Everyday Institute

THE INQUIRING PRACTITIONER

Martin Lackéus

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Introduction

We humans have studied our everyday lives since time immemorial. We have tried things out, observed what happened, drawn conclusions and adjusted our actions. In agriculture, medicine, community building and much else. Today we see it healthcare, social care, education and social work in the public sector, and in engineering, product development, service, leadership and crafts in the private sector. We call this *everyday inquiry*: the practice of systematically studying one's own work through action, reflection and shared learning. Everyday inquiry has probably always been a prerequisite for doing good work. Especially when situations are complex, when every encounter is unique, and when manuals don't go all the way. That's when an exploratory approach is needed—one that builds on professional judgment.

The inquiring practitioner is therefore not a new ideal. It's an ancient approach, deeply human and deeply professional. Yet for a long time, there has been a lack of language, structures and legitimacy for workplace-based everyday learning. In many organisations, this kind of learning has been reduced to something private, silent, or informally oral. At the same time, demands for documentation, evidence and quality have increased sharply. The result has often been a strange gap—more and more analyses and directives, but less and less room for practitioners themselves to own and develop a deep understanding of their profession. This handbook aims to fill that gap. It is written for practitioners who want to reclaim ownership of knowledge development in their own work.

Professional work always happens in motion. It is relational, situation-dependent and emotionally charged. It cannot be fully standardised without losing what makes the work meaningful and effective. Yet much of the knowledge development concerning professional practice has gradually been moved away from those who

actually do the work. Research, evaluation and development have increasingly become something done *on* professions, rather than *by* professions.

Today, many traditional professions find themselves in what can be described as a professional crisis. Demands are increasing, time is shrinking and complexity is growing. At the same time, more and more decisions about how work should be understood, measured and developed are made by actors far removed from everyday practice: academics, politicians, authorities, consultants and global tech companies. Often this happens with good intentions, but the consequence still risks weakening professionals' own judgment. When others formulate the questions, own the data and interpret the results, power over professional development also shifts.

Recently, large-scale digital data collection—a kind of mass research—has become increasingly common. Various IT platforms silently collect extreme amounts of data about us. Never before has so much data been collected about people's work and behaviour. Such mass research can create overview and make patterns visible that would otherwise be difficult to detect. But it also carries risks, see chapter 10. When complex practice is reduced to numerical indicators and metadata, there is a danger that what is easy to measure comes to govern, rather than what is important to understand in depth. The problem is not data itself, but what is measured and thereby given significance, who owns the interpretation, and who decides what the results should be used for.

Professional knowledge needs to be reclaimed by practitioners themselves. Not in opposition to academic research or large-scale analyses, but as a necessary complement. Many professions carry great social responsibility and therefore need to improve their quality over time. This requires approaches that enable practitioners to collectively study their own practice in scientifically robust yet everyday and time-efficient ways.

This is where Designed Action Sampling (DAS) comes in. DAS is a scientific method that makes it possible for practitioners to try out different actions in their own everyday work, reflect on what happens, systematically yet time-efficiently share experiences with others, and analyze patterns together. The method builds on three simple steps:

- Design testable actions ("Design the doing"),
- Carry them out in practice and reflect afterward ("take Action"), and
- Analyze the outcome together ("Sample the impact").

By connecting reflections to concrete actions and by having many people participate simultaneously, both depth and breadth are created in the learning. Feelings, experiences and lived realities are taken seriously—not as noise, but as important signals in complex change processes.

The method is the result of 15 years of methodological research at Chalmers University of Technology. It's not surprising that the method emerged at a technical university, given the role that advanced digital technology plays in making DAS possible. The research has been carried out in close collaboration with practitioners, primarily in Uddevalla municipality and at the Swedish National Agency for Education, but also in hundreds of other large and small organisations in the public and private sectors. The list of acknowledgments is long, and also includes school developers in Sundsvall, Åstorp, Hässleholm, at Praktiska Gymnasiet, Lärande i Sverige, Frida Education and in many other places.

This book is divided into three parts with ten chapters that don't necessarily need to be read in numerical order. If you're a manager, chapter 7 might be especially interesting. If you're interested in the history of inquiry or in power and surveillance perspectives, perhaps chapter 10 should come first. If you like metaphors, don't miss chapter 9. If analysis is your thing, go early to chapter 6.

In the first part of the book (chapters 1-3), central concepts around DAS and its scientific roots in everyday inquiry in professional work

are introduced. The second part (chapters 4-6) is about how everyday inquiry can be organised in practice, by describing the three steps of DAS in detail—one step per chapter. The focus here is on how DAS is used in everyday work.

Chapter 7 describes the leadership and organisation around DAS, both the everyday and the more overarching leadership. Chapter 8 describes in detail the most common challenges we've seen when practitioners study their own practice, from time constraints and uncertainty to ethics, data quality and organisational resistance. Chapter 9 explores how metaphors can be used to make DAS understandable in everyday work. Finally, in chapter 10, inquiry is placed in a longer historical perspective, from humanity's ancient everyday learning to today's mass research. A discussion is held about what is at stake when professional knowledge development risks being taken over by other actors.

I provide reading suggestions in the form of references at the end of many sections in the book. Quite a few of these references are to my own texts, since this book is a summary of what I've written about DAS over the years. The references should not be interpreted as classic academic references to support various claims, but are simply there so that readers can find more in-depth information if interested.

Finally, this handbook is part of an open and free practitioner training offered by the research institute Everyday Institute. On the institute's website www.everydayinstitute.se, there is an opportunity to read the book together with others, in a format that combines theory with practice. Participants receive action-based tasks in the spirit of DAS to carry out in their own everyday work, and are given the opportunity to reflect collectively on their experiences. In this way, the ideas from the book can be mixed with your own practice in a fine-grained, living and collectively exploratory way. A warm welcome!

Martin Lackéus
Practitioner-researcher at Everyday Institute
Researcher and teacher at Chalmers

1. Introduction to Designed Action Sampling (DAS)

Why should we study our own work? We're already stretched thin. The schedule is packed, the inbox is growing, decisions are waiting. Yet sometimes there's a quiet resistance inside – a sense that we're missing something important. That we're doing lots of things, but not always learning deeply from what we do. That our meetings, routines and projects rarely lead to that slow, insightful understanding that truly changes something. That we get stuck in the same problems and mistakes over and over again.

What if the solution isn't yet another development project, but a new way of seeing everyday work? What if the power of research methods doesn't have to stay at the university, but can also be present in the coffee breaks, client visits, classrooms or conversations between colleagues in ordinary organisations? Working in scientific ways then isn't about writing long reports, but about pausing, looking closer, reflecting deeply on why things turned out the way they did, and sharing that picture with colleagues.

The research method Designed Action Sampling (DAS) is like a microscope. Not one with lenses and slides, but one aimed at the small events of everyday work. It gives us new perspectives on our everyday experience. A conversation that went better than expected, a routine that no longer works, an unexpected idea that took hold. When many people look through that microscope at the same time, something new emerges – a collective learning that is both felt and visible, and that leads to better practice. Everyday work becomes a

laboratory for development, and practitioners become inquiring professionals studying their own practice.

This handbook is about how to build such a culture – how feelings, actions and insights can be woven together into research-informed learning right in the pulse of work, and how everyday work can become a bit more meaningful when we learn to look at it with the researcher's scrutinising and curiously appreciative gaze.

The first idea behind DAS was simple. Let people take small, designed actions in their reality, ask them to write a few lines immediately afterwards about why things turned out the way they did and how it felt, and then analyse the pattern together. Feelings play a key role because they capture energy and friction in the moment, before time distorts memory.

Over the years, tens of thousands of participants in different sectors have tried this way of working, from education and social services to healthcare, industry and public administration. The point is the same everywhere: small actions, close reflection, collective analysis and quick decisions. This makes development more visible, more impactful and more manageable. In this first introductory chapter, I'll describe how DAS is used and what happens when an organisation begins working this way. You'll hear about how practice-based data collection becomes possible despite stress and pressure, how trust is built when you respond quickly to reflections, and how leaders get evidence that actually leads to improved practice.

1.1 How a DAS study works

A DAS study moves through three clear steps that tie together action and learning, see Figure 1.1 below. First comes the design, where a small group of *study leaders* decides on a practice-relevant question to explore and transforms it into a few testable *action tasks* and a manageable number of so-called *tags* for different effects and outcomes. Then follows the doing, where participants in their ordinary everyday work carry out the action tasks and immediately afterwards write short reflections, choose from a set of tags and mark

how they felt. Meanwhile, the study leaders respond to these reflections, ideally quickly, mirroring what has been said and perhaps asking a curious follow-up question. The third step is the analysis, when the material is read in both "satellite view" and "street view", patterns are made visible and decisions are made for the next cycle. Taken together, everyone who participates in this work can be said to be *inquiring practitioners* studying their own everyday work.

Roles and responsibilities are simple: study leaders design, comment and facilitate analysis; participants do and reflect; managers give legitimacy and receive evidence for decisions. Each step is deliberately simplified to lower thresholds, but structured enough to create structure in the learning and generate high-quality data. We'll return to the details in the chapter, but here it's enough to remember three words: design, do, analyse. Figure 1.1 shows how the flow fits together.

