equity in access, equality in outcomes, and relevancy can be achieved by looking differently into or at educational practices. Dumont et al. (2010) maintain that education systems must be adaptive to foster innovative practices and develop relevant skills to respond to societal change. However, care is needed to manage innovative or creative attempts within context (Scruton, 1987) and avoid threatening either the functionality or overall performance of the institution.

This impact extends to academics' interactions with students, colleagues, institutions, or society. Innovating through the development of mindset, processes, and outcomes may enable reimagining education for educational transformation.

Suppose I can understand the purposes of and differences in innovative practice, the values that drive and challenge those practices (Agle & Caldwell, 1999), and the shared experiences in attempts to innovate. This understanding might contribute to an increased sense of personal agency, and I may be better positioned to be innovative. It is not as much success or failure that guides me here, but a desire to explore the journey of academics in innovating. This understanding may lead to differences in how my institution or I translate innovative practice within our context.

Cycle of change

Couros (2015) argues change is continuous in education, and we must innovate within constraints asserted by structures and sources outside our control. Mars and Medak (2019) extend caution, claiming it is naive to focus on disruption through innovation. Instead, divestment should focus on repair, maintenance, and care of what Mars and Medak (2019) claim is a 'broken social

world left in techno-capitalism's wake' (p.345). Innovation in this perspective can result in chaos and a need to rebuild what has broken due to innovation. In innovating, consideration must be given to potential coping strategies needed to support new practices. What innovative practice does not want to create is a mutation of attempts that causes quality educational practices to crumble. At the heart of change must be student success (Mintz, 2019), not change for change's sake. Of course, there must be some leeway given here, as, without any attempts to try to see and develop new ways of doing, enough advancement (or consideration of advancement) may not be possible.

One challenge emerging in higher education is the need for deeper learning. Evidence suggests students are quickly attuned to seeking to pass an examination, 'learnification' as coined by Biesta (2015), or simply complete qualifications to gain residency or employment entry status. In response, the complexity of assessment models reduces. Such practices support the need for innovative initiatives that positively impact learning and learners (Serdyukov, 2017). In addition, the shape of education may be evolving in how academics evaluate what is learned and assessed. Perhaps more focus on assessment practices in 'relevant knowledge', i.e. authentic assessment, is needed to enable the 21st-century learner to be adaptable and agile in constant change. In remedying such knowledge challenges, further consideration may also be necessary beyond academics to those higher up the chain, including management, business, regulatory agencies, or local government.

Previous research (Vaikunthavasan et al., 2019) has affirmed the importance of innovative practice to higher education in responding to environmental changes and the capacity of individual academics to contribute to that response. The position adopted here is that academics play a significant part in evolving higher education practice and that their agency is paramount to that. This acknowledgement has widespread implications for those employed by institutions and to what extent they wish to be seen as innovative by society. However, there are degrees of innovativeness that might be introduced, depending on the situational context. Thus, the emphasis is not necessarily on adopting widespread innovation behaviours, only on acknowledging where such behaviours can add value to the individual, the institution, learners, and society. With that in mind, the focus now turns to how innovative practice is implemented and 'behaving innovatively'.

2.6 Drivers of innovative behaviour

Why do people innovate? Both intrinsic and extrinsic motives drive individuals, but there may be differences in what might influence innovative behaviour, particularly in the case of higher education.

Related to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), intrinsic motivation gives the most significant insights into relationships between work and creativity, i.e. innovativeness. Intrinsic motivation arises from a personal enjoyment of an activity, resulting in more effort, engagement, and positive outcomes (Pintrich & Zusho, 2002). It is dependent on their need state, with more functional solutions forming around basic needs (Maslow, 1981). Notions of curiosity, cognitive agility, and risk-taking are associated with creativity and intrinsically motivated people. Satisfaction of three critical psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, drive this internal motivation and supports the notion of agency, benefitting innovative practice (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsically motivated innovators are acknowledged as more credible in their information processing, exploration, and identification of solutions (Amabile, 1997). This recognition is important in connecting the essence of innovative practice to 'responsible innovation' (Edwards-Schachter, 2018). Internal motives identified by Christensen et al. (2012) are important to how environmental changes are managed and are thus also likely to be linked with the concept of agency through this notion of human capacity. However, it is also valuable to understand that intrinsic motivation relating to an individual's creative self-efficacy is further moderated by the perceived 'exposure' and 'need to protect' when initialising ideas around new practices (Devloo, 2014). The more individuals feel the need to protect their creativity, the less motivated they will be to innovate.

Fear is also a prevalent concern amongst faculty and is represented by varying behaviours evident at different appointment levels. Australia and the United Kingdom are two examples of institutional cultures where the notion of a 'second class academic citizen' prevails through casualisation (Cantrell & Palmer, 2019). According to Megoran and Mason (2020), this second-class citizen is being taken advantage of by permanent faculty in workload and administrative tasks. Threats of technological advances and questions over an essential requirement for faculty to educate further compromise academics' position and role in education. Thus, while intrinsic motivation is critical to identifying new practices, the context and environment must support it to move beyond ideation.

Kunnari and Ilomäki (2016) claim personal motivation is foundational in supporting innovative behaviour in education. If academics do not desire or are interested in seeking change, change will not occur. But if we don't change what is being offered, how we create outputs, or how we deliver them, Tidd and Bessant (2018) argue that there is a risk of being overtaken by those that do, "survival is not compulsory"(p.1).

Meaningful educational environments must be created for innovative practice, requiring academics to continue learning and developing (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016). Riivari et al. (2020) assert that new approaches can ensure meaningful work, avoiding neoliberal and academic capitalism

concepts. They claim enabling more positive environments can help prevent silos between research and teaching (Riivari et al., 2020). Through innovative practice, role enrichment opportunities arise by gaining new insights, trying new things, or collaborating on new projects. Amorim Neto et al. (2018) state that 'entrepreneurs in education' or innovative practitioners are typically more focused than non-entrepreneurs in managing scarce resources, i.e. time or funding for evolving practice. However, this directionality may be demotivating for others as they constantly must stay ahead of what is needed.

Extrinsic motivations include money, resources, promotion, and other externally proffered gains available to individuals in meeting or exceeding expectations. The motivation may not be present depending on the organisational structure, funding systems, or resource availability. Smith (2012) states that authentic new practice needs contextual alignment with intended learning outcomes (extrinsic motivation) for academic and workplace needs, as identified by educational programmes and academics. Harvey et al. (2016) also focused on extrinsic motivations of student equity in determining responses to changes in higher education in Australia. Drivers for education in their case-oriented around new higher educational practices inclusive of 'first peoples' (e.g. Aboriginals), lower socio-economic groups, those with disabilities, women in non-traditional fields, students from non-English speaking backgrounds, and remotely located students. The literature (Christensen et al., 2012; Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000) indicates evolving practice drivers may be intrinsic or extrinsic for individual academics, depending on their habitus. Still, there is greater support for intrinsic as motivating an innovative practitioner.

However, irrespective of which aspect drives their need for change, the innovative practice requires authenticity. To this end, academics need to commit to ongoing development and evolvement to ensure genuineness in their solutions. The question is, how does this happen in reality? We need to understand what this authenticity is and how it is shaped and experienced by academics. For example, academics might evolve new practices from a learning outcomes base or develop them organically before being moulded to fit academic directives. This understanding might go some way towards knowing the directionality in evolving new practices.

2.7 Barriers to innovative practice

The role of education as part of broader social systems is acknowledged as a potential barrier to innovative practice (Myyryläinen, 2017). If society supports the practice, provisions will be made to enable it. Alternatively, if such support is non-existent, innovative approaches are less likely to exist. Serdyukov (2017) outlined social challenges, including consumerism, mercantilism,

monetisation of education, and entitlement (p.17). In addition, Lašáková et al. (2017) discuss disparities between different stakeholders' needs, tensions within, and inconsistencies in how ICT is used across organisations as key examples of such issues.

Schneckenberg (2009) claims organisational structures can create barriers to innovative practice. Elena (2017) depicted core processes for adopting digital content within a higher education setting but recognised institutional leaders' outstanding needs for effective engagement and action. Bourdieu (1990) would refer to this as habitus, in that social class distinctions and inequalities are socialised within academia via department, school, or institutional behaviours. Lašáková et al. (2017) refers to this as "Blocked Management" and "Rigid HRM operations" (p.73). However, Schneckenberg (2009) concedes an increasing awareness of this limitation arising from reflexivity (Bourdieu, 1990) and acknowledges institutions are moving towards more supportive human resource strategies and centralized models to sustain innovative practices. Such an example is noted by Van Petegem (2010) in developing a university-wide concept for pedagogy, namely 'Guided Independent Learning' (p.235). Lašáková et al. (2017) advocate for an open culture that empowers staff, nurturing innovative tendencies. To cultivate an innovation-linked discourse, a longitudinal agenda towards innovative practice is needed within and across the organisation and its stakeholders. Disconnection between stakeholders will lead to issues in communication, inhibiting effective innovative practice (Lašáková et al., 2017).

Mintz (2019) states systems of governance, the legacy of structure, and tradition are common barriers to innovation in higher education. He also raises concern over 'innovation fatigue' and increased risk due to changing student profiles towards students of diverse cultures, backgrounds, living situations, and employment statuses, presenting different concerns in developing new practices.

Blair and Briggs (2019) acknowledge concerns over the unbundling of academic roles, as specialist partner roles are created to supplement and support educational practice. These may be one solution to manage individuals' challenges such as academic burnout and increasing demands on research productivity. However, it is likely to be a solution for the few and not the many. The outcome depends on how roles are unbundled and how this aligns with individuals' academic identity, agency, and opportunity to advance new practice. For example, Evers et al. (2002) assessed academics' burnout levels and determined those with strong self-efficacy were more vested in experimenting and introducing new practices, reducing burnout.

In contrast, loss of control of the environment impacts self-efficacy and self-worth assessment (Kushman, 1992). The unpreparedness of academics toward new ways of doing things

can ultimately result in barriers of conservative practice (Lašáková et al., 2017). It can also enable burnout through failure to recognise different, effective, or efficient ways of doing things afforded by innovations in education.

Changes in roles from the 'sage on the stage' or 'chalk and talk' to educational processes that mediate and encourage learning are more evident in today's learning environment. New challenges such as increasing student to academic ratios, the duality of on/offline courses, and economic instability in an increasingly competitive environment warrant introducing innovative practices to provide effective relief. It is widely acknowledged (Sabagh et al., 2018) that current academic climates are highly demanding for educators, learners, institutions, and society

Resistance to change can occur through hysteresis (Hardy, 2014) arising from perceived gaps between habitus of academics within 'new practice.' These can impede the extent to which transformation might occur where academic entrenchment through continued service results in staff becoming ingrained in a consistent framework of behaviours and practices, hindering possibilities for change. As a result, inertia occurs, creating disparities between changing educational environments and academics' responses (McDonough & Polzer, 2012). Varied adoption and retention rates in individuals or programs using information and communication technologies (ICT) evidence this inertia. Dirk and Gelderblom (2017) discuss this in the context of power relations, noting the conservativeness of professors or their desire for directional change reasons behind limitations in achieving transformative practice. However, they also note introductions of habitus into discourse can improve reflexivity of academics, reducing hysteresis and improving attempts at transformation. Understanding the environment of work, stronger collegiality between peers, and contextual belonging can enhance innovative practice (Zhu et al., 2013) by reducing hysteresis.

A further challenge of innovative practice in higher education lies within the specialisation and orientation of individual academics. Namely, research-oriented scholars are less well-trained in pedagogy and what Wilson-Kennedy et al. (2019) refer to as 'high impact educational practices' (p66).

Cultural aspects challenge innovative educational practices as they confront and conflict with individuals' belief systems (Ho, 2020). Seo and Koro-Ljungberg (2005) argue that education will not be equitable for all without understanding cultural identity. However, Ho (2020) states that developing educational systems to comprehend cultural differences that enhance learning can mitigate how these barriers influence new practice adoption. Understanding varied cognitive approaches arising from individualistic or collectivist perspectives may invoke wider acceptance and adoption of innovative practice. In believing the role of academics as teachers is to facilitate learning

situations (Jarvis, 2006), students can arguably be better positioned to discover knowledge when challenged by the newness of unknown or innovative practices.

According to this literature, barriers to adopting new practices can be overcome through cooperation, collaboration, communication, commitment, culture, consciousness, confidence, clarity, and coin (investment). However, to what extent these are individually important is not clear. Understanding how different elements interrelate in the introduction and experience of an academics' new practice would explain this.

2.8 The role of the institution in enabling innovative practice

Innovation-driven policies are becoming more prevalent within higher education institutions as they seek ways to help society resolve wicked problems. Historically (Schot & Steinmueller, 2016), policies around transformation through innovation have moved from research and development to a systems-based approach to commercialising knowledge. More recently, this has led to a transformation-driven focus aimed at advancing society through the directionality of innovation. Schot and Steinmueller (2016) claim that the latest version focused on transformation is necessary to ensure that society and worldwide economies are future proofed to developing inequalities, climate changes, and end employment concerns. This advancement requires developing new educational practices that ultimately enable or empower learners to become agile in directing their response, knowledge and consideration to society's wicked problems.

However, this is challenging. The design, implementation, and evaluation of such innovation policies remain uncertain for many (Schot & Steinmueller, 2016). Experimentation is necessary for transformative change, and individual actors, agents, institutions, and networks need a shared directionality (Weber & Rohracher, 2012), particularly if diffusion of innovation is expected. Kunnari and Ilomäki (2016) propose that collaborative initiatives, knowledge sharing, and more teamwork would facilitate the identification of innovative solutions and applications.

One challenge to widespread adoption or implementation of such innovation policies lies in the context of individual institutions. Resources, i.e. finance, people, time, and authority, influence the degree to which innovative activity will occur (Chang et al., 2012). According to Schot and Geels (2008) involvement of multiple stakeholders can contribute positively to abilities to experiment, but care is needed in managing control. Stakeholders, particularly external agencies, must understand the environment where the innovation is sought to provide competence to 'being innovative' (Weber & Rohracher, 2012). Such alignment and support can advance the acceptance of innovative practice more readily than a singularly supported or internally generated action. It can reduce hysteresis. Thus, institutions enabling their academics to co-create across or within networks,

vertically and horizontally, should be better positioned in the trial, success, and adoption of coherent new practices.

A significant criticism and challenge of innovative practice acknowledge the institution's role in adopting weak policies or conformist behaviours that restrict change, maintaining the status quo. Rigid and fragmented structures hinder cooperation (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016), which reduces attempts to innovate. Vaikunthavasan et al. (2019) found that experience, or a mature environment, enables innovative practice by understanding issues associated with the demand and supply of education. Accordingly, "intelligence generation drives innovative practice" (p298), and providers should enable sharing of insights and content to appropriately disseminate knowledge relating to the new practice (Vaikunthavasan et al., 2019).

Introducing professional development activities diffuses new practices and 'reforms' education in many cases. However, a recent study by Kahveci et al. (2018) found that individuals with a propensity to attend development programmes had the opposite effect, resulting in lower intentions to reform, questioning the use of professional development programmes as an effective tool to enable widespread change. This issue may relate to the internal or external drive behind the individual attending the programme or the internal or external source of the innovative practice itself. Siddiqui and Adams (2013) maintain that opportunities for adopting new practices will diminish unless individuals' values and beliefs are aligned. Thus, educational change is still at risk regardless of the diffusion process.

2.9 Innovation in education

Ehlers (2010) introduces several key educational developments impacting the need for innovative and quality learning cultures. Amongst these are the ubiquity of learning, the role of the learner, duration of learning, constructivist communities of learning, and the formal and non-formal locality of learning. Vaikunthavasan et al. (2019) claim that educational sustainability necessitates innovativeness in courses and market orientation to create higher value for stakeholders. By adopting a market orientation, organisations are more equipped to respond to changing needs, satisfy customers, and operate effectively. As a result, they are better positioned to innovate (Brettel et al., 2012). This understanding builds on historical typologies of innovative practice in higher education as identified by Silver (1999), illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.**.

Individual	Responsive to in situ teaching

Content	Discipline led
Media	Technology & practice (industry)
Curriculum	Mode of delivery & assessment
Institutional	Organisational/strategic
Systemic	Regulatory/Government

Figure 3: Typology of innovation in education

The focus on innovative practice has remained largely consistent in the twenty-odd years since this typology was proposed. However, the environmental factors have evolved with increased globalisation, internationalisation, competition, and accreditation, leading to different responses (Cheng et al., 2016).

According to Bates (2010), change occurs in institutions, albeit not systematically or well-formulated. Criticism (Cai, 2017; Serdyukov, 2017) over the ability of universities to adapt with agility highlights a plethora of challenges, including the siloing (linearity) of disciplines, academic burnout, frustrations in attempts to adapt, as well as suggestions of unwarranted changes focused in the wrong areas (not learning centred).

Mars and Medak (2019) agree with Bates (2010) and his call for considered innovative practice. They assert universities are in constant cycles of re-creation at all levels of operation. It will either result in an oligopolistic transformation of domination by a few (akin to Google or Amazon) or a pool of 'impostership' and faked innovative disruptions until proven otherwise. They propose that care is taken to consider whether innovation is necessary and whether effort should be applied to repair rather than replace. A slowing down and proper consideration of what 'is', what 'might be', and what it 'means' is considered better custodianship of innovative practice than more radical introductions.

Couros (2015) suggests that innovative practice is applied to the curriculum and assessment through new thinking and doing. An example of this is using a transdisciplinary view of education to create new areas of knowledge and practice (Appel & Kim-Appel, 2018).

Underpinning innovative practice must be a more profound experience for learning, students, and society. The increasing use of ghost-writers (students' representatives) to complete academic assessments has challenged academics to reconsider assessing individuals (Lines, 2016). Such use of imposters in representing knowledge acquisition by learners is detrimental to future employers, the reputation of institutions, and their role in society, not to mention what the students learn. Atiku and Anane-simon (2020) propose a proactive approach for HEIs to enhance teaching and

learning practices to meet future workplace needs. In this way, they assert transformational or visionary leadership will help guide the formation of human capital through clarity in the navigation of academic directions, i.e. how innovative practice is enabled. However, challenges are evident in the pace and alignment of change with industry and social practice. Investigation of an attempt to introduce a new curriculum in an undergraduate degree (Dirk & Gelderblom, 2017) revealed an experience of hysteresis by academics, with feelings of distance from their field of expertise and an inability to actively educate others.

One direction education is innovating is via closer collaboration with industry. This is particularly true in business schools, shifting from a historically producer-consumer relationship (Kumar, 2019) to one where research advances, funding is supported, and arguably more significant benefit for society. Of course, this 'benefit' may or may not be perceived as such, depending on the role of the stakeholder. Consider, for example, the move to online courses and subsequent redundancies in academic staff arising from such. Kumar (2019) states it is essential for government support of industry-academia collaborations, particularly considering spinoff benefits acquired by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who would otherwise be limited in accessing knowledge.

Drawing on these previous examples, a framework for investigating innovative practice might be constructed from the perspective of the academic and how they might initiate the innovative practice. A typology of innovative practice on that basis is illustrated in **Error! Reference s ource not found.**.

Co-creation	Industry collaborations & partnerships to create value beyond the classroom
Curriculum	Ensuring course content is current
Andragogy	Finding & developing effective ways for teaching & learning
Technology	Using relevant technology & industry applications

Figure 4: Typology of innovative practice at the academic level

2.10 Innovation within marketing education

Marketing education provided by Universities has been criticized (Harrigan & Hulbert, 2011) as ill-preparing students for 21st Century marketing practice and failing to equip students with the necessary skills marketing practitioners require. Pefanis Schlee and Harich (2010) assert that although skills are changing and the importance of technical skills is growing, conceptual knowledge is more deeply rooted. Therefore, it is more stable as an educational currency for undergraduate

marketing students. Their research led Pefanis Schlee and Harich (2010) to recommend incorporating more technical skills in marketing curriculums. They claim lack of resourcing and competencies amongst marketing graduates restricts their potential to contribute to society.

However, this is the view looking out. Within the institution's walls, we must consider academics' resourcefulness to manifest their development and position themselves to equip students with the requisite 21st-century skills. Chonko (2003) postulates a concern in tenure and its' restriction on the readiness and ability of marketing academics to change. This concern is also supported by more recent research conducted globally (Rohn, 2017) and in New Zealand (Zealand, 2020). Such tenure may heighten the issue of hysteresis, as introduced by Bourdieu (1990). Agency theory (Bøe et al., 2015) would further propose that understanding the impacts of managers on academics' behaviour is useful in understanding educators' consideration of innovative solutions.

The effort and resource utilisation, driven by a marketing orientation towards creating value (Day, 1994), can be minimised by identifying and examining successful innovative practices in marketing education (Kahn, 2018). Arguably knowing impediments to successful practice may provide insights for developing effective approaches and should not be ignored when developing an understanding. Looking beyond my discipline to education can also reveal opportunities to innovate (Albers-Miller et al., 2001).

As asserted earlier, Harrigan & Hulbert (2011) contend the very function of marketing within organizations has changed, and this change has been unrealized by academics, leading to disconnects between the two. They claim a changing marketing DNA (Harrigan & Hulbert, 2011), necessitating that academics advance marketing education beyond traditional paradigms. If this is true, we may need to look outside the discipline and adopt a broader lens of marketing education. Add to this technological innovation in robotics, automation, analytics, and artificial intelligence that McKinley et al. (2017) claim leads to replacing human capital. A case for innovation for transformative education is evident.

Finch et al. (2013) conducted quantitative research amongst practitioners to identify priorities for improvement in marketing education. The results of their study posed questions as to the longevity of traditional undergraduate marketing education, suggesting meta-skills sought by businesses were not unique to marketing, nor even to a business degree. The claimed marketing per se is at threat of substitution. To survive, Finch et al. (2013) suggested marketing education focus on learning around these meta-skills in a way that presents marketing graduates with a unique 'marketing' identity. That leads to some pertinent questions for the marketing discipline: Could the integration of technology-based innovative practice enhance the longevity of marketing education?

Or are innovations in other areas such as reimagining the curriculum more prevalent? Again, how should academics and marketing teachers innovate to ensure that we remain ahead or at least current in the development of marketing education, regardless of where marketing practice lies? What does innovative practice mean within marketing?

A review of the literature associated with evolving innovative practice within marketing education leads to four illustrative examples of a proposed typology for innovative practice by individuals. These are previewed in **Error! Reference source not found.** and examined in the four f ollowing sections.

Orientation	Theme
Co-creation	Extensive collaboration with industry partner
Curriculum	Redesign of entire marketing programme towards digital marketing
Andragogy	New ways of assessing students
Technology	Use of new technology in teaching: Google Cardboard

Figure 5: Thematic orientation of innovative practice in marketing

2.10.1 Co-creation with Industry partners

According to Fitzgerald et al. (2019), adopting co-creative solutions between academic institutions and industry enhances the advancement of knowledge to enable institutions to contribute more fully to the future of society. They argue that diverse partnerships can exploit and enhance educational expertise, leading to knowledge creation and addressing societal concerns. Such partnerships can result in mutually beneficial exchanges of knowledge and resources (Driscoll, 2008). Therefore, engagement between academia and industry can arguably contribute to innovative practices by both. While academia orients towards advancing knowledge theoretically, the wider industry does so via a practical lens. Innovative practices can be expanded through collaboration and engagement between universities and external stakeholders, enabling all parties as learners and teachers (Fitzgerald et al., 2019). Many higher education providers have linked directly with industry in forming cooperative work placements that provide value to the students and firms (Schlesinger et al., 2015), albeit primarily a one-on-one exchange. Relationship marketing underpins successful and robust relationships between firms, yet little consideration has evolved within higher education beyond the common expert/guest speaker scenario. Philbin (2008) has highlighted the critical benefit of collaborative relationships with industry, particularly given a situation where the product is intangible, as in education. According to Philbin (2008), such relationships can reduce uncertainty in teaching and relevance within the wider community.

Brennan et al. (2018) mandate that deeper and sustained partnerships are necessary for authentic learning in marketing education.

Wix, founded in 2006, provides a cloud-based development platform that enables users to create an online presence, plan a website, engage in digital marketing activities, and reach new audiences (Wix, 2020). Wix has facilitated these marketing facets in moving with technology, enabling retailers to mobilise their online activities and capitalise on changes amongst target markets. One of its main activities is in education, through partnerships with educational departments and individual academics in facilitating students' abilities to create an online presence using its digital tools. Its' educational partnerships are provided free of charge.

Academics are choosing to partner with Wix to ensure that graduates have the digital skills and career tools necessary for the workplace (Richmond, 2020; Levine, 2020); and for marketing educators to remain timely, relevant, and interesting (Rosenbaum, 2020). The extent to which this industry partner involves itself in marketing education ranges from presentations and workshops; to one-on-one individualised sessions; to co-creation of courses, including syllabus design and lesson plans. Individual academics work alongside Wix in co-developing materials used within their institution, supporting this notion of ensuring alignment between teaching and application within the wider marketing community. The evolution of online retailing, increasing globalisation, and higher costs of a physical retail footprint reinforce the need for marketing students to learn and develop skills in designing effective websites. Practical experience of bringing together necessary information and formatting these for intended audiences brings authenticity to what marketing students are learning. It likely enables their work to be critiqued more practically.

In July 2020, Wix further extended their collaborative relationships with education by announcing a partnership with the Philippines Department of Education to improve e-learning education curricula and accessibility rising from restrictions to education brought about by Covid-19 (Wix, 2020). In this way, the partner organisation has learned from their relationship and experience with educational providers to develop resources further to enable innovative marketing practices in a changing educational landscape.

Such co-creation and support of academic programmes by industry partners can strengthen the realism of what is taught and how it is taught, drawing on the andragogical and curricula pillars of innovative practice.

While this example has revealed benefits in choosing to partner with an external organisation, caution is necessary for determining the flexibility, honesty of the relationship, fit (clarity), and awareness in making such arrangements. This approach is not unlike applying the framework of innovation (Kahn, 2018) that draws on mindset, process, and outcome. However it

extends to additional factors that consider environmental aspects further impacting the formation of collaborative partnerships. Rybnicek and Königsgruber (2019) also acknowledge that such partnerships have become part of university funding, creating sustainable practices and enabling innovation, but are only successful when drawing on the characteristics for a successful arrangement. Partnering can provide access to resources and new tools that academics do not have the ability or expertise to use. It reduces the gap between educator and practitioner. However, the choice of and trust in a partner can restrict the success of these collaborations. A further guiding principle is the ability of a collaborator organisation to handle the cultural gap between a University and an industry (Rybnicek & Königsgruber, 2019). Aspects of these concerns can be explored through this research to understand experiences in collaborating with industry partners.

