ESTABLISHING A SUPPORTIVE PEDAGOGICAL CULTURE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the doctoral dissertation was to deepen our understanding of different
sociocultural aspects supporting teaching and pedagogical development within the
pedagogical communities of higher education. The thesis consists of three studies,
which emphasise the importance of observing opportunities for support beyond the
work and development of individual teachers, focusing more on the pedagogical
development of communities. The dissertation approaches teaching and pedagogical
development from a sociocultural research perspective.

The three sub-studies take different approaches to studying support opportunities
for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. Study I explored
sociocultural elements in the community that are seen to foster teachers'
opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development. The study was based on
thematic semi-structured interviews with university teachers (N = 51). Study II used
quantitative questionnaire data to explore important factors connected to educational
developers' (N = 100) teaching-related perceptions that may influence the ways they
promote the quality of teaching and learning in their communities. Study III utilised
answers to open-ended questions in a questionnaire (n = 32) and workshop
discussion to (N = 7) to explore educational developers' conceptions of a sense
community from the perspective of pedagogical development.

The sub-studies had different emphases in terms of theoretical, methodological,
and practical implications. Study I indicated the importance of a pedagogical culture
that fosters sharing through community attitudes and values, principles and norms,
and practices and structures. Based on the findings, it was seen that in order to
support teaching and pedagogical development, it is important to establish a culture
of sharing through different elements, such as sharing the community's values,
sharing a common understanding of the teaching goals, and sharing everyday
experiences and ideas with colleagues through systematic practices in the
community. Study I increased the theoretical understanding of sociocultural aspects
influencing support opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development.
Although the inductive analysis of large amounts of interview data showed
connections to previous theories, the study deepened the theoretical understanding
of the subject matter in the context of Finnish higher education. The recognition of

the elements that are important within the specific context makes it easier to promote the elements in practice.

The educational developers in Study II had different perceptions of teaching approaches, which were related to their teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs, experiences of collegial support for teaching development, and experiences of the relevance of teaching. The study indicated, for instance, that collegial support is important for the employment of interactive approaches to teaching. Thus, the study recognised the importance of different teaching-related perceptions among educational developers, whose own teaching-related perceptions had not previously been the subject of much study. The study emphasises that it is important to pay attention to the different theory-based elements that contribute to the work of educational developers as this group of professionals has a central role in the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education communities. For instance, these elements should be considered in the development opportunities of this group of professionals, as the elements are seen as reflecting on their role in the pedagogical development work in the community.

Study III showed that the conceptions of a sense of community among educational developers entailed an interplay of individual and community factors, involving both the individual agency and social responsibility of community members as well as factors related to the socio-cultural context. Particular emphasis was placed on the potential for community members to experience a sense of belonging in their work community. The sense of community was seen as a positive factor in—or even a vital condition of—the pedagogical development of the community. Study III took a conceptual approach and deepened the conceptual clarity of the sense of community in the context of higher education teaching and pedagogical development. The findings reinforce the importance of systematic action in strengthening the sense of community within higher education communities. Higher education institutions may support their communities through the increased conceptual understanding of community, both as an enabler of pedagogical development and as a meaningful value in itself.

Without conscious consideration, it can be difficult to become aware of the different aspects influencing teaching and pedagogical development opportunities in the community. This dissertation has aimed to explore these sometimes invisible matters in a systematic way in order to deepen our understanding of the meaningful aspects. The three sub-studies showed the importance of sociocultural elements in teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. Thus, the dissertation suggests that these elements should be acknowledged and taken into account when providing support opportunities for higher education pedagogical communities. Ultimately, the aim is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in higher education through the identification of a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tämän väitöskirjan tavoitteena oli syventää ymmärrystä erilaisista sosiokulttuurisista tekijöistä, jotka tukevat opetusta ja pedagogista kehittymistä korkeakoulujen pedagogisissa yhteisöissä. Väitöskirja koostuu kolmesta osatutkimuksesta, jotka korostavat kehittymismahdollisuuksia yhteisöjen näkökulmasta, ei vain yksittäisten opettajien kehittymisen mahdollisuuksina. Väitöskirjassa hyödynnettiin sosiokulttuurista tutkimusnäkökulmaa.

Väitöskirjan kolmessa osatutkimuksessa lähestyttiin eri tavoin tuen mahdollisuuksia opetukselle ja pedagogiselle kehittymiselle korkeakoulutuksessa. Tutkimuksessa I tarkasteltiin yhteisön sosiokulttuurisia elementtejä, jotka voivat edistää opetusta ja pedagogista kehittymistä. Tutkimus pohjautui yliopisto-opettajien puolistrukturoituihin temaattisiin haastatteluihin (N = 51). Tutkimuksessa II hyödynnettiin määrällistä kyselyaineistoa koulutuksen kehittäjien (N = 100) opetukseen liittyvien käsitysten tutkimuksessa. Nämä käsitykset voivat vaikuttaa siihen, miten kehittäjät edistävät opetuksen ja oppimisen laatua yhteisöissään. Tutkimuksessa III hyödynnettiin avoimia kyselyvastauksia (n = 32) sekä työpajakeskusteluja (N = 7) koulutuksen kehittäjien käsitysten tutkimisessa yhteisöllisyydestä ja sen merkityksestä pedagogisessa kehittymisessä.

Osatutkimukset osoittavat erilaisia teoreettisia, metodologisia ja käytännöllisiä johtopäätöksiä. Tutkimus I osoitti, että pedagoginen kulttuuri, joka edistää yhteisiä asenteita ja arvoja, periaatteita ja normeja sekä käytäntöjä ja rakenteita, on merkityksellinen opetukselle ja pedagogiselle kehittymiselle. Tutkimustulokset näyttivät, että opetuksen ja pedagogisen kehittymisen tukemiseksi on tärkeää vahvistaa yhteisön yhteistä ja jaettua opetuskulttuuria erilaisten tekijöiden kautta. Näitä tekijöitä ovat esimerkiksi yhteisön jaetut arvot, opetukseen liittyvät jaetut tavoitteet, jokapäiväinen kollegiaalinen kokemusten ja näkemysten jakaminen sekä yhteisön systemaattiset käytännöt opetuksen tukemiseksi. Siten tutkimus I lisäsi ymmärrystä opetusta ja pedagogista kehittymistä tukevista sosiokulttuurisista tekijöistä yhteisöissä. Vaikka laajan haastatteluaineiston induktiivisen analyysin tulos osoitti yhteyksiä aiempiin teorioihin, lisäsi tutkimus teoreettista ymmärrystä ilmiöstä juuri Suomen korkeakoulutuksen kontekstista. Keskeisten tekijöiden tunnistaminen on tärkeää, jotta niiden toteutumista käytännössä voidaan edistää.

Tutkimus II osoitti, että koulutuksen kehittäjillä on erilaisia opetuksen lähestymistapoihin liittyviä käsityksiä, jotka ovat yhteydessä heidän pystyvyysuskomuksiinsa opetuksesta ja heidän kokemuksiinsa opetuksen kehittämiselle saatavasta kollegiaalisesta tuesta sekä opetuksen mielekkyydestä. Tutkimus osoitti esimerkiksi kollegiaalisen tuen tärkeyden vuorovaikutuksellisille opetuksen lähestymistavoille. Koulutuksen kehittäjien opetukseen liittyviä käsityksiä ei juurikaan ole aiemmin tutkittu. Tutkimus II osoitti koulutuksen kehittäjien käsitysten tarkastelun tärkeyden; tutkimus korostaa, että koulutuksen kehittäjien opetukseen liittyviin käsityksiin erilaisista teoriaan pohjautuvista tekijöistä on tärkeää kiinnittää huomiota, sillä tällä ryhmällä on merkittävä rooli oppimisen ja opetuksen edistämisessä korkeakouluyhteisöissä. Tutkimuksessa tarkasteltujen tekijöiden huomioiminen koulutuksen kehittäjien oman ammatillisen osaamisen kehittämisen tukemisessa on myös tärkeää, sillä eri tekijät voivat heijastua heidän rooliinsa pedagogisessa kehittämistyössä.

Tutkimus III osoitti, että koulutuksen kehittäjien käsitykset yhteisöllisyydestä näyttäytyivät yksilöllisten ja yhteisöllisten tekijöiden vuorovaikutuksena, mikä piti sisällään niin yksilön toimijuuteen ja sosiaaliseen vastuuseen yhteisönsä jäsenenä liittyviä tekijöitä kuin sosiokulttuuriseen kontekstiin liittyviä tekijöitä. Erityisesti korostettiin yhteisön jäsenten mahdollisuutta kokea kuuluvuuden tunnetta yhteisössään. Yhteisöllisyys nähtiin myönteisenä tekijänä ja jopa elinehtona yhteisön pedagogiselle kehittymiselle. Tutkimus III painotti käsitteellistä tutkimuksen lähestymistapaa, minkä myötä tutkimus lisäsi käsitteellistä ymmärrystä yhteisöllisyydestä opetuksen ja pedagogisen kehittymisen kontekstissa korkeakoulutuksessa. Tutkimuksen tulokset vahvistavat systemaattisten toimien tärkeyttä yhteisöllisyyden vahvistamisessa korkeakouluyhteisöissä; korkeakouluinstituutiot voivat tukea yhteisöjään niin pedagogisen kehittymisen mahdollistajana kuin tärkeänä arvona itsessään.

Ilman tietoista tarkastelua voi olla vaikeaa tunnistaa erilaisia opetukseen ja pedagogiseen kehittymiseen vaikuttavia tekijöitä yhteisöissä. Tämä väitöskirja on pyrkinyt tarkastelemaan näitä osittain piilossa olevia tekijöitä systemaattisen tutkimuksen kautta, jotta niitä voidaan ymmärtää paremmin. Kolme osatutkimusta osoitti sosiokulttuuristen tekijöiden merkityksen opetukselle ja pedagogiselle kehittymiselle korkeakoulutuksessa. Väitöskirjatutkimuksen pohjalta ehdotetaan, että nämä tekijät tulisi tunnistaa ja huomioida korkeakoulujen pedagogisten yhteisöjen tukemisessa. Tutkimuksen avulla tunnistetun opetukselle myönteisen pedagogisen kulttuurin kautta voidaan edistää korkeakouluoppimisen ja -opetuksen laatua.

ASIASANAT: pedagoginen kulttuuri, korkeakouluopetus, pedagoginen kehittyminen, yhteisöllisyys, opetuskäsitykset

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September 15th, 2024
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List of Original Publications

This dissertation is based on the following original publications, which are referred to in the text by their Roman numerals:

I   Myllykoski-Laine, S., Postareff, L., Murtonen, M. & Vilppu, H. Building a framework of a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. *Higher Education*, 2022; 85: 937-355. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00873-1

II   Myllykoski-Laine, S., Vilppu, H., Postareff, L. & Murtonen, M. Exploring the variation of educational developers' teaching-related perceptions in higher education. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 2024. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2024.2311368

III   Myllykoski-Laine, S., Murtonen, M. & Postareff, L. Korkeakoulupedago-giikan kehittäjien käsityksiä yhteisöllisyydestä pedagogisen kehittymisen kontekstissa [Pedagogical developers' conceptions of a sense of community in the context of higher education pedagogical development]. *Kasvatus*, 2024; 2. https://doi.org/10.33348/kvt.130705

Within the all three articles Myllykoski-Laine was responsible for the study designs, theoretical frameworks, analyses, interpretations and writing the manuscripts. Myllykoski-Laine contributed to the data collection for each of the three studies and was responsible for the data collection in Study III. Other authors participated in the planning of data collection and reviewed and commented the manuscripts.

1   Introduction

They have meetings about teaching a couple of times in a year, where they meet for a day and think about developmental aims. We haven't had that once… I would like to have that kind of discussion and hear what others are doing. So, I have no idea what they are doing, what they go through in their teaching… I was really disappointed when I suggested that we could have an informal discussion about how teaching is going, but no… I think that it is really difficult to try to change something alone. Second, I am not very confident as a teacher so I can't make many changes independently. I would want to have the social environment there, so that even if I did make decisions by myself, I would want to hear others' comments about what could be done. I imagined, that as part of being a teacher, it would be so that everyone would have in mind a clear goal that we were aiming at. This has not once been clear to me, and we have never discussed that together… I gradually start to understand what my own role is in all this and where we are aiming, but this was something I was really disappointed about.
(Study I, participant 15)

Even though we have the same pressures for gaining results, and we should get publications and this and that, in here the whole staff feels that teaching is really important, and we should put an effort to it, and we are allowed to do that. Pretty often we try out something and share experiences, and if they are good, then we plan something. We have a monthly meeting where we discuss teaching-related matters and there are developmental days too. We think about together what we could do better, what works, and where we could improve.
(Study I, participant 11)

In pedagogical development, I think what matters is not only the individual's own development, but… what benefits the pedagogical development can bring to the whole community. This is how the whole institution also develops.
(Study III, participant 15)

Support provided through different social and cultural factors plays a significant role in teachers' teaching and development. From this perspective, it is seen that the socially constructed norms and ways of working in a community influence the community's learning opportunities (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2015). In higher education, community support is known to be important for teaching and its development. For instance, opportunities for teaching-related discussions and the value placed on teaching within the community may foster student-centred approaches to teaching (e.g. Englund et al., 2018; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Vescio et al., 2008).