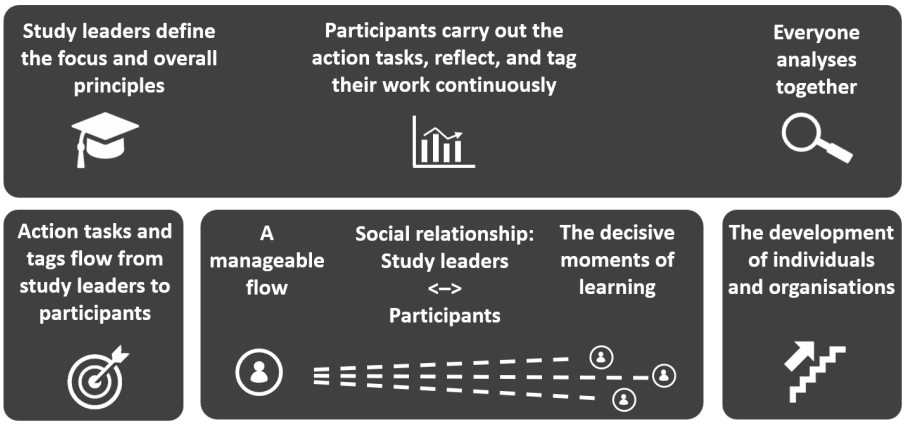


Figure 1.1. The three steps in DAS (revised from Lackéus, 2021, p.73)

Read more:
Lackéus, M. (2021) "Den vetenskapande läraren" [The Inquiring Teacher], chapter 4.

1.2 What DAS is used for and by whom

DAS is a way to transform everyday work into learning that can be analysed and acted upon. The method is used by leaders who want to make decisions based on more living evidence, by practitioners who

want to develop in their work, and by organisations that want to build a culture where people learn collectively from small steps in everyday practice. Practical examples might include managers who want to get cross-functional collaboration moving, coaches supporting teams in change work, social services developing different service processes, and teachers who want to make school development or student learning more visible.

In all these examples, reflections in the moment become a way to see patterns that would otherwise remain invisible. The ability to combine short texts with tags and feelings means that both stories and numbers contribute. There's an important democratic point here – the power of scientific methods doesn't have to be reserved for researchers in academia. When many can participate in small experiments, read reflections together and decide on next steps, the strength of research methods moves closer to practice. Everyone gets to participate. See Table 1.2 which shows typical user groups.

Table 1.2. Some typical user groups for DAS.

Students	**Employees**	**Researchers**
• Wellbeing / health • Conflict management • Work experience in school • Workplace practice • Action-based pedagogy • Vocational education / workplace learning • Teacher education • Learning in Work • Entrepreneurship education • Marketing	• SWOT analyses • Strategy work • Coaching • Motivational interviewing • Project follow-up • Practice development • Support for research-informed work • Professional development • Quality work • Learning organisation	• Impact studies • Follow-up research • Attitude surveys • Action research

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2025) "Designed Action Sampling: Investigating emotional action through micro-reflections". Book chapter in development for anthology on research methodology

Lackéus, M. (2021) "Den vetenskapande läraren" [The Inquiring Teacher]. 10 different examples in vignette boxes throughout the book.

Lackéus, M. (2025). "I have All the Feelings": Navigating the Emotional and Practical Challenges of Research Method Innovation in Entrepreneurship Education ECSB 3E, May 20-22, Munich.

1.3 A variety of completed DAS studies

DAS has emerged through real studies in many different settings, where each context has refined the methodology further. We will now look at some concrete examples. In a series of studies about a pedagogical idea called *value creation pedagogy*, researchers tested how emotionally charged action tasks for students affect their engagement and knowledge development. The many short reflections – a total of 11,000 reflections were collected – made nuances visible on a completely different scale than interviews can offer.

Researcher Jonas Boström's work with the "shark study" – where the DAS methodology was likened to sensors being attached to "sharks", in this case change leaders – became an example of how different attempts to introduce patient-centred care in healthcare can be more or less successful.

In Åstorp municipality in south Sweden, the education department has used DAS to follow and improve different parts of their practice, where they have published lessons about what moves practice forward. Uddevalla municipality has conducted large reading studies that showed how action tasks and feedback can drive both results and pride, something that was also recognised externally through a national quality award called “Guldtrappan”.

Development leaders in Hässleholm municipality developed practice-based systematic quality improvement work with a rhythm that holds over time. Researcher Leigh Morland followed café owners who tried new ways of working with composting. Preschool teachers in several municipalities have used DAS to collectively explore how their ways of relating to others and their leadership shape children’s sense of security and participation. Social workers have used DAS to systematically follow how changed working methods affect relationships, workload and professional judgement.

These examples show a great breadth in how DAS has been applied. At the same time, it's the same simple structure that in all these cases makes it possible to understand cause and effect in living environments. See Figure 1.4 with three covers that highlight some of the studies.

Figure 1.3. *Three example studies using DAS methodology.*

Read more:

Boström, J. (2025). Designing for Quality Emergence in Healthcare–Reflection and Action Mid Sweden University].

Boström, J., Heimer, M., & Lilja, J. (2025). Emergence of learning and quality-using scientific social media facilitating a complex adaptive space in healthcare. Journal of Health Organization and Management, 39(9), 266-283.

Brandt, P., & Viebke, H. (2023). Elever läser - en studie av lässatsning med hjälp av Skolverkets lärmodul [Pupils read - a study of reading initiatives using the National Agency for Education's learning module].

Lackéus, M. (2020). Comparing the impact of three different experiential approaches to entrepreneurship in education. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 26(5), 937-971.

Lackéus, M. (2021) "Den vetenskapande läraren" [The Inquiring Teacher]. 10 different examples in vignette boxes throughout the book.

Magnusson, A., Lackéus, M., Ohlsson, K., & Holmén, P.-E. (2023). Praktiknära SKA-arbete: En ny modell för ett mer meningsfullt och mer vetenskapligt systematiskt kvalitetsarbete [Practice-based systematic quality work: A new model for more meaningful and more scientific systematic quality work]

Morland, L., & Lever, J. (2024). Turn the handle everyday: developing circular practices in hospitality through auto action learning. Action Learning: Research and Practice, 1-19.

Viebke, H. (2020). Vilken effekt kan programmeringsundervisning ha på elevers lärande enligt lärarna själva? En effektstudie av möjligheter och utmaningar med programmeringsundervisning [What effect can programming education have on pupils' learning according to the teachers themselves? An impact study of opportunities and challenges with programming education].

1.4 What DAS achieves that otherwise isn't possible

Many organisations recognise the sluggishness of traditional methods for following up and analysing practice. Surveys arrive late and often lack context. Interviews provide depth but are difficult to scale broadly. Observations require large amounts of time and are interpreted only afterwards. The analysis thus becomes heavy, results are few and far between and participants rarely experience that their contribution is made visible or makes a difference.

DAS tackles these limitations by moving data collection to the moment when something crucial actually happens and tying it to concrete actions that several people can try in parallel. Unlike many other methods, DAS doesn't begin with metrics for follow-up, but with deliberately designed testable actions that are assumed to create value in practice. This gives participants more support in everyday work. Concrete actions are described, writing makes their thinking visible and comments deepen their understanding. For managers, it means an ongoing stream of micro-insights that can be translated into small, clear decisions without waiting for the next thick report that few read anyway. For organisations, it means a learning culture where shared patterns become clearer and where progress, obstacles and risks become shared phenomena, not individual burdens.

It's this combination of pace, grounding and analysability that is missing in much other development and follow-up work. DAS makes it possible to try many small changes in parallel, which lowers risk and increases pace compared to more traditional development work. The gap between action and analysis closes, which means that writing

doesn't become dry documentation after the fact, but instead makes professional judgement visible. Instead of following up and evaluating people's work retrospectively from a distance, we walk alongside practitioners throughout their development journey. We also get better impact from development efforts, impacts that also become more clearly visible. Analysis becomes a collective practice rather than an expert moment, which increases both ownership and usefulness in decision-making.

1.5 DAS as a bridge between theory and practice

Despite good access to research and general models, many professionals struggle to move between theoretical research-based knowledge ("scientific basis") and changes that work well in a complex everyday reality ("proven experience"). At one end we have research's abstract language and models, at the other end we have everyday work's richly varied reality. Two separate worlds.

A useful methodological tradition here is the so-called *design science research* (DSR) tradition, which offers a middle step between theory and practice. This tradition recommends that we create design principles that can be tested and improved incrementally. This is precisely what we do with DAS. Design principles are made concrete in the form of *action tasks* and *tags* that are gathered in *content packages* and tested in so-called *everyday inquiry* – a recurring, practice-based study of one's own practice. Design pioneer Herbert Simon, who laid the foundation for design research around 50 years ago, described this as the *sciences of the artificial*. When we prototype behaviours in real environments through DAS, we are thus engaged in design practice. DAS as a design practice then becomes a working way to bridge the gap between theory and practice through testing, reflection and analysis in real contexts, see Figure 1.5 below.

Another useful concept from design science research is the abbreviation CIMO which stands for Context, Intervention, Mechanisms and Outcome. We need to ask ourselves what should be done (Intervention) in which context (Context) to create which effects

(Outcome) and why this is likely to work (Mechanisms). When many try similar action tasks in different contexts, comparability then emerges without losing local nuances. The analysis then gives not just a list of observations, but also suggestions for design principles that can be taken forward to other contexts.