2.10.2 Innovative practice via Curriculum

Curriculum redesign is essential for ensuring that teaching content is current and applicable in and for today's society. Etherington (2019) encourages educators to understand how education changes considering digital culture and society's needs.

Adamant that marketing programmes have not kept up with the pace of change in marketing, Rohm et al. (2018) introduced a digital-first curriculum, placing digital marketing at the heart of their curriculum. They acknowledged issues educators and programmes have had in keeping pace with changes in marketing, mainly arising from digitalisation, and sought to address these.

The full embrace of a digital format into curriculum design evolved via four key pedagogical approaches. First, the focus was not solely on the content of the courses but in how they were taught. They integrated experiential and project-based learning, skills development, and a transdisciplinary agile team focus to cement their structure for change. To achieve this, Rohm et al. (2018) formed external collaborations with local consumer-facing brands to determine needs gaps and ensure course content's relevancy. Through ongoing mentoring and reflective change management processes, relationships with such partners evolved further. Rohm and his team (McTaggart et al., 2017) used action research that significantly reduced the opportunity for programme misalignment resulting from individual course redesign (Zimmer & Keiper, 2020). The participatory nature of curriculum redesign derived higher value for overhauling their marketing programme, gaining benefit and sense from involving key stakeholders. For example, project-based learning through real industry briefs helped students extend their subject understanding beyond traditional theories into the new digital realm, further supported by transdisciplinary teams (Ye et al., 2017). Following such projects, involving student stakeholders in curriculum change processes further enhances programme overhauls (Buechler et al., 2020). A programmatic approach to

learning was used as course content was scaffolded through different educational levels to complete the whole, further avoiding misalignments in the redesign.

In introducing this innovative 'digital first' core, Rohm and his colleagues saw the need for its effectiveness and sustainability. While the emphasis was on ensuring digital skills were taught and practised, they applied a broader lens to student competency through creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication. To evidence the employability of graduates, student satisfaction and industry feedback were all used as measures of success.

This example's success lies in an innovative focus on a digital marketing core within the curriculum instead of a single standalone course. Rohm and his colleagues recognised the need for and importance of introducing a comprehensive suite of changes at one point in time.

In such a programme overhaul, institutions must consider the role of academics in their areas of interest and specialisation, industry involvement, and their demands of employees and student interest. Rohm et al. (2018) acknowledge challenges in managing expectations, project scalability, student composition, and working across disciplines. However, they also propose these challenges can be minimised through collaborative teaching models, strong university-industry relations, effective resource allocation, and cross-faculty support.

2.10.3 Innovative practice in Andragogy

Moving from a pedagogical focus toward andragogy, the emphasis shifts to a mature learner-centred approach, assuming students as independent and active learners, responsible for achieving their goals (Muduli et al., 2018). Depending on prior experience of a subject, the learning style might favour either pedagogy or andragogy. In higher education, particularly marketing education, academics favour facilitatory roles as they evolve their students through interactive and experiential activities and problem-solving to advance scholarliness. Numerous marketing simulations are readily available to support such learning. Despite these innovative modes of course delivery, the depth of student learning remains problematic. Their motivation varies from intrinsic learning for interest or enjoyment to extrinsic and a means to an end (Bruce, 2018). Additional pressures on students' time resulting from a digital age continue to focus students on examinable content as their sole learning focus.

Drawing on these challenges, Mills and Robson (2019) introduced an assessment programme based solely on students' active contributions. Students were all given a basic starting grade of 'B' on the first day of this programme. Students ' grades were moderated up or down depending on their content engagement via discussions, collaborative tasks, or similar.

Mills and Robson relied on learners to relax, remove the anxiety associated with examinations and key deliverables, and focus on the learning process. Their determination to upend the assessment programme changed students' goal orientation away from credit accrual towards learning and knowledge acquisition.

Both academics have used this approach to assessment over two years within an undergraduate consumer behaviour course. Feedback from students indicated greater freedom to learn and higher enjoyment. In addition, the accountability assumed by learners aligns with andragogical principles (Mills & Robson, 2019). Mills acknowledges that this approach to assessment may not suit all higher education providers and may challenge the assumptions of course design and testing needs. He affirms the positive outcomes achieved from this innovative approach.

There is a multitude of factors that impact the learning experience of students. In their experience (Mills & Robson, 2019), adopting an active learning approach motivated students to be free to learn (Ackerman & Hu, 2011). Although not all students learn the same way, motivation remains central to transforming the student. Recognising their context within a behaviour oriented subject enabled Mills and Robson to explore alternatives. Not all academics will have the same degree of success in such extreme variations to assessment practice. Mills' acknowledges this in admitting the approach has not been extended to any other course, or any other academic. It is not to say that it couldn't, only that it hasn't. His own challenges in time, interest, and motivation are limiting this practice solely to this single course, suggesting that some innovative practices are restricted in their applicability thereby limiting widespread adoption.

2.10.4 Innovative practice via Technology

Technology has a more significant role in the education of today's learners, particularly in how it can simultaneously provide learning and entertainment (Chelliah & Clarke, 2011). Novel means of content delivery are sought, driven by students' expectations and academics' desires to maintain currency in the discipline. Recently this has led to the introduction of virtual reality to offer an immersive learning experience where students can explore concepts themselves through three-dimensional visualisations (Lee et al., 2017). Such immersion has long been recognised as providing richer, more interactive, engaging, and supportive learning opportunities than traditional descriptive methods (Majgaard & Weitze, 2020; Mantovani, 2001). Today's significant educational challenges are the depth of learning, leaning towards the surface rather than mastery, and short-term rather than enduring knowledge. In drawing on constructivist paradigms, virtual reality can enable knowledge acquisition through direct experience of the phenomenon (Minocha, 2015). According to

Mantovani (2001), this form of exploratory learning can be more effective in helping students to assimilate knowledge as they combine experience with reflection and analysis (Joplin, 1981).

Marketing educators Fischbach et al. (2018) have successfully introduced virtual reality into their courses. Experimenting with virtual reality is helping Sarah and her team integrate additional areas of learning through this exciting medium, providing students with a better grasp of marketing concepts (McGovern, 2017). In addition, virtual reality enhances the customer service experience, facilitates and manages customer expectations, and engages potential customers through a brief brand experience (Yaoyuneyong et al., 2014).

Virtual reality, for many, might seem out of reach in terms of cost. However, alternative and more accessible forms of VR are now available. Fischbach et al. (2018) use Google Cardboard to facilitate virtual reality in teaching. At approximately USD 30 per unit, it is a cost-effective approach. Through this technology, her students have experienced immersive retail store environments, gaining a greater understanding of customer journeys (local and international) which would otherwise remain inaccessible or a static learning experience. Fischbach et al. (2018) use virtual reality to expose students to marketing applications in practice and find success in students' engagement and comprehension of new digital technologies. Using Google Cardboard, educators and students create their 360-degree videos or choose from existing collections aligned with course concepts. The ease with which this low-cost technology solution enables students to connect with digital opportunities that may otherwise remain unexplored is widening their lens to broader applications in business (Fischbach et al., 2018).

There are challenges in educators comprehending VR platforms and ways to adapt their teaching to incorporate it and the 'deep dive' into new technology with which they are unfamiliar. Fischbach et al. (2018) acknowledge their journey into this has not been entirely smooth running. To accommodate this, some institutions are setting up specialised digital learning departments, while other educators collaborate alongside young students to jointly explore new technology in the classroom (McGovern, 2017). However, the benefits of experiencing marketing in these ways outweigh the initial obstacles in learning via new technology.

These four examples of innovative marketing education practices have contributed to a greater understanding of how marketing academics innovate. Variations in sustainability, application and implementation are evident. It is clear marketing education is evolving through collaborations, curriculum, andragogy, and technology. However, in these examples, what is not apparent is a deeper understanding of the individuals' experiences to the extent that their context, beliefs, motivations, and experiences are understood. Why does one academic look to technology as a

solution when others look to the curriculum? Why do some choose to collaborate when others attempt to, yet find it unstainable? How do environmental factors influence these decisions? To begin to know these answers, I need to look deeper into the experiences of individuals as they attempt new practices in higher education.

2.11 Summary: Innovation as a process for evolving academic practice

According to the literature explored previously, innovative practice is imperative for higher education to enable a sustainable and socially responsible world that effectively tackles societies' wicked problems.

Technology, as one example, was a source of innovation driving changes in how students are taught and how they learn. However, the literature proposed that it is not, and arguably should not be, the sole source of new practice, particularly regarding accessibility and relevance in different settings. Through socialisation, accreditation, and personal development, good citizenship should underpin how education enables society to advance (Biesta, 2015). The concern is how educators might nurture it, given the changes and challenges prevalent in this 21st-century era of learning.

Academics have been impacted in many ways, through casualisation of labour, the conflict between teaching and research (& service), access to resources, leadership models, an aging workforce, and technology-enabled learners. Increased competition through the globalisation of economies and open online courses has further created stressful environments for academics to prove their value and remain an asset to their employer. Additional concerns over diversity, equity, and inclusion have prompted institutions to pivot established learning practices for sustainability.

Such challenges support the need for an evolving academic practice that advances learners and knowledge to benefit themselves and society.

The gap here lies in the question of how?

The literature review pointed towards new educational practices applied to many aspects, including andragogy (pedagogy), curriculum, stakeholder relations, financing, or assessment. However, deciding how innovation should evolve is likely to differ according to organisations, culture, leadership, and individuals. Therefore, situational factors could be expected to influence the degree and extent to which innovativeness is possible.

The question is, in what ways? Through their own experience, academics could begin to know or comprehend these relationships and their solutions. Understanding choices innovative academics are making in the ways they are introducing new practices could shed perspective on

how, in what, and where they are involved directly in evolving practice, and importantly, the role technology may or may not have in this.

Through this study, we can learn about ways academics are innovating to direct our understanding of how we might evolve our practice. We can begin to know about innovative practitioners, drives to innovate, and how these shape new solutions. It may also be possible to understand how academics make sense of their evolving practice, and the impact of internal and external influences, potentially shedding light on how management might evaluate their practice. While the study emphasizes the perspective of individual academics and their experience in evolving academic practice, involvement of institutional management is likely to be included in such discussions.

Use of a conceptual framework: Components of Innovation (Kahn, 2018)

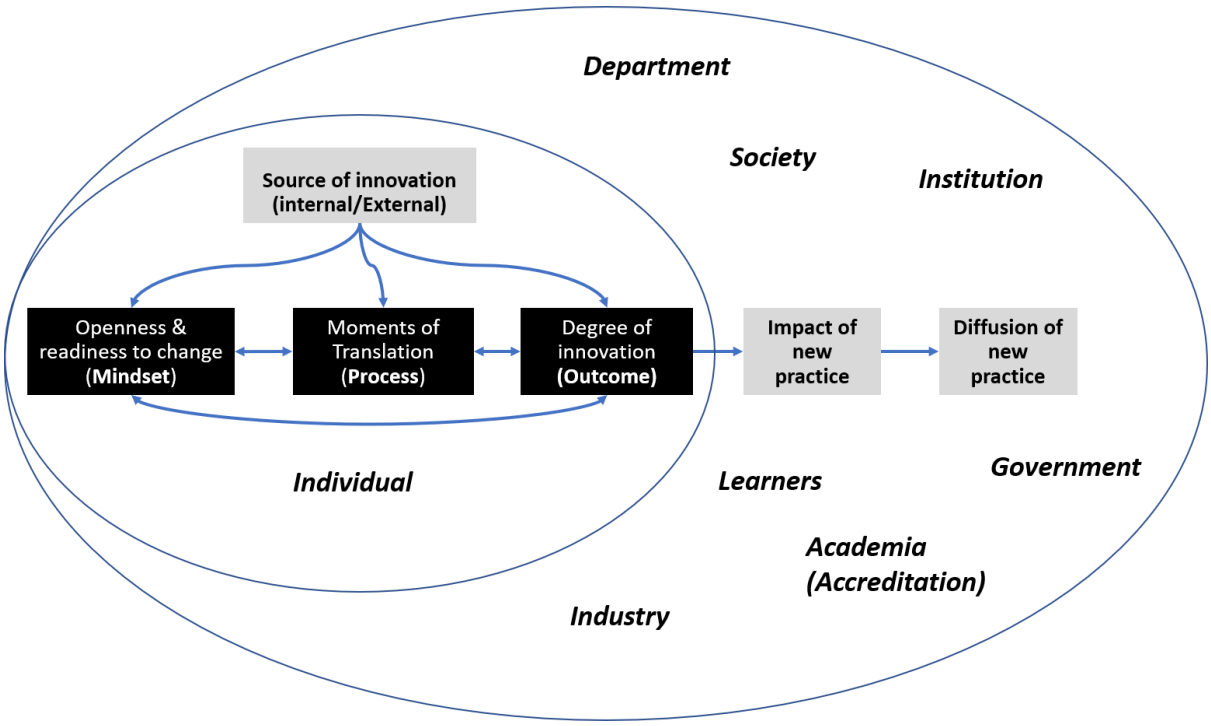

Figure 6: Conceptual Framework

Earlier in the review, I introduced three components necessary to achieve innovation: mindset, process, and outcome (Kahn, 2018). In this study, I drew on these components to inform the development of my inquiry via a conceptual framework (**Error! Reference source not found.**) to try and understand how these evolved in new educational practices. In exploring the internal, the path, and the solution, it could be possible to understand the intended purpose – qualification, socialization, or subjectification (Biesta, 2015) and how this aligned with the success or otherwise of

the attempts at educational transformation. Did these purposes asserted by Biesta (2015) shape innovative practice, or did innovative practice shape these purposes?

In undertaking this research, the aim was to reveal nuances in alternative views of innovative practice, providing direction related to others' situations and motivations.

This study could also provide value in how educators engage with learners, with direction over types of resources most suited to learning, i.e. text-based vs. multisensory approaches, and associated level of presence by learner and educator (Kop & Bouchard, 2011).

Innovative practice creates new opportunities and finds new ways of serving existing markets or growing new markets. In the context of understanding new practices in higher education, for differing purposes and outcomes, it may be possible to reflect more readily on how such practices might be applied to one's educational setting.

This higher education landscape is fraught with many challenges, unlikely to be remedied soon. Agility and adaptability are needed for education, educators, and institutions to help society resolve wicked problems now and into the future. According to Weber and Rohracher (2012), experimentation is necessary, and further understanding of conditions that enable and support such practices is warranted across a range of media, not just technology. Thus, the focus of this thesis is to reduce the gap in understanding individual academics' experiences and practices in evolving education towards opportunities for consideration in my context. In looking into dimensionalities of individuals' experience in how and why they have innovated and how challenges have been addressed, a better understanding of pathways for educational innovation may be garnered. As a marketing educator, I will reflect on how these practices could be understood and applied to marketing education. The following chapter explains the methodologies applied in the context of this study.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This thesis sought to understand ways of innovating in higher education across various academic perspectives and within different educational settings. At the outset, I intended to identify innovative solutions from leading-edge marketing academics and draw from these to determine the applicability for my department and university. However, limiting the focus to only identifying marketing-related practices meant that I would not necessarily understand the nuances and predicaments underpinning those solutions. Applying an 'outcomes' focus could restrict the evaluation of critical aspects and experiences individual practitioners have in arriving at solutions. Henceforth this study sought to explore individuals' journeys more closely, including their contextual factors, and apply a lens beyond marketing to gain a broader insight into innovative educational practice. In extending this lens of consideration, I hoped to identify insights to benefit my and others' understanding of evolving educational practice.

The focus was on higher education without geographical or disciplinary boundaries. This wider lens enabled an investigation of various applications, and through those potentially new concepts, ideas or applications could be determined. Current studies in and of innovative practice tend to be limited to thematic or geographical concentrations, limiting the disparity and awareness of potential variations in innovativeness. This study could, for example, have been limited solely to innovative practice using technology, innovative practice in the USA, or innovative practice in curriculum design. However, innovative practice is widespread and not limited to a single dimension. It is constrained only to the extent that others conceive of it through self-imposed limitations of the mind. Thus, the most valuable aspect of this study lies in understanding experiences regardless of academics' context or locality.

However, I expected that in selecting academics as research participants, their consideration of innovative practice would likely be *in* education, not *on* education. This is significant to recognise, for there may be differences in experiences due to participants' profile or role in education, or perhaps concerning financing activities or curriculum-related innovations. In selecting academics, as opposed to those in managerial or administrative positions, I was steering the investigation away from areas of concentration that relied on higher-level decision-making and involvement towards practical implementations available directly to the academic. The focus of this research, therefore, was the investigation of innovative practices associated with the *ways* of teaching, namely andragogy (mode), technology (tools), and authenticity (partnerships).

3.2 The problem in context

As acknowledged in the literature, the current state of higher education is challenging for many employed within it. Twenty-odd years as a marketing academic should have positioned me as an expert, yet in so many areas, I feel completely novice. It is due to changing technologies, how careers and jobs are also changing, and how higher education is expected to contribute to society. At an individual level, academics need to be agile enough to respond, remain relevant, and secure their sustainability in education. I don't believe we academics can or should rely on management structures and organisational strategy to necessarily resolve this disparity. There is a need for academics to embrace a mindset and capacity for new practice beyond the more widely recognised applications.

The problem here lies in understanding how those individual responses occur and in what ways they are being developed in practice so that we can gain insight into how others might also be agile in teaching and learning.

3.3 Aims

Specifically, this research aimed to explore experiences in higher education that could guide others in reimagining their educational practice, contributing to both their sustainability and practice.

In exploring documentation of innovative practice within Higher Education relating to curriculum, pedagogy, technology, and industry partnerships, an understanding of practice could be gained. Further research might recognise challenges and opportunities for innovating successfully useful to other academics or institutions within and beyond marketing education. These aims lead to the key research questions for this study.

Research Question and sub-questions:

How might an understanding of different experiences in innovativeness within higher education contribute toward evolving ways of academic practice?

1. How does an individual's academic identity align with their experience of innovative practice?
2. How are academics innovating in higher education, within and outside marketing-related disciplines?
3. What contributes to how innovative practice is shaped?

The research was not aimed solely at marketing-related leading-edge, innovative practices for adoption within my department. Instead, this research sought to reveal insights from those experienced in applying themselves differently as academics irrespective of discipline to know and

comprehend alternative ways of doing so. Having been situated in marketing academia for two decades, I felt the need to extend my exploration of innovative practice to include non-marketers. As innovation was the focus, confining the study to my discipline might constrain the findings on how academics are innovative, reducing the opportunity to discover novel practices via a non-marketing lens.

3.4 Theoretical Framework

An interpretivist epistemology underpins my research. I assumed academics have different experiences in innovating as impacted by their setting, agency, exposure to innovative thinking, and opportunity to develop and implement such practice. As the researcher in this setting, I applied an ontological condition of understanding (Schwandt, 1994) to learn about the world by understanding how others experience it. If I could capture academics' multiple realities, perspectives, and experiences in their intent to innovate, I could begin to understand the practice of doing so. Access to resources, use, and integration of technology, and 'state of the nation' each contribute to the position an educator or their institution is willing or able to innovate. A consideration of these various contexts can best be understood through different individuals' experiences in attempting to introduce new practices

This qualitative constructivist study aimed to explore innovative practices within higher education to understand how educational practices can be altered or transformed and their relevance within marketing education. Marketing is my field of education, and it is important to me to draw on the ideas revealed in this exploration and consider how they might apply in my setting. However, restricting the conversation only to marketing academics or focusing on single domains of new practice, such as using technology or new andragogical approaches, may have reduced the insights from dialogues with academics outside of my environment. To know how I might learn to conceive of teaching differently to meet 21st-century learning challenges, I believed I needed to hear from academics specifically, neither managers nor administrators, but those at the teaching coalface with direct experience in trialling new education with their students. I needed to examine their direct experience of new ways of practice.

I also felt I needed to extend my listening beyond the marketing discipline, broaden the scope to alternative fields, and allow unimagined opportunities. I believe that the challenges of student engagement, academic workload, technological advances, and changing industry practices necessitate the evolution of education. Thus, in looking outside of my marketing academia and in looking internationally, I might recognise new ways of educational practice that could positively

contribute to the way I evolve personally as an academic in the face of these ongoing challenges impacting higher education.

This definition of newness cannot be easily framed, in my opinion. The research focused on understanding ways of being innovative and how they evolve, what shapes them, where they emerge, and how they translate into practice. It was likely inconsistencies exist between academics in their approach to being innovative. It was also possible that what one considered innovative may be the norm to another. For example, I didn't want to focus solely on new technological approaches but to begin to know how different academics approach and experience innovativeness through their lens related to their context. I could not assume to know, or restrict the knowing, in the experiences of others being innovative, how their academic identity intersects with this, or how they apply themselves to be innovative.

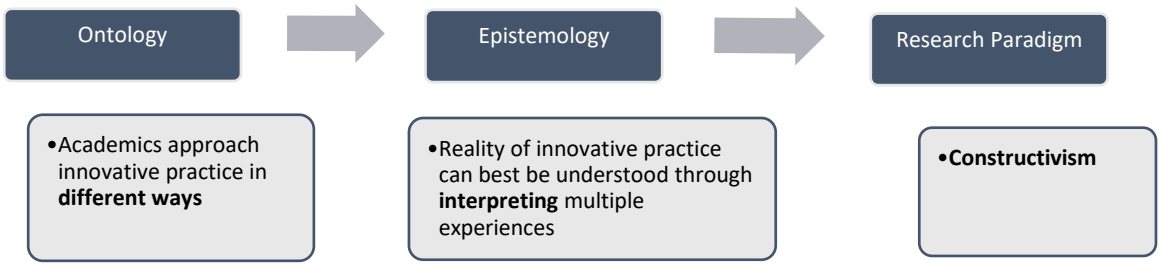

Figure 7: Theoretical Framework

With these variations in mind, a constructivist approach (**Error! Reference source not found.**) enabled the exploration of these variations. I could gain insight into what I understood about these ways of innovative practice, understand participants' perceptions and experiences (Kahlke, 2014), and translate this to inform opportunities applicable to my HE institution and how they might innovate educational practice. Wagenheim et al. (2008) propose that new practices may result from a greater sense of self-awareness of our assumptions. Through dialogues, I could begin to understand how others draw on their insights and assumptions in experiences of new practice, which could better contribute toward determining more effective outcomes.

3.5 The fit of a theoretical framework with the problem

Several approaches could explore innovative practice from quantitative and qualitative methodological perspectives.

Structured quantitative methods such as surveys or experiments assume a single reality or truth which can be measured, producing reliable and valid results that can be generalised to a

broader population. That is not the case here. I sought comprehension and understanding of ways of innovating. I needed to explore the mindset, process, and eventual outcomes experienced by other academics in their attempts to practice. I was not attempting to quantify how people acted similarly to one another or determine causal relationships between their actions or characteristics. Such methods are associated with positivist paradigms and are not applicable in this study.

My problem was also concerned with the depth of understanding of practice, one I could best obtain through immersing myself in knowing the experience others have had in this area of higher education. In attempting to understand the phenomenon, I couldn't be separated from it, nor could my participants. Their interpretation of the phenomenon was critical to my understanding of their experience (Koivu & Damman, 2015). Further, my position as an academic meant that my values would influence the research, and it was not possible to separate these values from the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). This subjective aspect further distracts from using the more objective, positivist methodologies. Finally, I did not identify with the need for measurability of the phenomenon such that there might have been a single best way of innovating in higher education. There was no need to control aspects of innovative practice to predict its outcome and, as Koivu and Damman (2015) acknowledge, achieve positivist expectations of external validity. Put simply, a positivist approach was not appropriate for this purpose.

Instead, if acknowledging multiple ways of knowing and multiple realities exist in how others have experienced innovative practice, these individual accounts could provide greater value in answering the research questions I sought to resolve. Epistemologically, I needed to construct those realities to make sense of differences in experience, again not to quantify them but reflect on them in the context of my practice. Being an academic positioned me as having inside knowledge of education (Petty et al., 2012), which affirmed my authenticity as a researcher of this phenomenon.

3.6 Choosing a methodology

To construct realities of innovative practice, understanding the phenomenon itself through exploring and interpreting others' attempts to do so is required (Fuster Guillen, 2019). This realisation led me to consider several qualitative methodologies such as grounded theory, action research, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

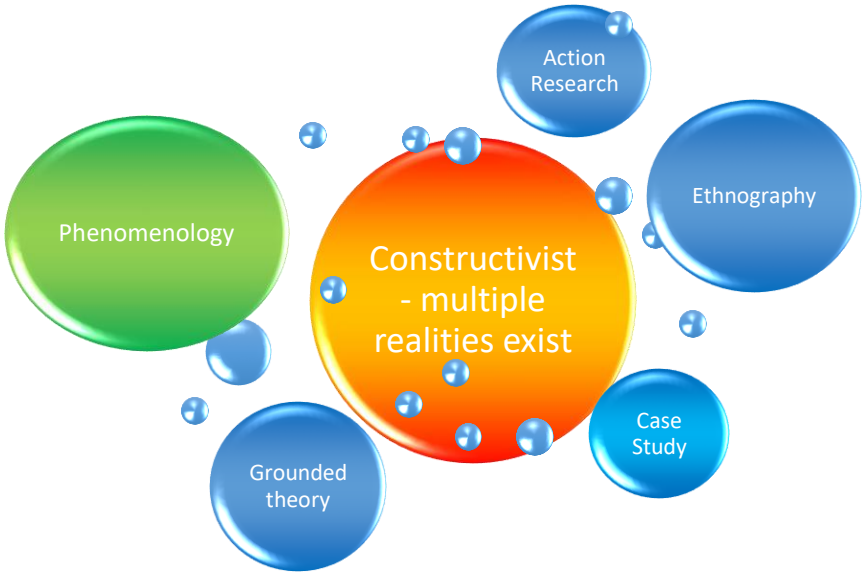

Figure 8: Choice of research methodology

I discounted grounded theory as I did not seek to derive a theory to explain the ways of innovating. I sought to understand academics' experiences in being innovative. Furthermore, my desire to gain a wider lens of application across international practices negated the relevance of a grounded theory approach. I wanted to gain breadth through more comprehensive exploration with an unmodified lens rather than develop relationships between data points. I collected the data and reviewed its meaning, with changes made to questions throughout the process to derive a theory.

Ethnography could have been a helpful methodology if I wanted to restrict the examination to either myself (autoethnography) or a cultural group (Reeves et al., 2013). However, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, I sought to explore experiences across a more expansive international landscape. I could identify differences or variations that could help me question my practices and aid in realising new opportunities. Furthermore, limiting an examination of the research question to a single cultural group, e.g., marketing academics, would potentially restrict the recognition of new academic practices perfectly suited to alternative disciplines.