Finnish higher education institutions have offered formal support for teaching, such as the organisation of pedagogical courses since the 1990s (e.g. Murtonen et al., 2022). In addition, institutional strategies acknowledge the importance of pedagogical development, teaching philosophies, and pedagogical policies and models (Toom et al., 2023a). However, the social and cultural context of higher education may determine whether teachers are able to put effort into teaching and its development (Ginns et al., 2010; Laiho et al., 2017). For instance, it is not self-evident that higher education communities will value teaching, and teaching may be neglected compared to other endeavours (e.g. Arvaja, 2018; McCune, 2021). In addition, there have been indications of a lack of collegiality among higher education teachers (Laiho et al., 2020), and a recent evaluation in the Finnish higher education context showed that resources for teaching development were lacking (Toom et al., 2023a), which may limit support opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development. Consequently, it is important to identify the significant factors shaping support opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development within higher education communities.

Research has focused strongly on individual perspectives in teaching and development (Schoen, 2011; Trowler, 2008), and it is only recently that more attention has been paid to community perspectives in the higher education context (Esterhazy et al., 2021). Therefore, this dissertation approaches teaching and pedagogical development from the perspective of higher education pedagogical communities instead of looking at individual professionals. In this dissertation, the term 'pedagogical communities' is used to refer to the higher education staff working on teaching and its development in their respective institutions. The dissertation takes a sociocultural approach (e.g. Schoen, 2011) and studies different elements which may not be apparent in everyday community practices. The focus is on the support opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development provided by the pedagogical culture which are seen to influence the quality of teaching and learning within the community.

Section 2 presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation, focusing on contextual issues in higher education teaching, sociocultural perspectives in studies

on higher education teaching and pedagogical development, and the importance of interaction and community support in teaching and pedagogical development aimed at student-centred practices. The roles of educational developers and teachers' approaches to teaching are also discussed. The general aims of the dissertation are described in section 3. Section 4 elaborates on the studies' methodological approaches, providing descriptions of the study designs, contexts, participants, data collection methods, and analyses. Ethical issues and the dissertation's trustworthiness are also considered. In section 5, the main findings are presented.

The introduction began with three quotations from the data, which introduce the viewpoint of the dissertation. These quotations will be returned to in the discussion as they reflect some of the key findings of the dissertation. Discussion of the main findings and the theoretical, methodological, and practical implications are considered in section 6. Through the findings of the three sub-studies, which utilise both qualitative and quantitative methods, suggestions are provided for the enhancement of a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development, in which support opportunities should be provided systematically through different sociocultural elements.

2 Theoretical framework: Sociocultural Perspectives in Higher Education Teaching and Pedagogical Development

The higher education context plays a significant role with regard to teaching and pedagogical development. The context can involve disciplinary communities, interactions with students and colleagues, the institutional environment, and the broader context outside of higher education (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). The work of higher education teachers consists of many roles, and teachers face the need to prioritise between certain tasks, often between research and teaching (Laiho et al., 2017). Although formal support for teaching and pedagogical development is offered in higher education, for instance through pedagogical courses, and the importance of pedagogy and student-centredness has been acknowledged in institutional strategies (e.g. Murtonen et al., 2022; Toom et al., 2023b), opportunities to engage in teaching are challenged by various contextual factors (Ginns et al., 2010; Pleschová & McAlpine, 2016). These may include multifaceted quality expectations, taking into account the diversity of students and their needs in teaching, obligations for social influence (Laiho et al., 2017), research intensiveness, accountability, and efficiency expectations (see Arvaja, 2018; Laiho et al., 2020).

Thus, higher education pedagogical communities operate in a specific contextual context, consisting of power structures, incentives, and responsibilities and resources related to teaching, research, and other objectives, which all influence the opportunities for common knowledge construction (see Nagy & Birch, 2009) and the implementation of community practices (e.g. Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016; Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Sustaining an identity that values teaching may require struggling against broader tensions related to the demands of the academic environment (McCune, 2021) or varying goals related to teaching (Wosnitza et al., 2014). For example, Finnish higher education teachers have seen that teaching quality may decrease due to the efficiency-based funding policy of higher education, which also steers attention away from pedagogical development needs (Toom et al., 2023b, p. 84).

The dissertation takes a sociocultural perspective in approaching higher education teaching and pedagogical development (Schoen, 2011). John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) present a sociocultural framework to study learning and development, particularly from the perspective of collaboration. They describe the foundation of sociocultural approaches to be in the Vygotskian theory, which emphasises a multifaceted theory of human behaviour whereby 'learning and development take place in socially and culturally shaped contexts' (p. 194). In this approach, it is important to recognise the reconstruction of 'the social, environmental and cultural forms and conditions surrounding the emergence of behaviour and consciousness, and its subsequent development' (Schoen, 2011, p. 15). From a philosophical perspective, sociocultural research seeks to view human activity in a broad context with complex influencing factors, which in an educational context can mean, for instance, that the educational environment can have indirect impacts on educational outcomes (Schoen, 2011, pp. 16–17).

As noted, the value that is placed on teaching and students' learning is influenced by the context in which the teaching takes place. Previous research has highlighted that in a context in which teaching is not valued, or in which its value is challenged, the opportunities to uphold the value of teaching depend on the discourses and cultural tools that are available in the community (McCune, 2021). Thus, the social and cultural environment, including the social norms, ways of working, and informal interactions in the community, influences the community's practices and development opportunities (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016; Roxå & Mårtensson, 2015; Trowler, 2008).

2.1   Teaching-related Values, Structures, and Interaction

Englund et al. (2018) examined the contextual conditions within teaching cultures that either facilitate or impede academic change and development. They focused on teaching practice at the micro-level of the individual (e.g. teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning), on the sociocultural context at the meso-level of the department (e.g. differences in disciplinary practices and academic cultures), and on the structural context at the macro-level of the institution (e.g. institutional policies). They found that teachers who expressed that their community was supportive of teaching and provided opportunities for informal and formal teaching-related communication also expressed holding a learner-focused view of teaching. Conversely, in research-intensive contexts where teachers lacked collegial support, teaching was not prioritised or valued. Thus, Englund et al. (2018) concluded that a supportive sociocultural and structural context seems to facilitate positive conceptions of teaching and learning among teachers. Similar results were reported

by Kálmán et al. (2020), who discovered different profiles of teachers based on their teaching approaches, pedagogical development activities, and perceptions of departmental culture. The experimenters with diverse teaching approaches and those who perceived their department's culture as most supportive and collaborative were the most committed to developing their teaching. The more individualistic, knowledge-focused teachers who worked in individualistic cultures, as well as those who were student-thinking orientated but professionally unintegrated teachers, were less committed to engaging in pedagogical development.

According to one study carried out in the Finnish context, it is important that participants have opportunities to actively engage in the process of pedagogical development, but of equal importance is the recognition of teaching as something valuable and worthy of encouragement (Jääskelä et al., 2017). However, this study noted that other elements should also convey the value of teaching, such as the university's reward policies and allocation of resources. Pedagogical development must be taken seriously in the communities' practices and structures so that there is time to discuss and facilitate development (Ginns et al., 2010; McCune, 2018). The Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC) recently evaluated the state and renewal of higher education pedagogy within Finnish higher education. This evaluation 'provides information about the current status of higher education pedagogy, including the pedagogical policies and operating models of higher education institutions… [and] higher education institutions' internal activities for developing teaching and education' (Toom et al., 2023a, p. 3). Even though almost three out of four teachers in FINEEC's evaluation felt that teaching development was considered to be important in their units, many of the teachers reported a lack of time for developing teaching (Toom et al., 2023a, pp. 16–20).

According to the institutional responses in FINEEC's evaluation, pedagogical development was mainly supported and encouraged within the institutions through the offering of pedagogical and other staff training, pedagogical support, opportunities for teacher to participate in various development projects, allocated time for self-development, the consideration of pedagogical competence in teachers' career development, and the rewarding of good teaching performance (Toom et al., 2023b, p. 206), all of which mostly reflect formal endeavours in supporting teaching and pedagogical development. In addition to such formal support, opportunities for informal development are also important. McCune (2018, pp. 317–318) highlights that:

> It will be important to promote policies which encourage generative conversations about pedagogy and support the development of new practice inspired by those conversations… This implies close attention to the situated social practices of academic colleagues, rather than simply seeing effective

teaching and assessment in terms of decontextualised knowledge and skills. Academic developers should aspire to influence policies and leadership practices which allow complex informal learning.

As previously noted, studies have addressed the informal and formal perspectives of interaction regarding teaching and pedagogical development. Higher education teachers' collegial interactions have been reported to include informal interactions, which may lead to personal development through the sharing of ideas and the experience of being supported by one's peers (Katajavuori et al., 2019; McCune, 2018). Informal interaction may enhance teaching-related confidence and the collaborative management of teaching and provide teachers with opportunities to obtain teaching-related help easily (Thomson & Trigwell, 2018). However, such opportunities may not be conveyed more broadly to the community if they are not also fostered through formal practices which could further enhance the sharing of good practices (Katajavuori et al., 2019; McCune, 2018). For example, organisational support, such as teaching-related policies and funding, have been described as affecting the development of beneficial teaching-focused social networks (Benbow & Lee, 2019). It has also been suggested that for shared expertise and knowledge construction to take place, teachers need to have the skills necessary to engage in the types of interactions through which peer learning is enhanced (Salonen & Savander-Ranne, 2015). In addition, community members working in different organisational roles influence the informal and formal learning in the community. For example, while educational leaders are important in contributing to a supportive culture for learning, the teachers' sense of agency also needs to be acknowledged (Mathieson, 2012; Vangrieken et al., 2017, p. 57).

Esterhazy et al. (2021) have proposed a framework of 'collegial faculty development' based on previous qualitative studies on the peer review of teaching, which reports on formal development approaches in higher education. Their framework consists of contextual (e.g. structures and rules), individual (e.g. experiences and conceptions), and relational factors (e.g. trust and power dynamics) that have been shown to support the development of teaching quality within teaching faculties. It has been seen that the quality of teaching increases through collegial interactions, such as in discussions of pedagogical content taking place in academic communities. Studies have also shown the importance of considering the dominant discourses regarding teaching in higher education institutions; if teaching is not valued, efforts may be required to shift the negative tone (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2015). On a similar note, Roxå et al. (2011) argue in their conceptual paper that many interrelated initiatives are needed to influence academic teaching and learning cultures. It is especially important to attempt to influence the discussions concerning teaching and learning taking place in the community, even though the significance

of these discussions may be greater in communities where the culture is supportive of such conversations (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2009). Thus, it seems that the amount of attention directed toward pedagogical discussions taking place in a community—or the shortage of such discussions—is an important indicator of the availability of support opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development.

A sense of community has been identified as an important motivating factor for community building and the sharing of common knowledge in higher education communities (Nistor et al., 2015). This sense has been seen to involve community members' experiences of belonging and feelings of social responsibility in participating in the community's work (McMillan, 2011; McMillan & Chavis 1986; Procentese et al., 2019). The interaction between the individual and the community as a whole is important in building this sense of community (Jason et al., 2015). Communities in higher education may be seen from two perspectives: They may be seen as different and separate communities, or they may be seen as smaller sub-communities taking part in a broader community: the shared context of higher education. Nistor et al. (2015) view academic communities from this broader perspective and show moderate support, based on their findings, for the viewpoint that higher education communities constitute 'a single, large community of practice' (p. 271; see also Nistor & Fischer, 2012). Thus, higher education institutions may be viewed as a broad context in which interaction and knowledge construction takes place, also beyond scientific boundaries (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016).

2.2   The Community's Significance to Student-Centred Practices

Student-centredness is one of the key aspects of the pedagogical policies and operating models in Finnish higher education institutions (Toom et al., 2023b, p. 13). The promotion of student-centredness is acknowledged, for example, in the content of higher education pedagogical studies and different developmental initiatives aiming to support higher education teaching (e.g. Murtonen, 2017).

Previous research has identified the community's important role in the employment of student-centred practices. Englund et al. (2018) reported on the influence of community support and dialogue opportunities among colleagues in the emergence of student-centred conceptions of teaching and learning. In addition, the valuing of teaching and the sharing of practices have been positively associated with student-centred approaches to teaching (Kálmán et al., 2020; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997). Positive connections have been identified between teachers' engagement in informal pedagogical conversations with colleagues and their employment of student-centred approaches to teaching (Murtonen et al., 2024). Vescio et al. (2008) reported on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice

and student learning based on their review study. They emphasise that collaboration and a well-functioning professional community should not be goals in themselves but rather parts of a process toward the enhancement of student learning. According to their findings, teachers become more student-centred when they participate in learning communities. Consequently, a focus on instructional practice—in particular a focus on student learning and on meeting students' learning needs through collegial practices—seems to be important in influencing the teaching and learning culture.

A strong emphasis on student learning within teaching communities is important for the quality of learning, since teaching approaches that focus on learning processes rather than merely information transmission have been found to support deeper learning (Trigwell et al., 1999). It is especially important that the approaches that focus on learning processes promote student engagement in and reflection on their own learning (e.g. Kember & Gow, 1994; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008). McCune's (2021) findings also show that teachers who value teaching and have rich interactions with students tend to focus more on student learning and critical reflection.

Recent results have shown that Finnish higher education teachers experience the realisation of their own teaching, guidance, and assessment methods rather positively (Toom et al., 2023b, pp. 142–145). However, some differences were detected between teachers and students' experiences, for instance, whether teachers were seen to promote meaningful learning experiences for students.