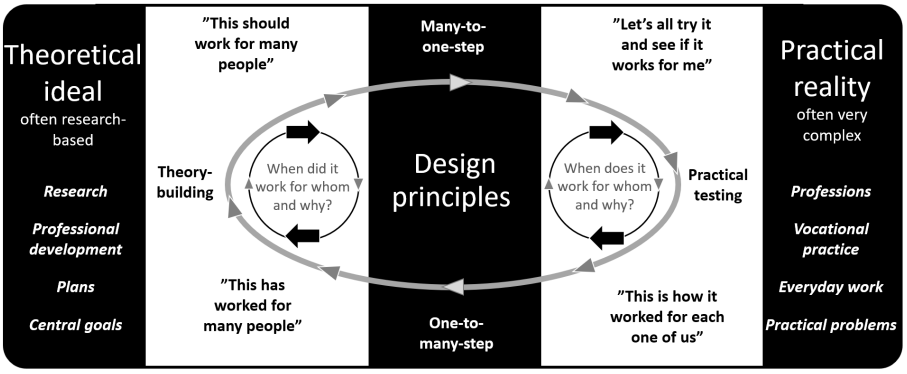


Figure 1.5. *How design principles bridge between ideal and reality (figure revised from Lackéus, 2021, p.117).*

Read more:

Denyer, D., Tranfield, D., & Van Aken, J. E. (2008). Developing design propositions through research synthesis. Organization Studies, 29(3), 393-413.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 6.

Romme, A. G. L., & Endenburg, G. (2006). Construction principles and design rules in the case of circular design. Organization Science, 17(2), 287-297.

Simon, H. A. (2019). The sciences of the artificial, 3rd edition reissued. MIT press.

1.6 DAS gives a finer-grained blend of learning with creating value for others

In many organisations, learning is separated from everyday value creation for others – customers, users, students or others that the practice exists for – despite the fact that it's precisely in daily work that the most important learnings arise. What makes DAS particularly powerful is that the method gives us a finer-grained blend of one's own learning ("learn") with creating value for others ("work"). When people every week try something small, preferably new, that matters to someone else, and simultaneously reflect in writing on how it went

and what insights were made, a balance emerges that many unfortunately otherwise lack in their work. We've previously lacked a term for this balance. I've chosen to call it having a good *work–learn balance*. It's about what happens to us as people when learning isn't separated from production, but is woven into the doing itself. With a good work-learn balance, motivation, competence and quality all increase. Work becomes more enjoyable when we more often see the small mechanisms that make a big difference in our attempts to help others.

Unfortunately, many organisations tend to be unbalanced from this perspective. Practitioners are expected to create value but rarely have time to learn in a structured way, or, learning activities are offered that aren't connected to the actual everyday tasks of work. With DAS, these two threads are woven together in a reasonable rhythm. Small action tasks, short micro-reflection, collective sense-making and adjustment. In Figure 1.6 below, the idea of work–learn balance is shown. The figure illustrates why learning-oriented reflection in everyday work is a necessary part of work rather than a luxury we don't have time for. In DAS, reflection in the moment isn't a pause from work, but a deliberately designed part of how work should function.

Figur 1.6. *Everyday work-learn balance (revised from Lackéus, 2023).*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapters 3, 6 and 13.

Lackéus, M. (2022). Den värdeskapande eleven [The Value-Creating Student]. Chapter 5.

Lackéus, M. (2023). Work-learn balance - a new concept that could help bridge the divide between education and working life? Industry and Higher Education, 38(2), 177-190.

1.7 A golden middle way between numbers and text

Many practices fumble between on the one hand demands for measurability and follow-up, and on the other hand an everyday reality that is too complex to be captured in simple numbers. On one side are rigid surveys and metrics ("numbers") that chase a general objective truth but often miss context and complexity. On the other side are personal experiences collected through oral subjective conversations via for example interviews and meeting minutes ("text"), but which rarely allow themselves to be spread or compared more broadly.

DAS contributes to organisational learning with precisely a method that binds together numbers with text – mathematically analysable statistics are combined with written-down wisdom from everyday work. This is grounded in the philosophy of science approach called *critical realism*. Critical realists argue that there are real mechanisms that affect what happens in practice, but that we can only understand them through incomplete observations in specific contexts. When we through DAS succeed in combining numbers and text, we more easily see such mechanisms, and then the analysis and thus the learning is strengthened. Without strong data, the analysis instead becomes weak, however rigorously it's done. With garbage data we get garbage analysis, which we'll see in Chapter 6.

DAS as a middle way is about letting those who are close to everyday reality lead the work of collecting both numbers and text. Study leaders get access to simple and clearly described procedures for designing action tasks, inviting reflection and leading collective analysis. Figure 1.7 shows a comparison between surveys, interviews and DAS, based on aspects such as philosophy of science, data collection method, governance, analysis and study methodology.

However, DAS isn't about replacing conversations and surveys, but about adding a method that unites different perspectives. We'll return to this comparison at the end of Chapter 3.

Table 1.7. *DAS is a promising middle way between rigid general truths and vague personal experiences.*

Dimension	Interviews	DAS	Surveys
Philosophy of science basis	*Vague subjectivism*	*Critical realism*	*Rigid objectivism*
Data collection method	*Oral conversations*	*Digitally facilitated experience collection*	*Digital surveys and statistics*
Analysis focus	*Text*	*Text and numbers*	*Numbers*
Governance model	*Bottom-up ideas from individual practitioners*	*Learning leadership at middle level*	*Top-down governance*
Study method	*Description of socially constructed meaning*	*Active creation of events that reveal mechanisms*	*Passive observation of facts and regularities in numbers*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 1.

1.8 How to study everyday work in research-informed ways?

Throughout world history, scientific method has contributed to more sustainable improvements than any other way of working. No other method has contributed more to increased quality of life, health and safety. Since Francis Bacon's time (1561–1626), we've experienced 400 years of scientific revolution. Yet it's extremely rare that scientific logic permeates everyday organisations.

Traditional scientific work requires time, competence and structures that few practices outside academia have at their disposal in daily work. DAS was developed to remedy this and make scientific logic more "just right" – or “lagom” in Swedish, an untranslatable word. Rigorous enough to be reliable, but simple enough to work in a time-pressured everyday reality. We call this working in research-informed “lagom”-scientific ways, or inquiring into your everyday

work – becoming an inquiring practitioner. We'll return to conceptual questions in Chapter 10 where we go through well-known inquiring practitioners through time, from ancient Egypt onwards, and put words to who fundamentally is an inquiring practitioner.

Working in scientific ways is in practice less mysterious than many think, but it requires discipline. You start by formulating a testable hypothesis or *inquiry question*, based on a systematic approach that connects actions and observations. You then test it through experimentation in everyday work, document in ways that others can understand, relate pragmatically to what actually works in a given context, analyse with both openness and clear criteria, and continue persistently over time, in repeated cycles.

In DAS, this is translated into a way of working that people can sustain. Action tasks with clear intent, reflections directly after action, quick dialogue that deepens understanding, analysis that combines quantity with meaning, and decisions that are actually tested next week. This way, working in scientific ways doesn't become something that happens far away or only in academia, but a language and rhythm that belong to the work itself. Figure 1.8 summarises these principles, and shows how six scientific principles support each other. When these principles are embedded in practice, everyday inquiry becomes easier to lead and the results clearer to use.

Studying everyday work in research-informed ways means working...	
...hypothesis-based	*How do we test whether the idea works in practice?*
... systematically	*Many practitioners test the same ideas simultaneously.*
... documenting	*All practitioners reflect deeply on outcomes.*
... pragmatically	*Does this work for me and my colleagues specifically?*
... analytically	*Look for patterns, similarities, differences, insights.*
... persistently	*Do more of what works, less of what doesn't work..*

Figure 1.8. *Six principles for research-informed everyday inquiry.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M., Sävetun, C., & Westlund, C. (2020). Lärares vetenskapliga lärande med IT-stöd – vad, varför, hur? [Teachers' scientific learning with IT support – what, why, how?]

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapters 5-7.

1.9 IT support to make everyday inquiry feasible

It's in steps two and three of DAS work that reality makes itself known. Capturing hundreds of short reflections precisely when something happens, connecting them to clear action tasks and tags, responding quickly as a study leader in a human tone, and simultaneously being able to analyse patterns in a fair way is practically impossible with email threads, anonymous survey forms or shared documents on a common file server.

This is why we developed a special IT support for working in scientific ways in everyday practice, a kind of "Scientific Social Media" (SSM) that we call Loopme (see www.loopme.se). An SSM platform does three things at once: it lowers the threshold to act and reflect through simple prompts and mobile access, it preserves the confidential dialogue between study leaders and participants so that the quality of the material grows, and it provides analysis views that bind together the depth of stories with the overview of numbers. In practice, this means that action tasks and tags can be designed as content packages, that reflections come in at the moment with feeling ratings, that reminders are sent at the right time, and that comments keep the rhythm alive. When the material is then to be analysed, there are overviews, heat maps (overviews that show where much or little is happening) and quote clusters (groups of recurring formulations) that make it possible to see cause and effect without losing context.

It's certainly possible to try DAS without an SSM support like Loopme. Many have done so. What we often hear, however, is that surveys lack the relational feedback and that shared documents quickly become unmanageable. Loopme doesn't solve everything, but it makes it easier to work in scientific ways – practically, traceably and ethically manageable, with clear frameworks for anonymisation and

access. Figure 1.9 below shows what the flow looks like from digital reflection on action tasks to collective analysis, and illustrates why a unified digital support tool facilitates work with DAS on a larger scale.

Read more:

Lackéus, M., Sävetun, C., & Westlund, C. (2020). Lärares vetenskapliga lärande med IT-stöd – vad, varför, hur? [Teachers' scientific learning with IT support – what, why, how?]