Action research involving forming a community group (in this case, a group of academics) was not relevant to this study because I had no understanding of others' ways of innovating. That was what I sought to explore. I was not looking to identify an innovative practice and trial it, which would have suited an action research study. I wanted to explore different approaches used by academics and understand their journey and context. There was no need to trial and evaluate an approach to answer the research question simply because no single approach was sought.

According to Yin (2014), case studies describe, explore and explain. They can be used in isolation or collectively to enable researchers to understand data, enabling either positivist or

interpretive insights. Seemingly, no necessary consistency appears in how such data is analysed or what materials or resources are required for data collection. Instead, the focus on case studies is an in-depth examination of a phenomenon that enables conclusions to be drawn. From those conclusions, theories might be proposed, frameworks developed, or insights obtained that provide value to the researchers in understanding the topics under investigation. A single case study might be enough to address a research question, depending on the extent of data sources used and the predetermined use of such a methodology (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). However, case study limitations can include the fit, specific framing of the research question proposed, the availability of additional data sources, and its purpose, i.e., a single source or in part of a more robust research approach.

While case studies help provide depth of understanding of some innovative practice experiences, they would limit the breadth of context that I believe would constrain this study. For example, I sought to know differences within disciplines, geographic locations, and solutions. The case study would have been a helpful approach if I was seeking to examine only the use of technology in a marketing department as an example, however, this was not the research under question. Thus, the case study approach would only help provide insights into some aspects of the problem and not the whole.

These considerations led me towards phenomenology to explain the experiences of academics in innovating.

3.7 Interpretive Phenomenological Approach

The purpose of phenomenology is to enable researchers to study participants' direct lived experiences of a phenomenon of interest. Developed by Edmund Husserl, this approach focuses on perspectives in making sense of lived experiences. While it is not generalisable to every situation, it enables researchers to explore data through several different approaches, including experiential, historical/archival, attitude/reflection, and observation/intention (Garza, 2007). I chose to use both a historical/archival and experiential approach in this investigation. In drawing on these two approaches in the form of a multi-stage phenomenology, I sought to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the ways and experiences of innovating. I felt I needed to 'know' to begin to understand and thus develop a richer data analysis. This philosophical underpinning led me to embrace and use inductive reasoning to examine others' realities (Dowling, 2007). These were then able to contribute to my understanding of new practices.

Phenomenology can be applied through either descriptive or interpretive means. In the former, researchers seek only to describe the phenomenon that occurs through a process of

bracketing. As developed by Husserl, descriptive phenomenology assumes that the researchers remain independent of the research and set aside their assumptions in collecting and analysing the data. Martin Heidegger (1962) extended Husserl's earlier work, believing it important to attempt to see experiences from the standpoint of individuals, i.e., not just their knowing their direct experience but exploring their embracement of it. In an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA), researchers involve themselves in understanding the phenomenon. Alase (2017) affirms this will best meet the novice researcher position. In innovative or new practices in education, it seems that it is impossible to separate ourselves from our world to isolate how things are from a scientific perspective. Reality is linked to individuals, their context, and their experience. This understanding necessitates an interpretive approach to obtain meaning and 'to know'. Because of its newness, innovative practice can be viewed as a significant experience. It can be ground-breaking even in the case of a serial innovator, as each attempt to introduce an approach is new and unknown to them (if not to others). An essential element of IPA is in the context within which individual experiences occur, which relates to working in an era of high technological influence. Conceptually embracing explicit and latent aspects of individuals' described experiences in being innovative brings a deeper understanding of what is said and unsaid concerning their evolving practice (Heidegger, 1962). Presupposing that innovating educational practice is a significant educational experience in the academic life, IPA is an ideal approach to use in the study (Smith et al., 2009). By collecting examples of these individual experiences and reflecting on them, it is possible to shape understanding of the practice of new academic applications related to the participants included in the study and their relatedness to this phenomenon (Larkin et al., 2006).

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) claims that 'interpretation' occurs at two levels (Reiners, 2012). Firstly, in participants knowing their context, and subsequently through the researchers' interpretation of meaning by instilling themselves in the participants' world and making sense of it. Knowing and understanding ways of innovative practice, it is necessary to know and understand the research participants and their world. According to Larkin et al. (2006), focusing on participants' voices enables an insider's perspective on the experiences of a specific event or process, including introducing the innovative practice. This then provided the opportunity for a more critical and conceptual commentary arising from a thematic analysis and consideration of what participants have meant in their shared context.

IPA provides an opportunity and guidance to reflect on others' perspectives and actions in innovating, providing alternate applications to similar or differing issues. In attaining knowledge of individual journeys of innovative practice and how those were constructed, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of those experiences (Allen et al., 2014) and develop my ability to interpret

those practices across different landscapes and contexts. This ability enabled me to draw more informed conclusions and reasonings to support applying this knowledge to my setting and how it might exist in other academic contexts. Crotty (1998) claims that interpretive analysis can bridge gaps between theory and practice by drawing on discussions of socially constructed worlds that explore language and understanding. Exploring in-depth information through understanding others' experiences (Creswell, 2008) and their 'becoming' as architects of knowledge creation (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) adds an interesting dimension to my ontology of innovative practice.

In exploring the research question, because of the newness associated with innovation (Hanifah et al., 2019) or innovative practice, limited knowledge and experience of the phenomenon likely existed (Giorgi, 1997). A constructivist approach helps in understanding not only what 'is', but what motivates individuals to consciously identify with what 'is.' Constraining knowing to new practices introduced through cases of innovative practice, i.e. what 'is', ignores the motivations, agency (Bøe et al., 2015) and actors (Miettinen, 1999) aligned with introducing the innovation, i.e. the experience. The focus of this research was to understand the ways of innovating and others' experiences in evolving academic practice. Thus, while a constructivist approach is ideal, I needed to determine the best methodological approach.

In further complicating decisions of methodological choice, a significant limitation of qualitative research is its lack of generalisability through selecting a single qualitative approach (Annells, 2006). McKibbon and Gadd (2004) also acknowledge researcher conflict in choosing a research approach to address the research question, something I experienced. Being challenged in this methodological decision, I reflected on my epistemological, ontological, and axiological beliefs. I needed to construct an understanding of the phenomenon by discussing it in-depth with research participants. I could not remove my identity as an academic from this investigation, but I could draw on it to interpret the data. Unlike Johnston et al. (2017), I did not seek to draw on my experience of the phenomenon as part of the sample. The emphasis was to look internationally and externally at what others were doing.

While I could not make my study robust and representative of the larger population of innovative practitioners, this was now an outcome I desired. I sought understanding. I sought insights and richness of reflection in examining this phenomenon. While interviews alone could have been enough, I sought a more rigorous research approach, where other academics could draw on findings for future consideration and application within their context. I realised I could use triangulation to achieve that rigour and thus extended my earlier literature investigation to focus on specific applications within the marketing discipline to give me the alignment I sought in gaining

meaning for my context. A focused literature review of marketing applications could contribute toward triangulating the data obtained from the primary interviews.

3.8 Towards a research design

At the outset, I decided to conduct a content analysis of various websites of higher education institutions to gather information about different marketing undergraduate programmes, thereby highlighting innovative practices and institutions offering unique aspects within their curriculum.

Following that evaluation, I intended to identify key differences and conduct qualitative interviews with academics involved in the stated programmes. The literature guided my choice of four unique applications in what I deemed 'innovative practice' within marketing education (**Error! R eference source not found.**). Innovative in the sense that these practices were new to me and not currently being applied within my academic department. I chose marketing specifically as I wanted to examine and understand my context and applications of innovative practice before extending my thinking to disciplines and realities beyond this. I also wanted a form of triangulation for the data I intended to collect.

Holloway and Todres (2003) suggest using qualitative approaches to explore and search for meaning in experiences. It can aid in recognising sensitive contexts that might influence innovative educational practice, e.g., the environmental context of participants, which resonated with me. Through my experience in marketing education, I am aware of factors that have impacted the extent to which colleagues have gotten involved in change, e.g. organisational politics.

When conducting the research, the world was entering a state of flux with COVID-19, and I was unable to secure interviews for each of the identified examples of novel practices in marketing. I decided to move ahead with the remainder of the study to ensure progress was being made. While I was not successful in completing these qualitative interviews, I did draw on secondary sources and the literature to examine these applications. While these interviews would have been rewarding to conduct, I don't think they have diminished the study's overall findings. In reviewing these individual examples in marketing literature, I was still able to realise some of the contextual factors influencing and impacting innovative responses.

From this initial review of different examples of innovative applications in marketing education, I intended to collect further qualitative data through individual discussions with a broad cross-section of innovative academic practitioners. I aimed to explore variability and similarities in the journey of academics through their application of innovative actions, to understand the qualities, processes, and outcomes aligned with motivations that sought educational change. In

conducting these broader interviews, I would become involved in co-constructing multiple realities of how individuals have 'lived' their experience of innovative practice.

3.9 Research Design

Using two discrete stages (**Error! Reference source not found.**) of an interpretive p henomenological approach enables insight and understanding of innovative practice, complemented with further explorations of contextual experiences shared within educational marketing departments and other disciplines in their attempts to innovate. In addition, complete descriptions of academics' experiences can help other researchers understand the context of a study enabling them to judge its applicability to their setting. This duality of research stages is somewhat inventive, yet Annells (2006) asserts this is acceptable if congruency in these approaches aligns with my philosophical paradigm of social constructivism.

Stage one of this study involved secondary research examining the phenomenon within marketing from a historical/archival perspective, as defined by Garza (2007). Literature discussing changes in education guided the selection of examples relating to four thematic orientations of innovative practice - andragogy (pedagogy), curriculum, technology, and industry partnerships.

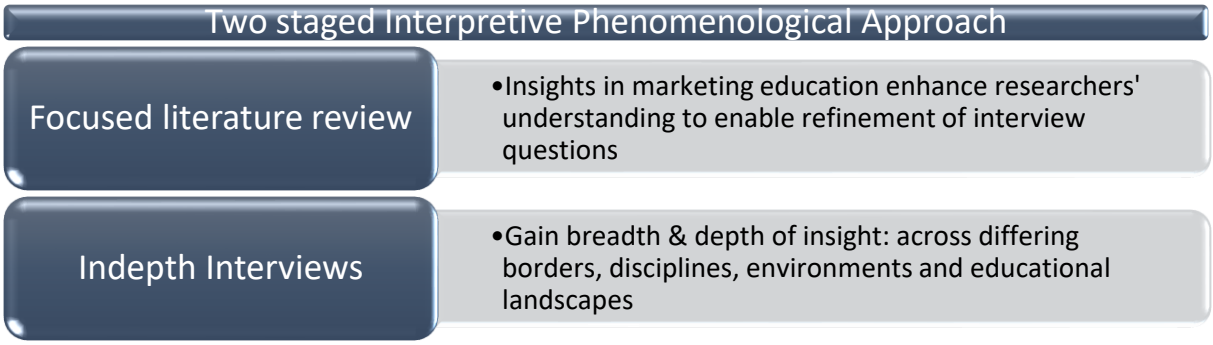

Figure 9: Two staged Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA)

While additional literature also points to an important fifth theme in financing and how institutions obtain funding to support practice, this theme was excluded from the review. The emphasis here was on academics and their experience in innovative practice, as opposed to staff in management or administration roles which is typically where the role of sourcing funding is situated. Thus, due to the distancing of most academics' positions from sourcing or making decisions around significant expenditure, I decided that this pillar would have less relevance to the studies' focus.

I chose the specific examples relating to the four themes because they resonated with me as a marketing academic and shaped my thinking about 'innovative practice'. These gave me context

and understanding of different innovative practice applications and expanded my knowledge in this area, enabling further refinements to develop my interview schedule required in stage two of my research.

Each example involved a review of innovative practice through published articles, institutional websites, and blogs. Recalling that the purpose of this focus was to gain a deeper appreciation for the ways of innovative practice in marketing education; to move the researcher from 'novice' to be more informed in the ways of innovative practice, and to thus contribute to interview refinements for use in the primary stage of data collection. Yin (2003) affirms that using such insights is particularly valid when attempting to understand a process, in this case, the process of innovation and change in marketing education.

It was important to me to draw on multiple sources of information to build this knowledge and then develop practical interview tools. Stake (2013) confirms that multiple perspectives or dimensions enrich and give greater depth to understanding a phenomenon. Based on my recent focus on teaching a single marketing-oriented paper relating to marketing research, I felt I had a narrow vision of innovative practice across marketing. While I understood marketing as a discipline was changing, primarily informed by advances in technology and business practice, I felt somewhat siloed in my knowledge about how this is evolving within academia. I needed to know more about these evolutions to make more sense of my role in marketing and education. For this reason, I felt that this study needed to include details of new practices that I had no or very minimal direct previous experience of. It was important to know alternate ways of innovating within marketing.

The primary research stage involved in-depth interviews in conducting experiential phenomenology (Garza, 2007) and aided in understanding the 'essence' behind individuals' experiences to make sense or draw conclusions for broader application. I chose in-depth interviews over focus groups for two key reasons. Firstly, the desire to collect information from a range of international perspectives would have made data collection very challenging due to differing time frames and the location of participants. Secondly, in adopting an underlying principle of phenomenology, I could understand individualistic perspectives in the authentic experience of innovating. I wanted to know how they constructed and interpreted this experience in their world, necessitating the use of an individual interview.

The interviews I conducted explored the perspectives of those directly involved in the innovative practice to more deeply understand their undistorted experience in educational evolution through their narrations (Alase, 2017). While the applications focused on four themes of innovative practice, I did not purposefully set about interviewing participants in each area. Instead, my focus was to extend my search internationally and across various disciplines.

I completed fifteen interviews that provided sufficient data to the point that I felt I had obtained a good understanding of the phenomenon I was researching. Across these interviews, I gathered examples of a range of new practices, enabling me to get accurate and comprehensive interpretations (Van Manen, 1997) of experiences in innovative practice. It is important to confirm that this thesis focused on innovating and understanding an individual's lived experience. It was not to determine a wide range of new practices using larger sample sizes and more structured studies. Alase (2017) states samples size in phenomenological studies traditionally range between 2-25. This guide is helpful. However, the key to participant selection is that they are the best ones to help understand the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

This sample size of fifteen interviews provided data and analysis that were concurrent, meeting the needs of thematic saturation for this study (Green & Thorogood, 2004). Braun and Clarke (2021) claim that in the case of thematic analysis, judgements about sample size are subjective and situated in the context of the study. The actual number of interviews in qualitative research can vary, but it is typically a small sample. As mentioned earlier, the emphasis was not on examining or quantifying each of the four key themes of change in education but on experiences of innovating from individuals' perspectives. What they chose and why they decided on aspects revealed insights. The richness of individual experience is more critical to a phenomenological study than the quantity of data (Alase, 2017). Specific details relating to the sample are expanded upon in section 3.10.

3.10 Collecting the data

Given the international nature of this study, technology was necessary to facilitate interviewing due to the location of the research participants and myself. I used SKYPE or ZOOM to conduct the face-to-face interviews, allowing for audio and video recording of data (with prior permission). While I had not used either technology for research purposes in the past, I found the platforms easy to use. All recordings were transcribed to minimize misinterpretations and researcher bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Interviews lasted approximately 1 hour. In addition to online interviews, two respondents provided their answers via email, using the interview guide to prompt their written responses. The answers provided in these self-completion scenarios were comprehensive and only required a few further short emails to gain greater clarification and confirm explanations. The approach was deemed necessary due to the time zone of respondents and the growing international crisis associated with COVID-19, which was creating communication and workload issues for participants and the researcher.

An initial pilot interview was held with a local academic not part of the proposed sample to enable feedback and identify potential issues in the interview schedule and sequencing or effectiveness in addressing the research questions. This interview helped guide minor changes to questions and provided the researcher with interview experience in investigating this phenomenon.

3.11 Sampling

The sample was selected based on a) the four previously identified themes of andragogy, curriculum, technology, and industry partnerships, or b) recent journal or conference publications that illustrated novel approaches to marketing education within the last 18 months. These selected examples emphasized innovative practices within higher education relevant to what is taught, the way it is taught, the mode by which it is taught, and its linkages to society that underpin many teaching and learning decisions faced by transformative academics (Larrivee, 2000).

Individual research participants were selected using purposive (judgment) sampling techniques (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This helped ensure respondents had an experience of the phenomenon under investigation and were a homogeneous group, i.e., academics. According to Creswell (2008) and Alase (2017), both are essential for phenomenological studies. Given the exploratory nature of this research, conclusive sampling techniques were not appropriate (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). There was no single comprehensive list of innovative practitioners in higher education. To construct such a list would have been incredibly time-consuming and unnecessary, given the purpose of this research. A further complication to the successful selection of participants was the challenges brought about by Covid-19, the worldwide pandemic of 2019/2020/2021 that closed economies and largely pushed countries into isolation with borders closed and education into solely online delivery (Lau et al., 2020). This challenge meant that many academics could no longer attend conferences. They also became time-poor as academics pivoted towards moving courses online due to lockdown restrictions on all citizens remaining in their homes with limited opportunity to move outside the boundary of their residence. As an example, New Zealand went into a total lockdown and border closures (level 4) from 23 March through to 28 April 2020, then to level 3 with some business reopening for click and collect operations (Radio New Zealand, 2021). On 14 May 2020, NZ moved to level 2 with stores open, but social distancing in place for all, and groups of no more than 10 permitted. Universities remained online only until Level 1 was reached (June 08, 2020). Borders remain closed, necessitating that online education delivery be retained to support those detained overseas and unable to enter the country.

Respondent Profile

Pseudonym (ref)	Discipline	Gender	Location	Type of Institution	Role
Albert (4)	Marketing	Male	North/South America	Private	Assistant Prof.
Ben (12)	Tourism	Male	Asia/Pacific	Public	Lecturer
Brian (9)	Social Sciences	Male	Asia/Pacific	Public	Lecturer
David (14)	Marketing	Male	Asia/Pacific	Public	Associate Prof.
Diane (5)	Digital Marketing	Female	North/South America	Private	Professor
Donna (11)	Education	Female	North/South America	Private	Lecturer
Grant (6)	Education	Male	Africa	Public	Lecturer / HoD
James (15)	Fashion	Male	North/South America	Public	Lecturer / Chair
Melanie (13)	Marketing	Female	Asia/Pacific	Public	Lecturer
Michael (1)	Retailing	Male	North/South America	Public	Professor / Chair
Monique (10)	Marketing	Female	North/South America	Private	Assistant Prof.
Nicky (3)	Applied Sciences	Female	UK/Europe	Private	Lecturer
Richard (7)	Education	Male	UK/Europe	Public	Professor/HoD
Sally (2)	Marketing	Female	North/South America	Public	Assistant Prof.
Stella (8)	Marketing	Female	North/South America	Public	Professor

Table 1: Respondent Profile

The final sample of 15 individual interviews (Table 1) was determined according to individuals' previous experience attempting to be innovative in educational practice, albeit successful or otherwise. Pseudonyms have been used in place of real names. Participants were selected from different higher education institutions located internationally and from various contexts to explore perspectives from diverse experiences, i.e. public vs. private, career stage, gender, and discipline. This breadth of selection could contribute to a broader understanding of the practice of innovating, which helps inform the model under consideration.

Table 2 summarises the focus of their innovation, which in some instances crossed more than one dimension, e.g. **technology** was used to enhance the **curriculum**, thus being represented in two columns. However, new practice impacted how each academic taught (andragogy) in every instance.

	The focus of innovative practice			
Location (continent)	Technology	Curriculum	Andragogy	Partnerships
Asia/Pacific	3	3	4	1
North/South America	6	6	8	2
UK / Europe	0	1	2	1
Africa	1	0	1	0

Table 2: Sample Overview

International participants were contacted using information from recent academic publications and conference proceedings relating to innovative practice, educational development, technology, and new directions in higher education across marketing and non-marketing-related disciplines. The second wave of leads evolved through personal networks and online forums such as the Marketing Educators Facebook group, where I identified thought leaders and extended email invitations. Due to the interest and anticipated value in researching this proposed topic, initially, there were no significant issues in identifying and securing research participants. However, as time passed, the recent events relating to Covid-19 resulting in worldwide lockdowns of countries and economies did begin to impact the ability to gain additional respondents. Despite this, a sample of four cases and 15 individual interviews were completed, which was considered sufficient in providing the insights and saturation of data necessary for this research (Smith, 2011).

Error! Reference source not found. shows the sample breakdown according to gender and d iscipline focus – marketing and non-marketing. As a marketing academic, I needed to gain insights from marketers, but these were not the sole discipline of investigation. In seeking data from additional disciplines, I found that I could broaden the scope of innovative ways, giving a broader understanding of opportunities available as a result.

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Marketing	3	5	8
Non-marketing	5	2	7
TOTAL	8	7	**15**

Table 3: Gender and discipline of respondents

3.12 Ethical Considerations

It is relevant to my research, career, and integrity as an academic in higher education that the study I have conducted is robust, authentic, and can withstand scrutiny.

Before commencement, I obtained permission from both the University of Liverpool and my University's Ethics Committee (refer to appendix two for the ethics document). In general, this research was deemed to be 'low risk' due to several factors:

- participants being of consenting age;
- potential conflicts of interest removed due to researcher and participants not having worked together previously;
- no confidential information or documents sought, nor identities of participants or their institutions revealed;
- no physical harm was likely (participants are interviewees only);
- respondents assured of confidentiality and anonymity in their agreement to take part

Recent events in Covid-19 and the dire economic conditions evolving within New Zealand and globally impact both business and education, requiring both to pivot for sustainability. On the one hand, this pandemic emphasises this study's importance in contributing to our understanding of ways of innovating higher education to guide practice. This importance necessitates that the research remains robust and ethical, enabling the drawing of appropriate conclusions. Additionally, at a more tactical level, the events relating to Covid-19 impacted the availability of some academics to participate either due to unanticipated non-attendance at conferences or increased workloads due to changes needed in their environments. I was mindful of this in recruiting participants and ensured that I did not send follow-up requests beyond two initial attempts to the same targeted participants.

All participants received email invitations to participate, clearly outlining the nature of the research proposal and intended use of the data and a request seeking their consent (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). Confidentiality and anonymity were assured and maintained by removing personal or organisational information when reporting results. Each interview was audio-recorded and electronically stored. Each file was then password protected and uploaded to a server that was also password protected. Data were anonymised using conventions of 'Interview 1', 'Interview 2' etc., as a reference and password protected. While there was some burden imposed by asking participants to share personal information, volunteer their time, and assume minimal associated risks, the value in sharing their insights was greater. All participants were reminded of their overall contribution toward the understanding of innovative practice in higher education and how they might contribute by sharing their experiences and advancing the academic practices of others through the creation of knowledge and learning. In higher education research, all data collected will be stored and safely guarded for five years.

Full disclosure of ethical practice warrants explaining how data was used and interpreted. Such openness in processes can help affirm the researcher's objective intentions, avoid biases, and ensure research rigour.

In my approach to analysis, I used bracketing to help evolve my findings (Fischer, 2009). Bracketing helped ensure that the insights drawn from the data were not just my assumptions but would also be derived should others review the same data. One stage towards achieving this was acknowledging my positionality as the instrument for analysis (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007) to give perspective to my stance, which could be reconciled with my interpretations. I wrote down a brief paper on my own experiences in innovating, as Moustakas (1994) recommended to give me a heightened awareness of my positionality. In acknowledging my 'insider perspective', I needed to take care that the voice of participants remained first and foremost to assure the usability,

credibility, rigour, and trustworthiness of the phenomenological study (Johnston et al., 2017). This occasionally meant that I needed to clarify comments made by respondents to avoid misinterpretation.

This reflection is an essential component of an untainted (Tufford & Newman, 2012) ethical and legitimate process, according to Fischer (2009). In discovering and re-examining data for insights, hermeneutic understanding can be established. The key to this is using verbatim comments from the interviews to enable others to live the participants' experience through the study results (Van Manen, 1997).

In progressing through the data collection stage, I decided to apply bracketing by making observational memos to examine and reflect on the data as I recorded it. Cutcliffe (2003) suggests that bracketing helps highlight the researcher's feelings about the research as it is collected, leading to important insights. Thus, as I listened to respondents' answers, I wrote notes, highlighted key points, and emphasised elements I identified as valuable to my understanding of their experiences. I then reflected on these again when I listened to and transcribed the data in full to ensure that I had identified an appropriate meaning from their statements. This process was particularly useful when developing my understanding of perspectives shared by academics positioned in culturally and economically different contexts than myself. Using reflexivity meant that I refrained from filtering data that did not immediately align with my expectations of how the world views innovative practice.

3.13 Data Collection

Before collecting primary data, I adopted a focused literature search that reviewed four innovative applications in marketing education. This secondary data provided insight into innovating within marketing, specifically by drawing on resources, including published articles, institutional websites, and blogs. In addition to these data sources, I also informally held reflective discussions with colleagues to confirm my understanding of the data.

Critical to IPA is the need to have clarity in approach so that it is possible to draw out robust themes. Alase (2017) recommends using the Internet to gather additional full and unhindered data relating to the phenomenon. This flexible, low-cost, and efficient means of data collection meant that I could draw on available secondary sources to develop a more comprehensive interview schedule. I felt I became more informed on the ways of innovating as it applied to marketing. By complementing the data acquisition via informal discussions with colleagues, I was better able to begin to know. In knowing, I felt I was more prepared for bracketing my preconceptions about the phenomenon, more open-minded to the data I was about to obtain in the in-depth interviews, and

aware of the potential for failure through not bracketing well (Gregory, 2019). People say being forewarned is being forearmed, and to an extent, I felt that the thematic investigations prepared me well for the upcoming interviews with participants.

I used semi-structured interviews to elicit information about participants' experiences in innovating in academia. The steps laid out by Alase (2017) guided me in data collection for an IPA study, namely:

- Semi-structured interview, 2-25 participants
- 60-90 minutes duration
- 1 to 1 interview
- Held at the convenience of the participant (date, time, location)
- Use of technology recording devices and traditional note & pen observations

All participants received copies of the interview format ahead of time, which allowed them to reflect on the questions I was interested in knowing answers to. I began each interview after introducing myself with a brief overview of the nature and purpose of the interview research. I then followed this by asking participants to tell me a little about themselves in the form of a self-introduction, i.e. where they were working, what they taught, and how long they had been teaching. This information provided further context to my understanding of them and their situation in introducing the new practice.

Drawing on Kahn's 2018 concept of innovation as a mindset, process, or outcome, I sought to explore each of these elements in how academics innovated. The semi-structured aspect of the data collection process meant that I had direction in the areas of investigation I sought to understand. This approach also provided flexibility in how respondents answered. The nature of experiences and identities often meant that individual discussions around the phenomenon occurred differently. This difference meant I needed to be cognisant of the data I was looking to elicit and consider how they wished to recount their experiences. I often had to probe and use other questioning techniques to drill down for additional insights, particularly on critical aspects introduced by Kahn (2018). The benefit of the semi-structured interview also meant that participants would often discuss critical points of importance to themselves in more detail – which I may not have uncovered if the discussions had been too structured or inflexible in the sequencing of questions.