It seems that the interactions taking place in teaching and learning situations are especially important. Such interactions can foster student thinking and teachers' reflection on their own teaching (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008; Postareff et al., 2023) and can, therefore, enhance teachers' pedagogical development. In addition, Kálmán et al. (2020, p. 610) concluded that 'teachers who focus on transmitting knowledge to students instead of facilitating their learning are unlikely to change their teaching'. In order to facilitate teaching-related reflection through pedagogical development initiatives, it is important to consider contextual elements as well, as these can support reflection (Hubball et al., 2005). A recent study in the Finnish context suggests that teachers' participation in pedagogical training and their ways of regulating and approaching their own learning were associated with their employment of a student-centred teaching approach (Murtonen et al., 2024).

Results from basic and secondary education have shown that a teacher's instructional practices are associated with their interest in teaching and self-efficacy beliefs (Schiefele et al., 2013). When teachers feel enthusiastic about their work, this may contribute positively to their teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Studies in higher education have reported that student-centred approaches to teaching in particular are positively related to teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs (Cao et al., 2018; Kaye & Brewer, 2013). Therefore, teachers'

perceptions of their teaching competence and self-expectations in teaching situations (e.g. Bandura, 2006; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) may be enhanced through the promotion of interactive and student-centred approaches. Postareff et al. (2023) suggest that opportunities should be provided for teachers to develop their abilities to employ interactive teaching methods to enhance their teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs.

A recent framework of approaches to teaching in higher education involves interactive, transmissive, unreflective, and organised approaches (Parpala & Postareff, 2021; see also Entwistle & McCune, 2004). The framework aims to capture, for instance, how much a teacher engages students in the learning process and activates student reflection. This resembles the learning-focused approach and the knowledge transmission approach to teaching that were reported in previous studies (e.g. Kember & Gow, 1994). The unreflective approach in the framework refers to a teacher's ability to understand students' learning processes, particularly in cases where a teacher may find it so challenging to understand these processes that they do not know how to support student learning. Thus, the unreflective approach is in this dissertation viewed as an element of uncertainty rather than reflectiveness. Nevertheless, a teacher's own understanding of how to foster students' learning is known to be important (Trigwell et al., 2000).

2.3 Educational Developers Promoting Teaching and Learning

Educational developers (e.g. academic, faculty, or staff developers) have been widely recognised as a key group supporting the enhancement of quality teaching and learning in higher education (e.g. Debowski, 2014; Felten et al., 2007; Roxå et al., 2011; Sorcinelli & Austin, 2010). Educational developers work in varying positions in higher education (Green & Little, 2016; Mori et al., 2022) and support the institution's pedagogical practices. A recent inspection in the Finnish context showed that the tasks of educational developers include, for instance, providing support for pedagogical issues in the community and encouraging experimentation and participation in the quality work of the institution (Eronen & Mielityinen, 2022). Mårtensson and Roxå (2021) have highlighted a need to increase knowledge of educational developers' work, which can help improve their competence in supporting the enhancement of teaching and learning (see also Chadha, 2013).

Research suggests that educational developers' work can promote student-centred practices. For example, teachers' participation in formal pedagogical training may increase their pedagogical skills (Södervik et al., 2022) and support the development of pedagogical awareness and student-focused approaches to teaching (Postareff et al., 2007). Through observations of teaching and an examination of

students' course achievement, Wheeler and Bach (2021) reported on the increased utilisation of student-centred practices in teachers who had participated in educational development initiatives. However, even though such initiatives may foster teacher development, there seems to be great variation with regard to their effectiveness (Vreekamp et al., 2023). In addition, finding valid ways to measure the effectiveness of pedagogical development initiatives is challenging as the many complex and simultaneous factors influencing the data and methods (e.g. Postareff et al., 2008) may not 'make it possible to evaluate the long-term effect of pedagogical training when the lecturers return to their teaching communities' (Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017, p. 750). Moreover, although development programmes have been seen to support the development of student-centredness and reflective approaches in teaching (Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017), this development may be constrained by the teaching context, such as pressures stemming from an emphasis on research or different community views about teaching (Ginns et al., 2010; Pleschová & McAlpine, 2016). Mårtensson and Roxå (2016) argue that these contextual aspects affect educational developers' work, contending that it is important that developers are aware of such context in order to enhance teaching and learning in higher education.

Although Mårtensson and Roxå (2016) view formal development initiatives as important, they argue that the cultural environment within an institution is the most important focus of attention in educational development. They see that 'it is mainly through day-to-day interactions and meaning-making processes in collegial contexts that academics develop their understanding and practices of teaching'. Daily interaction matters most in the planning of support activities, which could be directed to teachers' 'collegial contexts in which their teaching is practiced…supporting both individuals and their local context' (p. 185). Mårtensson and Roxå see this kind of approach as having more potential when it comes to helping communities enhance student learning.

According to FINEEC's evaluation in the Finnish context (Toom et al., 2023b, p. 150) higher education teachers, pedagogical leaders, and pedagogical developers utilise various methods to promote good teaching, such as co-design and co-teaching. The evaluation also mentions that pedagogical developers use pedagogical concepts in the enhancement of good teaching and in the support of teachers. The use of pedagogical concepts may be relevant when considering the important role of educational developers in shifting teaching-related discourses to promote the value of teaching (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2015). McCune (2021) also recognised the important role of educational development in supporting the value of teaching, stating that 'ideally educational development might provide a space where participants can be supported to question the sources of emerging tensions between different aspects of their identities and to critically reflect on how they might act to

challenge the discourses and positions which devalue transformative teaching' (p. 31). Thus, McCune emphasises that academic developers are critical agents rather than maintainers of the status quo.

2.4   Summary of the Theoretical Framework

This dissertation approaches higher education teaching and pedagogical development through a sociocultural perspective, which emphasises the interdependence of social and individual processes in knowledge construction (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Schoen, 2011). The sociocultural perspective refers to examinations of social activity taking place in a specific context that understand these activities to be interrelated with individuals' actions and opportunities—in this case, the opportunity to perform and develop (see e.g. Trowler, 2008). Thus, social interactions are seen as being shaped by different elements which may support or constrain the community members' opportunities, making it important to become aware of these elements. Consequently, the dissertation addresses the ways teaching-related support takes place in communities (e.g. Englund et al., 2018; Jääskelä et al., 2017; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2015) and the structural conditions shaping these opportunities (e.g. Arvaja 2018; McCune, 2021; Roxå et al., 2011).

The sociocultural research approach may include the inspection of individual attributes and the connections to social interaction (Schoen 2011, p. 13). In the dissertation, approaches to teaching, teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs, and the perceived relevance of teaching are explored, and connections with teaching-related collegial support are addressed. Teaching itself is seen as a social activity (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996) in which interaction with students plays a significant role in supporting the development of students' engagement in their own learning and, consequently, in enhancing deep learning (e.g. Kember & Gow, 1994; Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008; Trigwell et al., 1999). As the focus here is on the interrelation between personal experiences and beliefs and on the social relations in the work community, the concept of sense of community is also studied. The sense of community is seen as significant for knowledge building in higher education communities (Nistor et al., 2015), but this concept has not been much studied.

The role of educational developers has been identified as important for the promotion of teaching and pedagogical development, and it is, consequently, seen as important in the enhancement of quality learning as well (e.g. Debowski, 2014; Felten et al., 2007; Roxå et al., 2011; Sorcinelli & Austin, 2010). As educational developers play such a central role, their teaching-related perceptions are highlighted in this dissertation. In addition, the actualisation of educational development activities may be impacted by elements of the pedagogical culture and how these elements are actualised in the community (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). Therefore, it

is important to gain more knowledge on these elements in order to support the work of educational developers.

Figure 1 illustrates the dissertation's conceptual framework based on the presented literature. The framework works as a base through which the dissertation proceeds toward the identification of a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching. Such a culture is seen to include opportunities to engage in pedagogical development.
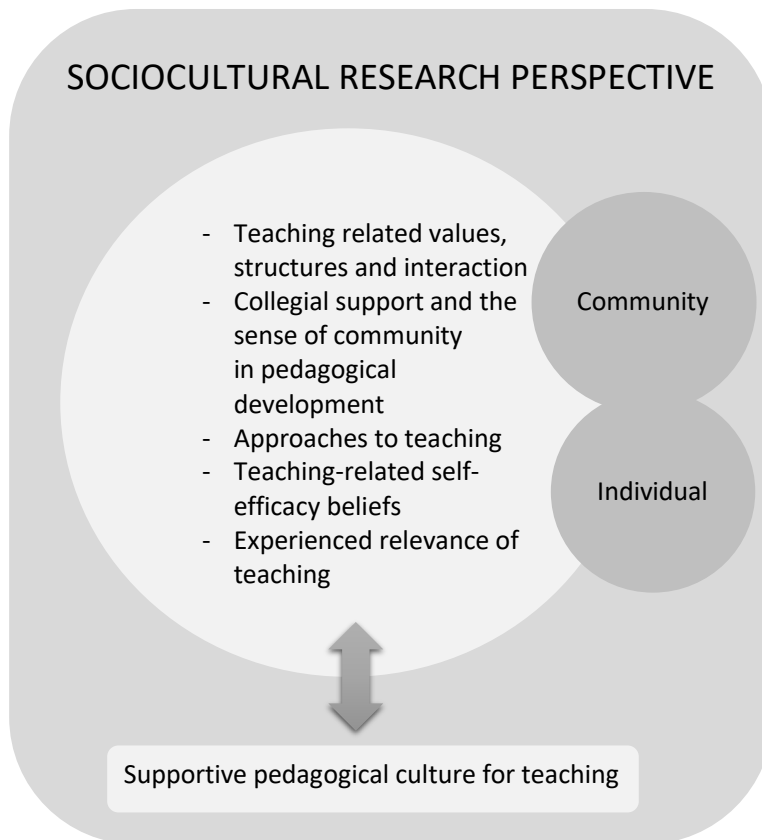
Figure 1. A conceptual map of the dissertation.

3   Aims

The general aim of this dissertation is to deepen our understanding of different sociocultural aspects supporting pedagogical communities in higher education in the matters of teaching and pedagogical development. The main question is the following: What kind of pedagogical culture supports teaching and pedagogical development in higher education? Earlier studies have shown the importance of community support for teaching and pedagogical development (e.g. Englund et al., 2018). However, as Kalman et al. (2020) highlight, the role played by departmental culture in the enhancement of teaching and learning has not been sufficiently studied. In addition, they note that when aiming to enhance teaching and learning in higher education, it is important to consider different elements, such as the perceptions of the teaching culture, approaches to teaching, and pedagogical development activities (p. 609).

The present dissertation acknowledges the role of pedagogical culture and communities in providing support for teaching and pedagogical development. First, the research focuses on teachers' perceptions of the social and cultural elements in their communities that support teaching and pedagogical development (Study I). Second, the dissertation explores educational developers' perceptions of teaching approaches and related elements, such as collegial support for teaching development (Study II). These perceptions are seen to affect the pedagogical development work these professionals undertake in their communities. Studies I and II led to enhanced understanding of different sociocultural elements, especially with regard to the significant role of community support (e.g. communal sharing, opportunities for collegial interaction, and experiences of collegial support for teaching). Hence, the planning of the third study was influenced by the previous findings, and it became of interest to study the significance of a supportive community and the relationship between community support and pedagogical development. Thus, Study III explores educational developers' conceptions of a sense of community and how this sense of community affects pedagogical development.

The aims and research questions of the three sub-studies were as follows. Study I aimed to identify supportive elements of the pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development in university communities. It posed the following research

question: What kinds of supportive social and cultural elements do university teachers perceive in relation to teaching and its development in their communities? The study explored these different elements of pedagogical culture using qualitative research methods. The data consisted of teachers' descriptions of their perceptions of teaching and teaching development in their work communities.

Study II aimed to create new knowledge on educational developers' teaching-related perceptions by exploring participants' approaches to teaching and the connections between these approaches and related elements. The research question was the following: What kinds of approaches to teaching do educational developers employ, and how are these related to their teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs, experiences of collegial support in teaching development, and experienced relevance of teaching?

Study III aimed to increase understanding of a sense of community and its meaningfulness in the context of pedagogical development. The research questions were as follows: How do educational developers conceptualise a sense of community? What kind of meaning does a sense of community have in pedagogical development based on educational developers' conceptions?

Taken together, the dissertation aims to increase an understanding of different elements that may affect the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education, which could be acknowledged, for instance, in the systematic support of higher education communities.

4 Methodology

In scientific research, it is important that the researcher considers the ontological and epistemological premises for conducting the research (Creswell, 2018), such as what is considered as the foundation and nature of knowledge, and how can knowledge be attained (Cohen et al., 2018). It is important that researchers elaborate on their own paradigmatic ideas, as these ideas are based on ontological and epistemological premises and guide the way the research is conducted and determine the trustworthiness of the research. Although research paradigms are simplifications, they help to clarify the research project's different procedures and contextual issues (Cohen et al., 2018). This section begins with ontological, epistemological, and methodological reflections, after which the research context and methods for the sub-studies are described. In addition, the dissertation's ethical issues and trustworthiness are considered.