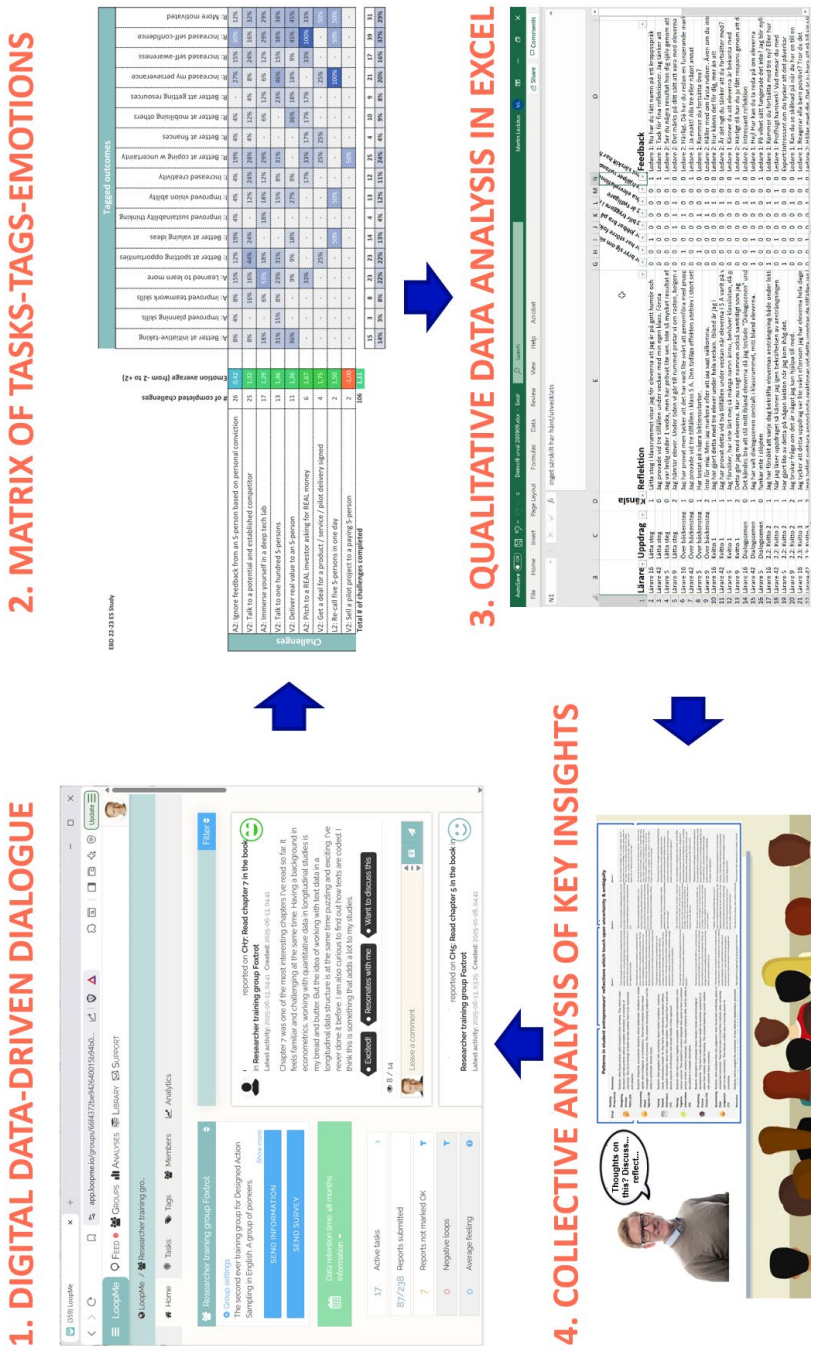


Figure 1.9. *Four-step model for how DAS works together with Scientific Social Media platform such as Loopme.*

2. A Historical Perspective: How It Began and Its Scientific Roots

The methodological journey behind DAS began with equal parts frustration and curiosity. My doctoral studies at Chalmers started in 2009 with a deeply personal question: What had my teachers actually done to me as a student ten years earlier? I had been transformed into an entrepreneur in the haulage industry through a world-unique Master's programme called the School of Entrepreneurship. The teachers paired my group with an innovator in vehicle diagnostics, which completely changed the course of my life. I became a growth entrepreneur in the transport sector. A decade later, I returned to Chalmers to try to understand why. My job as a doctoral student became to work out why this education had such powerful effects on so many people. But traditional scientific methods frustrated me. Interviews and surveys were not enough to make visible—let alone explain—the powerful identity journeys we saw in practice every year, and which I myself had experienced.

That's why I began experimenting with emotion-based digital micro-reflection. The first attempts were small and craft-like. It was initially extremely time-consuming to ask students to write down what they had just done via their mobile phones, how it felt, and why it turned out the way it did. But when we began reading these voices in clusters, we sensed a new kind of close-up science: close to the action, close to the feeling, close to the critical decisions.

As a doctoral student, I often looked back through history of science to see if others had pointed out a similar path before. There were century-old threads of ideas about practice-based science and

design of change, from early pragmatism to modern design science research and action research. There was also a contemporary wave of technology in the form of social media platforms that made it possible to collect many short texts in a steady stream and to respond quickly. From that intersection, a methodology was born with clear steps and a new language for everyday learning.

This chapter tells the story of how it all took shape and how we can understand it today. The first studies, why we dared to try something of our own, how the roots of ideas stretched backwards and how they bound together theory and practice into a usable whole. Figure 2 below sketches our journey and some of the ideas that carried it forward. The figure shows that two parties besides Chalmers have been particularly important for this journey—Uddevalla Municipality and the Swedish National Agency for Education. Without them, DAS would not exist today. They believed in us when no one else did.

2.1 A Methodological Innovation at Chalmers

It all really began with two simple questions to 13 students at the School of Entrepreneurship: How do you feel? Why? Every time something significant happened in their work, we asked them to write a few lines immediately, before memory had time to rearrange the details. In a short time, we had a growing web of micro-narratives that made it possible to follow experiences in real time. When we later analysed the material, we saw patterns that often otherwise remain silent: which situations sparked energy, what provoked, and which events recurred among those who made progress.

From this grew our first published study, where we could formulate conclusions about the connection between emotionally charged events and the development of different competencies. Somewhere there, DAS was also born: emotional action in a real environment, reflection in the moment, and collective interpretation of recurring patterns. We understood that this could be useful for more people, but only if we held fast to the simplicity of the questions and respect for participants' voices.

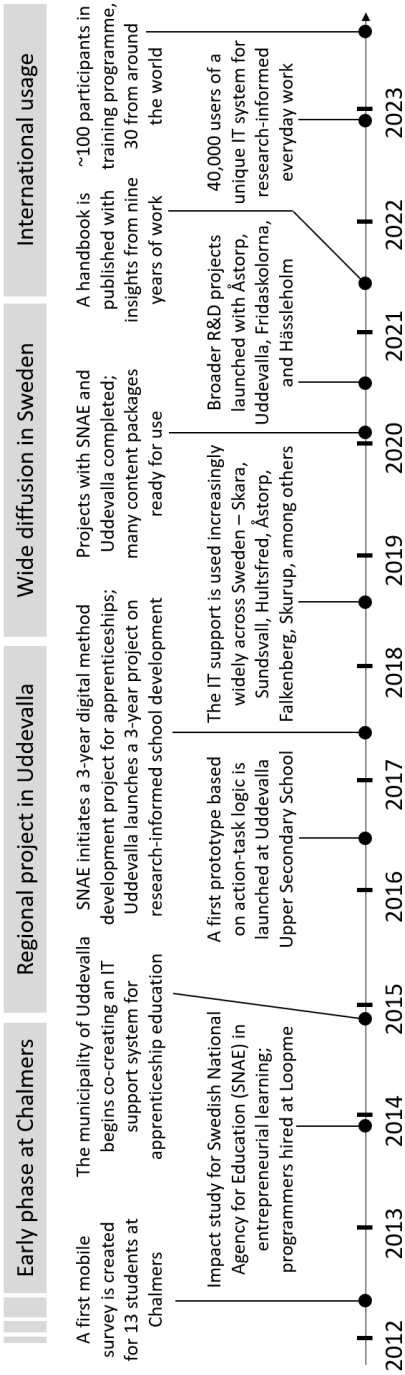


Figure 2. *The journey behind DAS.*

In Figure 2.1 below from the first published study, we can see how emotional events over time drove the analysis forward and gave us a new kind of detailed overview.

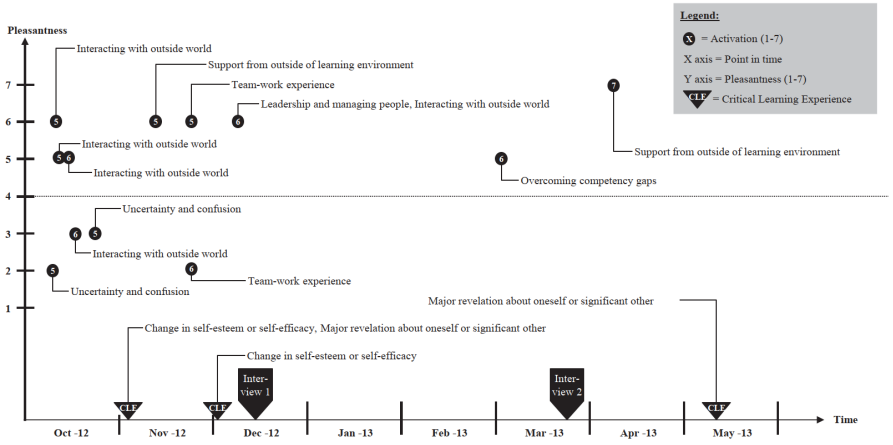


Fig. 2. Overview of app reports and interviews for student Barbara. The app reports preceding each interview were used to inform the interviewer and focus the discussion around significant emotional events triggering learning, facilitating the linking of emotional events to developed entrepreneurial competencies.