I used Zoom, an online platform, to undertake the interviews as this appeared to be more widely accepted in academic circles than SKYPE and had the inbuilt ability to record. As each interview took place, I also made handwritten notes, emphasising key points introduced. I felt this was an efficient way of highlighting critical issues about individuals' experiences and providing an

opportunity to prompt my thinking as I reviewed the notes immediately following each session. I confirmed my understanding throughout the interviews and sought clarification of various points to ensure that their ideas were accurately captured (Lauckner et al., 2012).

Given that I interviewed participants from other countries, I spoke slowly and clearly due to having a different accent.

Each interview was transcribed into word to enable ease of analysis.

3.14 Data Analysis

I applied an iterative inductive cycle (IPA) to manage the primary data analysis (Holland, 2014). To make sense of the data, I reviewed transcripts multiple times (Braun & Clarke, 2006), working my way through each respondent's statements, identifying themes within transcripts, and later across transcripts. I applied a bracketing process to help me use a critical lens to participants' views and experiences (Tufford & Newman, 2012). This iterative approach allows for sufficient reflection and critical consideration (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and a holistic perspective (Van Manen, 1997). While time-consuming, Dowling (2007) recommends using reflexivity to retain the impartiality of data and avoid researchers' influence.

Phenomenological analysis presupposes that participants' comments result in units of meaning, and the essence of experience is discoverable (Cibangu & Hepworth, 2016). Applying IPA as an analytical method involves identifying significant statements into units of information or themes (Alase, 2017), followed by experiences associated with those themes. To do so, Moustakas (1994) advocates for a modified Van Kamm approach, applying a multistage process to each interview in turn, as shown in Figure 10.

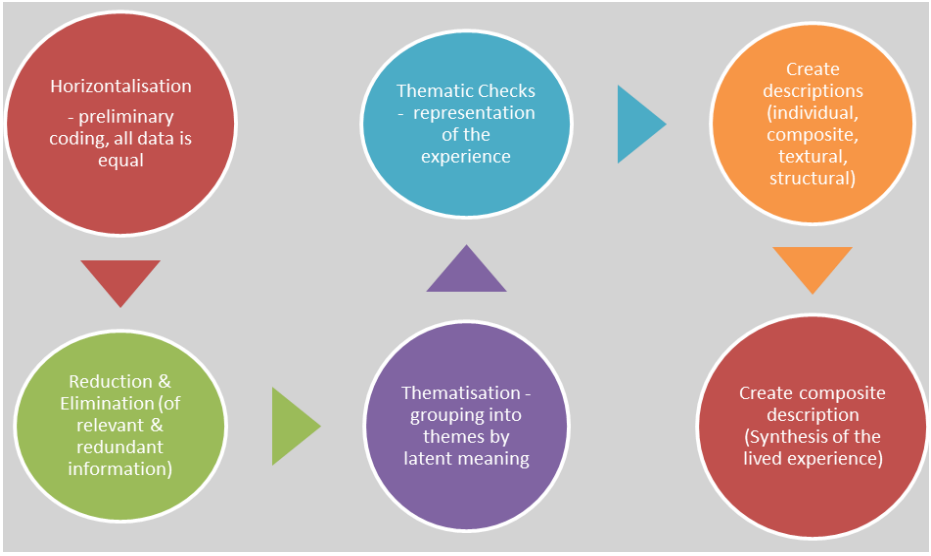

Figure 10: Modified van Kamm analysis process

This approach has gained support in phenomenological studies due to its consideration of the integrity of participants' voices (Larkin et al., 2006). Behind this approach are essentially three cycles of data condensation, resulting in participants' insights collapsing into 'core essences' of their lived experiences. This is achieved through reading/listening to interviews multiple times, highlighting key statements, determining key nodes, and re-condensing data into core interpretations.

In approaching the data analysis for this study, I first began with what I would call a very 'stable basis' for determining and understanding themes, drawing on innovation concepts as a mindset, process, and outcome (Kahn, 2018). If I could code and make sense of themes from a central and sub-theme level, I would find logic in developing my understanding.

This approach looks for meanings holistically by applying an initial general search of the transcripts (Akerlind, 2012). Interpretation continued as I discovered dialogues emerging in and between the data, enabling me to inductively discover knowledge and determine what I thought were viable frameworks for making sense of relationships (Boyatzis, 1998). This starting point involved an early intervention in forming initial themes. In co-constructing these themes through shared stories at the outset, I felt I would be better placed to adopt an iterative hermeneutic circle of knowing. In assigning context to the structures, I thought I had a better handle on the notion of innovative practice.

I sought clarification from supervisors and colleagues to help test the plausibility of my interpretations. However, following discussions with my thesis supervisor, I was encouraged to reflect on my inductive approach and carefully examine whether I was guiding findings too much by using such a framework to 'fit' my data. I was shaping the data to fit my belief in the framework being right instead of letting the story unfold, thus impacting a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009).

Entirely bracketing researchers' preconceptions is one of the challenges with IPA, according to Smith et al. (2009). Ironically, I found myself at fault for this, diminishing my ability to thoroughly examine the life worlds' of participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Following the discussion with my supervisor, I took a step back and reconsidered this carefully. According to Bowden (2000), in remaining open to evolving themes, I would be reducing my biases about the look of the data. The checks and procedures I used to ensure data reliability and validity, including peer review, supervisory checks, and triangulation, were justified and necessary (Alase, 2017).

Thus, I made two significant changes to my approach. Firstly, I decided to change from using Excel to using NVivo. I was familiar with using Excel to explore recurring themes. However, this

software's lack of structure and informality led me to believe it is less reliable for my research. There were too many opportunities for errors to occur and items to be overlooked. NVivo is a software package specifically created to assist researchers in qualitative coding. Identifying nodes (themes) and text highlighting makes it possible to reorganise data to reveal true stories through connected themes. As a highly recognised tool for coding and analysis, the use of NVivo added a layer of reliability to my research.

The second change I made was changing my coding approach from deductive to inductive. My sense of innovation aligned with the model proposed by Kahn and additional concepts revealed in the literature. I felt I should construct these nodes and then apply them to the transcripts from the participants. In doing so, I believed that I would identify any outlying themes and introduce them as 'new' nodes, but most ideas would sit nicely with those coding conventions I had predetermined. The alternative approach (inductive) involved reading through each transcript and developing nodes as I went, followed by regrouping and reorganising themes to a point where they became more apparent. Before this, I read over transcripts twice to gain a broad perspective to garner meanings from individual participants and how they interrelated. I was more prepared to form nodes of importance, ensuring that I did not attribute items out of context.

Changing my coding approach to NVivo provided me with a richer understanding of the data and a clearer sense of how to interpret it without losing the essence of the participants' experience. After the first wave of assigning meaning, I revisited the labels and reorganised these to avoid duplication and identify more thematic pools of meaning (Marton, 1986). Inductive coding gave me a much richer understanding through a phenomenological graphic of pattern coding, which gave greater insight into the relationships between category descriptions (Saldaña, 2015). Through inductive coding, distinctive discussion areas evolved to understand how experiences in innovative practice developed.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) assert the need to ensure that the data arising from an IPA study is both credible and transferable. I reflected on data collection processes in the thematic cases and interviews to achieve this. I reminded myself of the need to report findings accurately, acknowledge biases that might influence results, and inquire sufficiently into the data to reflect the research's purpose comprehensively. As this is a phenomenological study drawing on the experiences of 15 academics in their experiences of introducing new practice, the interpretation of their contributions needed to be accurate and appropriate to the research inquiry. Semi-structured interviews enabled depth of data, but there were instances when conversations detoured from the primary purpose. This deviation was especially evident in the interviews conducted after the onset of Covid-19, which prompted specific instruction to consider a recent innovative practice before this

event. Participants shared additional comments towards the end of the interview regarding introducing new practices due to this current climate. In shaping discussions, the data remained focused, enabling more credible and transferable findings beyond those suited solely to pandemic responses.

3.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored my positionality as a researcher in investigating the problem of innovative practice. I have drawn on my perspective that to know ways of innovating, I needed to explore others' experiences of introducing new ideas and practices to begin to understand their issues, their responses, and their journey in doing so. I have introduced Kahn's (2018) framework on innovation as a mindset, process, and outcome as a basis for this investigation for exploring the role of identity, applications, and factors shaping practice. Methodologically, I have explained my adoption of a multistage interpretative phenomenological approach to obtaining this insight and using thematic cases and in-depth interviews to achieve this. I have detailed the analytical approach applied to condensing data to determine critical themes and reflected on why this study remains essential in contributing to the body of knowledge during a world pandemic.

4 Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter reveals data and insights obtained from the primary stage of this phenomenological study using in-depth interviews to explore individuals' experiences of innovative practice. At the end of the chapter, a complete discussion drawing together these findings and the literature is provided.

The key research questions I expressly sought to explore were:

1. How does an individual's academic identity align with their experience of innovative practice?
2. How are academics innovating in higher education within and outside marketing-related disciplines?
3. What contributes to how innovative practice is being shaped?

Through my interviews, I was able to gain an understanding of the experiences varying academics had in attempting to innovate in higher education. Their contexts and even discipline focus differed across participants, which was important to know their relevance to evolving practice. As a marketing academic, I felt my preconceptions about ways to develop academic practice were limiting. I needed to gain a broader perspective to know how, why and what resulted from their attempts to shape education differently. In interviewing academics from different countries, disciplines, career stages, and institutions, I hoped to become more knowledgeable and discern what enables the innovative practice to draw from these insights within my context.

In this chapter, the profile of those I interviewed has been considered alongside their innovative practices. To assure anonymity and confidentiality, I used participant codes (P1-P15) to connect individual stories and related them to the key categories and overarching themes that evolved from the data.

Following the presentation of the findings section, chapter five then brings data and literature together, presenting a critique of theory and practice in ways of innovative practice.

4.2 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

A phenomenological and interpretative approach was used to extract understanding from stories of innovative practice amongst a group of novel academics. Why were they novel? Rogers (2010) asserts that identifying 'innovative practice' is not absolute. Depending on the critic's viewpoint, it can be complex, challenging, and variable (Somekh, 2007). In this study, academics

were selected through a process that drew on newly published conference presentations, journal articles, or recommendations within peer networks (Cranmer & Lewin, 2017). These practices were new to me in some way, shape, or form and stimulated me to consider my approaches within academic practice. These novel ways introduced nuances in academic life, which enabled me to understand better the lived experiences of academics in how and what they are implementing or trailing in their realms of everyday life as academics.

This was my journey in understanding ways of reinventing academia, as told through the experiences of both business and non-business educators. I deliberately chose not to restrict my exploration of this phenomenon to my marketing discipline, to realize new ways to re-evaluate my approach and make sense of evolving my journey as an educator in higher education.

The following pages provide an overview of the findings and central themes and sub-themes relative to understanding research questions. But first, a brief introduction to participants, who, for reasons of anonymity, I labelled from P1-P15.

4.3 Profile of participants

Fifteen academics were interviewed across various disciplines within and outside of marketing education and from multiple locations internationally (**Error! Reference source not found.**). There was an almost even mix of gender, and most were experienced academics, as indicated by their position. Although none happened to be at Tier One research-based universities, both developed and developing countries and private, and public institutions were included. This omission is likely due to the focus on innovative educational practice, which was mentioned multiple times as the reason academics chose to work at their institution, allowing them time to innovate and reflect on educational practice. Areas of innovative practice ranged across the key themes previously introduced (industry partnerships, curriculum, andragogy, and technology) and incorporated multiple foci within its orientation in more than one instance. Each interviewee identified with the term ‘innovative practitioner’ and willingly shared details of their experiences in higher education.

4.4 Developing themes and clustering into subthemes

The process of developing themes and subthemes involved an iterative approach to coding. Each of the 15 interviews was examined individually, coding key content to relevant concepts, resulting in 218 individual data nodes. Realising this was a large amount of data to make sense of, these individual nodes needed re-examining and relationships between these identified for the data to become more manageable. This subsequent coding process enabled the ordering and bunching of

key nodes to be formed and reformed as significant themes emerged. By the end of the coding process, 218 nodes had been moved into ten primary categories.

Figure 11 graphically depicts the ten core themes that evolved from this analysis, illustrating distinctive areas of discussion for developing an understanding of how experiences in innovativeness are changing academic practice. These key themes included the individual - beliefs, identity, concerns (RQ1), motivations, solutions, and impact of technology and processes (RQ2), and moderating variables (RQ3) that impact or shape innovative practice. Each theme was mapped to initial research questions, which led to consideration of how these might inform practice within an NZ university (RQ4). Each of these themes has been explored more fully in the following pages.

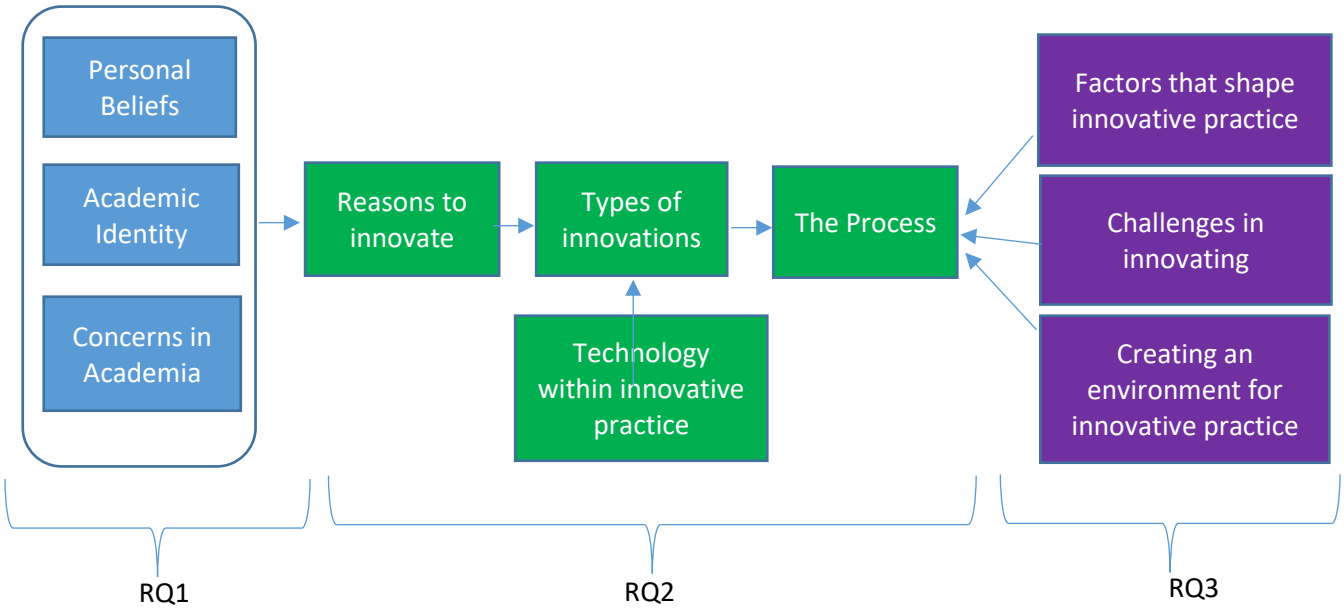

Figure 11: Framework for innovative practice

4.5 Theme 1: Identity - understanding the individual academic (RQ1)

How does an individual's academic identity align with their experience of innovative practice? This was one of three key questions I initially posed to understand aspects influencing individuals in their ways of evolving practice. In knowing and understanding the individuality and contextualisation of their lens, I could begin to know them, enabling me to apply an interpretive lens to their experiences.

The complexity of this identity was separated into three characteristics that emerged as informing their positionality. These included their beliefs in the ways of education, their identity within education, and their concerns about the future of education.

Beliefs in the ways of higher education

Individual journeys in academia are influential in shaping their perspective of the need for and role of evolving practice in higher education. Participants shared a common belief that academic practice is changing and necessitates that actors, academics, and learners change.

For some, there was a belief that the academic role is changing from a scholarly approach where information is created and disseminated to the coach or facilitator. This was mainly due to what they believed to be the state of education and technology, situated in an environment challenged by the equity in access to learning (P1). Others shared this view in contexts where their learning communities were culturally, economically, and socially wide-ranging. However, in an alternative context, where a national drive towards innovation across education and business was emphasised, the orientation towards novel practice was standard and supported by educators in facilitatory roles. This recognition of educators as emergent, participatory, and guiding facilitators instead of professors professing appears irrespective of context. The literature also acknowledged facilitation as an important factor in enabling novel practice (Ta, 2018).

The days of professing knowledge are claimed as long gone, acknowledged one professor (P1). He claimed that failure to recognise this would likely impact learners in and on society through their ability, or lack of it, to synthesise knowledge in practice. However, he also acknowledged that this might not necessarily be true for an academic in a top-tier research-oriented institution.

There was an implicit assumption that undergraduate programmes are more suited to the practical nature of employment, while postgraduate studies align with discovering and building knowledge more holistically. For this reason, ‘coach’ was viewed a better fit with how some were interpreting their role. Further variability in who was seeking higher education contributed to this perspective, with the adoption of ‘no learner left behind’. However, the role of a coach was also identified as conflicting. One academic had concerns about their personal ability to add value, causing them to reflect on their praxis. They worried about bringing enough value into the classroom every day, believing they have become the value proposition, not the content per se (P1).

In drawing together these two paradigms of academia, knowledge creation, and knowledge application, there were nuances in how educators might evolve their practice. For one academic, actively acknowledging and being responsible for acquiring knowledge and applying that for the betterment of society was shaping differences in their practice, as illustrated in the following comment:

> *I just feel the responsibility of the students that I teach that they need to protect consumers because there are ways to manipulate people. How can we keep them from doing that, how can we be the good stewards of marketing? (P2)*

Some academics were critical of the state of academic practice and the role others adopt as educators. This included a laissez-faire assessment of older educators who might be entrenched in their ways of doing, harnessing research-focused academics, and a practice of recruitment that has not typically embodied teaching capability or real-world experience. This was asserted by those who had long been established in academic practice themselves, typically in senior roles, yet who felt different in their approach to academia. They assumed agential responsibility for educating and navigating unchartered educational practices to achieve higher education success. These variances in methods open the window for criticism of how some believed higher education was being constrained. One academic admonished the reality of having educators who have never formally learned to educate others providing a service costing hundreds of thousands of dollars they are not even trained to provide:

> *Just because we're educated, doesn't mean we can educate... (P4)*

The focus of individual academics on their raison d'être belies their involvement and, in some cases, their ability to develop new practice, as evidenced in claims such as teaching only to enable them to do research (p4); teaching in the way they were taught (P11); teaching without the life experience to guide them in blending the theory-practice divide (P2); and teaching without being industry-savvy (P14). The high cost and return on investment in education for learners were observed differently by academics. Some saw this as motivating in driving emerging practices yet also acknowledged it as unconsidered by others they observed.

Participants acknowledged that innovative practice was an essential part of higher education to avoid obsolescence or irrelevance of education (P8) and that academics must be realists in not trying to do everything and change everything at once. They also agreed that it could not occur at the cost of not learning by those paying for it.

The need for innovative practice is evident amongst those interviewed, particularly in terms of engaging students in learning (P15), bringing in different perspectives (P11), and in terms of survival of academics (P5) and higher education itself as content becomes unknown to educators without their continual alignment with the global pace of societal change (P3). The institution's role

was relevant here: teaching students or developing and disseminating knowledge. Depending on its' purpose, support for innovative practice differed.

That pedagogy evolves was also evident, as academics acknowledged new techniques were important in the classroom (P2). There was the sentiment that regulations or parameters guiding this was relaxing, meaning that individuals were becoming more able to introduce different practices. In contrast, before, they felt constrained by systems and processes, as commented by one academic from a private university:

It's quite different to how it used to be. Earlier it was more about planning and going slowly, going carefully. Now it's all about going fast, making mistakes, learning from them. We really need to be innovative. (P3)

But this was not the case everywhere. Participants suggested that institutional structures (degree of autonomy), cultural contexts (e.g. Asia), stage of economic development (South Africa vs. Western Europe), or openness towards organic growth of innovative practice could limit the extent to which they considered alternative approaches.

Critical to the value of the new practice, participants emphasised the need for it to add value to the journey of learning and for it to be evidenced-based, suggesting that erroneous or disruptive innovations were less welcomed than more continuous ones. The foundations for the change needed to be meaningful and have clear goals and purpose so that change could occur (P9).

While some academics may simply not be suited to evolving practice in recognising their limitations, others believed this could be overcome by drawing on alternative sources to help guide them. Among those mentioned was the integration of non-academic experts to facilitate content delivery. Brew et al. (2018) refer to these experts as artisans, evolved from the unbundling of academic roles. In this study, the unbundling appeared to occur through collaboration, particularly external collaboration, rather than a deconstruction of the academic's role into micro-specialisations, i.e. educator, curriculum designer, or technology expert. Participants typically believed that these external experts raised the value of learning, connecting students more readily to knowledge for learning. One female marketing academic shared the importance of this to her:

…my philosophy is "keep it real." This means bringing in real examples and even local ones when I can. It means thinking about how to prepare them for

the "real world" and workforce more generally. It also means being "real" with myself, that I need to continually be learning and growing. (P8)

Innovative practice was acknowledged as not suitable for everyone, however. Participants commented that typically the 'younger folk' (P4) or those newer to education (P1) were more likely to be the innovators. Those older or longer tenures were reflected on as being more entrenched in their ways and less open to change. Arising from this, they drew caution to the need to avoid becoming enveloped in a practice of 'innovativeness' that could overpower the legitimacy of change. Describing this as being 'smitten by the trending culture of experimentation' (P3), academics noted that for some, it was becoming the only way they thought about things. They cautioned that such blinkering could be detrimental by derailing good practice.

Extending education beyond the academic expert was a contentious issue for some, particularly academic staff who had been teaching for much longer and grew up with a way of learning that now seemed to be under scrutiny. This example was described in relation to textbooks being central to knowledge creation:

It's always been textbooks and disseminated knowledge, through textbooks that were created by the instructors. By academics. And that's falling by the wayside…. It is only the professors that are still clamouring to the idea that they think it (professing knowledge) will come back. (P1)

While the way of learning was not under examination here, the reliance on out-of-date resources or theory-heavy courses was challenged in their effectiveness for today's learners. The pace of change in knowledge and technology resulted in less reliance on textbooks by participants. Some educators even worried that they might be replaced by YouTube or Wikipedia (P4). They had concerns over the sustainability of higher education.

The innovative practice was one way some academics believed they could add value to learners' educational experiences. However, there were different expectations for what scale of innovativeness was needed. One academic from a mainly developing country witnessed these differences but further stated that it was not just differences because of location but also within different disciplines. He believed few academics were innovating in higher education irrespective of their context (P6). Another, from North America, cautioned on an archaic higher education system that is non-customer centric. He debated the need for innovativeness given that students pay

upfront, and even if they had a poor experience and failed their course, they just paid and did it again. This option was not available to all students, and morally should not be behind decisions to continue with more historical teaching models. The same academic further claimed that although innovation was not all that necessary, he is reticent in the belief that it would be better if we did innovate (P4). This comment was from the same interviewee who sought engagement and learning to acquire knowledge, not simply accreditation.

Differences do exist amongst academics. Interviewees acknowledged that naturally, some followed, and some led change (P9). Personal experiences influenced differently, as did individual priorities, not only in what was introduced but in where it might be applicable (P11). This realisation suggests that a tendency for innovativeness could be associated with an individual's capacity for change and, subsequently, the degree or extent to which academics are involved in innovative practice.

Some believed, for example, that older, more experienced academics were less open to and less aligned with new ways of learning than those who had more recently been appointed. That is not to say that older academics could not and did not innovate within their teaching. Participants commented that the career structure in academia fostered a priority for research rather than teaching. In knowing this, the locus of the academic and orientation of their institutions might contribute to instances of innovative practice. However, such differences were not evident in how academics innovated in this case. Participants came from various locations, large and small institutions, public and private. Their approaches to innovative practice were largely self-determined rather than examples of institutionally led changes. While all engaged in academic research, their agency aligned more strongly with teaching and learning than with research. Not to say that research was not important to them, only that they were motivated for and by effective and engaging teaching.

A recount of an experience with a highly published colleague highlighted this difference in perspective, with the colleague's admission that they dismissed any investment in teaching in favour of research (P13). Such a strategy enabled them to focus on doing the bare minimum, gaining publishing success in A* journals, and climbing the promotional ladder. This focus was viewed as detrimental to the need for or desire to be innovative in the first place.

In both public and private institutions, some participants viewed their role beyond the scope of a discipline enabler as one that translated to a higher-order role (P1 & P3). This role saw them adopting a more socially responsible lens in considering how students learned and how that learning segued into becoming active contributors to society, including future employment.

Recalling this sample of respondents were predominantly business and arts academics, their openness to value-added contrasted with their observations of career-driven business academics focused on research and promotion. The breadth of personal experience across different disciplines and activities may have contributed more to this openness in thinking. One academic had a background in art, for example, but was teaching in a business school. She could draw on her creative lens in seeing things differently, a fact she said helps her to see new opportunities in ways of doing (P3).

Differences were also mentioned amongst student communities. There was concern over the teaching of less worldly or inexperienced students (P3) who were viewed as lacking in genuine engagement arising through a disconnection in meaning i.e. in aligning theory and practice. Students' lack of motivation and desire to learn were blinkering learners towards seeking certification over the journey of learning. Their failure to buy the textbook was evidence of this disengagement in education:

They don't want the textbook. Students don't even buy required textbooks. I have students tell me they would rather get a 'C' than get an 'A' and have to buy the required textbook (P3)

Sentiment about educators' perspectives is that they should not necessarily accept what 'is', and the onus was on them to drive new practice, not the system. As they challenged the status quo, opportunities emerged to add value to learning and learners themselves. Propositions to 'go outside the box' (P1), 'look around you' (P3), 'go beyond your landscape' (P2), and 'stepping outside your silo' (P7) were all introduced as ways to open the pathway towards change. People made the innovative practice happen (P5).

This proactive approach to guiding new practice resonated well throughout all research participants, naturally because these were innovative practitioners. However, they shared the DNA and the belief that applying a different lens could contribute to the journey in evolving practice. They admitted that this was not true of all academics and could be disconcerting, but that help could enable them through this process.

Identity within education: Innovative academics as agile, flexible, and strong identities

Participants shared examples of a values-driven basis in why they applied different approaches to learning.