4.1 The Ontological, Epistemological, and Methodological Premises of the Dissertation

As noted in the previous sections, the dissertation has a sociocultural research perspective in studying teaching and pedagogical development. This perspective has close links to the epistemological understanding of knowledge as a social construction of reality, in which the focus is on 'interpretation and negotiation of the meaning of the lived world' instead of understanding experience to be a representation of an objective reality (Kvale, 1995, p. 24). However, the ontological assumption is considered non-dualistic, meaning that reality is seen to exist outside of people's perceptions of the world (see Marton & Booth, 1997). This implies that 'objects have an independent existence and are not dependent for it on the knower' (Cohen et al., p. 5). The study uses both qualitative and quantitative methods, which are not seen as opposite forms of knowledge construction. Rather, each has benefits in creating understanding of the study phenomenon and thus contributes to the dissertation's practical knowledge. Consequently, the dissertation approaches teaching and pedagogical development from a pragmatic philosophical perspective, which is 'oriented to the solution of practical problems in the practical world' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 36). According to Schoen (2011, p. 25):

> Pragmatists believe there are many ways of knowing and that the more corroborating data the more likely a statement is true or close to true… multiple research methods, including the use of both objective and subjective points of view and the variable use of both inductive and deductive logic as needed to answer specific questions. Because of its flexibility the Pragmatic paradigm is particularly well suited for sociocultural inquiries.

Pragmatic research is purpose driven, with researchers valuing both qualitative observations and quantitative metrics as both methods make their own kinds of contributions toward constructing an understanding of individuals within their contexts (Schoen, 2011). As noted by Cohen et al. (2018), 'we use all the means and data at our disposal to understand a situation' (p. 31). Therefore, in this dissertation, the utilisation of different methods is seen as a combination of various tools to gain information about a phenomenon rather than as an attempt to lean on ontologically and epistemologically different premises. Thus, 'if the methods of research and the data collected—be they numerical or qualitative—address the research purposes, problems or questions then they are acceptable' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 35).

Packer and Goicoechea (2000) have proposed an interpretative framework of sociocultural perspective and ontology that they contend is crucial in research on learning and development. Their framework is based on a non-dualist ontology that sees human beings as formed and transformed in relationship with others. They propose that 'the person is constructed in a social context, formed through practical activity, and formed in relationships of desire and recognition' and that 'learning involves not only becoming a member of a community, not only constructing knowledge at various levels of expertise as a participant, but also taking a stand on the culture of one's community' (p. 228). Schoen (2011, p. 26) sees that 'sociocultural research within a pragmatic framework is particularly well suited for addressing educational questions. Pragmatist tend to look for general principles and to describe circumstances under which they believe general principles will hold true.' From this perspective, 'what is "true" and what is "valuable" is "what works"' (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 35).

Study I provides in-depth-knowledge based on interview data, whereas the quantitative results of Study II provide important indications about the phenomenon based on a larger amount of data and through the reflection of specific statements. Study III has a different emphasis in that it focuses on participants' understanding of a specific concept. Nonetheless, all three sub-studies, in one way or another, focus on the participants' perceptions within their social environments (e.g. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

4.2   Context

The research was conducted in the context of Finnish higher education. The participants of the studies worked in universities and universities of applied sciences, which both offer education and research. The emphasis in universities is on scientific research and education, whereas universities of applied sciences highlight pragmatic education and co-operation with working life. The missions of the two types of institutions are defined in legislation. According to the Universities Act (558/2009), the mission of the universities is:

> to promote independent academic research as well as academic and artistic education, to provide research-based higher education… In carrying out their mission, the universities shall promote lifelong learning, interact with the surrounding society and promote the social impact of university research findings and artistic activities.

According to the Universities of Applied Sciences Act (932/2014), the mission of universities of applied sciences is:

> to provide higher education for professional expert tasks and duties based on the requirements of the world of work and its development and on the premises of academic research and academic and artistic education and to support the professional growth of students. The mission of universities of applied sciences is also to carry out applied research, development and innovation activities and artistic activities' that serve education in universities of applied sciences, promote industry, business and regional development and regenerate the industrial structure of the region.

From the perspective of teaching, the requirements for university teachers and university of applied sciences teachers differ, as a formal pedagogical qualification (60ECTS) is required only from teachers in universities of applied sciences. In universities of applied sciences, teachers must have completed pedagogical studies, and they must also have sufficient work experience from the field of subject. However, it is good to note that pedagogical studies are systematically offered in universities, and these are often worth of 20–60 ECTS credits. University of applied sciences teachers often complete their pedagogical studies with an emphasis on vocational teacher education, whereas university teachers often complete university pedagogical studies (Murtonen et al., 2022). Based on FINEEC's evaluation and the responses of 3,064 higher education teachers working in different disciplines in universities and universities of applied sciences, teachers in universities had

completed less pedagogical studies than universities of applied sciences teachers (Toom et al., 2023b).

The funding of Finnish higher education consists of core funding, with the total amount being decided by Finland's parliament and allocated by the Ministry of Education and Culture to the universities and universities of applied sciences (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.). This core funding is mainly based on performance in education, research, and development, with some differences between the institutional types. In addition, part of the funding is strategy-based, which is agreed between the Ministry and the higher education institution. Funding is also received through external sources, including, for instance, the Research Council of Finland, Business Finland, foundations, enterprises, and the European Union (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.). According to a recent evaluation of the governance and funding practices used by the Ministry of Education and Culture to steer Finnish higher education institutions, the Finnish funding system is highly performance based (Nielsen et al., 2023).

Structural and political factors have influence on higher education teaching in Finland, and there are also connections to global policies and development. For instance, since the 1990s and early 2000, pedagogical training has been systematically offered in Finnish higher education institutions, partly because of the development initiated by the Bologna Process (e.g. common standards among higher education degrees, see European Commission, n.d.). The development of teaching has been acknowledged in the strategy work of the higher education institutions, and the Ministry of Education and Culture has steered and financed this development (e.g. Murtonen et al., 2022). Other factors that have supported the development of higher education teaching in Finland include active research on higher education teaching and learning, the acknowledgement of teaching in staff recruitments, and the existence of national collaborative networks of higher education pedagogical developers (Murtonen et al., 2022).

With regard to pedagogical development, the institutional-level responses in FINEEC's evaluation revealed that Finnish higher education institutions usually promote teaching development through support services such as centres, units, teams, or specific persons appointed to that task (Toom et al., 2023b, p. 28). The impact of pedagogical development in the institutions was described as assessed through, for instance, student feedback and different evaluations. However, the need for more systematic assessment was recognised.

4.3   Data Collection and Participants

The data in Study I consisted of 51 thematic semi-structured interviews with university teachers. A thematic interview typically follows certain themes and there may not be specific questions to ask, which allows more space for the participants' interpretations and experiences (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2022). The interviews that were conducted were semi-structured and contained questions that were asked similarly from the participants. However, the questions were guiding rather than specific in nature, and allowed participants to describe their experiences openly. The data were collected during 2018-2019 in a research project focusing on higher education pedagogy. In the project, an electronic survey was carried out at three universities, in faculties representing different disciplines. The participants were contacted through the faculties' email lists (approximately 40 percent of the participants in the present study) or data was collected from teachers who had participated in pedagogical courses (around 60 percent of the participants in the present study). The interviews were organised with participants who stated their interest in participating in the further interview study. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The average duration of the interview was 68 minutes (varying from 25 to 116 min).

The interview framework was developed in the project based on previous studies on higher education teaching (e.g., Postareff et al., 2008) and consisted of questions related to teachers' approaches to teaching, teaching development, the work community's views regarding teaching and its development, teaching-related discussions in the community, participants' experiences of teaching-related support, and opportunities to influence teaching. In addition, participants were asked to describe what kind of work community and environment would be most supportive of their teaching.

Study II explored educational developers' teaching-related perceptions through quantitative questionnaire data. Typically, a questionnaire can be used to scan a wider target population, to collect descriptive information, to use a standardised instrument to collect data, and to explore associations between different factors or patterns of responses among the target group (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 334-335). The data in Study II was gathered in a project focusing on pedagogical development in higher education and which, for the first time, aimed to identify the scope of pedagogical developers in the Finnish higher education institutions. Thus, a purposive sampling (Cohen et al., 2018, pp. 218–220) was utilised in the data collection: through a Finnish network of higher education pedagogical educators and developers, higher education institutions were contacted and asked to compile a contact list of staff who considered themselves as pedagogical educators or developers. Thus, this contact list (281 people from 36 institutions out of 38) was utilised in contacting the participants of the study via email. 119 participants (42%) from 27 institutions completed the questionnaire. In addition, it was possible to forward the questionnaire, which makes the actual response rate unknown. The data were collected using online survey software (Webropol Ltd,

Finland). The final sample size was 100 (after removing the responses, which showed several missing values, repetitive outlier values, or lacked consent to utilise the responses for research).

The questionnaire was based on a HEAT-inventory developed in the Finnish higher education context to measure teachers' approaches to teaching and related elements (Postareff et al., 2023). In Study II, scales measuring approaches to teaching (partly based on Trigwell et al., 2005) and teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs (modified from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, Pintrich et al., 1993) were utilised. In addition, scales measuring collegial support in teaching development and experienced relevance of teaching were, for the first time, explored (developed for the HowUTeach Questionnaire reported by Parpala & Postareff, 2021).

Study III explored the perceptions of educational developers (N = 31) through open answers collected through a qualitative electronic questionnaire and online workshop discussions. The data collection was designed to allow participants' perceptions to be explored openly (Marton 1981) without the researcher's interference. The data were collected during a pedagogical course, which was organised in a project offering training and peer support, especially for higher education pedagogical educators and developers. Additional data were collected via the network of pedagogical educators and developers, as the survey did not include very many participants in the training (n = 9). Ultimately, 31 open descriptions were received. The participants who were contacted through the training, were asked to participate in workshop discussions, after which seven participants from different institutions participated in workshops.

The open questions in the questionnaire were as follows: What does a sense of community mean to you and what kind of significance do you think it has in pedagogical development? Why do you think this way? The instructional length for the answer was from half to one page of text (in Finnish approximately 1400–2800 characters). However, the length of the answers varied and a typical answer was from 2-5 lines of text. In the online workshop discussions, the participants worked without the researcher's interference. The duration of the workshops were 45 minutes and they were transcribed verbatim. The instruction for the workshop was as follows: Create a plan to support a community's pedagogical development from the perspective of a sense of community. Describe the type of work community you create the plan for and what kind of situations and challenges there are regarding pedagogical development and a sense of community. Define the different actors and roles in the community. What is your role as an educator or developer? Bring out alternative options, compare, reflect, make judgements and question.

Table 1 presents the background information of the participants in the sub-studies. Generally, the participants represent pedagogically qualified higher education professionals with many years of experience in the field of higher education.

Table 1. Summary of the background of the participants in the sub-studies.

	Study I	Study II	Study III
Participants	University teachers (N = 51) • From three universities (28 + 18 + 5) • From 20 different faculties, and often participants from the same faculties, represented different academic subjects	Educational developers (higher education pedagogical educators and developers) (N = 100) • From universities n = 35 • From universities of applied sciences n = 65	Educational developers (higher education pedagogical educators and developers) (N = 31) • From universities n = 16 • From universities of applied sciences n = 16 (Workshop data: universities (n=3); universities of applied sciences (n=4); all had a formal pedagogical qualification)
Teaching experience (Study I), work experience in higher education (Studies II and III)	• 4 years or less (n = 11) • 5–9 years (n = 6) • 10–14 years (n = 12) • More than 15 years (n = 21)	• Less than five years (n = 8) • 5–10 years (n = 15) • 11–20 years (n = 46) • More than 20 years (n = 31)	Majority had been working in the field of higher education more than 15 years
Work title	• University/senior lecturers (n = 19) • University teachers (n = 8) • Assistant professors (n = 7) • Professors (n = 6) • Post-doc researchers (n = 3) • Ph.D. researchers (n = 4) • Others (n = 3)	• Teaching-related titles such as professor, university lecturer, principal lecturer (n = 53 approx.) • Development/support-related titles such as specialist, coach (n = 34 approx.) • Directors such as developmental and service directors (n = 13 approx.)	• Teaching-related titles (n = 15) • Development-related titles (n = 12) • Directors (n = 4)
Pedagogical studies	• 60 credits or more (n = 13) • 20–40 credits (n = 22) • 10-15 credits (n = 9) • No studies (n = 1)	• A formal teacher's pedagogical qualification (n = 95) • Some studies (n = 5)	• A formal teacher's pedagogical qualification (n = 28) • Some studies (n = 3) • No studies (n = 2)

4.4   Data and Analyses

4.4.1   Study I: Inductive Qualitative Content Analysis of Interview Data

A research interview can be seen as a situation where:

> knowledge is constructed in the interaction between two people. The interviewer and the subject act in relation to each other and reciprocally influence each other. The knowledge produced in a research interview is constituted by the interaction itself, in the specific situation created between an interviewer and an interviewee (Kvale, 2007, Epistemological Issues of Interviewing section).

Thus, the interview allows the exploration of participants' experiences and understandings of the world. Because the interviews in Study I were quite structured, large in quantity, and involving rich teaching-related descriptions, qualitative content analysis was used as a method of analysis. Qualitative content analysis allows for descriptions of experiences and facilitates the search for a generality of experiences. There have been many descriptions of and approaches to content analysis. So-called classical content analysis, with roots in communicational research, was fundamentally a quantifiable way of analysing text (Krippendorf, 2004; Mayring, 2014). However, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative content analysis has been questioned as 'ultimately, all reading of texts is qualitative, even when certain characteristics of a text are later converted into numbers.' (Krippendorf, 2004, p. 16). In this dissertation, the qualitative nature of the analysis is highlighted. However, because one of the aims was to consider the generality of experiences within the dataset, the analysis had quantitative elements. Mayring (2014) also sees qualitative content analysis as a mixed-method approach containing qualitative and quantitative elements: 'assignment of categories to text as qualitative step, working through many text passages and analysis of frequencies of categories as quantitative step' (p. 10). Even though no systematic quantification of codes was conducted during the analysis, the frequency of categories directed the coding to some extent.