Figure 2.1. *This figure comes from the research article "An emotion based approach to assessing entrepreneurial education" published in the International Journal of Management Education in 2014.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2014). An emotion based approach to assessing entrepreneurial education. International Journal of Management Education, 12(3), 374-396.

Lackéus, M. (2015). Entrepreneurship in Education - What, Why, When, How. OECD Publishing.

2.2 An Entirely New Educational Research Tradition Took Shape—Value Creation Pedagogy

With new glasses, we saw new things. What carried students' engagement was rarely the dream of their own legal entity in the form of a company to be started, but rather the moments when their work created something that mattered greatly to someone else. When they wrote about these moments, the texts changed tone: the feelings became stronger, the contexts clearer and the lessons deeper. There and then we began to talk about creating value for others as learning,

not just as a new pedagogical concept but also as an observable mechanism. When students made their own efforts that helped others, and reflected openly on how it went, a kind of learning emerged that reached further. Figure 2.2 below is from my book about our research on *value creation pedagogy* in primary and secondary schools, and metaphorically illustrates how small actions, rightly placed, can move learning to a great extent.

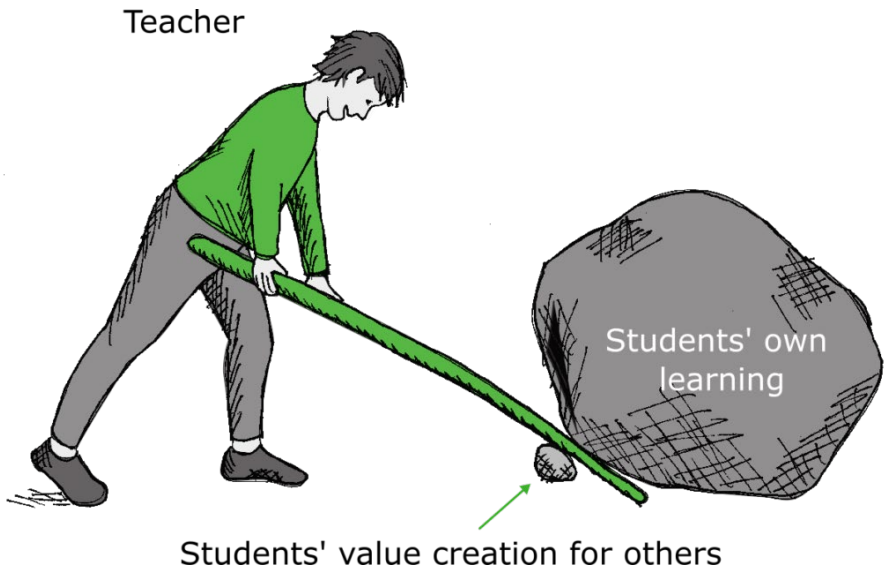


Figure 2.2. *Students creating value for others as a lever for strengthened learning (Lackéus, 2022).*

The insight spread and took hold in different environments, far beyond its first home. But what emerged was not only a new pedagogical idea, but also a new scientific method that made it possible to see things previously hidden by overly crude measurements or vague memory images. When the new method was clarified, anyone could begin to study their own practice, discover which actions actually make a difference, and formulate principles for getting more of it. The democratisation of science's tools lay precisely in this: giving anyone the opportunity to transform everyday work into testable knowledge.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2022). Den värdeskapande eleven. [The Value-Creating Student]. Chapter 1.

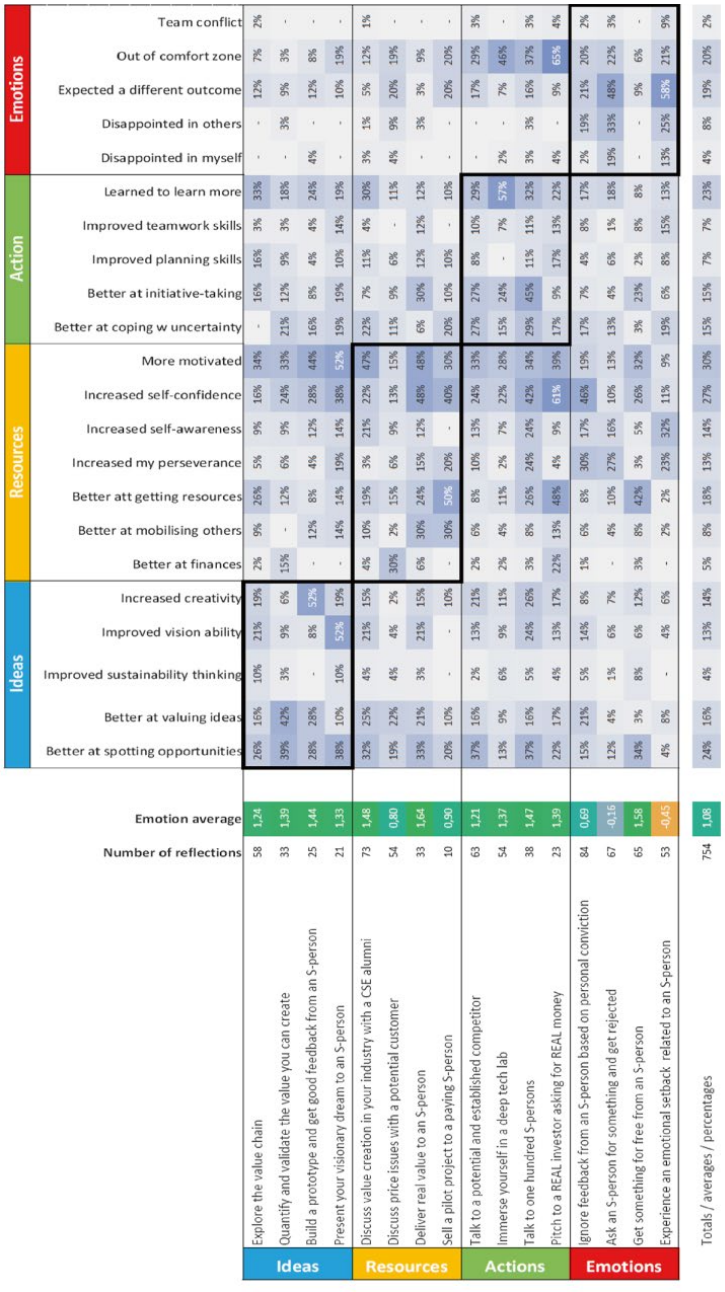
2.3 How DAS Developed Over a Decade

The method took shape layer by layer, as more and more people wanted to try it. From vocational teachers came a sharp focus on action tasks. The doing had to be concrete, feasible and meaningful in everyday life. From university students' ways of reasoning about their own reflections came the idea of collective analysis, where many anonymised quotes are read together to see new patterns. From collaborations with primary schools, a matrix emerged where action tasks meet tags, first drawn manually in Excel, then generated automatically with a click. In a long-term development process with school leaders who believed in us, support for analysis was gradually built, and later AI functions that could cluster texts and suggest themes and even action plans without replacing human judgement.

The small details that make the method robust—reasonable rhythm, quick comments, design of content—came from different practical projects with shifting demands. Along the way, an important insight grew—it is the emotional actions that build the hard-to-capture capabilities. When we mapped entrepreneurial competencies, we saw how action tasks that directed attention outward gave faster learning curves than abstract competency lists for learning objectives. When we followed vocational students, the doing became the leading indicator of what they actually learned. The method thus became not just a way to collect data, but also a language for shaping behaviours that lead to deep learning. Table 2.3 below is from research together with my own students and shows which actions best drive the development of the so-called entrepreneurial competencies in the specific context they find themselves in.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2025a). From EntreComp to EntreAct: Sixteen validated design principles for making people more entrepreneurial In B. Derre & Y. Baggen (Eds.), "Empowering the next generation of entrepreneurial change agents". Springer.