Innovative academics had a strong sense of academic identity and purpose which underpins their interest and approach to practice. But they also had a strong sense of individual character. Although there was evidence of structural and resourcing constraints limiting some of the opportunities these academics found before them, they remained passionate about students and practice. They were realistic in acknowledging boundaries yet open to learning through doing, knowing that they would make mistakes. However, at their heart, research participants believed that academics needed to continue to evolve, as much as education itself, so that higher education institutions could continue to meet the needs of society. Passion had to be at the heart of this in motivating them, as indicated in the following quote:

What affects success in innovative practice – the individual. Passion, drive (P5)

Several participants identified the individual as a key characteristic in the success of an innovative practice. Descriptors used to explain their perspectives included: differentiated, the innovative guy, adventurous, open to risk, passionate about seeing things differently, out on a limb, inspirational, creative, flexible, willing to try, freedom to act, pioneering, enquiring, strong determination, seize the opportunity (carpe diem), collaborative (with students), and 'eyes open' (to changes in their environment).

Their strength of character positioned these innovative practitioners as confident they could add value by applying different ways of doing or learning that positively benefitted learners. Their academic identity was the foundation of everything they did (P8). This strength was vital to acknowledge, for there was also isolation amidst their new and status-quo challenging activities. This sense of being a 'lone pioneer' (P5) in their efforts to see and apply things differently could impact how they attempted to innovate. In contrast, several academics admitted others might be less inclined to try the new practice, preferring instead to be nudged or led towards change, as illustrated in the example below or refrain from change entirely:

I presented the concept and it generated some interest from several other staff. They were so motivated that they came to me to see if we could implement this work in practice. (P7)

Participants recognised that some academics were likely to view innovative practices differently. Everyone embodied a strong sense of personal agency in these cases and valued the challenge change brought. They recognised that they were different from other academics who 'did the same thing every semester for 20 years' (P4) and even from who they were initially. Their increasing capacity for the new practice helped an academic understand how they could be the main source of knowledge for their learners:

…I don't consider myself very innovative, so I am the first person I converted because I really needed to rethink my own boxes because it's much easier to be the one person who's knowledgeable (P3)

Interviewees acknowledged an internally driven, heartfelt desire to enact new practice despite the risks and critique this opened them up to. They were pioneers and willing to trial, work 'under the radar', and seek forgiveness instead of permission (P15). This seemingly rogue-like behaviour is unlikely to suit all academics who are not 'ok with messing up' (P2), but for these innovative practitioners, their identity was strong. Their belief in learning for knowledge (not credit) was similarly strong (P4). They were confident to push boundaries and discover different ways of learning. Yet, they were also aware of their journey in shaping academic identity through personal life experiences or experiences in their role as educators. Ultimately, they credited their identity with their alignment to innovative practice and how they were wired:

People make the innovative practice happen….it is about passion. You cannot get people to innovate if it is not in their personality…there is typically no reward for innovative behaviour. I am just wired this way (P5).

Fragility of academia

Environmental influences challenged academic practices. The worldwide pandemic of Covid-19 was disrupting academia in a way never previously experienced, and there was recognised uncertainty amongst participants as to how educational practice should evolve to accommodate this event. Not only in the immediacy of the event but also given the long-term impacts:

> *…right now we are caught in this global pandemic; they (academics) don't know how to adjust at the moment (P13)*

As evidenced in the literature (Dede & Richards, 2020), research participants in this study also shared multiple concerns over the climate of higher education. These included increasing workload arising from the increased focus on research outputs, moving to online teaching (pre and post Covid-19), reducing staff numbers, and growing constraints on student and staff mental health and wellbeing (P7). One academic was fearful that their role or employment might be affected because academics had shown they could move to teach online (P13). In addition, casualisation of staff was also criticised as unsettling academic practice wherein these short-term appointments were neither invested in nor fully supported to evolve practice. Academics feared their continued employment, state of work, and potential career progression (P12). They also feared developing academic roles towards 'coaches' rather than 'professors' (P1). This observation was an interesting acknowledgement made by one professor in a management role. He saw the notion of a coach as more suitably able to connect learners to be adept in responding to society. However, this view did not extend to the separation of duties as proposed by introducing artisanal roles through the unbundling of the academic role (Brew et al., 2018).

A further challenge was also acknowledged concerning the changes in student perspectives towards learning, which effectively respond to changes in student perspectives as illustrated in the following comment:

> *I think industry-wide we're running into some problems with today's type of student, with millennials… they're having a hard time focusing on anything for more than 30 seconds. There's a weird shift happening in academia right now (P4)*

One academic reflected on the failure of their institution to recognise differences arising from teaching in 2020 due to Covid-19. She commented on the demotivating aspects of her university using traditional evaluation tools to measure 'teaching effectiveness' as expected, without them having been reconceptualised for the almost instantaneous move to online teaching in courses that did not align with this mode. She felt she had put enormous effort into attempts to craft her course for this alternative delivery. She coined it as 'distant learning' instead of 'online learning' and criticised the tool as having captured mainly negative feedback, which only proved to upset and

frustrate her. The failure of auditors to manage this measure of success evidenced the systems' fragility in support of academics and their attempts to evolve practice.

While some believed (early 2020) that Covid-19 would dissipate and things would return to normal (P14), they recognised that their practice had been challenged in moving between teaching modes and that student engagement was the biggest issue regardless of which mode was used. There is a sense that there was no choice but to adapt (P12). However, despite being innovative practitioners, they felt challenged to engage students in different environments. Out of this arose concerns over failure to innovate and becoming obsolescent – ultimately the dearth of their career through a developing detachment in societal relevance via their curriculum content:

Those that haven't joined in have typically become obsolete…where the content of today becomes unknown to them (P5).

Summary

The findings indicated that educators' mindset, beliefs, and identity were critical to applying an innovative lens within higher education. A robust personal character was evident in each of the academics interviewed. These individuals acknowledged their capacity for change, their desire to retain currency in their content, how they connected with their students, and in alignment with the role and purpose of higher education. Their level of personal agency and 'right to innovate' was high, particularly among the more experienced educators. Pioneering spirits, openness to risk, and comfort in making mistakes provided the supportive framework within which each felt comfortable looking at educational practices differently. In a sense, their agency provided the lens through which they filtered their environment, providing them the perspective on where innovative practice could be introduced. This lens helped them navigate the fragility of the higher education environment and how they enabled and evolved innovativeness.

4.6 Theme 2: Ways of innovating: motivations, technology, and solutions (RQ2)

So, how do academics innovate? What drives them, into what solutions, and to what extent does technology play a role in this? The second thematic cluster explored 'ways of innovating' through the motivation, technology, and solutions interviewees drew from and evolved in their practice.

Reasons for innovating

Academics' motivations to innovate ranged from basic physiological needs to higher-level needs centred around self-actualisation.

For some, the drive to innovate was a basic necessity borne out of survival in the way that the higher education institution strategically positioned themselves (P6); or as evidenced more recently due to Covid-19 through impacts on teaching modes where there was simply no choice but to adapt through new practice (P12). Changes in society regarding technological advances were also acknowledged as requiring higher education to seek alternative ways to deliver education or modify educational outcomes to respond to environmental changes (P9). At the individual rather than the institutional end of this spectrum of basic needs, some academics also had the more simplistic desire to simply find ways to avoid boredom – for themselves and their students, as evidenced in the following:

…could easily see how easily also students get bored, not just by me talking, but with each other talking. So if there isn't any engaging gadgets or videos or whatever, they get so easily bored.(P3)

A drive around 'safety and security' existed for others as they attempted to be innovative to ensure that students had the skills to gain meaningful employment when they graduated (P1). This was evident even for those academics who had been teaching for decades, attuned to the research drive so many institutions were led by. It was interesting to note that the basic orientation of new practice was directed, for many, by the specificity of student employment as an outcome. This contrasted with what others believed the role of higher education to be. Innovative practice orienting around employment fundamentally shifts the focus from 'knowledge for knowing' to 'knowledge for doing'. A direction that has received some criticism (Downs, 2017). Additionally, there was an acknowledgement of the need to innovate to remain current and avoid irrelevance as educators (job safety) – staying open-minded to new ways of teaching and keeping up to date on innovations within the field (P8).

'Authenticity' was commonly used among interviewees to reflect their desire to recreate learning experiences that resonated with the real world. They view this as engaging students more strongly in the journey of learning (P3), avoiding what one academic called the assembly-line approach (P4). Authenticity is important as higher education moves to a more socially responsive purpose (Serdyukov, 2017). Academics have acknowledged the need for education to develop

thinkers and recognised that they needed to find ways of educating that engaged learners to achieve that:

> *to try and engage with the student in the classroom for a better learning (P11)*

Authenticity underpinned an opportunity for educators to get closer connections with industry, distinguish their academic programmes, and reinforce the high-value experience in real learning. One academic was motivated to introduce innovative practices due to their discussions and collaborations with industry partners. The concept of co-creating inspired them to develop new and interesting classes (P1) and embrace the idea of belonging. They drew on online tools and certifications that businesses often made available for free (P9) and got closer to what the industry needed in education (P5).

Perspectives of available collaborations did vary amongst respondents. In some cases, the partnership was formalised through sponsorship of academic positions by external stakeholders, which meant resources were available. This could be restrictive depending on the degree of alignment and availability of desirable alternative solutions outside of the relationship. However, these partnerships were recognised as relevant to the course of study and allowed individual efforts to innovate to focus elsewhere. Alternatively, in some situations, opportunities for external collaboration were reduced, for example, due to economic capacity, which resulted in academics looking within practice to innovate. Contextual differences meant that academics accommodated innovative approaches differently.

Connecting students to learning was a common reason that participants sought to discover new practices, enabling various learners with differing needs to discover and acquire knowledge through their ability to make sense of information, 'engaging them for better learning' (P11). Academics recognised that the more active the learners were, the more engaged in learning they were likely to be (P3):

Another way the academics connected with stakeholders involved their alignment with communities in and around them. Some were linked to opportunities for employment directly, while others were focused on the educator-learner relationship. All were discussed as motivating themselves and others to see the point in learning and evidenced the perspective that innovative practitioners had in always seeking opportunities to enhance student learning:

Innovative practice is an essential part of higher education. As educators, we must constantly be looking for new ways in which to engage our students(P15)

Gaining respect and recognition from students and peers provided some academics with the esteem they sought in their roles and the motivation to develop new practices. This came from the thrill that students had to be involved in authentic learning environments, and in that change in practice being meaningful (Kunnari & Ilomaki, 2016) in it being based on sound foundations:

Many students were thrilled to be learning a real programme (P1)

…it is about ensuring that what we are doing in education is the best possible way we can do it. In achieving any improvement or change to doing it differently, we should base this upon research and scholarship (P7)

Attaining transformation motivated some academics directly into moving beyond habit to understanding, to critical reflection…to explore what was learned and the learning process (P13) to fully extend their knowledge and evolve behavioural changes in students (P2). The process of change was recognised as being different for those who encountered it, which meant that academics needed to consider not just the innovative practice but how it was adopted and how that adoption could be enabled:

I think, because at the end of these sessions, sometimes we'd reflect on it, we talked about it, and then you could see that some people thought exactly like you; or felt the same thing that you did. But other people, something completely different. Then you start opening little windows or little doors that you hadn't seen before. Like it is a thing full of walls, but you don't see them. When you listen to other people talking, little windows start opening (P11)

Intrinsic motivation was a strong feature in attempts to introduce the novel practice. Their realisation that they were making a difference in the lives of learners was the key for some. In this

sense, they were self-actualising as educators through their ability to help guide others towards their potential:

> *I want to be able to make a difference in one or two students' lives per year and help them discover how phenomenal they can be, if they want to be. To me, that's why I get out of bed*

Other notable motivations included: avoiding a siloed curriculum, where all the classes were the same form (P15); remaining relevant in a changing discipline (P2) (P5) (P8); achieving more openness in trying new things, and seeking out innovative methods (P15); improving the educational experience (P4); regaining a sense of a community of learners, focused on experience (P7); achieving balance in learning – between traditional research and consultancy (P14); fear of a discipline losing its identity (P1); reimagining learning beyond physical space boundaries that confined learning (P3), and motivating others (P3).

Ultimately, regardless of differing levels of motivations driving the individual academic, all sought to improve the educational experience and limit the level of inertia in higher education to provide value to all stakeholders, themselves included. An example of this was in one academic's reflections on aspects of the role they loved and hated and how they sought innovative ways to manage their investment across these:

> *I'm more of an ROI. If we can have a better student experience, increased learning, increased happiness and me spending less time doing what I love which is educating and less time doing what I hate which is grading, that's an ideal system for me. Everyone's learning, everyone's having fun, no-one's getting jaded with this inertia (P4)*

Role of technology

One of the common aspects that academics discussed in their interviews was the role of technology in innovative practice. Discussions were both positive and negative, as catalyst and aide, as risky and exciting.

Some recognised technology as facilitating standard face-to-face practices within an online environment, extending how courses were taught (P3). Others reflected on their use of technologies

in increasing engagement, for example, using clickers (P8) as an innovative way to engage students who might otherwise shy away from contributing to activities and discussions. One academic commented:

> *Technology provides different ways or provides a tool for me to better engage the students in the classroom. That's why I wanted to incorporate this kind of technology, tools, or platform in my teaching. Because I think that will help me to improve the students' engagement, as well as the students' learning outcomes (P10)*

Several academics also recognised preparation for the class as a challenge to effective learning. They saw that the use of technology shifted the learning process to a different format. It acted as a stimulus in driving students to take greater ownership in preparing for learning. One example was in the use of clickers to reward students for having prepared for class:

> *I wanted to solve a lack of reading before class and cramming and dumping study methods before tests. I was frustrated by students showing up to class and not being able to even participate in basic discussion or answer my verbal in-class questions--because no one but me did any prep. Instead of tests, by doing clicker questions in class, the students are rewarded directly for reading the materials before class and engaging in-class lectures/activities. (P8)*

In other situations, technology was simply a distraction. The need to learn new technology, by academic or learner, provided challenges in whether and how to introduce technology into new academic practices. Issues such as slow loading, kicking learners out of programmes and licensing or access were problematic for innovative practice (P10). Shorter sources of information were also criticised as negatively impacting students' depth of learning. Academics feared these changes were distracting learners from quality learning in favour of less formal cuts of information:

> *We have also seen a growing disengagement by students with sustained reading and writing in favour of shorter and more meaningless clickbait. This has*

been a negative consequence of technology that we need to acknowledge and try to counter (P7)

Some academics claimed that their use of technology was the innovation, affirming the conceptualisation of innovation as an outcome (Kahn, 2018). Access to and use of technology might differ, but there was evidence of contextual adoption of appropriate technologies to their environment for those institutions included in this study. Irrespective of their choice of new technology in teaching, i.e. Zoom, Microsoft Teams, alternative Learning Management Systems and specific applications within it, or Virtual Reality, their adoption was innovative and exciting for academics because they were recent adopters of technology. Others looked to them for assistance because of their capacity to adopt new technologies (P13).

For many, acquiring these technologies may have simply been a means to a new way of working rather than an innovative evolution in higher education practice per se. Depending on the availability of professional development activities, institutions can be the differentiator in academics, being leading-edge educators versus skilled educators. The differences in intended use are what others perceive as an innovative lens to good practice.

Thus, a reliance on technology as core to innovation in academic practice came with a cautionary note and supports what the literature has acknowledged (Tidd & Bessant, 2018). The 'shiny new platform' should not be the driver behind evolving practice, merely a tool (P2). Ensuring the right technology was in place to support expected outcomes was deemed necessary to avoid gimmicky approaches that were not aligned strategically in supporting effective learning. Low to zero cost online sources were also identified as high risk (P10), particularly when the pace of change and source control was outside the academic's scope (P1). Reliability and security in the choice of technology-based adoptions were raised as important factors in decision making:

As time went on, I realized that I needed to focus my changes on the technology. Finding a solution that was more reliable and secure (P8)

There was additional value in understanding exactly how academics were evolving their practice. Identifying the new applications being introduced to deal with today's challenges in higher education to ensure effective learning? The next section of the findings reviews the wide-ranging examples interviewees discussed in this study.

Innovative applications in practice

The varied examples introduced by respondents included elements relating to the environment of learning, collaborations, assessment, co-creation, and creativity. As previously mentioned, rather than appearing as an innovative stand-alone practice, technology was highlighted more as a support and enabling role, illustrated in Figure 12 as linked to each new practice.

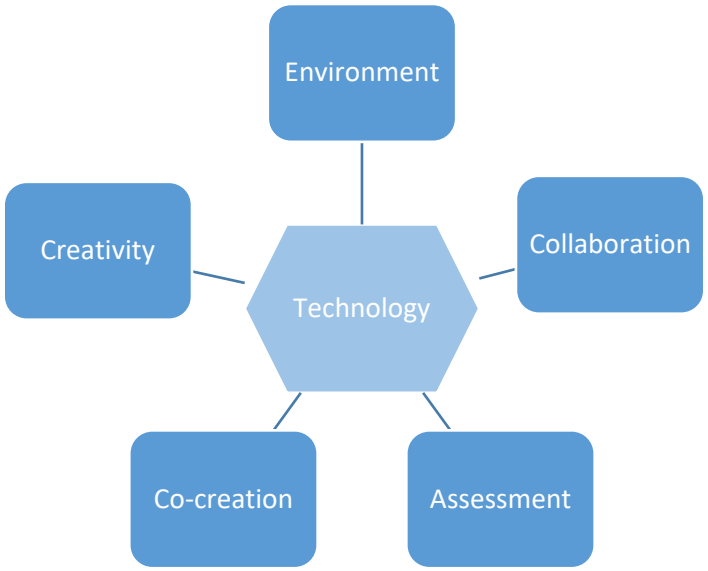

Figure 12: Examples of innovative practice

Changing the learning environment, either physically or psychologically, was identified by several academics as providing an innovative element to learning. Introducing learners to new/different spaces introduced a creative lens to learning methods, breaking down assumed barriers. While the physical areas on campus were identified as quickly losing their edginess and becoming old-fashioned, the spaces beyond the campus seemed to provide unique environments for learning, as explained in the following example:

> *...the best things and best spaces are out there somewhere, depending on the time of the year, out in nature or in other buildings or other locations, or in ruin sites, in museums, in shopping centres, just where the life is…. I think the best spaces are outside universities and school buildings and office buildings, always (P3).*

Managing class time in an online environment led academics to explore different class and self-directed learning configurations (P11), recognising that large blocks of face-to-face teaching

time did not work as effectively in a digital environment. This practice led some academics to be more innovative in using assorted digital communications tools to manage students and facilitate learning and engagement. Driven by the move to online learning in response to Covid-19 and the temporary closure of learning institutions, academics were identifying more opportunities to work with and alongside students predominantly associated with changes in communication practices as illustrated:

When everything went to shambles (Covid-19) and we decided to stay home and we agreed to that, that's when they started putting their barriers up. And I started to do a lot more communication; whether it's discussion, whether it's just one-on-one emails. Even though it took longer, they appreciated it. Like a Zoom, I would do a lot of Collaborate Ultra one-on-one sessions. I have my office hours through Collaborate Ultra, so I try to be as available as possible… (P13)

Sharing campus resources for different purposes led one academic to new ways of being creative in their teaching. They realised that resources could benefit additional learners beyond those for whom the resource was initially intended through collaboration with different schools on their campus. A central intermediary, namely the library, provided greater visibility and use of various resources (P2).

As an extension of this, others were looking for innovative ways to work together across faculty, departments, and schools, bringing people together and regaining a campus life that supports communities of learners. Their experience in new practice was driven by the reimagining of learning through alternative approaches used within their institution but not within their immediate locale. They looked to broaden their capacity and, in doing so, their agency for being innovative.

The extent to which this sharing and collaboration occurred did vary, as some were protective of their domain of innovative practice to preserve it. In contrast, others appeared more open to enabling wider adoption. When resources were constrained due to finances, politics, or others, the opportunity to realise widespread gain was limiting. One example given was how institutional practices had diminished this capacity:

We must regain the sense of a community of learners with more of a focus on the experience, not a tick-box, outcomes driven approach that in my opinion has done considerable damage(P7)

Managing assessment items in different ways provided one academic with the environment for happy and less stressful learning. The academic took a somewhat radical approach to give all students the same base grade at course commencement, moderating grades up or down according to their effort over the course duration. The driving force for this lay in distracting students away from a preoccupation with grades and content for assessment only, towards education in a purer sense. He sought to shift the role of education away from accreditation toward personal development and socialisation (Biesta, 2015). The academic felt that students were so focused on the grade that they missed out on the bigger picture in learning. He needed an innovative solution to reduce this siloed way of studying and for students to 'enjoy education for education's sake' (P4). As he explained:

> *Were they learning the same amount as my other classes where I had mid-terms and exams and papers and all that stuff and yeah, the evidence was they were in fact learning exactly the same stuff to the same degree. Because I was teaching the same context, I was just not having grades attached to it….Then qualitatively what I found was that they were basically enjoying themselves more, they were happier, they were less stressed and more relaxed.(P4)*

Another academic (P5) was in a sponsored position within her department. She was able to negotiate new resources and applications by working in conjunction with corporate sponsors to co-create content and enrich the real-world learning experience of students. In this process, they developed digital resources crafted around key learning outcomes and introduced 'badging' so that students could obtain certifications along the way. Course marks were allocated to Zoom calls and online discussions to encourage participation. The use of technology was recognised by this academic as critical to the value of learning for the future of work and the building of student portfolios aligned with targeted career interests. Other academics have also partnered with agencies to have students working on 'live' projects. In one case, the entire course pivoted to be a group-based project for master's level students, recreating the experience of a live brief and resulting in a client-based solution. This industry connection drove their innovative approach to teaching, delivery, and assignment creation (P14).

Online education and the use of technology were recognised as facilitating co-creation in learning. From enhancing the quality of relations in student supervision and improving completion rates (P6) through to using learning analytics to refine content in real-time (P9) and to digital quizzes like Kahoot (P10), academics were using different tools to co-create an effective learning

environment. Here they were aligning technology to support learning, not as the outcome. The innovation was in the process (Kahn, 2018), with the benefit of driving student's engagement:

> *…technology provides different ways, or provides a tool for me to better engage the students…That's why I wanted to incorporate this kind of technology tools or platform in my teaching. Because I think that will help me to improve the students' engagement, as well as the students' learning outcomes (P12)*

Some academics adopted creative and spontaneous approaches to education to disrupt the linearity of expected learning. Students had slide materials to present, including only a key number of facts. Their subsequent use of storytelling to examine and discuss the content, led by them as 'expert' learners/teachers, inspired some students to seek and make sense of the information presented to them (P11). The academics noted this motivation as displacing expectations of what learning processes should occur, resulting in more natural inquiry (P3). Other creative approaches such as the use of art (P4), Lego play (P13), filmmaking, and photos (P3) were mentioned as highly useful in activating students to think differently about what is being learned. Applying an alternative lens to interpreting materials enabled learners to see things in a new light. In one case, this involved tasking students to teach others, which revealed to the academic what needed to be taught and perceptions of what they were supposed to be learning (P3). The co-creation evolved as learners switched roles between teacher and student. Pedagogical change to learning through art over a more traditional essay or exam-driven assessments was an innovative way to adjust expectations of how students should learn:

> *Art can be evidence…why reduce non-verbal, non-linear experience to words or tables of figures? (P7)*

Novel approaches to increase student engagement were common. As one academic stated, "I'm striving for innovation in method in all areas of engagement" (P14) to bring in a more enriching educational experience using real-life projects, portfolios, and competitions that push the students to achieve higher. The opportunity to use more immersion in learning, while acknowledged as more challenging, resonated well with academics:

…that deep immersive, hands-on, get dirty learning. To me that is beautiful, just beautiful. It's the sort of assembly line approach that I really resist, which everyone seems to do. It's easier but it's shittier. (P4)

As mentioned previously, rather than being a central focus of all innovative practice, technology appeared to play a more dominant enabling role, supporting new approaches in education. In this study, technology was primarily evident in virtual reality with Google Cardboard, social media channels as resources or to guide assessment development, 3D printers to evidence learning, digital learning platforms, and 'clickers' in classrooms to engage learners. While respondents were at different technology levels, none used ground-breaking technology in their practice evolution. In the role of 'first mover users' (early adopters of new practices), these academics indicated a cautious approach to their use of technology, favouring principles of excellence in education over 'shiny new toys' (P2). This may be due to their experience with not all academics viewing technology positively or with positive consequences.

In exploring innovative practice by respondents, their solutions were mainly driven by looking for ways to move practice forward, to accommodate a broader range of concerns beyond the digitisation of education.

The following section looks at the processes used to understand how innovative practice evolved rather than what the innovation was. In beginning to unpack these approaches, it may be possible to comprehend ways to innovate across a broader spectrum. Focusing on how varied academics evolve their practices instead of the solution may reveal how others adopt similar openness in educating beyond replication. It might further extend an understanding of their agency.

4.7 Theme 3: Processes and influences shaping new practice (RQ3)

According to respondents, innovative practice evolved with consideration, inquiry, iteration, understanding, and time. In most instances, it was a carefully guided non-linear pathway that developed through a continuous process of reflection, focused all the while on key learning outcomes. Contextual factors and interviewees' experiences acknowledged parameters that frame boundaries within which they took risks trying new ways in education. It shaped their capacity, their agency, for being innovative. While limiting to an extent, these parameters still allowed academics to push their thinking to the edges while remaining aligned with organisational expectations of academic practice. This agency influenced their awareness of where innovation could be applied and what framed this. Thus, while a considered approach for the most part, in some cases, the new

practice was still viewed as risky, spurious, disruptive, and full of trial and error. Regardless of the approach used, most innovative practitioners interviewed sought to understand and fine-tune their new ways of doing, developing more refined processes, which sometimes resulted in broader uptake by others. However, this uptake was not a condition of their approach.

In reflecting on how they introduced innovative practices, common beliefs arose that underlay what was involved in developing new approaches in higher education. Each is explained in more detail in the following pages, with a summary graphic provided at the end (Figure 13).

Enough thought and consideration were needed in timing the new practice (P15) and balancing the degree of experimentation with the challenges of tradition (P12). Risks were welcomed, but they should be measured (P2) and aligned with educational needs first and foremost (P3). Modifications were likely for it is not one size fits all (P10), and care was needed in guiding others in the journey to avoid losing them irrespective of their role (P3). Metaphors or stories could assist the adoption of new practices, and where technology was being considered, its' relevancy needed to be determined (P10). What was critical, however, was the need for the change in how it fulfilled a purpose and avoided novelty for novelty's sake:

Time and time again I see people coming up with a new approach where there is no real foundation for the change they propose apart from it 'seemingly like a good idea'. However, does it work? Don't keep making change for change's sake. Become more preoccupied with going deeper to allow students to think more meaningfully – resist the fads! (P7)

Act responsibility and assume ownership of innovative activities. Belief was needed in the freedom educators had in the classroom (P8), yet mindful of students' needs or situations (P13). Care was required to avoid ruffling feathers (P4). Strong leadership (P2) and knowing the reasons, processes, and sharing workloads (P7) could facilitate the implementation of new practices and encourage others to join.