The method of analysis in Study I had an inductive emphasis, which is understood to be a way of categorising data without predetermined categories. The aim was also to create a general understanding of the phenomenon based on the data, which can be seen as typical for inductive reasoning. However, some deductive elements also occur in this kind of approach, as categories and codes are formed based on some specific viewpoint (see Mayring 2014, pp. 79–97), which is directed by the research questions. Schreier (2012) also emphasises the role of research

questions in qualitative content analysis, in which these questions specify the perspective for examining the data.

The teachers were not asked explicitly to describe the pedagogical culture in their departments or institutions, but the culture was explored through related descriptions. Hence, the analysis was conducted by focusing on both latent (clear and explicit) and manifest (unexplicit, hidden) content. Therefore, the analysis is interpretative in nature as it did not focus simply on classifying descriptions but also involved interpretation (Sandelowski, 2010; Vaismoradi et al., 2013). It is important to note that one description could include several different coding units. Thus, the interpretation of the units of meaning and their relationships during the analysis is emphasised, and the units need to be meaningfully interpreted in relation to the formed categories (Schreier 2012, p. 131). It is noteworthy that despite the description of different phases, the analysis was iterative and nonlinear by nature, which means that constant reflection regarding the categories and their relationships were made, and some broader themes were identified before ending up with the final categories (see Graneheim et al., 2017, p. 32). Table 2 presents an overview of the method and process of analysis.

Table 2. An overview of the method and process of analysis in Study I.

The data	Teachers' descriptions of their perceptions and experiences in interviews (transcriptions)
The method of analysis	Qualitative content analysis (inductive)
The units of analysis	Teachers' describing teaching and pedagogical development from the perspective of their work community
The coding units	Words, sentences, paragraphs
The level of focus	Meso-level of analysis (phenomenon on a community level)
The level of analysis	Descriptive and interpretive analysis (of descriptions and meanings) focusing on both manifest and latent content
Analysis process	Familiarization with data Deciding the content of focus Creating categories and sub-categories Organizing and re-naming categories in a non-linear manner Frequency of categories direct the coding and organization of data into broader categories ('elements') Interpretation of the descriptions (during and after the analysis) Interpretation of the meanings (during and after the analysis)
Findings	Different elements which can be related to each other but describe the phenomenon from different perspectives Meaningfulness of the elements

4.4.2 Study II: Quantitative Methods in Analysing Questionnaire Data

The quantitative questionnaire data in Study II were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics and Amos. The statistical analyses included confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses, reliability analysis, correlational analyses, cluster analysis, and the Mann Whitney U test. Confirmatory factor analysis was utilised in the measurement of model validity for the items in the approaches to teaching scale. The validity of this scale was previously reported by Postareff et al. (2023). The approaches to teaching scale consists of four approaches to teaching: interactive, transmissive, uncertain, and organised. An exploratory factor analysis was utilised to explore the factor structure of the other items (teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs = SE, collegial support in teaching development = CS, and experienced relevance of teaching = RE). Figures 2 and 3 present the statistics of the confirmatory and exploratory factors analyses as they were reported in the original publication.

Approaches to teaching scale		x^2		CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
		62.97, $df = 47$, $p = 0.063$		.96	.95	.06	0.07

Factor	Cα	Items	Mean SD	Standardised regression weights
F1 Interactive approach	.70	AT_1: In my teaching, I create situations where I encourage students to discuss their thoughts and opinions about the topic.	4.60 0.59	0.40
		AT_2: I set aside teaching time so that the students can discuss among themselves about the key concepts of the subject.	4.61 0.63	0.69
		AT_3: In teaching situations, I provide an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding about the subject through discussion.	4.58 0.67	0.87
F2 Transmissive approach	.79	AT_4: The majority of my teaching time is spent transmitting information to the students about the topic.	2.35 1.00	0.62
		AT_5: My teaching is focused on the good presentation of information to the students.	1.82 0.92	0.89
		AT_6: The most important goal of my teaching is to deliver what I know to the students.	2.00 0.96	0.72
F3 Uncertain approach	.79	AT_7: I have trouble understanding how I can help the students learn.	1.55 0.67	0.87
		AT_8: The students' learning process is so complicated that it is challenging for me to understand how I can support it as a teacher.	1.60 0.73	0.71
		AT_9: It is difficult for me to understand what learning is all about.	1.29 0.48	0.67
F4 Organised approach	.73	AT_10: I am organised and systematic as a teacher.	4.23 0.96	0.41
		AT_11: I put a lot of effort into my teaching.	4.34 0.75	0.98
		AT_12: I spend a lot of time to prepare my teaching.	4.10 0.885	0.80

Figure 2. The model validity statistics, factors, Cronbach's alpha values, items, and item means and standard deviations (Study II).

Item	Mean SD	Communality	Factor loadings F5 Cα .82	F6 Cα .76	F7 Cα .69
SE_1: I believe I can cope with my teaching tasks.	4.52 0.60	.33	0.60		
SE_2: I am confident that I can manage even in the most difficult teaching situations.	4.46 0.66	.68	0.81		
SE_3: I am certain, that I have the necessary pedagogical skills to manage in teaching tasks.	4.37 0.77	.59	0.78		
SE_4: I am confident that the students learn from my teaching.	4.31 0.61	.61	0.70		
CS_1: My colleagues listen if I tell them about the challenges I face in my teaching.	4.22 0.82	.38		0.53	
CS_2: My colleagues are open to new ideas regarding teaching.	3.99 0.93	.86		0.95	
CS_3: My closest work community values teaching and its' development.	4.33 0.83	.44		0.68	
RE_4: The topics I teach are meaningful to me.	4.70 0.56	.98			1.06
RE_5: I enjoy my teaching.	4.46 0.70	.30			0.45
RE_6: The majority of my teaching content is very interesting.	4.40 0.68	.36			0.50

Loadings under .30 are suppressed.

Figure 3. The items, means, standard errors, standard deviations, the factor structure, and Cronbach's alpha values related to self-efficacy beliefs, collegial support, and relevance of teaching (Study II).

As it was important to identify associations between the different factors, Spearman's correlations (with bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals) were carried out. Further analyses were conducted to explore whether different profiles of participants could be identified based on their approaches to teaching, and whether there would be significant differences between these different groups in relation to their other teaching-related perceptions. Thus, K-means clustering was utilised to identify participant profiles, and the Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare these profiles with regard to teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs, collegial support in teaching development, and experienced relevance of teaching.

4.4.3 Study III: A Phenomenographic Research Approach in Analysing Descriptions of Conceptions

The data in Study III consist of written descriptions and transcriptions of workshop discussions related to participants' conceptions of a sense of community in pedagogical development. Study III uses the phenomenographic research approach (Marton, 1981) to seek an understanding of the conceptions of educational developers' (i.e. pedagogical educators and developers). This research approach originated in educational research conducted by Marton and his colleagues in the 1970s and can be seen as an approach that is empirically based rather than philosophy

based (Richardson, 1999). Tight (2016) argues that this approach is the only research design developed particularly in the field of higher education.

Phenomenography aims at describing, analysing, and understanding 'the different ways in which people experience, interpret, understand, apprehend, perceive, or conceptualise various aspects of reality' (Marton, 1981, p. 178). Thus, phenomenographic research focuses on participants' conceptions and the variation in their conceptions of reality (Marton & Booth, 1997), which may reveal something general of the phenomenon in focus (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). Consequently, the aim of phenomenographic research is not to identify differences between individuals or make categorisations between them (people perceiving). Rather, the focus is on the phenomenon (perceived phenomenon) (Marton 1981, p. 195). The findings of a phenomenographic study are an "outcome space" and capture the different ways participants understand the phenomenon (Åkerlind, 2012; Ashworth & Lucas 1998; Marton & Booth, 1997).

Phenomenographic research views participants as equal and unique experiencers (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). The ontological assumption in phenomenography is non-dualistic, implying that there is one world which is experienced differently by different people (Marton & Booth, 1997). The focus is on the exploration of the perceived reality instead of reality as it is (the second-order nature), with Marton (1981, p. 178) seeing this perceived reality as 'sufficiently interesting in itself'. This assumption holds that the differences in people's experiences are the cause of the differences in their perceptions of reality.

This ontological viewpoint has phased criticism. The suspension of different aspects of research, or 'bracketing', is seen as a requirement for phenomenographic research. This can entail, for instance, the suspension of any previous knowledge, research findings, or hypotheses that may direct the data gathering and analysis (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998). Ashworth and Lucas (1998) have criticised the ambiguity of this viewpoint of phenomenography, arguing that while the aim is for the researcher to suspend their own assumptions, those assumptions may still influence the researcher's descriptions of the phenomenon. On a similar note, Richardson (1999, pp. 66–67) has argued that there is an epistemological problem related to interpreting people's conceptions solely through their descriptions.

In respect to the trustworthiness of phenomenographic research, it is important to reflect on the process and be aware of how the descriptions of conceptions have been reached (Ashworth & Lucas, 1998, p. 429; Sandbergh, 1997). The assessment of reliability focuses on the plausibility of the data interpretation and the possibility for other researchers to identify in the data the same perceptions that the original researcher found (Sandbergh, 1997, p. 205). The key to this process is for the researcher to 'demonstrate throughout the research design how they have reached their interpretations, such as the formulation of research questions, the choices and

actions involved in data collection, the analysis of the data and the reporting of the results'. The researcher can thus show 'interpretative awareness' (Sandbergh, 1997, p. 209). Disputing the common notion in phenomenography that there is a limited number of varying conceptions of a phenomenon, Ashworth and Lucas (1998) have proposed that the limitation is rather the researcher's determination to end the analysis following their interpretation that they have captured all the varying conceptions. From this perspective, one must acknowledge the iterative nature of analysis and the importance of remaining open to new interpretations (Åkerlind, 2012, p. 118). In the present study, the categories are those that the researcher interpreted as sufficiently representative of the participants' conceptions of the phenomenon. Table 3 describes the different phases of the analysis.

Table 3. Phases of analysis in Study III.

Phase of analysis	Description of the procedures
Phase 1	Reading through the data and identifying meaning units: parts of sentences, complete sentences, or several sentences, which were seen to describe a complete thought (Marton, 1981)
Phase 2	Searching variation across the whole data, not within individual responses (Tight, 2016, p. 320)
Phase 3	Categorisation of the meaning units, which represented different ways of conceptualising the phenomenon
Phase 4	Formulation of a mind-map to get an idea about the relations of the categories
Phase 5	Identification of different aspect or levels the categories represented
Phase 6	Reorganisation or disregard of categories
Phase 7	Identification of dimensions of variation (individual and communal levels)
Phase 8	Creation of a phenomenographic "outcome space", which is seen to capture the participants' varying conceptions (Åkerlind, 2012) based on their different ways of experiencing the phenomenon (Marton & Booth, 1997).

4.5   Summary of the Sub-studies

In order to summarise the research designs and key methodological aspects in the sub-studies, an overview of the dissertation is provided in Table 4.

Table 4. An overview of the dissertation.

	Study I	Study II	Study III
Topic of the study	Identifying supportive elements of pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development in the university context	Exploring the variation of educational developers' teaching-related perceptions (approaches to teaching, self-efficacy beliefs, collegial support, teaching relevance) in higher education	Educational developers' conceptions of a sense of community in relation to pedagogical development in higher education
Methods and data	Qualitative approach, individual semi-structured thematic interviews, inductive qualitative content analysis	Quantitative approach, questionnaire data, statistical analyses (confirmatory and explorative factor analyses, reliability analysis, correlations, cluster analysis, Mann Whitney U test)	Qualitative approach, phenomenographic research approach, individual written descriptions and small-group workshop discussions
Focus of the study	Element-specific, focusing on a phenomenon, deepening an understanding of a phenomenon, focus on a community	Person and group oriented, focusing on identifying different profiles, gaining new knowledge of a specific group	Focusing on individuals' conceptions of a phenomenon and the variation of conceptions
Participants	University teachers representing different disciplines (N = 51)	Educational developers (higher education pedagogical educators and developers) (N = 100)	Educational developers (higher education pedagogical educators and developers) (N = 32)
The study's approach to teaching and pedagogical development	Examining sociocultural aspects that are important for teaching and pedagogical development of university communities	Examining a group, which has a significant role in supporting teaching and enhancing pedagogical development in higher education	Examining conceptions of a phenomenon to gain a deeper understanding of its meaning for pedagogical development

4.6   Ethical Considerations

The dissertation followed the guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2023), which include guidelines to 'promote good and responsible research practices and to prevent violations of research integrity in all academic disciplines' (p. 6). The primary principles outlined in these guidelines are reliability, honesty,

respect, and accountability in research. These principles are described as follows (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, 2023, p. 12):

> Reliability in ensuring the quality of research, reflected in the design, the methodology, the analysis and the use of resources; honesty in developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting and communicating research in a transparent, fair, full and unbiased way; respect for colleagues, research participants, society, ecosystems, cultural heritage and the environment; accountability for the research from idea to publication, for its management and organisation, for training, supervision and mentoring, and for its wider impacts.