		Ideas					Resources									Action					Emotions				
		Better at spotting opportunities	Better at valuing ideas	Improved sustainability thinking	Improved vision ability	Increased creativity	Better at finances	Better at mobilising others	Better att getting resources	Increased my perseverance	Increased self-awareness	Increased self-confidence	More motivated	Better at coping w uncertainty	Better at initiative-taking	Improved planning skills	Improved teamwork skills	Learned to learn more	Disappointed in myself	Disappointed in others	Expected a different outcome	Out of comfort zone	Team conflict
Ideas	Explore the value chain	26%	16%	10%	21%	19%	2%	9%	26%	5%	9%	16%	34%	-	16%	16%	3%	33%	-	-	12%	7%	2%
	Quantify and validate the value you can create	39%	42%	3%	9%	6%	15%	-	12%	6%	9%	24%	33%	21%	12%	9%	3%	18%	-	3%	9%	3%	-
	Build a prototype and get good feedback from an S-person	28%	28%	-	8%	52%	-	12%	8%	4%	12%	28%	44%	16%	8%	4%	4%	24%	4%	-	12%	8%	-
	Present your visionary dream to an S-person	38%	10%	10%	52%	19%	-	14%	14%	19%	14%	38%	52%	19%	19%	10%	14%	19%	-	-	10%	19%	-
Resources	Discuss value creation in your industry with a CSE alumni	32%	25%	4%	21%	15%	4%	10%	19%	3%	21%	22%	47%	22%	7%	11%	4%	30%	3%	1%	5%	12%	1%
	Discuss price issues with a potential customer	19%	22%	4%	4%	2%	30%	2%	15%	6%	9%	13%	15%	11%	9%	6%	-	11%	4%	9%	20%	19%	-
	Deliver real value to an S-person	33%	21%	3%	21%	15%	6%	30%	24%	15%	12%	48%	48%	6%	30%	12%	12%	12%	-	3%	3%	9%	-
	Sell a pilot project to a paying S-person	20%	10%	-	-	10%	-	30%	50%	20%	-	40%	30%	20%	10%	10%	-	10%	-	-	20%	20%	-
Actions	Talk to a potential and established competitor	37%	16%	2%	13%	21%	2%	6%	8%	10%	13%	24%	33%	27%	27%	8%	10%	29%	-	-	17%	29%	3%
	Immerse yourself in a deep tech lab	13%	9%	6%	9%	11%	2%	4%	11%	2%	7%	22%	28%	15%	24%	-	7%	57%	2%	-	7%	46%	-
	Talk to one hundred S-persons	37%	16%	5%	24%	26%	3%	8%	26%	24%	24%	42%	34%	29%	45%	11%	11%	32%	3%	3%	16%	37%	3%
	Pitch to a REAL investor asking for REAL money	22%	17%	4%	13%	17%	22%	13%	48%	4%	9%	61%	39%	17%	9%	17%	13%	22%	4%	-	9%	65%	4%
Emotions	Ignore feedback from an S-person based on personal conviction	15%	21%	5%	14%	8%	1%	6%	8%	30%	17%	46%	19%	17%	7%	4%	8%	17%	2%	19%	21%	20%	2%
	Ask an S-person for something and get rejected	12%	4%	1%	6%	7%	-	4%	10%	27%	16%	10%	13%	13%	4%	6%	1%	18%	19%	33%	48%	22%	3%
	Get something for free from an S-person	34%	3%	8%	6%	12%	3%	8%	42%	3%	5%	26%	32%	3%	23%	2%	8%	8%	-	-	9%	6%	-
	Experience an emotional setback related to an S-person	4%	8%	-	4%	6%	-	2%	2%	23%	32%	11%	9%	19%	6%	8%	15%	13%	13%	25%	58%	21%	9%
	Totals / averages / percentages	24%	16%	4%	13%	14%	5%	8%	18%	13%	14%	27%	30%	15%	15%	7%	7%	23%	4%	8%	19%	20%	2%
	Number of reflections	58	33	25	21	73	54	33	10	63	54	38	23	84	67	65	53	754					
	Emotion average	1,24	1,39	1,44	1,33	1,48	0,80	1,64	0,90	1,21	1,37	1,47	1,39	0,69	-0,16	1,58	-0,45	1,08					

Figur 2.3. *A matrix showing the connection between what students at Chalmers School of Entrepreneurship are asked to do concretely, and what they learn from this (Lackéus, 2025a)*

2.4 How the IT Tool Developed Over a Decade

To work with the method at a larger scale required more than good will. The IT tool Loopme was built to more easily collect many short reflections in a social flow and provide space for quick dialogue. The first years were mostly about data collection: lowering thresholds, making it easy to write in the moment, and keeping order with tags and feelings. Gradually, social functions emerged and also different ways to sort, filter and invite.

A decisive shift came in 2015 when action tasks became mandatory in the design, which made usage more sustainable over time and the data more comparable. During the second decade, from 2022 onwards, the development of Loopme has increasingly revolved around analysis support: overviews that can be generated in seconds, heat maps that show where effects gather, quote clusters that give patterns a human voice, and AI support that saves time without taking command. Over time, we gained more and more synergies when the platform supported both participants' reflections and leaders' analytical capacity—it spurred both these parties. We learned that technology's role is to make the scientific work easier, not bigger. In Figure 2.4 below from a book chapter in an American methods book, we can see how functions and design in Loopme matured over time.

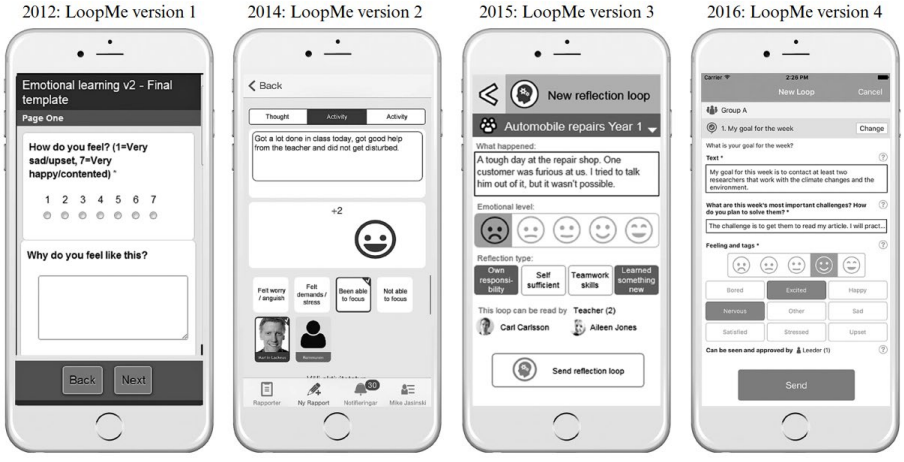


Figure 2.4. *Figure from chapter in a scientific methods book (Lackéus, 2020).*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2020). Collecting digital research data through social media platforms: can 'scientific social media' disrupt entrepreneurship research methods? . In W. B. Gartner & B. Teague (Eds.), Research Handbook of Entrepreneurial Behavior, Practice, and Process. Edward Elgar Publishing.

2.5 Trying to Help Each Other in Everyday Life—Roots in Clinical Action Research

When I searched for words for what we were doing, I found them partly at home. Our research division at Chalmers has a long tradition of *clinical action research*. For us, it's about standing close to practice—the "clients", helping where it hurts for them and simultaneously learning systematically. It's not only in healthcare that one works "clinically"—everyone who has clients they try to help is fundamentally a clinician. Teachers, lawyers, social workers, architects, consultants and others. Action research gave us a form—many people try different types of actions together, change and understanding grow collectively, and the knowledge is returned to those who created it.

In DAS, these ideas took a more concrete form. Action tasks became the unit for a helping action, and the reflection afterwards became the clinical journal where we could follow processes, reactions and results. When several groups work in parallel, comparisons become possible without losing context. The collegial conversation moves from the room to the text and back again, and the question shifts from who is right or wrong, to what actually works here and now. The method obliges—helping is the first task, interpretation comes later. That's precisely why the data becomes better. People notice when the purpose is learning and improvement rather than control and follow-up. See Figure 2.5 below which compares classic action research with our action task-based way of working and how both move in the same direction, but with different tools in hand.

Table 2.5. *How DAS develops clinical action research as a phenomenon.*

Classic features of action research	Comparison with DAS	How DAS develops action research
Collaboration between researchers and practitioners	*Researchers can participate, but practitioners can also work in scientific ways on their own*	*Clarified process removes the requirement that researchers must be involved in the work, which lowers the cost*
Oral learning dialogue among practitioners in focus groups	*Written, structured and confidential learning dialogue, with written confidential feedback*	*Dialogue documented in writing and more confidential, research becomes more rigorous, time is saved*
There are many different ways to conduct action research	*Clear methodological choices, work processes and techniques for data collection and analysis*	*Simpler and less diffuse for practitioners to participate, greater chance of making theoretical contributions*
Reflection occurs orally in groups, some time after completed action	*Reflection occurs individually, in writing and as soon as possible after completed action*	*More reflections become deeper and in the present, and are not coloured by other participants' experiences*
Focus on problem-solving and dialogue between researchers and practitioners	*Focus on experiments and subsequent structured documentation and collective analysis*	*Better conditions to meet critics' high demands for scientific rigour and scrutiny*
A broad flora of different data collection methods	*All data is collected via a form for deep reflection after completed action*	*Great time saving but still improved analytical capacity through mixed structured data*

Read more:

Schein, E. H. (1993). Legitimating clinical research in the study of organizational culture. Journal of counseling & development, 71(6), 703-708.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 6.

2.6 Designing Actions That Can Work—Roots in Pragmatism and Design

We humans like to find universal truths, facts and principles that work everywhere. However, there is a shortage of such truths in complex everyday working life. A more useful perspective is pragmatism—to practically test different ideas' value in practice, to see knowledge and action as necessarily united. DAS is about precisely this. We design actions that might work in a complex practice. Instead of asking ourselves "What works?" for everyone everywhere, we ask ourselves "What works, for whom, when, how and why?".

An action task in DAS is thus a kind of hypothesis about what can help people, a social experiment. It must then be tested practically by each individual person in their unique situation. When we formulate such action tasks, we engage in a kind of design work. We design principles that can be more or less useful in different situations, for different people. How well an action task works in practice, each participant then judges after the attempt.

Pragmatism may sound self-evident, but the fact is that we humans constantly fall into the trap of reducing complex situations to universal truths and mathematical relationships. As soon as easily measurable key figures and numbers are demanded, perhaps in the form of KPIs, we should be on our guard. Philosophy of science scholars call this misstep *positivism*. It's not about being overly positive, but rather about only dealing with established facts. Since there is a shortage of such facts in a complex reality, one is easily fooled. Design science research is here an alternative scientific approach to traditional research that focuses on law-bound observable facts, see Figure 2.6 below.

Read more:

Romme, A. G. L. (2003). Making a difference: Organization as design. Organization Science, 14(5), 558-573.