Search beyond boundaries**.** Inspiration for innovative practice came from many directions, including promotional offers from new providers (P10), internet searches (P1), students (P13), conference or networking opportunities (P11), and colleagues from other disciplines (P3). The key was finding ways to get into a different mindset, mood, or process to steer thinking in different directions (P3) in opening one's capacity for being innovative so that they were more aware of opportunities to be innovative. Alternative approaches also existed in proactively seeking assistance

from aligned external stakeholders, e.g. corporate sponsors (P5) or community (P2), and in closer connections and collaborations with industry to advance teaching, delivery, and assessment (P14). Looking into the future, into the 21st century, and beyond could seed new ideas. The movement between institutions was also recognised as important to the process of innovating:

> *once you've been in academia in one location, to experience somewhere else and they'll try things differently, or bring some ideas through to fruition and play differently. (P13)*

Approach with ***openness and awareness*.** It was essential to have a positive attitude and an open mind (P6) supported by clear goals and an understanding that multiple paths can achieve them (P1). This required a degree of flexibility and openness in revealing attempts to innovate together with receiving feedback from peers (P11). However, caution was also needed in determining how much information was disclosed to students to avoid 'guinea pig' scenarios (P3). Innovative practitioners needed to be patient – being innovative was an evolutionary process (P8) that required perseverance (P14). ***Flexibility and reflection*** aided in developing and introducing new approaches, recognising that personal experiences would shape innovative practices differently (many respondents). Always 'being on' resulted in constant awareness of opportunities for change (P8) and the skill to react to new learning modalities (P15). Adjustments were needed throughout the journey in response to changing resources, expectations, and challenges (P9), but evaluations had to occur when it was meaningful to do so (P8). This included recognising the value and benefits before, during, and after (P11, P13). Reviewing in-practice allowed for understanding authentic learning practice (P2) and acknowledging students' lens (P12). The process of reflection by innovators, their peers, and colleagues was important to gain alternative perspectives.

> *…you have to reflect during the process and at the end of the process. I think that reflection is important, and self-evaluation. Self-evaluation and also peer-evaluation, it's important that you share it with other people…they see things from another perspective that might be interesting. (P11)*

Currency and relevancy of new practices were essential. Linking to the real world through industry tools and certifications (P8) or using industry as clients to enable the hands-on experience (P10) contributed to authenticity. The primary focus must be on the experience in learning, not on a

tick box - outcome-driven approach (P7). In some cases, much prior research could be necessary to ascertain the validity and adoption of new practices (P9). Taking time to seed the idea was essential, as was avoiding getting lost in the details, which could cause hesitations and stymie new approaches (P3). Collaboration with industry was viewed as having multiple benefits in how it could contribute towards innovative practice:

Being industry-connected drives the approaches in innovation teaching, delivery, and assignment creation (P14). Diffusion of innovative practice may or may not occur, but ways to work towards successfully ***expanding the practice*** *did exist*. A bottom-up approach could be used to gain support from others (P6). Stakeholders needed to be known and involved where relevant (P14). Senior management support (P9) and acknowledging university procedure (P7) was beneficial. Innovative practice needed to start slowly, trial first (P4), recognising that change and wider adoption could take time (P9). Sharing the experience with others (P11), having conversations with others in the department (P8, P10), and working with others to develop a mindset of innovativeness beyond the finished product (P3) could enable greater adoption of practice by others. At times it took insights to be shared, benefits to be understood (P9), and expectations on what 'learning is and should be' (P1) to manage and reduce barriers to change.

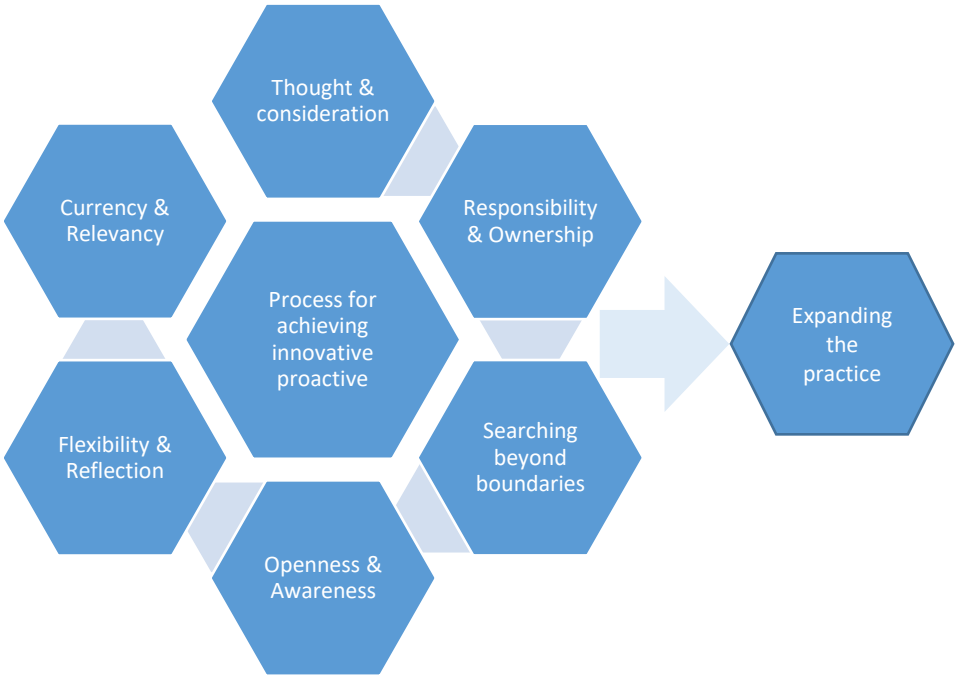

Figure 13: Summary of process variables for developing new practice

It was evident from these process variables (Figure 13) that expanding academic practice required much consideration. In these cases, innovative education evolved not through entirely erratic, erroneous attempts but with a more measured understanding of the locus of higher

education. Primarily driven by individual agency, understanding the relevant process variables gave insight into the keys that framed novel thinking and application. **Error! Reference source not found.** summarises how these process variables have shaped practices revealed in this study. In determining these outcomes, this sample of academics drew on their epistemological view of micro, meso, and macro conditions to orchestrate new opportunities for learning and teaching. Collectively this illustrates personal ideologies in evolving or constraining innovative practice and factors beyond the academic that continued to shape idea development and refinement.

Factors and challenges shaping practice

According to one academic, making a change in academia is 'like trying to turn an aircraft carrier on a dime' (P4). There was no time to wait in some instances, and yet, change was not for everyone. Academics acknowledged that not all were open to rethinking their boxes (P3), and not all understood the relevance of change (P13). Their abilities could limit even those who did think differently without necessarily recognising it (P1). For some, acting as the 'lone pioneer' was tiresome, and at times interest was lost in pushing forward with new practices (P5, P11). Recognition of the capacity for change in others as constrained by their own prior educational experiences can challenge new approaches:

> *I have had to realise that people can sometimes be slow to change the way they do things since most people teach how they themselves were taught (P7)*

From these interviews, it was clear that there were multiple influences in how innovative practice evolved from the environment to systems and management, to individuals and perspectives.

An educational environment comprised of wealthier institutions and financial partnerships benefitted innovative practice by enabling educators to access resources that facilitated innovative practice, particularly those involving technology. Several academics discussed the impact funding had on their ability to innovate. 'Playing the game' and using critical impact phrases, e.g. 'cultural experimentation' in funding applications, saw some success (P3). However, this was not the case for all. Some took the less risky route by formally validating their drive for innovative practice by identifying funds needed and potential reach of impact (student numbers) in their request for funds (P5). This inability to access resources could restrict the extent of introducing new practices or result in poor practices because of these limitations (P12). The following statement explains some of these environmental factors:

The extent to which academics are innovating in higher education vary from one context to another…how academics are innovating in universities from developed countries is different from that of developing countries... how academics from Science, Technology, Business, Education, Economics, and Arts fields are innovating in higher education also vary greatly. (P6)

The source of innovative practice might differ according to the institutional environment. Respondents mentioned factors such as universities' mission, specific research focus, the profile of student body, and the locality and industry nearby as impacting the extent to which innovation was possible. These academics suggested institutional factors could be significant in enabling innovative practice. Structural impediments included effective or enough resourcing (finances, people, access to materials, time), constraining leadership styles or beliefs about academia's role, and the culture and tendency for conformist behaviours. Each identified as a challenging opportunity for evolving new practice. Individual agency was evident in findings ways to navigate such challenges.

Moving outside of one's immediate environment was helpful in the journey of innovating. So too was exploring education beyond a discipline, beyond discipline-based research, or education into practice. Interviewees often mentioned teaching experience in other institutions or countries and previous work experience in different industries. Several academics highlighted the value of collaborating with different teachers from different classes and industry partners with differing expertise. Industry partners' interest and engagement in collaborating could shape the adoption of new practices, but respondents urged caution about the degree of influence such collaborators might exude (P3). Collaborations could work well given the fast pace of technological change and a lack of time to continue learning evolving platforms. One academic believed that we could no longer innovate in isolation, and corporate partnerships were increasingly necessary (P1). Among respondents, it was commonly held that innovative practice evolved with understanding how and why to educate, not simply what to profess. This belief underpinned the emphasis on academics as educators; supporting their need to develop their agency within education, increase their capacity for teaching and learning, and extend their role beyond a conduit of the textbook:

…you get thrown into a classroom with no training. I find it a wild injustice, very upsetting...they don't know what they're doing. Most of them have never worked a day in their life so what do you do? Ok, well, I'll use this slide that

came with the textbook…we're churning out this group of people who can't teach... (P4)

A teaching-oriented environment enabled innovative practice. Several interviewees chose to work at their institution because of the openness to quality education over an intensive research focus and smaller class sizes over traditional lecture halls. This enabled them to be innovative and use their time to consider alternative ways of doing instead of engaging in a rigorous publishing programme. However, they also acknowledged that students had greater difficulty learning when there was no prescribed way of doing it (P3) or when they or teachers used technology unfamiliar to them (P15).

Academics were further challenged in working across departments to collaborate effectively when systems and internal cultures differed (P15). Additionally, the failure of organisations to provide needed support led to frustration and blocked innovative practice (P11). The preference of others in accepting the status quo also reinforced resistant behaviours toward change:

…little and/or no support from colleagues at the workplace to introduce new practice as, more often than not they prefer the existing status quo. Put differently, they have a fear for the unknown, thus, resist change (P6)

Recent shifts towards online learning were causing some academics difficulty in finding solutions to quality distant learning. Covid-19 resulted in many uplifting face-to-face teachings on a digital platform where existing strategies and approaches did not replicate well. Academics acknowledged this and the need to address it with new practices and, in one situation, used an inter-departmental working group to explore possible solutions (P9). Innovative approaches needed to fit within the educational environment (P9), and any perceptions had to match the reality of its development. It was not just changing for change's sake. New practice should be meaningful (P7) and evidence based (P9), and academics need sufficient time to achieve this (P13). Compatibility was a key factor:

…ensure that the innovation/new practice is compatible with the existing and/or future practices (P6)

Existing systems were recognised as supporting and suppressing attempts to innovate, not the least concerning university politics (P12). Some academics preferred to innovate first and ask for forgiveness later, ignoring the stated ways of doing, in favour of challenging the status quo to evolve their practice. Again, this notion of agency and belief in what they can do underpinned personal motivations to enact change. Regardless of knowing the purpose for change (P3) or providing evidence via some foundational basis, there still needed to be validity, as illustrated in the quote below:

…have a purpose. What do I want with this? Not just go and – Oh, I found this idea, I'm going to do it just for doing it. Having a kind of… maybe not a theoretical background but at least to know where you go (P11)

Some still believed that it was necessary to gain support (P7). However, even if the need for support was acknowledged by management, the realities could be quite different from what was anticipated, as explained by one academic:

…they always tell you – Good, great idea, we're going to support you. But that's it…when it comes to when you start working nobody has time… (P11)

The rigidity of systems, in some cases, required substantial research and cost-benefit analysis before attempting new practices (P9). Past failed attempts to innovate had led to a more cautious or reduced approach that made it more acceptable for others to implement (P4), reducing the extent and sustainability of any change being considered, which could also reduce the potential value (Vaikunthavasan et al., 2019). Alternatively, institutional intransigence could block the change entirely (P15). A heavy emphasis on procedures and mechanistic approaches stifled creativity and learning and, in one academics' opinion, 'dehumanized education' (P7). The trust management had in their staff to act within reasonable boundaries, to the extent they were hands-off, was deemed a positive influence in innovating processes (P8). So too was the degree and quality of communication in encouraging wider adoption of new practices. The perceived benefits from the change and steps for its implementation and support channels had to be clear (P9). Management had a critical role to play in supporting valued initiatives.

Recognising different ways of doing things was central to an innovative perspective, yet respondents confirmed this was not easy to achieve. Individuals varied in how they acknowledged

alternative ways of doing and the solutions they evolved. These differences could be problematic, as one academic explained:

…to be honest, her way of seeing innovation was a different one to the one that I saw, or some of us saw, so it was difficult (P3)

Respondents recommended carefully unpacking expectations and changing perspectives about how things were traditionally done. This could involve changing students' thinking about learning or developing educators' beliefs about essentials to meet the changing global knowledge-based economy of the 21st century and beyond (P6). The type of learner and attitude towards education provided challenges regarding independence in their thinking (collective vs. independent culture) and openness to novel practice. One respondent stated the barrier to change is not what they were doing but within the students themselves (P13). Ironically, so was the case with academics, wherein one claimed cultural differences in the institution they were teaching in resulted in them becoming more conservative in approaching their work, reducing their level of innovativeness (P12). Understanding context, relevancy, industries' needs for the future of work, and external connections were revealed as essential in informing and shaping practice. However, the innovative practice also needed to fulfil the role of education as explained:

…at first you can't really say for sure whether this is going to be a success or failure, but to a certain level we have to serve the students, we have to be able to fulfil our promise of the possibility to learn, so we can't really just tip everything upside down.. Sometimes if a course has been too experimental, they're saying like – You screwed our chance of learning up (P3)

Feedback from learners helped shape changes in practice. Seeking feedback on their experience provided insight into the effectiveness of the activity and to what extent it worked as expected (P13). From an educator's perspective, ownership of the introduced change was vital to shaping it. Failure of individuals to commit to seeing the practice through or acknowledging or understanding what went wrong eroded subsequent value for all stakeholders (P3). This study revealed that academic experience provided the freedom and license needed to shape new practices (P12). High levels of personal agency and robust and open leadership towards change could facilitate

any innovation attempts (P13). This agency provided a capacity for acting independently, as illustrated in the following:

> *As an educator who is later in their career and a full professor, I have a bit more freedom to stand back and be more critically aware than those who feel they must follow the dictates of others (P7)*

Creating an environment for innovating

This study has acknowledged the ways and barriers to evolving innovative practice and the role of the individuals, institutions, and other external stakeholders in relation to those. From this, it was possible to establish an understanding of conditions for innovative practice (**Error! Reference s ource not found.**), including providing the capacity to do so, as one academic expressed:

> *if I was at a Uni that limited me to (publishing) 3-5 A+ journals, I would never have developed my personality or my innovativeness (P1)*

Figure 14: Conditions for innovative practice

Cultivating the right cultural fit was critical to enabling innovative practice, with one academic recruiting staff based on 'who' they are, not what was on paper alone (P5). Innovative academics being 'born not bred' appeared to be true of those willing to explore new teaching and learning methods. They were able to respond well to catalysts and identify opportunities in crisis and safety (P12) if the room to innovate was provided. While smaller departments appeared to be more agile and able to respond innovatively, larger departments still encouraged novel thinking if organisational or administrative structures remained uncomplicated (P6). Perhaps it should be embedded into large organisations' structures, missions, and visions to ease the adoption of innovative practice. However, irrespective of the organisation's size, management needed to be flexible and avoid micro-managing staff. Ultimately, staff benefitted from being given enough time to evaluate what they did and how they conceived novel practices (P4).

Most interviewees acknowledged that while individuals needed to drive the change, *support from management* helped expand the practice and overcome resistance to change, contributing to its long-term sustainability. Giving permission to try, fail, and retry was deemed necessary. Promoting this from the top-down relaxed expectations, created possibilities, and enabled others to learn from their mistakes (P3). Having allies was important in the pursuit of change, as one academic acknowledged:

It's important to have allies when you try to make improvements or have a vision to do so (P7)

An openness towards co-creation during the process of innovating strengthened the potential success of the new practice, including collaboration with peers or students as parties to the process. Letting them define themselves and their learning through innovative experiences and examining its impact helped realise opportunities for refinement and identify key success factors (P3). Opportunities for others came from sharing resources, contacts, solutions, and experiences (P1). Benefits were claimed beyond the immediately recognisable outcome, and it was key to *clearly define and redefine the purpose of the new practice* as it evolved. The goal should be communicated to all stakeholders to enable further development and achieve sustainable change (P2). In innovating, there were likely variances and challenges arising from the heterogeneity of the stakeholders involved. These need to be accommodated. *Not everyone adopted new approaches in the same way,* making the process more challenging (P3, P12). This could potentially be achieved by humanising oneself and introducing personal experiences to improve understanding and believability in the opportunity presented by changing practices (P13).

However, it was important to *recognise when desired outcomes or positive changes were impossible*. Covid-19 has challenged face-to-face teaching environments, resulting in many practical, innovative solutions being temporarily redundant (P7) or replaced by different online solutions. The perceived risk of change could reduce the scope of adopting innovative practices, limiting them to the 'lone pioneer' or the educator who simply likes to give things a go without ruffling any feathers, thereby flying under the radar (P4). Some of these risks could be mitigated through *effective communication*. Simple changes in the language used in applying for or introducing novel approaches to education could garner greater support from stakeholders. For instance, 'knowledge base' over 'theory' suggested a more practical orientation (P3). Looking through the lens of the target audience was an important aspect in framing the communication of intended new practices as explained:

I think of myself - If I was a student what would I like, how would I like to be engaged with, and I use a lot of why, how…(P13)

While some interviewees acknowledged the use and benefit of official forums for discussing or sharing new practices, they predominantly believed *informal channels were more effective* in gaining real and sustained interest from others. Self-selection was a key success factor in the diffusion of innovative practice by others. More formal, structured approaches to wider adoption were acknowledged as less effective, with individuals reverting to previous practices or finding shortcuts to minimise their efforts.

…they have a fear for the unknown, thus, resist change (P6)

As illustrated (Figure 14, pg.108), an environment for innovative practice requires flexibility, trust, openness, and support. True pioneers sought out new solutions *when they chose to*, not because it was mandated. Good leadership could encourage, excite, and support staff to innovate but largely relied on individuals choosing to change. This links back to cultivating the right environment and recognising some individuals are 'born that way', eager and willing to invest time and energy in evolving educational practice, not necessarily for the broader adoption but simply for increased student engagement and job satisfaction (P4).

4.8 Summary of Findings

These findings have focused on exploring experiences of innovative practice. The initial four cases within marketing education gave evidence to practice examples through collaborations, curriculum, andragogy, and technology. These same themes resonated in the approaches discussed by the sample of 15 geographically dispersed academics. The individual, their motivations, solutions, use of technology and processes, and the moderating variables influencing them were essential to understanding this group's evolving practices.

Key results suggested that an assumed identity of 'undercover academic' and license to act (agency) were critical to evolving academic practice. With such agency and educational experience, these respondents acquired beliefs and knowledge in their ability to comprehend the need for change and developed novel practices within the scope of their habitus. These academics were passionate about higher education and ensuring stronger connections with industry and society. They were largely independent, agile, flexible, and strong identities, open to taking risks for the greater good.

Driven by authenticity and a desire for students to learn more deeply and achieve higher levels of self-actualisation, innovative academics sought alternative ways of doing. These varied in the involvement of technology, as the change outcome was prevalent to their need and not the mechanism. For this reason, their solutions focused on different themes of practice as previously introduced.

An acknowledgement was made of the impact organisational factors had on how innovative practice emerged within an institution. The perceived focus on teaching or research, assumed role of education, availability of resources, and flexibility of the institution to respond to environmental changes collectively shaped how the academics adapted.

These findings have provided insights into how innovative practice might evolve within my institution, and with further discussion, some of these conclusions can now be determined. Chapter five explores these findings with respect to the literature and determines key insights arising from this comparison.

5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I reflect on my research findings. I draw on my positionality to realise similarities and differences between established literature and make sense of these in finding meaning for academic practice concerning the research questions.

This study aimed to explore academic experiences in innovative practice to benefit wider practice. This small-scale qualitative study involved 15 in-depth interviews with self-acknowledged innovative practitioners in higher education. Underpinning this was an initial review of the literature, extended with a specific investigation into four examples of innovative applications within the marketing discipline, guided by the research questions. Collectively these led me to a framework of innovation (Kahn, 2018), which I then conceptually extended to explore key components as they might apply in higher education. In doing so, this also provided structural consideration in how participants were questioned.

According to Kahn (2018), it is important to recognise its existence as a mindset, process, or outcome to understand innovation. These three elements relate to components of a strategic focus that emphasises the state, means, and ends within which innovative practice might be situated. This study confirmed pathways toward new academic practice are indeed located in these elements. However, in researching academics experienced with educational innovations, this investigation has further revealed the critical role individuals have in evolving relevant and manageable change that is more tactical than strategic, an emphasis not given by Kahn (2018). This realisation became apparent as I analysed my data and established my findings. I used this initial framework to explore innovative practice in higher education and, in doing so, revealed the importance of the individual in this.

My research highlighted high levels of agency by academics in organically evolving their practice. While this may be expected, given individual academics are the unit of analysis, their stories recounted ownership in new ways of academic practice that drove them to evolve it, furthering learning, enjoyment, and education. This level of focus was valuable in acknowledging how academia might respond to challenges impacting higher education and society, fostering individual agency at the heart of evolving practice, which then emphasises the mindset, process, and outcome that will ultimately lead to innovativeness. This ecological approach to individual agency assumed agency, not as something to behold but as an emergent phenomenon that enabled an outcome (change in practice) to be achieved (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). In times of disruption, like

that arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, a managerial approach that fosters, harnesses and facilitates individual agency may be the essential ingredient for assisting academia in navigating through such difficult times, building resilience and sustainability within its walls.

Beyond these perceptions of agency, additional moderating factors were also recognised by way of the environment, technology, and resources; and the leniency and support of academic institutions towards enabling and cultivating environments for change. Contexts, experiences, and confounding factors influenced variability in degrees of innovativeness; however, as illustrated by the novel applications observed in this study, these practices were unlikely to be entirely ground-breaking. Further, depending on where they were conceived, participants acknowledged the new practice may or may not gain momentum for wider diffusion. For instance, Usher (2021) claimed that 'technology-taker' is a role assumed by every country, suggesting instead that differences lie with its creative use. Thus, it is not necessarily the tool but the perspective. As illustrated by my findings, at the heart of innovative practice in higher education ***was*** the academic.

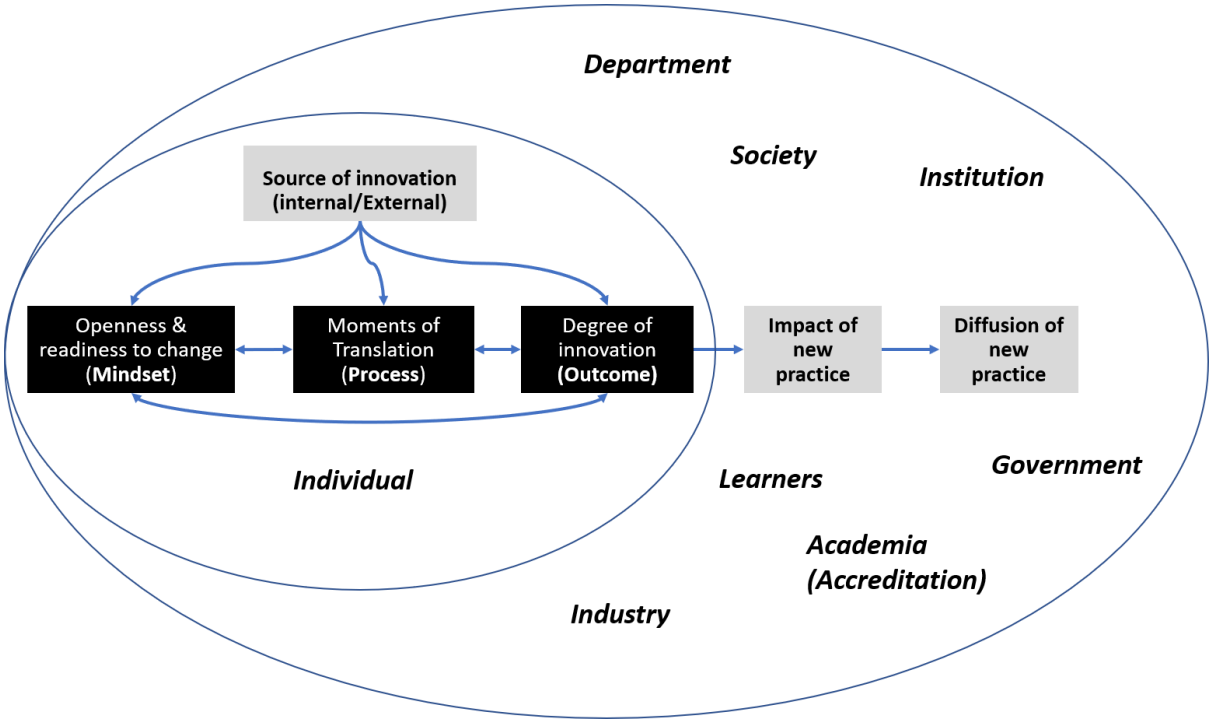

Figure 15 Conceptual Framework Revisited

The conceptual framework I initially conceived (Figure 15) assisted me in understanding aspects of individuals' journeys in innovative practice and helped reveal additional principles that shaped its application in academia. Key areas of investigation included academic identity (RQ1), process (RQ2), and contributory factors shaping those practices (RQ3). From these insights, it was anticipated that key understandings might be gained for translation into guiding practice (RQ4).

In the following sections, I relate the findings of my study to the initial literature examined and research questions formulated to make sense of these outcomes. In turn, I look at each of the initial research questions and work towards how this knowledge might be used to inform practice, my fourth research question.