In addition, the dissertation follows the ethical principles of research with human participants described by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2019). These general ethical principles guide researchers in respecting the dignity and autonomy of human research participants, avoiding doing harm to the participants, and ensuring the voluntariness of participation. It is important that the participants receive truthful and clear information about the research so that they can provide informed consent to participate in the research (pp. 8–10). The dissertation was carried out according to these principles as well as the data policy of the University of Turku (2016), which guided the collection, use, and management of research data. The participants were informed about the use of the research data, and consents for participation were requested from all the participants. The participants' anonymity was guaranteed throughout the research process through the use of participant codes. The participants faced no risk of harm by taking part in the research.

The studies were based on the voluntariness of participation. In Study I, the participants were contacted based on their voluntary announcement of their interest to participate in an interview following their completion of an anonymous electronic questionnaire. In Study II, the participants answered an electronic survey as part of a development project concerning higher education pedagogy. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to provide voluntary consent to utilise their responses in research. Study III was also based on voluntariness, as the participants of the pedagogy-related training were asked to fill out a questionnaire in which their consent was requested to utilise the online workshop discussion data for research. In Study III, more data were gathered through a contact list of higher education institutions, and an email invitation was sent to ask for volunteers to participate in the study by filling out the questionnaire. In the studies, the project leaders of the research projects, through which the data were gathered, and the institutions in which these researchers were based are responsible for the totality of the future data management and the storage of the research data that were utilised in this dissertation.

Special attention was paid to provide the participants with understandable and adequate information about the studies. The purpose of the research was further explained to the participants during the interviews. According to Kvale (2007, Ethical Issues of Interviewing section), 'the consequences of the interview interaction for the subjects need to be taken into account, such as stress during the interview and changes in self-understanding'. Therefore, the research group discussed together how such matters would be dealt with. Especially important was to let the participants know that even during the interviews, they could decide whether they wanted to discuss certain topics. It was also important to create a situation in which the interviewee felt that they could share their views confidentially. Kvale (2007) has highlighted the importance of considering the balance between the researcher's interest in the production of knowledge and respect for the interviewee. This means, for instance, that it is important to let the participants discuss matters they find meaningful even if these topics fall outside of the specific research interest, with the interviewer acting as an active listener and thus showing respect toward the interviewee.

It is also important to pay attention to the reporting of the findings. According to Kvale (2007, Ethical Issues of Interviewing section), in 'a qualitative study where subjects' statements from a private interview setting may be published in public reports, precautions need to be taken to protect the subjects' privacy'. With regard to the reporting of the qualitative research findings in sub-studies I and III, special attention was paid to the use of participants' quotations. It was decided that no identifying information should be provided while reporting quotations, such as a participant's age or field of discipline. The quotations were also modified to make it impossible to identify the participant or a specific community based on provided descriptions. With respect to the quantitative findings, careful attention was paid to the accurate use and reporting of statistical measures, which were also discussed with statistical experts.

4.7   Trustworthiness

In research, it is important to pay attention to the quality of the research process, not only the findings that are reached. Thus, the 'validity' of the study does not refer to the findings alone but requires rather 'continual checks of the credibility, plausibility, and trustworthiness of the findings… and the stages of knowledge production' (Kvale, 1995, p. 27). The validity of qualitative research is not based on specific instruments and tests, and a researcher needs to consider what kinds of validity procedures have been undertaken, as these may be related to concepts such as trustworthiness, transferability, and authenticity (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Although the form of the data and the analysis process differ when utilising

qualitative versus quantitative methods, both entail similar procedures and choices. In both qualitative and quantitative approaches, it is the researcher who plans and formulates the means for the operationalisation and measurement of the phenomenon. Therefore, the starting point for both methods is similar and can be seen as the most significant phase of the research.

During the analysis process, qualitative methods require that the researcher pay more attention to the implementation and description of the analysis, as no standards exist as they do in the utilisation of statistical methods in the quantitative approach (see Hammersley, 2007). Therefore, in this section, the emphasis is on the trustworthiness of the qualitative methods. With regard to the statistical tests conducted, more detailed information is provided in the original publication of Study II. In addition, the utilisation of the research instrument in the specific context of Study II has been elaborated. The development of the research instrument in Study II has also been described, and the statistical findings interpreted in accordance to the context of the study. However, as noted, both qualitative and quantitative methods require that the researcher understands and leans on methods that are generally accepted by the scientific community, thus making certain of 'reliability in ensuring the quality of research, reflected in the design, the methodology, the analysis and the use of resources' (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity, 2023). Therefore, this section may be viewed as containing aspects that are important for the trustworthiness of research in general.

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), the most important element of validity in qualitative research is for the research to display credibility. The assumption of qualitative research is typically that reality is socially constructed, and findings about that reality can be made through participants' perceptions. Therefore, it is important to consider how well the study represents these perceptions (p. 125). Creswell and Miller (2000) also highlight the need for the researcher to consider their own paradigm assumptions and philosophical positions about qualitative inquiry when thinking about how to ensure the credibility of the study. This dissertation includes such reflection. It is especially important to consider the position of the researcher throughout the research process, including their own values and beliefs. Stated another way, 'Instead of trying to hide behind the false sense of objectivity, the researcher makes his or her own sociocultural position explicit' (Lietz et al., 2006, p. 447). Thus, the researcher is seen as part of the reality that is being investigated and thus as part of the knowledge construction. During the dissertation process, the position of the researcher varied, at times being an outside observer and at other times an inside actor within the higher education context. The researcher's position as a "newcomer" when beginning the dissertation process is noteworthy. This newcomer status can be considered somewhat beneficial. As described by Schoen (2011, p. 19), 'the sociocultural researcher must be to somewhat of a generalist in

order to see the big picture of the socially situated context'. Consequently, the researcher's position as new to the research field and background as a Master of Arts in general educational sciences could be seen as having strengthened the development of the research from a sociocultural perspective through an 'awareness of the different assumptions or "truths" that exist' (Schoen, 2011, p. 23).

When validating qualitative research, it is important that a researcher provides detailed information about the study process, which Creswell and Miller (2000) describe as rich description. This may involve descriptions of the study settings, the participants, the theme of the study, and the study context, which allow the readers to reach a comprehensive idea of the entire process. Hence, the readers may also relate the applicability of the study's findings to other contexts (p. 129). This approach to ensure credibility resembles the procedure of reflexivity discussed by Lietz et al. (2006), who state that it is important to reflect on the trustworthiness of the research project throughout the entire research process, both individually and through dialogue. As the dissertation's sub-studies have been partly conducted within research projects, and as part of the dissertation process included dialogue with supervisors, peers, and research communities, the reflexivity is seen to have been strong. In addition, all the sub-studies have been published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

Triangulation is used when multiple methods and sources of information are used to increase the validity of research findings. According to Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 126), 'as a validity procedure, triangulation is a step taken by researchers employing only the researcher's lens, and it is a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas'. This dissertation has used triangulation to a moderate extent. Multiple methods were used, and different informants were represented. However, the research was only carried out in the context of higher education in Finland. It is important to consider that many situational, personal, and other aspects influence participation in research and thus influence the production of information, which may create bias. The use of different methods and representation from different informants are seen to diminish this worry. As a summary, Table 5 presents an overview of the trustworthiness and credibility procedures involved in the research for the original publications and the dissertation.

Table 5. Trustworthiness and credibility procedures of the dissertation.

Elements of the research process	Key actions
Researcher's position and competence	• In-depth familiarisation with the research approach and methods that have been utilised • Reflection of ontological, epistemological and paradigm assumptions of the dissertation • Reflection of the role of the researcher in respect to how the findings have been reached • Discussion of the research process and findings together with the supervisors of the dissertation, peers and the research community (e.g., conference presentations). In addition, the studies went through the peer-review process
Theoretical and methodological procedures and choices	• Alignment of the theoretical framework and the study design • Utilisation of multiple methods in studying the phenomenon • Iterative and open nature of the qualitative analyses; utilisation of valid statistical methods in quantitative analyses • Reflection of the findings in respect to related literature, in which the Finnish higher education context has been acknowledged
Transparency	• Thorough description of the study design and approach, context, methods (e.g., analyses processes, participants, the process of data collection) and findings • Reflection of the limitations of the studies

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5 Overview of the Main Findings

This chapter summarises the main findings of the sub-studies.

5.1 Study I

Study I explored the role of context in the teaching and pedagogical development taking place within university communities by exploring teachers' perceptions of different cultural and social elements. The elements appeared as opposite experiences, as they were found to be either existing or lacking in the communities. Since the identified elements were those described by the teachers themselves, they were considered to convey meaningfulness. Based on the findings, a framework for a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education was introduced and discussed.

The elements were categorised under three themes: (1) attitudes and values in the community in relation to teaching and its development, (2) principles and norms in the community in relation to teaching and its development, and (3) practices and structures in the community in relation to teaching and its development. The first theme included the following elements: the value of teaching, willingness and ambition, and interest and enthusiasm. The second theme included the following elements: shared responsibility, common goals and shared understanding, permissiveness and expectations, power, and respect and trust. The third theme included the following elements: systematic practices and development, formal and informal interaction opportunities, collaboration and sharing, resources, and career opportunities. The analysis showed the interrelation of the elements and indicated that the elements may or may not be in congruence. The analysis did not differentiate between the emergence of the elements based on different community levels, but it was acknowledged that the elements may vary depending on the level in focus (e.g. the closest colleagues, department, faculty, etc.). Figure 4 summarises the main findings of Study I using examples of the different elements as reported in the original publication.

Theme	Element	Sub-categories
Attitudes and values in the community in relation to teaching and its development	The value of teaching	-Teaching is valued in itself -Balance between teaching and research
	Willingness and ambition	-Willingness to put effort into teaching and its development -Teaching development as a goal
	Interest and enthusiasm	-Community's interest to teach and develop teaching -Positive atmosphere and staff enthusiasm
Principles and norms in the community in relation to teaching and its development	Shared responsibility	-Shared responsibility in teaching development -Knowledge about others' work
	Common goals and shared understanding	-Existence of common goals and shared understanding
	Permissiveness and expectations	-Teaching and its development allowed, expected, and encouraged
	Power and influence	-Possibility to influence -Development occurs openly and in a fair manner
	Respect and trust	-Work and expertise are respected and trusted
Practices and structures in the community in relation to teaching and its development	Systematic practices and development	-Actors and channels (e.g., forums, committees, responsible actors) -Actions (e.g., organized training, encouragement actions, development initiatives, official educational outlines, rewards)
	Formal and informal interaction opportunities	-Cooperation around objectives (co-teaching, co-development, co-creation) -Collaboration and sharing (peer support, supervisor support, dialogue, sharing knowledge and experiences, the establishment of teams)
	Resources	-Financial resources -Physical resources -Social resources
	Career opportunities	-Teaching acknowledged in career advancement -Teaching acknowledged in recruitment -Teaching acknowledged in merit

Elements are interrelated, may, or may not be in congruence, and can be considered from different community levels (immediate, unit-level, leadership level, broader community, and management level).

Figure 4. Supportive elements of pedagogical culture for teaching and its development (Study I).

The main conclusion in Study I was that a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development needs to be enhanced through community attitudes and values, principles and norms, and practices and structures. A culture that fosters sharing and values teaching through different cultural elements was seen to be important for the pedagogical development of university communities.

5.2 Study II

Study II strengthened the view of educational developers as a varied group of pedagogically qualified higher education professionals working in different positions in their institutions. On average, the educational developers reported high scores in scales for interactive and organised approaches to teaching and low scores in scales for transmissive and uncertain approaches to teaching. This corresponds to teaching approaches that focus on the learner and support the learning process. Different combinations of teaching approaches were identified and named to form a highly interactive profile and a mixed profile. The mixed profile reported lower interactive and organised approaches to teaching, with higher transmissive and uncertain approaches to teaching than the highly interactive profile. Figure 5 presents the statistics of the two profiles, as reported in the original publication.

	F	Cluster 1 ($n = 31$)		Cluster 2 ($n = 69$)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Interactive approach	50.09	4.22	0.50	4.80	0.32
Transmissive approach	26.74	2.60	0.72	1.80	0.72
Uncertain approach	131.89	2.04	0.47	1.20	0.26
Organised approach	29.04	3.78	0.64	4.47	0.57

Figure 5. F-values of the K-means clustering, mean values, and standard deviations of the two clusters (Study II).

Study II showed that the highly interactive profile reported higher scores in the factors measuring teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs, collegial support, and relevance of teaching than the mixed profile. These results are presented in Figure 6 and were reported in the original publication.

	Teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs	Collegial support	Relevance of teaching
Mann-Whitney U	395.00	637.50	683.00
Z	−5.14	−3.27	−2.99
p-value	$p < .001$	$p = .001$	$p = .003$
r	.51	.33	.30
Mean rank of the *mixed profile*	28.74	36.56	38.03
Mean rank of the *highly interactive profile*	60.28	56.76	56.10

Figure 6. The results of the Mann-Whitney U test between the participants grouped by their approaches to teaching (Study II).

The main conclusion of Study II was that educational developers are a varied group whose teaching-related perceptions may also vary. It is important to take these factors into account while considering the role of educational developers in the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education institutions as well as in their own professional development. Especially important was the notion of

association between collegial support and interactive approaches to teaching, which further confirms that a supportive community can enhance the employment of student-centred teaching practices.