Table 2.6. *Differences between traditional research and design science research (the table is based on an article by Romme, 2003).*

	Traditional research	**Design science research**
Study object	*Naturally occurring phenomena*	*Artificial phenomena created by humans*
Goal	*Analyse, describe and explain what exists today*	*Creatively change, design and create what does not yet exist but should exist*
Result	*Patterns, laws, relationships between different forces and variables*	*Recommendations, design principles, solutions, useful actionable knowledge*
Form	*"In a situation A, if B happens, then C often follows"*	*"In a situation A, if you want to achieve B, do C"*
Research ideal	*Objective, observing, analytical, emotionally detached*	*Pragmatic, action-based, situation-adapted, engaged*
Challenges	*How to be practically relevant?*	*How to conduct rigorous research?*

2.7 Collecting People's Thoughts in Writing—Roots in Experience Sampling

The core of DAS data collection is simple but effective: let people write when something has just happened. A 50-year-old research tradition called *experience sampling* gave us the logic and discipline. Experience sampling is a classic data collection method in psychological research where participants at random or predetermined times in everyday life briefly report what they are doing, how they feel and in what context, so that experiences are captured in real time. The written format has several advantages. It makes thinking visible, it scales without losing nuance, and it can be read again, alone and together. When the

reflection also contains feelings, it becomes not just a report, but also a temperature gauge of energy and friction.

We therefore ask not only for participants' reflection on what happened, but also on how it felt and why they thought it turned out the way it did. Over time, this becomes a form of written collegial learning, where participants' texts become shared knowledge that can be sorted, quoted and recirculated.

When the same people write many times over time, the value becomes even greater. This is called working *longitudinally* and means we see shifts in behaviours, language, motives and soft factors. Then one can follow both personal learning curves and organisational shifts. It's not about replacing conversation or numbers, but about giving them a stable backbone. Figure 2.7 compares writing, speech and numbers and shows why text in the moment gives a particular kind of evidence.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 7.

Larson, R., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1983). The experience sampling method. In M. Csikszentmihalyi (Ed.), Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pp. 21-34). Springer Nature.

Stone, A. A., Shiffman, S. S., & DeVries, M. W. (2003). 2 - Ecological momentary assessment. In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, & N. Schwarz (Eds.), Well-being: The foundations of hedonic psychology. Russell Sage Foundation.

***Table* 2.7.** *Comparison between oral, written and number-based communication (table from Lackéus, 2021, p.130).*

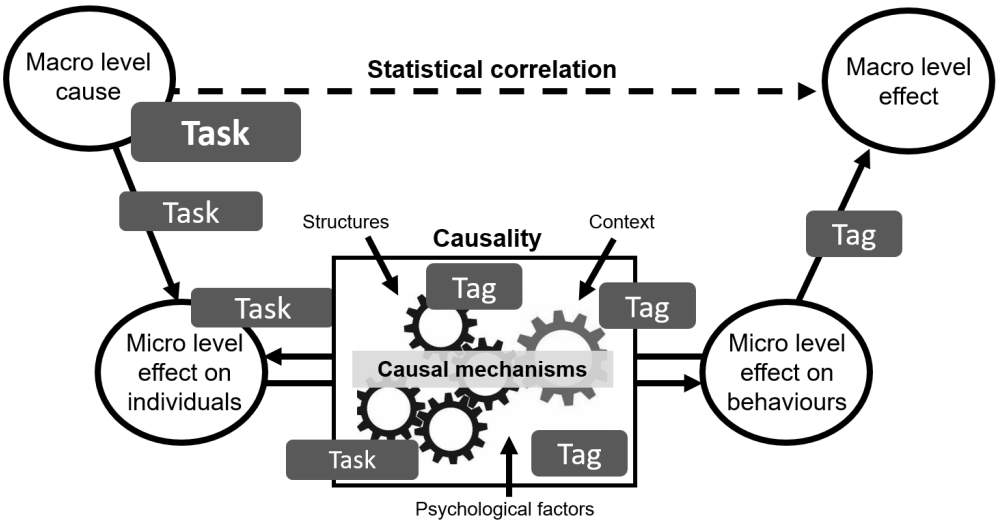
	Oral communication	**Written communication**	**Communication through numbers**
Depth of understanding	*Very large*	*Large*	*Small*
Time spent in production	*Small*	*Small*	*Small*
Time spent in analysis	*Very large*	*Medium*	*Medium to small*
Spreadability	*Small*	*Medium to large*	*Large*

2.8 Analysing Cause-Effect Relationships—Roots in Critical Realism

To understand a phenomenon in depth requires more than measurement—it requires a language for cause-effect relationships. The philosophy of science tradition of *critical realism* gave us that language. We connect actions to subsequent reflection at the micro level and then look for recurring patterns that can be explained by underlying forces—expectations that change behaviours, visibility that creates responsibility, small risks that tempt initiative.

Let's take an example of an action task: "End the meeting with a 60-second round about what became clear". In team A, the tag "clarity" increases and the feeling moves towards positive. The effect may be that the turn-taking makes it easier to speak. In team B, the effect is absent. The effect is perhaps blocked by low psychological safety. When we then read quotes in clusters and place them alongside tags and feelings, such differences become visible: same action task, different outcomes, different active forces.

This illustrates something that in critical realism is called *mechanisms*, not just *correlations* as it's called in statistics. Visualisations help us see these mechanisms without simplifying away the human aspects. The heat map over action tasks and tags shows where effects gather, while the quotes give the underlying mechanisms voice and contour. We interpret cautiously and formulate a testable design principle: "In context C, do intervention I to achieve outcome O, because mechanism M works there." (cf. CIMO as described in section 1.5). Then we test whether the principle holds in the next cycle. That's how mechanisms for cause and effect become more than words: they become decisions and changes that make a difference in the real world. Figure 2.8 is called Coleman's boat, a classic figure in critical realism that shows how we move from structure to individual and back again in our interpretation of what we study.



Figur 2.8. *DAS is about trying to explore cause-effect patterns at the micro level (figure revised from Lackéus, 2021, p.90)*

Read more:

Elster, J. (1989). Nuts and bolts for the social sciences. Cambridge Univ Press.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 5.

Ylikoski, P. (2019). Mechanism-based theorizing and generalization from case studies. Studies in History and Philosophy of Science, 78, 14-22.

2.9 We Build a Research-Informed Learning Organisation

The dream of a learning organisation has existed for a long time, but often it has remained value-based words. With DAS, the dream becomes more possible to achieve. When people get to reflect confidentially about sensitive questions in their everyday work, when leaders mirror with respect and when patterns are read together, then the tone of conversation changes. We move from defence to exploration, from what the researcher Donald Schön calls a Model 1 organisation towards a Model 2 organisation, see Figure 2.9 below. Small decisions are made more often and closer to the floor, and knowledge circulates through so-called *communities of practice* that share action tasks and design principles across boundaries.

In the long term, what we call a *"lagom"-scientific research-informed culture* emerges where evidence doesn't mean heavy reports, but visible patterns that help us do the next thing better. We get an organisation that both produces value for its customers or users, and simultaneously learns deeply about how value comes into being, in the midst of the flow. However, it requires courage to dare to write honestly, patience to read and discipline to persist, but the reward is a way of working that lasts. The three steps in DAS are then layered on each other into a structure that carries—not as a template from above, but as a shared craft for learning-oriented value creation.

Read more:

Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1978). Organizational Learning: A theory of Action perspective. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 6.

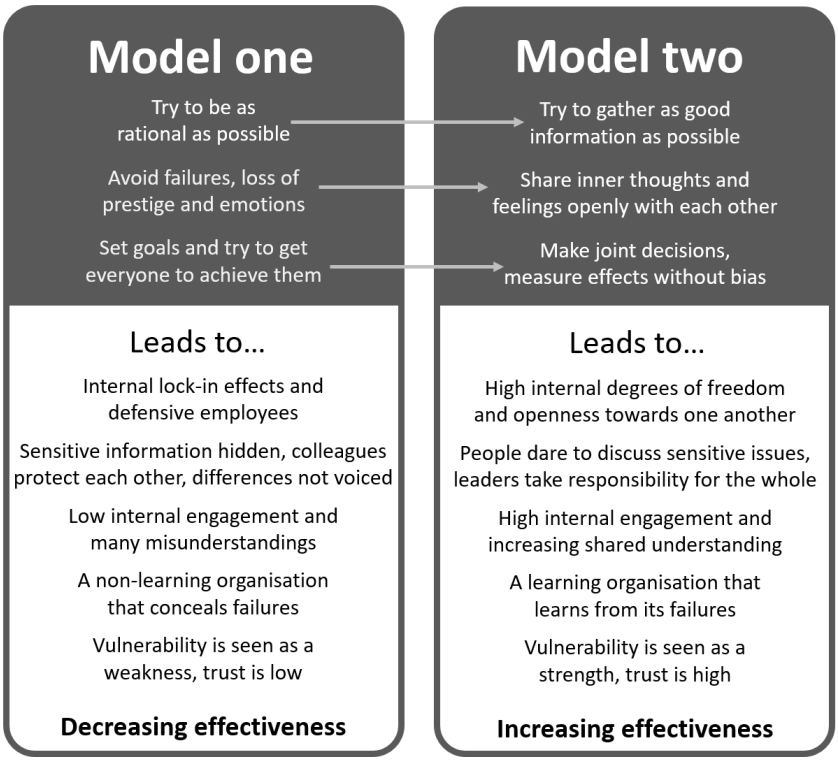


Figure 2.9. *A vision for a learning organisation proposed by the researchers Argyris and Schön in the 1970s (Argyris & Schön, 1978).*

3. How DAS Works: Three Steps and Six Key Concepts

This chapter provides an overview of how the DAS method works in practice. Following the first two chapters about the ideas underpinning DAS and why the method emerged, this chapter explains how the work proceeds at an overall level—step by step and concept by concept. DAS always moves through three steps: design, action, and sampling with associated analysis. In the design phase, the purpose, action tasks, tags and pace are shaped. In the next step, action, the tasks are carried out and reflections are written while the experience is still fresh in memory. In the third step, the empirical material is analysed together, both in numbers and in narratives, until patterns and conclusions emerge.