5.2 How does academic identity align with experiences in innovative practice? (RQ1)

Innovative practitioners assumed a strong academic identity regarding independence, confidence, and self-belief. Rarely was the journey of new practice discussed as part of a broader strategic, stepwise adoption by groups or departments. This could be due to the focus on individual academics as the sample. Stories and experiences focused on their journeys, and in doing so, examples of externally sourced or institutionally led innovative practice remained unexplored. This is interesting as it reiterates the ownership and connection academics have to innovative practice and the power that 'accountability for change' provides. This was also linked to their agency, supporting and driving their belief and knowledge in what they were doing and how they were looking to evolve the academic practice. And further to their mindset in how they were influenced to change, drawing on their views of educational practice (Nadelson et al., 2020).

In hearing their stories, a diversity of identity was evident (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013), including negotiator, facilitator, choreographer, undercover agent, parent, child, scientist, overloaded worker, actor, and more. It extended well beyond the single role of academics, supporting the notion that academic identity is a composite measure (Briggs, 2007). Respondents acknowledged these various assumed personas as contributing to their agency and subsequent agility to respond in different environments (Annala et al., 2020). Agency underlined these individuals' ability to manage their educational systems while enabling the resources for innovative success (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

As mentioned by several interviewees, their approach was somewhat organic, less reliant on strategic forethought or research, and such was the strength of their academic agency. In some cases, we might be concerned by this and the capacity of academics to act responsibly in navigating change. However, this did not present in this sample. They appeared to implicitly understand the risks and ways to minimise these as they innovated. Some participants acknowledged being 'born that way inclined', while others related their upbringing and independence at an early age as possible reasons for being comfortable in challenging the status quo. This tenacity for innovating was attributed to more than the habitus of the educator (Bourdieu, 1990). This was their past, their now, and their future intertwined into agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). "It's just who I am". They felt driven to innovate.

The lens of innovative practice is attributed to these individuals and their interest and curiosity in seeing education differently. It is not in the notion of higher education for qualification (Biesta, 2015) but in the need to know (subject) and the opportunity to know (for socialisation).

Although these pioneering behaviours are not confined only to education or managerial processes (field), they can be challenged. This was evidenced in some of the comments mentioned wherein others resisted change for fear of the unknown, support was negligible, or the rigidity of environments made it more difficult to achieve (page 108). For the most part, it seems that these innovative academics operated as members of a secret society of practice, where they assume the role of undercover academic - licensed to play, licensed to indulge, and licensed through their belief of agency to do so. This is not to say that there are no rules. Only that the rules are somewhat fluid or agile in how these academics view them and that they know how to act freely within them. This is the mindset of the innovative practitioner.

Annala et al. (2020) acknowledge that one's principles and traditions are essential to achieving change. This is their agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), shaped and recrafted as they navigate their educational landscape.

Kahn's innovation framework focused on mindset, process, and outcome and, in doing so, ignores any predisposition that may exist to support innovative perspectives as they relate to these elements. My study has highlighted agency, which I propose is quite different from the mindset in understanding innovative practice in higher education, yet it appears related. From the interviews I collected, there was a suggestion that agency is the predisposition that evidences a preclusion for innovative practice when present. Thus, agency influenced the response via mindset, process, and outcome. And, it is agency that needs to be enabled to equip institutions with the tools to remain sustainable and achieve diffusion of continued innovation and innovative practice.

This leads to the question of leadership and its role in innovation within higher education. Interviewees acknowledged leadership as enabling and valuable in supporting new practice, aligning with Zhu and Engels (2014) claims that this enables individual competencies to be strengthened. However, leadership was also deemed as not entirely necessary for the new practice to occur in the first instance. This could be related to interviewees being experienced academics, which is also closely linked to their assumption of agency. In most cases, respondents had been in education for several years, providing them with knowledge, experience, familiarity, and academic maturity to attempt innovative practice. The specific leadership style of managers was rarely mentioned in depth, promoting the idea that both transactional and transformational styles could support innovativeness amongst academics. This aligned with literature claiming that a facilitatory approach

was more conducive to supporting innovative practice, but this could also be contingent on an academic's predispositions for being innovative.

Also interesting to managerial practice was the omission of extrinsic rewards in driving innovative behaviour. This reinforces the notion that the individual was essential to the emergence of innovative practice rather than relying on the process or outcome. This supports beliefs that innovative practices will follow as long as individuals have freedom, autonomy, and space to explore new ways (Hairon & Goh, 2015; Owusu-Agyeman, 2019).

Management support was emphasized to broaden the adoption of innovative solutions, resulting in the diffusion of innovation as 'best practice' across a wider application. This is interesting, as in most cases, the innovative practice was conceived and applied by only one or two academics – the innovative practitioners. Sources of innovativeness came largely from within the individual. Although others incorporated processes as needed, it was always at the directive of the individual. There was no evidence of academics pushing for wider adoption of the novel practice in these instances. Rather it was left to diffuse organically by word of mouth or watercooler conversations. This is important as it suggests an informal channel for emerging new practice is valuable to adoption by those who see the value; not change or newness of its' sake, but authenticity in the novel practice being beneficial for learner and educator. That is not to say this is the situation in which all innovative practices evolve, only that these academics recognise this approach.

However, this may be a challenge. If individual practitioners' networks of contact constrain innovative practice, organisational benefits from widespread adoption of highly beneficial innovative practices will remain unrealised. The agility of individuals and institutions to respond promptly in the face of change is compromised. If individual academics are confronted by too many requests to learn, adapt, or react to the resources they use in educating, they are at risk of burnout. In such cases, these academics could use their agency negatively to act as a diffuser in adopting new practices. Perhaps it is best that this level of 'license to operate' is retained within academia to benefit the individual practitioners who thrive on novel practice and allow the average academic to continue unaffected.

Drawing on earlier findings (pages 84-86), the individual academic appears central to how innovative practice evolves in higher education. Important to this was their belief in how they could add value to their learners and that it was their responsibility to drive new practice, not the system. This ownership model is built on intrinsic motivations as the drivers of innovativeness and their

passion for advancing learning. Their strength of character was also acknowledged as vital to their success.

Their capacity for change and perspectives on new practices were important and likely to have impacted the successful adoption of any innovation within education. Drawing on this notion, Figure 16 proposes that an understanding of academic identity and innovative practice might be gained by considering variations in 'agency' and associated 'level of innovativeness'. This study acknowledged these concepts as important to evolving academic practice, yet their relationship has not been fully explored in the existing literature.

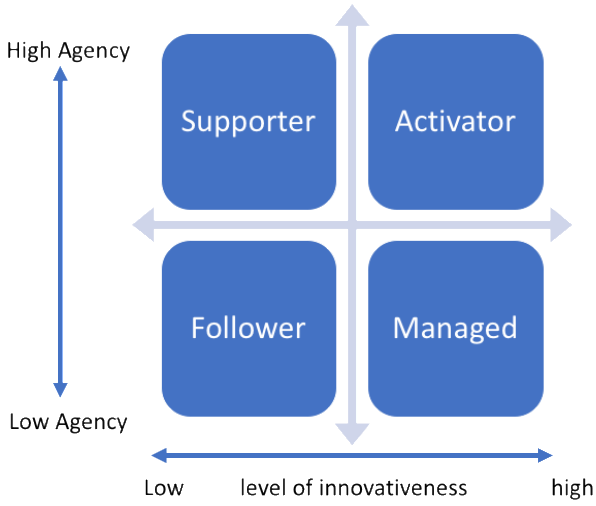

Figure 16: Proposed relationship between Agency and Innovative practice

This proposed Agency-Innovation matrix (Figure 16) reveals four potential dimensions that academics might position themselves in innovative practice. **Activators**, those leading the way, have high agency and innovative perspectives, including the majority of those who participated in this study. **Supporters** have high agency but low levels of innovativeness, positioning them as potential early adopters but not through their conceptualisations of new practice. **Followers** have a low tendency for innovativeness and low agency, thus becoming more inclined to join the majority in adopting new practices as determined by leadership. The last group, '**Managed'**, is in a challenging position. Despite a high tendency for innovativeness, they likely lack the agency to implement and may be more inclined to feel frustrated and stymied in any attempts to initiate change. The study has revealed this proposed model as a valuable finding. Further exploration is warranted to determine how the proposed relationship between agency and innovative practice exists in higher education.

5.3 How are academics innovating within higher education? (RQ2)

Innovative practice applications in higher education range according to individuals' agency, context, experience, resources, motivations, and expectations for and of change. Despite differences in the perceived or actual level of need for new academic practice (Maslow, 1981) or the solution introduced, each academic appeared confident in revealing their stories relating to innovative practice during the interviews. This indicated an authenticity to their identity and agency, which should be emphasised given the importance of agency for evolving practice, as revealed in the first research question.

Innovating with agency appears to be the initial stage within how innovative practice is developing, extending the perspectives of Kahn (2018) beyond the components of innovation and aligning with the earlier matrix conceiving the relationship between agency and innovativeness. In acknowledging research participants in the capacity of 'Activator', it is proposed conceptually that their agency leads to awareness for innovative practice, which connects to a motivation that then drives conception of the educational innovation (response), which is evaluated and activated. This is visually expressed in Figure 17:

Figure 17: Conceptual framework of evolving innovative practice in education

This proposed framework (Figure 17) aligns with earlier work undertaken by Bannan-Ritland (2003), where she drew on academic practice in developing an integrated research development framework for developing 'educational interventions'. Her work introduces exploration and enactment as core processes, which then are evaluated in terms of both local and subsequently broader impact, supporting the introduction of an evaluation stage in the model (**Error! Reference s ource not found.**). In my study, agency is proposed as precluding both the exploration (awareness) and enactment (motivation and response). In doing so, I recognise the critical role the individual has in this process and its subsequent effect on both awareness and motivation toward innovative practice.

5.3.1 Types of innovative practice

According to Zhu et al. (2013), who conducted an extensive review of the literature related to innovative teaching, examples of innovative practice align with four key competencies; learning, social, educational, and technological competencies (Zhu et al., 2013)**.** These further consider innovativeness related to perspective, content, and approach in evolving new practice.

In this study**,** examples revealed innovative practices in the use of evaluations (assessment), resources (Google cardboard), methods (constructivist through Lego & storytelling), content (industry partnerships), and application (communities of learners and alternative environments), supporting Zhu's findings. These novel practices further align with shifts in education theory from cognitivism to social constructivism and communities of practice, focusing on higher-order active learning, interpretation, and application of ideas (Miedijensky et al., 2021). The focus on innovative practice appears to support these goals for achieving deeper learning.

It is worthy to note the levels of innovative practice were within legitimate scopes of power associated with the role of experienced academics (Aboramadan et al., 2020). The catalyst in prompting the change lay within the individual or further evolved through discussions with others (collaborative partners). The innovative academics were responsible for the difference and how it evolved. Considering this, innovative practices revealed in these interviews did not extend to curriculum overhauls by an individual. Nor did they extend to highly risky adventures for change, which would require approval and process to occur at managerial levels beyond those interviewed. It might be proposed that joint innovation attempts may be easier to approach at a more personal (individual) level than forming teams to address change. At the individual level, it may be easier to manage, nurture or discard according to their effectiveness in serving the educational purpose sought by the academic and institution. Such flexibility enables trialling of 'shiny new buttons' and supports their dumping when the novelty or purpose wears off.

5.3.2 Solutions are relevant to the context

As stated in the literature, differences in geographical location (Africa, USA, UK, Europe, Asia/Pacific) or inequities in student access to resources mean variations in the innovative practices' academics will likely apply (Schröder & Krüger, 2019). This was supported in these interviews where online technologies were used in an innovative approach to improve communication in Africa. Technology was deployed via virtual reality in the USA to enhance the immersive learning experience. Elsewhere entire curriculums are being set around technology, in contrast to the introduction of specialised elective papers attempting to do the same in other settings. Some of these reduce digital divides, while others build digital resilience (Chelliah & Clarke, 2011). In addition

to frailties in higher education, contextual settings contribute to wide-ranging solutions to address its challenges in the 21st century.

5.3.3 Technology is not everything in evolving innovative practice

There was a reliance on technology when challenged with the emergency response teaching (ERT) to Covid-19. The rush to move traditional face-to-face courses into an online environment provided challenges (Hodges et al., 2020). While this study is not about innovative practice in a pandemic, some of the interviews were conducted over this period (2019/2020). Some academics discussed their solutions considering these current challenges. Arising from this was their concern over the role and reliance on technology, their competencies in innovating quickly with new technology, and academic practices' rigor.

Alternative approaches to learning via technology must account for concerns over distractions or equitable learning for all (Schröder & Krüger, 2019). This study has illustrated the supportive role largely evident in practice, affirming claims that innovative practice should not hang on or in technology (Kopcha et al., 2016; Tidd & Bessant, 2018). In their experiences, academics looked beyond the gimmick of new technology to the foundations for learning, supporting educational shifts based on evidence, not a novelty (Kantar, 2013).

Technology can be the innovative lens to good practice, but not without preparation or alignment. The call for a holistic approach to underpin change is evident in other education aspects, including curriculum development (Annala et al., 2020). This was clear with the 'Digital First' strategy employed by Rohm et al. (2018). While no academics interviewed in this study were amid a curriculum overhaul, they did acknowledge the need to ensure currency and relevancy for education and society. This leads to the need to ensure 'learning-centred' remains at the heart of innovativeness in education. Irrespective of collaborative, technology-based, curriculum-centred, or andragogy-oriented focuses, these academics chose novel ways to engage in education for inquiry and the betterment of society (academic and external). They were also cognisant of the disparities amongst learners. They sought less resource-intensive solutions to engage learners in a more connected experience, e.g. Google Cardboard. In doing so, they reduced the impacts of social inequities and exclusivities (Choudaha & van Rest, 2018) arising from socio-economic constraints (Schröder & Krüger, 2019) while enabling economical ways to deliver education (Christensen & Eyring, 2011).

5.4 What factors are shaping innovative practice? (RQ3)

Multiple influences have been identified in contributing to how innovative practice is shaped. Earlier studies by Bourdieu (1990) discussed field, habitus, and capital; Ylijoki and Ursin (2013) focus on the individual and discuss the variability in enthusiasm and passion; Maslow (1981) also takes a unit perspective in establishing different needs behind the motivations and outcomes sought. In addition to the conception of the innovative practice itself, this study has revealed multiple institutional, environmental, managerial, and cultural factors shaping the practice of evolving academia. These are discussed as follows.

There is an assumed responsibility for academia and self-preservation by these innovative educators. The extent of the new practice is predominantly oriented towards dynamically continuous changes not reliant on extensive involvement from others. Such practices enhance experience and satisfaction in the role, providing meaningful work (Riivari et al., 2020). Interviewees did not acknowledge extrinsic motivation behind their behaviour, only intrinsic, claimed as foundational to meaningful practice (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016). However, they did recognise the necessity for ensuring they delivered on essentials for learning and their responsibility to students. These academics manage change under a duty and guidance of care, and to some extent, with a degree of self-preservation. The process of evolving academic practice is motivational for them, and they appear committed to the organisation with a license to innovate afforded to them. They find the time to do so despite scarce resources (Riivari et al., 2020). This agility, and adaptable mindset, distinguishes them in perceptions as valued employees, providing greater job protection in these uncertain times.

On odd occasions when academics did seek input or guidance in shaping the introduction of their new practice, this was mainly via informal communities of practice or close colleagues. Managers were typically consulted when additional resourcing was needed, or the source driving change in practice was external to the individual. Overall, academics are open to feedback but do not rely on it when the prompt for innovative practice is sourced within the academic realm.

That academics need balance for educational practice to evolve is evident. Literature has acknowledged the seriousness of the afflictions shaping education and society (Baliga, 2020; Curnalia & Mermer, 2018; Megoran & Mason, 2020). Beyond mere regulatory criteria, academia is under significant pressure to perform – to deliver an essentialist (Chankseliani et al., 2021) role of advancing knowledge to benefit the greater good within an era of unprecedented change. One concern raised in the literature was the degree of academic burnout (Evers et al., 2002). Academia is fragile. Academics are fragile. Employment is uncertain. Demand for learning is erratic and evolving through numerous alternative channels. Academics are challenged with managing discipline-related

changes, adopting new technologies, and a disengaging student population in conjunction with demands for research outputs. These interviewees acknowledge their role and existence are at risk. Balance must be achieved between a research and practitioner-based workforce to comply with current models of tertiary funding; but they must also be balanced within the individual's role itself. This is essential to the agility of a responsive higher education system, and to an understanding that academics can become weary from continuing to evolve new and novel ways of practice.

Alternative views on academic roles can seed opportunities for the new practice. Interviewees acknowledge the challenge of finding time for research alongside daily academic work. Still, perhaps this is when the academic pathway becomes more relevant – research academic vs. professional academic. One respondent proposed that we go so far as to recognise a change in academics' role from 'professing' to 'coaching', which they believe enables them to bring value to the classroom. They claim that due to ready access to information, the focus is on how information is applied and modified as work environments adapt. The shift towards learners who can 'do' and hit the ground running upon employment benefits society more than those who extoll the virtues of knowledge, unaware of its relevance today. This supports much of the literature that discusses the scholarship of teaching and learning and the development of a 'T' shaped scholar, cognisant of knowledge in breadth and depth, agile for today's workforce (Martin & Rees, 2019). Extending academic practice beyond vertical discipline expertise towards additional cross-sectional competencies equips learners to navigate or respond to wicked problems more effectively.

The freedom to keep moving feeds a growth mindset**.** One might call on the notion of these 'Undercover Academics' as rogues and disrespectful of organisational frameworks within which they are employed. The truth could not be further from this. These academics seek ways to survive, remain relevant, 'be cool,' and be engaged in an environment deconstructing around them. How do you respond to change? You move with it. These academics acknowledge the necessity of moving with the times, connecting more intimately with learners, and developing solutions for the faceless learner. The innovative practitioner believes in higher education for social good. They are willing to invest time and effort, often bereft of recognition, in finding ways to connect content and students to enable deeper learning. However, academics must maintain a novel experience relevant to learners at the heart of these changes. Fraser (2019) alerts academics to the risks of taking on an additional workload, reducing the focus on discipline research, and heightening public failure of new practice. However, in the view of participants in this study, this risk is inconsequential. They believe innovative practice is essential to avoiding obsolescence or irrelevance of education.

The role of teaching academics is changing. In this study, academics acknowledged differences amongst their peers, claiming evidence of tenure, research orientation, and an aging workforce as restrictive in evolving innovative practice. That is not to say that longer serving research-focused or older academics cannot innovate, only that from their experience, these identities are less inclined to do so. Perhaps changes in career structure are needed to support and foster entrepreneurial academics. An initial statement from Enders and Musselin (2008) claimed that higher education needed revaluating to better equip itself for responding to educational challenges has, to an extent, fallen on deaf ears. Respondents contend that academics risk being replaced by YouTube or Wikipedia. They are concerned that such sources of information lack credibility or reliability, and one-way consumption of data reduces fair consideration and due diligence in the acquisition of knowledge.

The need for academic practice that fosters critical engagement with knowledge instead of simply its transfer gives foundational support towards an innovative practice that achieves such outcomes. That knowledge is easily located via the Internet is clear. However, such knowledge does not sufficiently prepare students for an unpredictable future in how they might discover or produce new knowledge (Stalheim, 2020). Education can add value through critical evaluation and extension, beyond relying on it simply being available, to eventually arrive at a point of knowing and understanding. This is not limited to traditional delivery modes (Itow, 2020). Many of the innovative applications revealed among these respondents sought to engage students in this learning outcome.

Employment strategies can support or constrain innovative practice**.** In this study, academics suggest that the 'research professor' is ill-equipped for agility in the face of pedagogical change. This is likely for those immersed in traditional research advancing a discipline instead of research in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Respondents determinedly choose to work in institutions that value andragogy, are flexible, enable change, and open their arms to investing in the agency of their appointments. While Macfarlane (2011a) discussed the unbundling of academic roles towards artisanal roles that might provide the support academics needed to innovate (Brew et al., 2018), this research suggests such moves are irrelevant. This is a valuable insight as institutions turn to weighty administrative appointments to streamline activities yet disconnect the practitioner from opportunities to ideate and innovate. The individual and their capacity as an active educator, interested instigator of knowledge, and undercover academic appear essential for innovative practice to evolve and extend. Most academics interviewed in this study are not under threat of casualisation due largely to their length of service in academia. However, those more recently appointed did act in more cautionary ways. This suggests an impact on innovative practice exists due to the specifics of their appointment. The risk factors are higher, and personal agency is lower. These

newer academics look to structure and boundaries to ascertain the realm of contemporary practice. It is challenging to academia, for with the novelty of new appointments comes a fresh perspective. If these risks increase for the newly recruited faculty member, universities run the danger of remaining agile enough to cope sufficiently with external and internal challenges.

New practice is situated across multiple perspectives and aspects related to teaching. It lies in curriculum, technology, andragogy, and collaboration. Novel practice looks to innovativeness in thought, use of content, method and strategy, resources, and evaluation. Irrespective of focus or approach, as clearly illustrated in this research, individual academics are central to evolving academia. In knowing this, the innovation framework (Kahn, 2018) benefits from modifications that recognise and emphasise this agency as critical to sustaining innovative practice's evolution (and the innovation itself). The advantage of individuals having agency and contextualising alternative learning methods can provide foundational support for agility within academic practice that extends above and beyond replication/introduction of others' new practices.

6 Conclusions

6.1 Contribution to new knowledge

The essence of innovative practice has been acknowledged in this study as aligning with the individual academic, reinforcing the importance of the first research question (RQ1) in seeking to understand how their identity aligns with innovative practice. Academics' expertise in discipline knowledge, crafting effective relationships with learners, adapting to technological changes, and collaborating with external stakeholders, were evident in shaping their educational responses for effective learning. However, their agency appeared to be what is most notable in underpinning their awareness and motivation to affect an innovative response.

In most instances in this study, there was no formal tipping point. No crescendo. No, Do or Die. Rather the innovative responses evolved naturally via agency and the academics' experiences in educating, their need to connect, via personal mandates evolving from their experiences, and through desire for meaningful work (Riivari et al., 2020).

Considering both the level of agency and innovativeness, findings suggest that innovative academics become activated when both components are high. This conclusion has been drawn from a new understanding of this relationship not previously expressed in the literature, adding to the original value of this research. As depicted by the Agency-Innovativeness relationship matrix (Figure 16), this relationship is relevant to how institutions might look to their sustainability in enabling individuals to develop high agency and a culture of innovativeness. Failure to acknowledge high levels of agency amongst innovatively activated academics could hinder their growth potential and sense of meaningfulness in work, resulting in disengagement with the organisation or defection.

Recognising the scope for innovative practice within the realms of individual contexts is important to acknowledge and addresses the second and third research questions (RQ2 & RQ3), which seek to know the ways academics are innovating and the key factors shaping those practices. As Blair (1998) claimed and supported herein (Figure 13: Summary of process variables for developing new practice), innovative practice was enabled in different ways and by different drivers. There was no singular reliance on technology to fuel new practices.

The range of innovative solutions applied by academics in this study was variable, drawing on the satisfaction of academics' basic needs to avoid boredom and achieve higher-order needs around knowledge and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1981). This finding indicated that innovative practice could occur at any level and was not reliant on higher order needs to contribute to authentic changes in academic practice. Addressing boredom by developing innovative teaching

methods enabled academics to find meaningfulness in their work, extending their self-preservation and potential value to their organisation.

Regardless of its locus, the extent of innovative practice amongst this academic group was close to their identity as practitioners and within the four pillars initially introduced in the literature – collaboration, curriculum, andragogy, and technology. They drew on their own experiences identifying authentic alternative practices and acted largely independently of institutional influences but were aware of environmental resources. They were generally unimpeded by financial barriers or administrative cobwebs, looking instead to novel ways to address potential constraints. Their lack of conversation around leadership constraints also suggested that non-transactional approaches were absent, allowing instead for non-coercive managerial approaches that activated self-motivation amongst staff (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). This finding would support developing the individuals' license, or agency, to innovate (Owusu-Agyeman, 2019).

Arising from this investigation was understanding the alignment between agency and innovativeness and the essential role agency played in evolving innovative practices in higher education. This realisation has been conceptualised in an extended framework (**Error! Reference s ource not found.**), building on previous work by Kahn (2018, and emphasising agency. Awareness and motivation were also introduced as predeterminants for an innovative response. The findings indicated that agency allowed academics the opportunity to notice the potential for new practice, which, when aroused, elicited action. Evaluation was introduced as a necessary reflective measure to complete the framework, demonstrating its relevance to evolving agency levels.

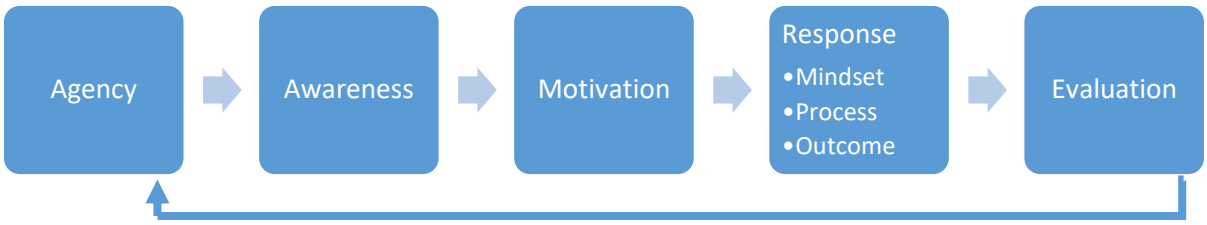

Figure 18: Conceptual framework of evolving innovative practice in education

6.2 Observations aligned with the theory

This study has confirmed a focus on innovative practice toward socialisation and personal development, as Biesta (2016) asserted in assessing the purpose of Higher Education. While critical to higher education, accreditation was not central to innovative practice per se.

Academics evolving practices leaned toward the skills necessary for the 21st century (Harrigan & Hulbert, 2011) and varied learning methods to accommodate emerging problems created by digital divides and disparities amongst communities of learners and academics.

Drawing on initial calls (Boyer, 1996) to institutions to engage more closely with communities to better align with solutions to wicked societal problems, Ehlers (2020) claimed that higher education should equip students with adaptability to face society; and that the need for collaboration was evident. In this study, collaboration and relationships between academics and stakeholders benefitted when individual agency was high irrespective of who they were. This occurred when the individuals were activated in the way they worked. Agency could enable academics to find meaningfulness and empowerment, equipping them to adjust to environmental change, including claims of toxicity evolving in academia due to workforce casualisation (Bottrell & Manathunga, 2019). Thus, despite practices that might dehumanise academics, agency could ultimately contribute to their ability to respond more agilely and more innovatively in the face of such challenges.