5.3 Study III

Study III explored educational developers' conceptions of a sense of community in relation to pedagogical development. The findings showed that a sense of community was conceptualised through three viewpoints: (1) as an interactive experience, (2) as individual and community-related prerequisites, (3) and as an enabler of pedagogical development. A sense of community appeared to be formed by an interplay of individual and community factors. This sense involved relationships between matters of individual agency and social responsibility among community members as well as with factors related to the socio-cultural context. Participants especially described the potential for community members to experience a sense of belonging in their community, which also enhanced participation opportunities and the ability to act as one's own true self within the community. Opportunities to experience purpose and influence the community's work were highlighted. A sense of community was seen as crucial for pedagogical development at both the individual and community level; it was seen as having a positive impact on the quality of work and on the culture of teaching and learning in general. Table 6 summarises the main findings as they were reported in the original publication.

Table 6. Pedagogical developers' conceptions of a sense of community in the context of pedagogical development (Study III).

	Dimensions	
Categories	*Individual level*	*Community-level*
Appearance of a sense of community as an interactive experience	• A sense of belonging • Meaningfulness as a community member • Utilisation of personal expertise and getting responsibility	• Common sharing of knowledge and reflection • Co-development • Respectful interaction
A sense of community as individual and collective prerequisites	• Responsible behaviour • Commitment	• An atmosphere of support and safety • An active nature of the process • Shared goals and responsibilities • A culture of openness, respect and equality
A sense of community as an enabler of pedagogical development	• Vital for learning • Experienced support	• The community's development opportunities • Shaping and increasing the quality of the teaching and learning culture • Reaching the community's goals • Establishment of a culture of support

Study III highlighted the importance of interactive activities and of the active construction of a sense of community. These require not only sufficient resources and places for sharing and meeting other community members, but also the systematic fostering of a sense of belonging as a value in itself. Consequently, the findings suggest that a collaborative and shared culture that fosters interaction may contribute to the quality of learning and teaching within an institution.

6 Discussion

The aim of the dissertation was to increase our understanding of different sociocultural aspects supporting higher education teaching and pedagogical development. In particular, the dissertation approached the question of what kind of pedagogical culture supports teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. In this section, the findings of the studies are discussed, the methodological and theoretical viewpoints are acknowledged, and the limitations of the dissertation are addressed. In the final section, conclusions are drawn, and practical implications and future research needs are brought forward.

The quotations that were presented at the beginning of the Introduction introduced the main viewpoint of the dissertation and demonstrated many of the significant elements of a supportive pedagogical culture that were identified in the sub-studies. These quotations will be returned to in the discussion as they illustrate some of the main findings.

6.1 General Discussion

Study I aimed to identify the sociocultural elements that shape the support opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. Study II aimed to explore the teaching-related perceptions that appear within a key group supporting higher education teaching and learning, namely educational developers. Study III sought to increase understanding of the role played by a sense of community in pedagogical development in higher education. Taken together, the dissertation aimed to delineate a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. The main findings are as follows:

- Elements of pedagogical culture that are important for higher education teaching and pedagogical development are related to communities' attitudes and values, norms and principles, and practices and structures. Particularly important is the promotion of a teaching culture of sharing. (Study I)

- Educational developers have varying perceptions of teaching, and these perceptions may influence their promotion of student-centred practices. An interactive approach to teaching is a significant determiner of whether educational developers' perceptions contain positive associations with experiences of collegial support for teaching development, teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs, and experienced relevance of teaching. (Study II)

- A sense of community is vital for the pedagogical development of individuals and the community as a whole, and its promotion may help the higher education institution reach its goals regarding the quality of student learning. The sense of community manifests as an interplay of individual and community factors, which involve both individual agency and social responsibility among community members, as well as factors related to the socio-cultural context. These include feelings of social responsibility among members of the community and the potential for community members to experience a sense of belonging and purpose, participate in the community, and find opportunities to influence the community. (Study III).

Especially interesting was that the teachers in Study I described the same sociocultural elements very differently with respect to the ways they emerged in the community. For instance, some participants described having regular teaching-related discussions and common goals for teaching development, whereas others described never engaging in conversations about teaching goals. In addition, some participants described the whole community as sharing the view of teaching as a highly important endeavour, whereas in other communities, teaching was seen as something compulsory or subordinate to research. Therefore, the analysis showed that the teachers' positions varied with regard to the amount of support they received for teaching and pedagogical development. Jääskelä et al. (2017), for instance, have reported disciplinary differences in how well teaching development is integrated into teachers' everyday work, for example, the amount of time allocated for teaching development. Although contextual aspects related to disciplinary communities and the institutional environment (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016) undoubtedly lead to differences in teachers' experiences, it was possible in Study I to identify important elements of pedagogical culture based on the teachers' reported experiences. Hence, the identified elements are considered meaningful, as they are the ones that the teachers themselves described, indicating important elements of their sociocultural context (Trowler, 2008).

6.1.1   A Pedagogical Culture Valuing Teaching and Learning

Previous research has shown that community support is important for the teaching and pedagogical development of university teachers. In a community where teaching is discussed and valued, more attention is paid to student learning (Englund et al., 2018, Esterhazy et al., 2021; Kálmán et al., 2020).

> *Even though we have the same pressures for gaining results, and we should get publications, and this and that, in here the whole staff feels that teaching is really important, and we should put an effort to it, and we are allowed to do that. Pretty often we try out something and share experiences, and if they are good, then we plan something.*

In this way, students also benefit from a pedagogical culture that supports quality teaching and learning (Vescio et al., 2008). Study I showed that it is important that the value of teaching is promoted, not only as a value in itself, but through the willingness to invest in teaching and to view teaching development as an important goal in the community.

> *I imagined that as part of being a teacher, it would be so that everyone would have a clear goal that we were aiming at. This has not once been clear to me, and we have never discussed that together.*

This means that there needs to be a common idea for teaching goals and a shared responsibility for teaching development (Procentese et al., 2019). These were also key findings in Study III. As individuals may have varying goals for teaching (Wosnitza et al., 2014), it is important that these goals are discussed, as it is through this discussion that it is possible to build a shared understanding of the community's aims (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Study III suggests that a sense of community may help the community members enhance shared teaching-related values in the community (see Procentese et al., 2019) and thus build a shared understanding of teaching and learning.

> *We think about together what we could do better, what works, and where we could improve.*

However, the valuing of teaching within higher education communities may not be easy or generally promoted by the whole community (Ginns et al., 2010; McCune, 2021; Pleschová & McAlpine, 2016), and teaching may still be neglected due to other duties and tasks (Laiho et al., 2017). For example, the teachers in Study I described a balance between teaching and research as an important element

supporting teaching, and they noted the need to acknowledge this in the community's structures as well, such as in resources and career opportunities. Although such structures have been included in the formal support of pedagogical development in the context of Finnish higher education (Toom et al., 2023b), the extent of these structures and the extent to which teachers experience them as supportive for teaching are unclear. Study I showed that it is in particular the promotion of a teaching culture of sharing through different sociocultural elements that contributes to the valuing of teaching.

6.1.2   Systematic Promotion of Teaching and Pedagogical Development

Previous research has shown that higher education teachers may lack teaching-related support from their communities (Laiho et al., 2020) and adequate time for pedagogical development (Ginns et al., 2010; Toom et al., 2023b). According to studies I and II, opportunities for community interaction are crucial, and systematic actors and actions are needed to promote this interaction. This also enables concrete teaching-related co-operation as well as collaboration and sharing (see also Katajavuori et al., 2019).

> *They have meetings about teaching a couple of times in a year, where they meet for a day and think about developmental aims. We haven't had that once... I would like to have that kind of discussion and hear what others are doing. So, I have no idea what they are doing, what they go through in their teaching... I was really disappointed when I suggested that we could have an informal discussion about how teaching is going, but no.*

Participants in Study I noted that there were key individuals in their communities who were enthusiastic about teaching and made active efforts toward its development. However, these individuals' active work could be challenged by other community members who, in one way or another, hindered the promotion of teaching. Therefore, it is important that the responsibility for the promotion of teaching does not depend solely on individual teachers, but rather that there are structures supporting the value of teaching and learning (McCune, 2018), including the work of educational developers aiming to influence the disposition of teaching and supporting the communities in valuing quality teaching (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2015).

Educational developers are a key group promoting teaching and learning in various ways and from various positions in higher education institutions (e.g. Debowski, 2014; Eronen & Mielityinen 2022; Felten et al., 2007; Roxå et al., 2011;

Sorcinelli & Austin, 2010). In Study II, this group's teaching-related views were systematically explored for the first time in the Finnish higher education context. Different combinations of teaching approaches were detected among the educational developers. As noted in previous studies, it is important to view approaches to teaching as combinations of different elements (Postareff et al., 2008 Postareff et al., 2023). According to the findings of Study II, interactivity in teaching was positively associated with other important teaching-related elements, such as experiences of collegial support for teaching development. Knowledge of the learning process was also a significant factor in the different combinations of teaching approaches (see Trigwell et al., 2000). Therefore, the findings highlight the importance of supporting the utilisation of interactive methods and increasing pedagogical knowledge. It is vital that educational developers have pedagogical awareness (Postareff et al., 2008) and an understanding of the importance of collegial support in teaching development. Such increased understanding benefits the entire teaching community, as educational developers play a central role in supporting pedagogical development in higher education. Acknowledgement of the connections that were identified in Study II is important as they were also related to teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs (also Postareff et al., 2023).

> *Second, I am not very confident as a teacher so I can't make many changes independently. I would want to have the social environment there, so that even if I did make decisions by myself, I would want to hear others' comments about what could be done.*

Participants' experiences in Studies I and III showed that the community has an important role in strengthening participants' beliefs of their capabilities in teaching-related matters (e.g. Bandura, 2006; Trigwell & Prosser, 2004).

6.1.3   An Interplay of Individual and Community Factors

Study I showed the importance of a supportive sociocultural context for teaching and its development. This finding led to the third study, which examined what it means to have a sense of community and how this sense of community relates to pedagogical development. According to Study III, participation opportunities in the community are important (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2015). These participation opportunities require trust to be present among community members so that they can work together, share experiences (Jääskelä et al., 2017), and promote the quality of teaching (Esterhazy et al., 2021). It seems that trust allows community members to feel that they belong, be their true self in the community (see McMillan, 2011), and engage in the community's practices, whereby 'all parties bring their special

knowledge and skills to the learning community to which they feel they belong' (Salonen & Savander-Ranne, 2015, p. 317). Internal trust and shared responsibility have been found to be important in how a community functions in relation to teaching and learning quality (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2013, Roxå & Mårtensson, 2015). This trust and sense of shared responsibility may enhance individuals' desire to commit to the community's knowledge building (Nagy & Burch, 2009). In Study III, it was seen that a sense of community supports community members in exploring new things and also allows them to make mistakes during their explorations (see also Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Studies I and III indicate that it is important for community members to be able to experience autonomy and influence in their communities' teaching-related practices and policies (see Esdar et al., 2016). Practices and policies need to be transparent, and this means that community members must be able to have open discussions related to the community's values and goals. Engagement in such discussions can also help community members to commit to these goals. This suggests that each member of the community has also a social responsibility to support the community, for example through openness and the acceptance of other members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Higher education teachers operate within their communities through their personal agency (Esdar et al., 2016; Mathieson, 2012; Van Schalkwyk, 2015) and values (Arvaja, 2018; McCune, 2019). Agency in a work context can be seen as a negotiation of a professional's position in a certain socio-cultural context, which may also have constraining aspects (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Similarly, the learning environment for higher education teachers has been described as constituting experiences instilling a sense of belonging versus experiences of being an outsider (Salonen & Savander-Ranne, 2015). Thus, it seems that it is the interrelation between collaboration and the sense of agency that influences a teacher's opportunities to work and develop within the social context. Based on the findings of Studies I and III, it is important that difficult matters can be discussed and community practices may be critically inspected. This, again, requires trust and a safe atmosphere (Nistor et al., 2015; Vangrieken et al., 2017). It has been suggested that the work conditions in higher education should include both encouragement for collegiality and individual working styles (Esdar et al., 2016).

Study III showed that a sense of community allowed community members to rely on each other and gain support for their teaching. A sense of community was seen to support the entire teaching and learning culture and to create a context for development opportunities (see Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Percentage et al., 2019) and by acting as a means toward development (see Vangrieken et al., 2017).

In pedagogical development, I think what matters is not only the individual's own development, but… what benefits the pedagogical development can bring to the whole community. This is how the whole institution also develops.

Thus, a sense of community was seen as contributing to the pedagogical development of the community as a whole, and not just to the development of the individual.

6.2   Theoretical and Methodological Implications

The dissertation's sociocultural lens enabled reflection on teaching and pedagogical development as the interrelation of individual and community-related aspects (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Schoen, 2011). There has up to this point been little research approaching teaching and pedagogical development from the perspective of supporting community learning (Esterhazy et al., 2021; Trowler, 2001), and the different methods used in this dissertation provided more information and enhanced understanding of the phenomenon from different viewpoints.

Study I approached pedagogical culture in relation to teaching and pedagogical development from an element-specific angle. Although the inductive analysis of the large amount of interview data showed connections to previous theories, the study deepened the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon in the context of higher education. Thus, the study allowed a framework to be built for a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. Recognising the important elements of a supportive pedagogical culture makes it easier to promote these elements in practice. The findings of Study I could also be utilised to plan Study III. Study III had a more specific viewpoint and was able to conceptualise the interactive relationship between an individual and a community and build knowledge about what individuals' perceptions indicate about this interrelation. Study III had a conceptual approach, which deepened the conceptual clarity of the sense of community in the context of higher education teaching and pedagogical development.