A note of caution. Innovative practice could become an evolving wicked problem, polarising or siloing academics into different camps of academic practice not dissimilar to the research-teaching divide that currently exists within some higher education institutions. Ironically this research-teaching nexus has been acknowledged as challenging innovative practice in both time available to innovate and prioritisation. Most academics interviewed had purposefully chosen institutions with a strong industry connection and andragogical lens aligned with their perspectives on higher education, providing them the best opportunity to use resources (Serdyukov, 2017). Their choices insinuated an assumed value by the organisation for, and of, agency amongst academics. It also assumed an environment and leadership that enabled this. Such a choice supported the opportunity for effective education through the continual reshaping of practice and the idea of a triple helix approach to acquiring and developing knowledge (Yonezawa et al., 2020).

Mintz (2019) also called on innovative practices that extended beyond a single discipline focus toward a broader, more inclusive lens in society. Both calls are important to how institutions considered the boundaries within which academics felt able to operate. Acknowledging certain maintenance conditions was necessary to the academic role, but allowing and enabling individuality and diversity of perspective, and agency growth were also valuable to the craft of innovative practice. Housekeeping issues that prevented individuals from freeing themselves – time, motivation, or creativity – would quash attempts to realise alternative educational approaches. An appropriate leadership style that supported innovative behaviour was likely to be that of ‘servant

leadership' wherein leaders were oriented toward employee development and wellbeing, listened and communicated well, focused on positive working environments, and used resources effectively to enable others (Aboramadan et al., 2020).

As many institutions structure towards centralising stakeholder relations for control and resource efficiencies, perhaps more consideration of the individual "shokunin" or artisanal appointments is warranted (Brew et al., 2018). Despite having agency to evolve practice, maybe some mechanisms could support the agent academic without quelling their innovative, pioneering practice or the institution's vision. Such support might be all that is needed to seed communities of novel practice more efficiently and effectively than the isolated practitioner. Examples could include allowing time for innovative thinking, seed funding for research of new ideas, or institutional events celebrating novel practice, i.e. cross-faculty conferences. There is a risk for the organisation in allowing organic innovative practice. Innovative practice is less likely to result if the scope of practice is outside the department's direction or contradictory to the current leadership vision and mission. However, when it's outside of traditional educational capacities but within the applications in society, the attempts appear to garner greater legitimacy and thus the opportunity for acceptance. Pioneering academics unself by looking to industry and collaborative partners for insight and validation in what and how they evolved practice (Olsson, 2018). This approach enables transformative education to develop, particularly relating to curriculum and andragogy (Summerlee, 2018). This is valuable in determining opportunities for the broader academic community, e.g. sharing resources, alternative class configurations, central intermediaries, assignment practice, or sponsored positions.

A collaborative and shared understanding of pathways for learning could help manage concern for risk and determine the locus for innovative applications. It could also increase the legitimacy of attempts to innovate by academics. This is important for institutions, particularly when recognising high degrees of agency assumed by innovative practitioners can potentially destabilise otherwise solid educational practices, i.e. when attempts to innovate are stymied.

The risk was evident not just in the idea for practice but in the process applied and the outcome that arises, as illustrated in the initial conceptual model for this study (Figure 6). Environmental conditions within the institution could support or constrain innovativeness (Jääskelä et al., 2017). This included applications and processes the provider offers, from the general working conditions to resources, norms, hierarchies, time, and structures. Looking to broaden interactions and expectations might help to manage those boundaries. For example, the literature specific to change in marketing practice revealed multiple benefits from external relationships, including

mutual understanding/development of goals, access to leading-edge technologies, and reducing education-practice gaps.

Similarly, a second example also alerted me to the need for a wide lens of comprehension in understanding the value of novel practice in and for society, alongside the need for alignment with existing content and the avoidance of silos. Internal collaborations across institutions, effective allocation of resources, and collective teaching models contributed to this. In determining these collaborations, the risk remains in the choice of partner, alignment with educational expectations, and overall academic fit. Tensions were likely to arise due to differences in the parties' individualistic vs. collectivist culture, in the realities of implementing novel ideas vs. expectations of processes, organisational support, outcomes, and the acceptance of oneself as an innovative practitioner.

The notion of innovative practice as providing meaningfulness to work (Riivari et al., 2020) was evidenced within this study by a group of largely individualistic practitioners. Despite acknowledging that rewards for innovative practice were limited and, in some cases, steered academics towards a discourse with limited career value, their intrinsic motivation provided these practitioners with self-fulfilment and higher levels of personal satisfaction. Those interviewed were generally accepting of the agency they had to be innovative. However, there was some evidence amongst the less experienced, and with it caution, in how they approached novel practice. For example, changes in context impacted how one academic was willing to be seen trialling new approaches. They had only recently shifted institutions, so they felt less confident in asserting their previously assumed agency. However, over time a collective efficacy is likely to integrate into their positions (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

While environmental conditions moderated the boundaries within which innovative practice evolves, this study reinforced the value of higher education in enabling ‘undercover’ academics to exist. In finding meaningfulness in work, these academics found their superpower. They stimulated learners, developed and harnessed inquiry, and contributed to evolving academic practice necessary to society, industry, and ourselves. In their alternate lens of higher education practice, these academics contributed to a more critical reflection in innovating ways, contributing to how learning and teaching evolved within academia.

6.3 **Implications for practice**

The findings emphasised the importance of the individual and their desire to find meaningfulness in their work as critical to enabling entrepreneurial practice. Academics needed to be assured of a breadth of responsibility for this to continue. Managerial approaches benefitted

from being aligned with servant leadership styles (or similar). This leadership style enabled, supported, and facilitated innovative practice (Aboramadan et al., 2020) while also acting as gatekeepers and advocates against restrictive policies that ultimately challenged the level of self-efficacy assumed.

Formal processes for sharing and learning novel approaches have had variable success in diffusing new practices according to the social capital assumed by individuals, with dyadic relationships recognised as highly valuable in seeding early stages of evolvement (Han et al., 2020). The research indicated that agential academics were likely to seek solutions instead of attending formal workshops. Thus, in enabling the initial introduction of new practice, the University would benefit from allowing trial and error within a safe environment. It would also benefit from cross-disciplinary discussions, as valuable insights could be gained from different applications and contexts. Such was the case here, where I have identified opportunities for innovating within marketing education due to the shared insights provided by participants. This research has revealed that innovative marketing education practices benefit from considering non-marketing applications.

Once the practice has been understood, and outcomes successfully determined, more formal attempts to broaden the practice are warranted. However, in some cases, an organic adoption network may prove more successful. Intrinsic motivation was high for innovative practitioners. They 'do' because they wanted to and valued the meaningful work this provided for them. Intimately sharing experiences with smaller collectives, i.e. personal knowledge networks (Han et al., 2020), could give them greater opportunity to self-actualise. The development of mechanistic systems and processes is likely to dehumanise education and disable meaningful work by entrepreneurial academics.

Various alternative solutions were introduced in earlier discussions, drawing on the environment, collaborations, assessment, co-creation, creativity, and technology. For each of these, recommendations could be made to enable wider adoption within the university. Any attempt should be mindful of the individual and collective agency assumed by academics and departments to avoid rigid structures' restrictions (Kunnari & Ilomäki, 2016). However, these structures may be directed towards the diffusion of innovations and the formalisation of practices to gain wider acceptance and advance higher education practice. As is expected in such circumstances, more formal workshops and guidelines would assist in decision-making, e.g. choice of partner for collaboration, use of new technology, etc. Such guidelines enable faculty to make more informed decisions and ultimately reduce erroneous experimentation and decision-making.

Central to all the examples in this study was a focus on social constructivism for learning and academics as the source of innovation. Critical to any effective solution was how it was carefully unpacked with the expectations of all stakeholders and managed accordingly. Using my university as an example, it is feasible that most of these solutions could be adopted within my academic marketing department, particularly given they could occur within the designated activities associated with my educational role. The single practice that management might challenge would likely be the novel approach to assessment and the need to assure equity and parity across courses and students.

Figure 19: Summary of process variables for developing new practice

Recommendations for adoption realised through interviewees in this study acknowledged numerous process variables for shaping new practices, as shown in Figure 19. Due to the individual being such a critical focus for innovative practice, these variables were largely focused on how they worked through evolving academia instead of an organisational perspective. While Elmore (1996) claimed that incentive structures were warranted, intrinsic factors were more prevalent for these academics. Each of these identified process variables should be considered in how they aid individuals' translation and embedding of innovative practice.

Evolving educational practice benefits from the right environment to cultivate innovative activity. Figure 20 introduces factors important for the translation of innovative practice within an institution. In seeking to know others' experiences innovating within higher education, this study has determined what is needed for innovative practice to evolve beyond the scope of those interviewed.

Figure 20: Conditions for innovative practice

6.4 Researchers' reflection

When I began this study, I assumed that I could begin to know solutions to develop new and novel practice within my context by understanding how academics evolve academic practice. I focused on the outcome, the innovation and why, and the educational process to enable new practices. By asking academics directly about their experiences, I anticipated realising similarities and triggering points to draw on in personally effecting novel practice. I expected to uncover tricks and tips for managing resource and institutional constraints in shaping practice and highlighting unconsidered processes to achieving transformation within higher education. I also anticipated that innovative practice was prevalent in academia as an organic, unassuming practice underneath it all. I sought to do so because I believe that innovative practice is necessary for the evolvement of education, particularly given the changing 21st Century landscape and the massification of Higher Education. For these reasons, undertaking this study was important to understand how academia evolves and what lay ahead for me in finding meaningfulness in my career.

What I have discovered is more valuable than I originally conceived. I have gained an immense appreciation of the role of agency in evolving innovative practice. I have affirmed some of my original assumptions regarding innovative practice as organic evolution, and I have extended my understanding of the criticality of agency in evolving practice. I assumed that the individual had a lot to do with how new practices were trialled and developed. But like Kahn (2018), I focused on

perspectives of the innovation itself, the bright shiny button. I have recognised the academic role is important, but this agency has been illuminated. If I can know my agency, if I can centre myself on this core, then novel organic practice could have the potential to be both recognised and evolved.

This research has confirmed my understanding of the range of different applications within which innovative practice is seeded. Technology is not absolute in how future innovative practice must be centred. Perhaps in some instances, technology may even be the wicked problem that constrains innovative practice and dampens personal agency via increasing workloads and burnouts as academics seek to remain agile and current in technology. COVID19 is a further example of where immediate changes in course delivery using technology were necessary to enable learning during campus closures. However, in a rush to adapt to distance and remote delivery via learning and adopting new (innovative) technologies, the individuals' capacity for agency is likely to have been impacted. Understanding how workload and different teaching practices affect agency might contribute to how academics could be managed for evolving sustainable educational responses.

I have understood contextual and organisational boundaries can contribute to the degree and locus of attempts to introduce new teaching practice, and consideration must be made of those factors. As an academic in a young university, working within a discipline that is continuing to move at pace, I feel comforted by the extent to which others are evolving practice. Originally, I sought to know ground-breaking practice, anticipating identifying exciting, leading-edge solutions for integration into my practice. My research has led me down a different pathway. To begin understanding how marketing education might be innovated, I have realised there is no magic solution. Still, there is the agency, and agency is necessary to remove chains of replication that can constrain innovative practice. I find this somewhat challenging as I struggle to reconcile my experiences in differing leadership styles and how they have impacted my sense of agency. Current institutional climates where academics are more distanced, choosing to work remotely, and engaging less in spontaneous interactions, are also compromising levels of agency. Understanding this change in academic work practices may lead to new knowledge enabling agency for innovativeness in education.

Many changes occur within marketing in society, driven by advancements in technology and adjusted skillsets for emerging roles within the discipline. But this is the nature of knowledge. These changes must be reflected in higher education such that our roles as educators remain relevant. In my understanding, the reality of an emergent innovative practice that advances higher education lies predominantly not with the solution per se but with the individual academic and their agency for evolving practice that ultimately benefits society. The individual, self-efficacy, and agency in

assuming a legitimate power to introduce new perspectives in higher education must be supported and enabled.

6.5 Reflections on research methodology

In focusing the literature review on a specific focus on marketing education, I developed an understanding of innovative practice within my discipline. In drawing on these insights and a framework of innovation (Kahn, 2018), I moved partially towards triangulating my primary research findings via in-depth interviews. Originally, I sought to study four examples of innovative marketing education practices through initial interviews and case analysis. However, access to participants was challenging largely due to COVID19 and increasing demands on academics. I drew on specific journal publications, blogs, and other secondary sources associated with the chosen examples. This limited my attempt to utilise an innovative two-stage methodology focused on marketing education and individual experiences (the sample). However, I advanced my understanding of the novel practice by gathering secondary data sources, specifically on the four examples of innovative marketing practices. I prepared myself for conducting the primary interviews.

The COVID19 pandemic impacted the data collection stage of this thesis. Most data were collected between December 2019 and April 2020, when the pandemic was firmly taking hold worldwide. Campus closures and changes in working environments meant that academics were confronted with working differently, which contributed to some realisations they acknowledged (but otherwise may not have, had the pandemic not occurred). This event may have impacted an individual's ability to recall some of the criticality of events in innovating, and I reflected on this as I reviewed each of the interviews and transcripts. I had to maintain an awareness of how their data was being interpreted.

Using Zoom to conduct the interviews was an efficient mode for data collection in the way that I was able to record interviews and replay for transcribing and quality checks. It was also necessary given that this study covered multiple continents and was largely conducted when international borders were closing in response to COVID19.

In-depth interviews were highly appropriate to the purpose of this study. Although I predominantly only ever saw the head/shoulders of my respondents, I was still able to ascertain the passion and emotion associated with each response, enabling me to gain a greater sense of understanding of their perspective.

6.6 Limitations

This study has sought to explore academic experiences of innovative practice. As with many studies, it is limited by several factors that ultimately provide the opportunity for additional research. Firstly, as an exploratory study, these results are not generalisable to a wider population, in essence, because of the sample size of 15 and applied qualitative design. I interviewed self-identified innovative practitioners identified through the literature, personal networks, and conference attendance. This group provided individual perspectives limited to those from an academic lens. While the data was rich and revealed their experiences, the inclusion of management and administrative staff would have contributed to a wider understanding of the nuances in practice. The literature indicated additional factors important to shaping innovative practice, which would have been included in this wider participation scope.

The sample crossed multiple continents and included different disciplines, career stages, ethnicity, and gender of respondents. However, key heterogeneous differences were not strongly evident due to the small sample size. Future research might consider cross-cultural comparisons to understand more in this domain.

A focus on individual perspectives gave rise to agency in the context of the individual rather than a shared agency. In taking this approach, consideration of structural issues was limited.

This research included novel innovative practices of these respondents instead of cutting-edge examples. In this way, the choice of the sample may have precluded findings that did not reveal a critical moment in the course of innovating. The realisation of agency is a key outcome. Future studies might emphasize cases where the degree of innovation was more significant; however, the individual academic perspective may become less evident, overshadowing the important findings that this study has revealed.

As an academic researcher within academia, I may have been biased on my chosen themes. I attempted to manage this by using both an inductive and deductive approach to analysis. I further tried to resolve my proximity to the study by drawing on an innovation framework (Kahn, 2018) alongside additional literature when shaping my questions.

6.7 Dissemination and impact on practitioner research

My research sought to uncover insights from this study to inform practice, particularly how I could draw on these results to inform my practice and others. Beyond the suggestions I proposed within this conclusion, my final thoughts focus on ‘How might agency be developed?’

My study has revealed a focus on enabling innovative practice in higher education that will benefit from high levels of agency amongst academics. Irrespective of the concentration of innovativeness, i.e. collaboration, curriculum, andragogy, or technology, my findings suggest managerial and organisational approaches that value and enable individual agency can benefit from the alternative perspectives such agency can help flourish. How can we begin to evolve this? And importantly, how can I begin to develop this within my context?

I have found that formal and informal channels are equally valuable for embedding novel views. Furthermore, my attempts to innovate within educational practice can be used to assist wider recognition and adoption of new practices by my institution. I should not shy away from either channel, as adopter or instigator, in contributing to developments within educational practice. This means I need to be more aware and encourage others to be involved in innovating educational practice, e.g. promoting workshops, speaking engagements, and other on-campus or marketplace initiatives. If not personally leading these, then I need to encourage the adoption of this practice within the department as part of regular group communications.

The emphasis on how each academic's agency can be developed signals valuable insights into enriching academic practice and organisational sustainability. I believe that this can be done effectively through open discussions around agency, i.e. what it is and how it can be enhanced, through individual development opportunities, i.e. one-to-one mentoring or leadership. I have recognised that the internal culture of the environment and 'fitness' for agency and its activation by practitioners are equally important to this.

As educators, I and others in the field can also be innovative in embedding desire and drive for alternative practices that benefit differing educational contexts. I encourage institutions to look at relevant educational conferences targeting early-career academics and ways to nurture agency and identity through such opportunities. Alternatively, I am looking at options to develop an 'academic survival kit' specific to my institution, revealing insights into the academic journey. This kind of toolkit can contribute to how new academics understand, view, and develop their agency. It is more than induction into educational practice within the institution. It can draw on the insights revealed in my study to provide new academics with a vision of academic practice with sustainability at its core.

I encourage a greater level of awareness of ways to develop agency through informational materials (Appendix 3: Infographic) or perhaps through developing a board game, 'The World of Academia,' an educator-focused version of the Milton Bradley 1960's board game: 'The Game of Life ©.' In place of children, marriage, houses, and life, the game would focus on the educational journey of academics, i.e., promotions, publishing, student ratings, sabbaticals, and conferences

alongside challenging decisions (problems and opportunities) which prompt early-career academics to begin to consider their positionality and their journey ahead. I have already started conversations with colleagues regarding this idea, and they have recognised the merits of its potential. I have also shared my infographic with others through an internal department presentation, and I am proud to see this poster now displayed in many of my colleagues' offices. I have received feedback that this is a good prompt to how they are thinking about their practice as marketing educators. I will look to refine and develop this further for wider dissemination within the institution.

The need to disseminate these research findings is clear to me. That promotion to managerial roles is often made without academics having managerial expertise or experience further supports the need for alternative channels of enabling agency amongst academics if we are to achieve innovative practice. Failure to help individual academics realise their potential, or even their agency, can constrain academic practice in unsustainable and potentially destructive ways. I believe academic practice must continue to evolve; standing still is not an option.

Agency is significant. It has taken me 21 years as a marketing academic to realise this is my challenge. Improved mentoring, greater collaborative support networks, and institutional policies that emphasise the academic identity beyond research generator, and channels to nurture agency, have the power to equip all of us in education with the tools to navigate change. These tools maximise our ability to respond to challenges and add value to how we can each contribute towards an evolving educational practice, benefitting learners, institutions, and society.

6.8 Future Research and Conclusions

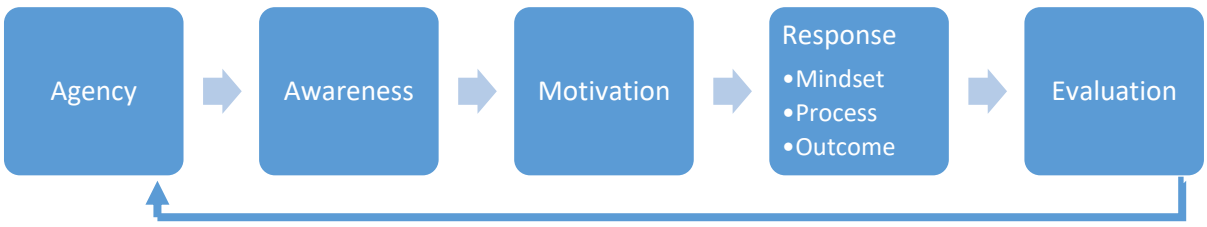

Figure 21: Conceptual framework of evolving innovative practice in education

Reflecting on my findings, research that seeks to explore the proposed framework of evolving innovative practice in education (**Error! Reference source not found.**) might provide a ddditional insights into the specifics of the relationship between elements, obtaining a more concrete understanding of the impact of each.

Individual differences in context can also be determined yet restricted in this study due to methodology and sample size. Additionally, an investigation into how innovative practice is diffused through institutions vis-à-vis leadership can also enrich this investigation area.

Innovative practice is essential in the desire to advance higher education to pursue all its intended aims. In comprehending agency's role and importance in organically evolving academic practice, we can understand the need for institutions to embrace organisational practices that exemplify and support developing agency.

Further investigation of the proposed Agency-Innovation matrix as a useful tool for guiding and supporting innovative practice in Higher Education might benefit various stakeholders, including practitioners, managers, and collaborative partners.

Having completed this study, I have been reawakened to my potential and the potential that I can be. My agency is fuelled by the realisation I can be the change I wish to see in academia.

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8 Appendix 1: Interview Questions

Innovative Practice: Proposed questions for case study/interviews.

My environment

Please describe your role and the Institution you work for in brief (to give context to your environment):

Innovative practice - overview

1) What does innovative practice mean to you?
2) What is the role of innovative practice in higher education?
3) How do you think academics are innovating in higher education? (ways, areas of focus, tools being used, etc.)

Mindset

4) How would you describe your academic identity? i.e. the type of academic you are. Your beliefs and approaches to your academic practice.
5) How do you think your academic identity impacts the way you approach innovative practice?
6) What challenges have you personally experienced in attempting to introduce new practices?
7) How has this affected the way you think about trying new ways of doing things?

Process

8) Tell me about your experiences in innovating
    a. What was the innovative practice?
    b. Why was it introduced? How did you recognise it was needed? What was the problem you sought to solve through this new practice?
    c. How 'innovative' was the anticipated change you sought? Small change, significant change, or radical change? Why is it so?
    d. Can you describe the process you went through in arriving at the new practice?
    e. How closely did the outcome match what you had originally intended as the innovative practice? Why? How did your focus change? What influenced the shift?
    f. Who else was involved in the process? What were their roles? How active were they?
    g. What factors contributed to the ease or difficulties you experienced during the process of innovating?
9) How did your context impact on the introduction of that practice?
    h. Departmental processes? Values? Mission and vision?

Outcome

10) What has affected the success or otherwise of the new practice?
11) To what extent have you/others continued with the innovative practice?
12) How has the practice been altered since you originally introduced it? What contributed to those changes?
13) How have others been affected by your attempts to innovate? Students? Colleagues? Managers?
14) What advice do you have for others attempting to innovate and introduce new practice?

9 Appendix 2: Ethics Approval

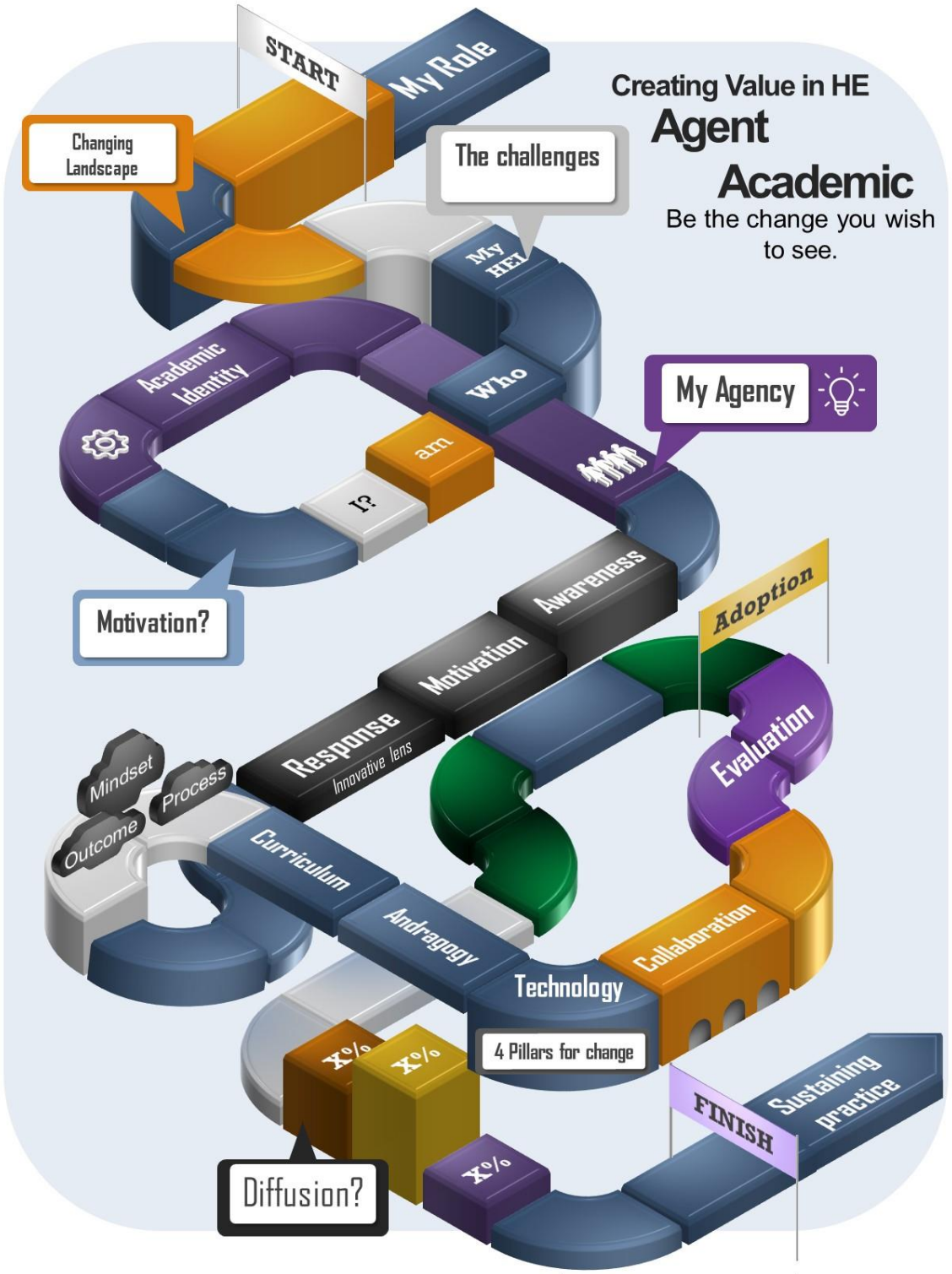
Dear Helene Wilkinson,	
I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.	
Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)
Review type:	Expedited
PI:	
School:	Lifelong Learning
Title:	Reimagining Education: Towards an understanding of how new academic practice might lead to transformational education
First Reviewer:	Dr. José Reis Jorge
Second Reviewer:	Dr. Dimitrios Vlachopoulos
Other members of the Committee	Dr. Lucilla Crosta, Dr. Eileen Kennedy, Dr. Janet Hanson
Date of Approval:	1/07/2019
The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:	
Conditions	
1 Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc.

Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).

Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.
(update from researcher 2/7/19: This has already been granted)

10 Appendix 3: Infographic



Infographic for creating value in higher Education
Arising from EdD studies

Helene Wilkinson
August 2021