Study II indicated that certain theory-based elements that are seen as key aspects contributing to teaching approaches (Trigwell & Prosess, 2004), such as the encouragement of an interactive approach to teaching, experiences of teaching-related self-efficacy beliefs (Postareff et al., 2023), and collegial support, should be incorporated into the development opportunities of educational developers. It is seen that these aspects may influence their pedagogical development work in the community.

In this dissertation, similar elements were identified as important through analysis of a rather large qualitative data as well as several other data sets which are typically utilised in a sociocultural research approach (Schoen, 2011). According to Schoen (2011):

> Socioculturalism itself has no real standard for the extent of generalizability of research findings, nor specific goals for the type of knowledge that is most highly valued… Pragmatism, being somewhat of a middle of the road research paradigm, lends itself well to allowing the researcher to make generalised statements that are conditionally qualified and believed to be true in many, but not all instances (p. 27).

It has been reported that higher education teachers from different contexts often face similar challenges related to their teaching environment (Pleschová & McAlpine, 2016). Therefore, it is important to obtain applicable information that can be utilised broadly within different contexts. In this respect, the sociocultural research approach of the dissertation seeks significant community-level findings based on data that have been gathered in different higher education communities and attempts to make observations about these communities in general (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016; Nistor & Fischer, 2012; Nistor et al., 2015). Similar issues have been addressed in international research literature, as noted in the theoretical background of this dissertation, indicating that the findings may be beneficial in higher education contexts outside of Finland as well. Educational developers also work around similar questions in their institutions, and this group can be seen as a broad community in itself, including in international contexts (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). Thus, it is seen that:

> theories are to be judged by their practical utility rather than being ends in themselves; they are instruments for coping with, understanding and living with 'reality'… Our frames of reference, conceptual schemes, categories for understanding the world, are not immutable or eternal, but are creations, our artefacts, useful insofar as they solve practical problems (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 36).

Ultimately, the readers need to consider the applicability of the findings to different contexts (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129).

6.3   Limitations

The dissertation has limitations that need to be addressed. These limitations are related to the participants of the sub-studies as well as methodological issues.

Higher education in Finland consists of two types of institutions: universities and universities of applied sciences. In chapter 4.2, the differences between these two types of institutions were briefly described. The participants of Study I were only from universities, which limits the applicability of the findings to the broader context of higher education in Finland. For instance, even though research is one of the key tasks in both types of institutions, research intensiveness, which is one of the contextual issues shaping support for teaching, is typically found more in universities than universities of applied sciences. The two types of institution have different histories and different missions, which are not addressed in the dissertation. However, one strength of the study is that participants also came from universities of applied sciences, as this context is less studied than the university context. Moreover, the findings of Study I can be seen as a framework, offering a basis for further development and exploration in specific contexts.

Another limitation relates to potential bias, as the participants represented a pedagogically aware group with many years of experience in the field of higher education. Some of the participants were contacted based on their previous involvement in pedagogical development initiatives. As such, the participants of the dissertation were not broadly representative of members of pedagogical communities in higher education. On the other hand, the participants are a relevant group of professionals. The dissertation's focus is matters related to pedagogy, and these participants were among the most likely in their communities to have observed and reflected on such matters. Moreover, the participants described a variety of opposing experiences, which also indicated critical reflections on their contexts.

Sub-studies II and III had rather small sample sizes. However, this is not considered a major limitation as the focus of the dissertation is not on the production of generalisable knowledge. Thus, the readers may consider the applicability of the findings in a variety of contexts as the research approach, process, and procedures have been thoroughly described (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In addition, phenomenographic research considers all participants' experiences to be equally important (Marton, 1981). Special attention has been paid to describe the studies thoroughly, allowing the reader to reflect on their trustworthiness and on whether the participants' perceptions are sufficiently represented.

One concern of Study II is the suitability of the HEAT-inventory instrument (Postareff et al., 2023) to fit within the context of the work of educational developers. The instrument was developed within the context of higher education teaching, and, as noted in the dissertation, educational developers typically hold varying positions and engage in various tasks in their institutions (e.g. Green & Little, 2016; Mori et

al., 2022). However, the participants of studies II and III were a pedagogically qualified group, as almost all of them had completed pedagogical studies. They had also worked in the field of higher education for several years, and despite their varying titles, their work tasks had included teaching-related tasks. Based on the quantitative statistics, the instrument worked well and detected the participants' perceptions, revealing important associations.

In general, more disciplinary knowledge is needed regarding the support opportunities for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education. Although the aim of the dissertation was not to seek differences between communities or describe certain communities, the findings did provide indications about the different situations of different communities. In addition, while the studies highlighted some important elements, other significant elements were undoubtedly left outside of the scope of the dissertation, for example, the specific role of students when building the pedagogical culture within higher education communities.

6.4 Conclusions and Practical Implications

In the dissertation, meaningful elements of pedagogical culture were identified through data gathered from higher education teachers and developers working in different institutions in Finland. In their paper, Van Schalkwyk et al. (2015) expected higher education institutions to take responsibility for promoting environments which create spaces for professional learning and the valuing of teaching. This dissertation elaborated upon this expectation by illustrating the factors that should be taken into account in such endeavours.

The findings suggest that various elements are needed in order for teachers to be able to experience support for their teaching in their communities. When best implemented, these elements—such as a common understanding of the importance of teaching and student learning, common goals for teaching, shared responsibility in teaching development, opportunities to utilise one's expertise and influence the community, and common sharing of knowledge and experiences—would provide a supportive culture for teaching and pedagogical development. For the shared building of knowledge, it is important that teachers have skills for interaction (Salonen & Savander-Ranne, 2015) and that the environment offers places for interaction and promotes trust among community members (Esterhazy et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important that both teaching-related elements and social interaction are supported, thus fostering a sense of community (Procentese et al., 2019), belonging, and meaningfulness for community members (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The dissertation is expected to guide higher education institutions in supporting a sense of community among their community members, not only because this sense

can act as a facilitator for pedagogical development but because it is a meaningful value in itself. One way to support such interaction could be the organisation of collaborative reflection events within pedagogical communities. A recent study of teacher educators in Finnish universities and universities of applied sciences showed that teachers value opportunities for collegial reflection on teaching (Myllykoski-Laine et al., 2024). The participants of the study first responded to a self-reflection questionnaire (HEAT inventory, Postareff et al., 2023), after which they received a description of the teaching-related elements that the questions were related to and feedback concerning their responses. The findings suggested that the combination of individual and interactive collegial reflection is beneficial and provides teachers with opportunities to experience support and enhance common knowledge construction (see also Pekkarinen & Hirsto, 2017). The promotion of teaching-related interaction and a sense of community can foster a culture of support, which further helps the community reach its goals and increase the quality of teaching and learning. This underscores the importance of social interaction in within such communities (Englund 2018; Esterhazy et al., 2021; McMillan 1986).

As noted, higher education institutions are responsible for the establishment of a pedagogical culture of support (see Van Schalkwyk et al., 2015); however, such an endeavour may be challenged by various contextual issues of higher education (Arvaja, 2018; Laiho et al., 2020; McCune, 2021). Therefore, it is important that systematic actions are undertaken to enhance this pedagogical culture of support (Ginns et al., 2010; Katajavuori et al., 2019; McCune, 2018). This requires that the policies and practices of institutions acknowledge this need. For example:

> strategies for recruitment, recognition, and reward must give real weight to participants' being engaging in developing their teaching... annual review should include discussion and facilitation of these developmental processes. Workload allocation needs to take into account that reflecting on and developing pedagogic practice should be mainstream, not pushed to the margins of colleagues' time (McCune, 2018, p. 319).

The findings of the dissertation promote the idea that pedagogical communities share certain similarities and are situated within the broad context of higher education (Nistor & Fischer, 2012; Nistor et al., 2015), with community members interacting and engaging in development work (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016) and enjoying opportunities for the wider sharing of ideas and development beyond specific courses (Jääskelä et al, 2017, p. 663). In other words, the value of teaching could be promoted broadly, beyond disciplinary and situational communities (see also Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). The broad promotion of a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching and pedagogical development in higher education institutions

could also contribute to increased equality in support opportunities among teachers. In FINEEC's evaluation, it was noted that in Finland, pedagogical support is often the task of a specific unit that provides support for different communities within an institution. However, specific developmental units may fall outside the scope of the disciplinary communities and the development of teaching due to many simultaneously functioning processes in the institution (Laiho et al., 2017). Therefore, it is important to consider the way support is implemented so that it is equally accessible to all staff.

The dissertation highlighted elements to focus on and offered knowledge about educational developers' perceptions, all of which could be utilised in institutional initiatives. Educational developers may be seen as working as pedagogical change agents at a broader level in the institution, but it is also important to encourage key individuals who are interested in teaching and its development. Such individuals have much potential to influence their communities to be positive toward teaching (Clavert et al., 2018). In addition, educational leaders are in an important position in facilitating educational development, for example through their 'ability to develop trusting relationships with colleagues and to enable change in teaching and learning cultures and practices' (Fields et al., 2019, p. 225; see also Vangrieken et al., 2017). Study I showed that the opposite of change agents would seem to be those staff members in leading positions in the community who lack interest in teaching and its development. The findings imply that attention needs to be paid to the actors promoting teaching and that these actors should be supported through collegial development (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). It has been suggested that educational leaders need to acknowledge the sociocultural context in which they play a central role in promoting teaching and learning, but they need to profoundly consider their own ideas about teaching and learning as well (Quinlan, 2014). Thus, the teachers, developers, leaders, and institutional managers should promote the supportive pedagogical culture as a collaborative endeavour. The efficacy of educational development may be enhanced as community members work together toward common aims (Eronen & Mielityinen, 2022).

One option for collaborative work would be to integrate consultation opportunities within developmental initiatives, such as pedagogical courses (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). For example, 'individual teachers, who may find it difficult to inspire or persuade colleagues to rethink their teaching practice, can invite academic developers to come to a departmental seminar, or run a workshop, or just participate in a collegial conversation about the chosen topic' (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016, p. 181). In this sense, developers have an important role in bringing community members together (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2016), and they also enhance the development of significant social ties within the institution (Benbow & Lee,

2019). It is crucial to promote the value of teaching and pedagogy and consider how these are related to students' learning experiences.

To conclude, it is important to increase the pedagogical awareness of higher education pedagogical communities and provide them with opportunities for formal development. Providing pedagogical support has long been known to be important for individual teachers' pedagogical development (e.g. Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2008), but there has been little focus on supporting community-level pedagogical development in higher education (Esterhazy et al., 2021). The findings suggest that higher education institutions should direct their focus toward guaranteeing that the environment in which we operate is one in which teaching can be experienced as valuable and that there are opportunities to discuss teaching and pedagogical development, both in everyday community practices and through formal structural elements and institutional practices (see also Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). All staff should be offered a sufficient and equal amount of time to take part in activities supporting teaching and pedagogy, and appropriate spaces should be allocated for such activities to be held. Support opportunities should be provided systematically through different sociocultural elements in the community. In addition, as educational developers play a key role in supporting the quality of teaching and learning, it is important that their role is acknowledged in the community and that opportunities are provided for their professional development. However, it should be noted that educational developers are not a distinctive group of professionals but rather work in varying positions in higher education institutions. Thus, it is vital to identify this group and understand how their professional knowledge could be utilised in the institutional practices to establish a supportive pedagogical culture for teaching in higher education.

6.5   Future Directions

The dissertation provides a basis for several further studies. The findings of Study I are not considered all-encompassing, but they indicate key elements to be considered. As such, they offer a basis for further research conducted in specific higher education communities. The findings hinted that higher education pedagogical communities differ in matters of teaching and the appreciation, promotion, and support for teaching in the community. This may challenge the pedagogical development as well as the wellbeing of individual teachers (see Turner et al., 2022). For example, in explorations of burnout among university teachers, associations have been noted between teachers' well-being and experiences of social support (Virtanen et al., under review). The position of teaching within a community ultimately impacts students' learning opportunities as well (see Vescio et al., 2008).

In Study II, the dissertation investigated the perceptions of educational developers, whose development had not previously been a focus of research (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2021). Therefore, future studies may continue to use diverse methodologies to explore the varying perceptions of educational developers and plan initiatives to support the development of these professionals, as they contribute significantly in building the pedagogical culture in higher education (Roxå et al., 2011).

Study III increased the conceptual understanding of the sense of community in pedagogical development. Future studies should aim to collect more data on this subject and seek to critically explore the actualisation of the sense of community in specific contexts. Thus, a case-study approach is suggested for further research. Taken together, it is important that future studies aim to acknowledge the contextual preconditions systematically as part of the research design, allowing researchers to make in-depth observations of the complex phenomenon with interrelated elements and interactive processes.

The dissertation shows that higher education teachers and educational developers value social interaction, collaboration, and a sense of community. It is important that pedagogical communities are supported within their social contexts (e.g. Packer & Goicoechea, 2000) and that individuals are not left alone with their teaching-related matters. In addition to formal endeavours of support, such as pedagogical training and support services, the focus needs to be on the sociocultural context, which shapes the ways teaching can be valued. Hence, a supportive community is important, both for individuals and the community as a whole. A pedagogical culture that promotes quality teaching and learning can only be genuinely fostered by recognising these findings and consciously taking them into account when supporting individuals and communities.

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