To understand DAS, you also need to know six central concepts that recur throughout the process: *form*, *action task*, *tag*, *feeling*, *comment thread* and *content package*. Together they form the structure that makes it possible to design, analyse and share everyday experiences in ways that are both practical and scientific. This chapter describes each step and each concept in turn—how it works, why it exists, and what role it plays in the whole.

3.1 Step 1: Design of Purpose, Action Tasks, Tags and Pace

Work with DAS begins by shaping the framework for the study itself—the purpose, action tasks, tags and pace. Everything starts from a clear and engaging *inquiry question*. It should be specific enough to

be investigated through the data that will later be collected, but also meaningful enough to spark engagement among all who participate. A good inquiry question focuses on a defined phenomenon, uses clear concepts, is open rather than yes-no oriented, and points toward a possible contribution. When the question feels both important and personal, a powerful driving force is created throughout the process.

The next step is to design testable actions—the action tasks that participants will carry out. Kolb's learning cycle is used as guidance here: plan, act, feel, reflect, see Figure 3.1. Each action task describes a concrete action that is expected to lead to learning when followed by reflection. A selection of tags is connected to these action tasks—short, precise phrases of no more than five words that capture the effects, experiences, or behaviours of particular interest.

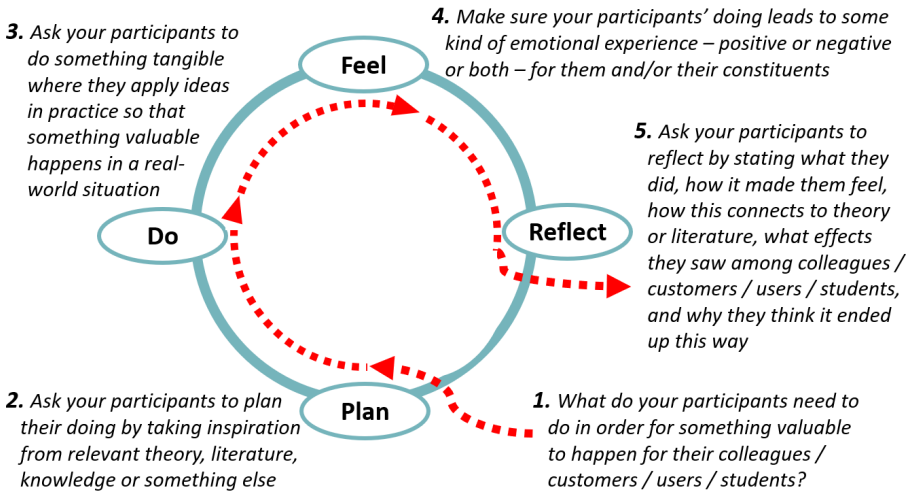


Figure 3.1. *Kolb's learning cycle applied to action task design in DAS.*

Finally, ethical frameworks and pace are established. Decisions are made about who reads what, who gives feedback, how data will be handled, and how often reflections should be made. These choices provide both security and rhythm to the work and form the foundation on which the rest of the DAS process can be built.

Finally, you establish ethical boundaries and pace. Who reads what? Who gives feedback? How will data be handled? How often

should people reflect? These choices provide both security and rhythm to the work and form the foundation on which the rest of the DAS process can be built.

Read more:

Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Prentice Hall.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. Kapitel 5.

3.2 Step 2: Let Others Take Action and Reflect

When purpose, action tasks and tags are formulated, it's time to invite others to participate. This is the moment when a DAS study comes to life. Participants try the designed action tasks in their own everyday lives and then reflect on their experiences in a digital form. The reflections function as a bridge between action and analysis—each time a participant carries out an action task, a reflection is made afterwards, which makes it possible to collect data while learning is ongoing.

Managing many participants and large amounts of reflections in this step requires digital support. In our handbook, we use the IT support Loopme to explain DAS, a platform developed by researchers at Chalmers specifically for DAS-based data collection and analysis. In a tool like Loopme, the study leader creates a group, enters their action tasks and tags, and then invites all participants to register, which happens via email or through a code displayed on the board or projector screen.

When reflections start coming in from participants, the experience becomes a bit like on a social media platform, see figure 3.2 below. This enables a relationship to be established between study leaders and participants. It's then important to give feedback quickly—preferably within one to two days. The personal response from study leaders shows that each reflection is taken seriously, which strengthens the relationship, engagement and depth of reflection in continued work. The comments that get written also become part of the data material that is later analysed. This step can last anywhere

from a few hours to over a year, depending on the scope and character of the action tasks. Regardless of timeframe, it's crucial that participants experience the process as meaningful, otherwise both action and reflection will be absent.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2020). Collecting digital research data through social media platforms: can 'scientific social media' disrupt entrepreneurship research methods? . In W. B. Gartner & B. Teague (Eds.), Research Handbook of Entrepreneurial Behavior, Practice, and Process. Edward Elgar Publishing.

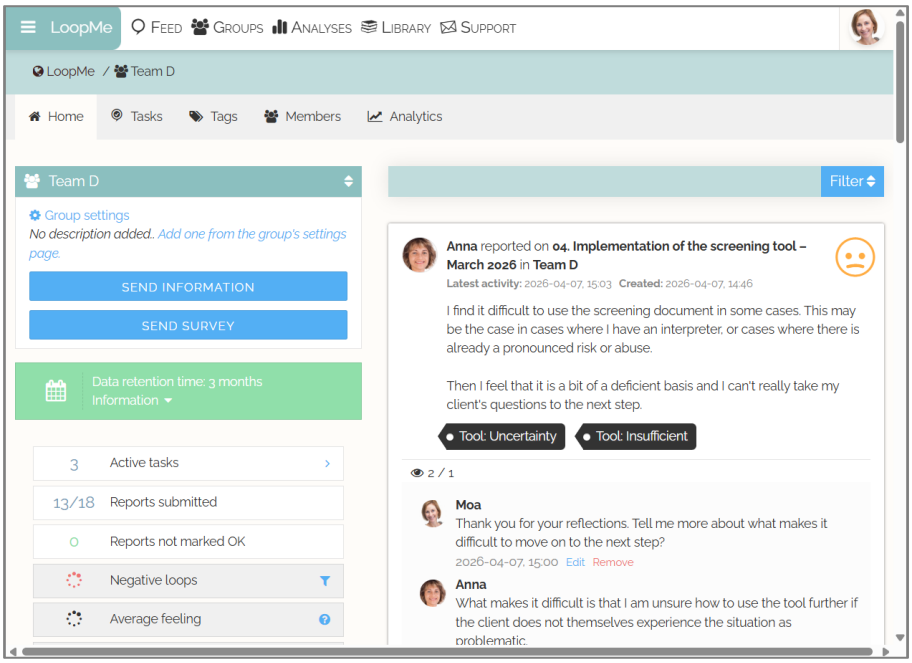


Figure 3.2. *Loopme as an example of a scientific social media platform.*

3.3 Step 3: Sample the Effect - Analyse All Collected Data Together

Already when participants have been invited, the final phase begins—analysing the material. In DAS, this happens in three steps that together make the analysis both deep and participatory. First, the flow of incoming reflections is followed in real time. This *formative* analysis—while the study's outcome is still being "formed"—gives an

early sense of what is happening and makes it possible to discover tendencies and patterns. Reading and commenting on participants' texts becomes like following their learning journeys up close—a kind of ethnographic participation that both documents your thoughts during the journey and deepens understanding.

When all reflections have come in, a more systematic processing of the data is done. Here statistics are compiled about number of reflections, average feelings, tags and action tasks. The overview with numbers gives a "satellite view" of the whole, while close reading of selected reflections offers a "street view" where details and cause-effect patterns emerge. The combination of numbers and text makes it possible to see both breadth and depth in participants' experiences.

The third analysis step is collective analysis, where compilations are shared with all participants. This can be done digitally or in workshop form. Together you interpret what you see, compare insights, and also collect new reflections. In this way, analysis doesn't become an ending, but a shared learning process where understanding grows and is anchored among all who participated. Collective analysis creates a strong sense of participation and meaningfulness, because everyone gets to contribute to interpreting the results and see how their own experiences become part of a larger shared learning. Figure 3.3 below shows an example of a *task-tag matrix*, which is a common type of data analysis compilation. In the tool Loopme, such matrices can be generated with a click of a button and then analysed interactively—each cell in the matrix can be clicked to see the underlying reflections.

3.4 The DAS Form – Captures Everyday Life and Provides Rhythm

In the DAS method, a special form is used that constitutes the fixed structure through which all data is collected. Figure 3.4 below shows what the form looks like and how the different parts work together to transform everyday events into researchable knowledge.

		Number of loops	Average feeling (from -2 to 2)	Tags: Disappointed in myself	Disappointed in someone else	Become braver	Received feedback	Got someone with me	Dealing with uncertainty	Conflict/disagreement	Increased self-awareness	Practiced my creativity	Practiced communication	Surprised negatively	Positively surprised	Other	Strengthened my business acu...	Strengthened self-confidence	Trained my endurance	Outside my comfort zone
Tasks	1. Sell the value of events as a marketing channel	35	0.97	3%	3%	9%	29%	11%	3%	-	6%	14%	54%	3%	14%	3%	20%	9%	-	14%
	2. Contact a prospect (company)	35	0.77	6%	3%	11%	17%	9%	11%	-	9%	11%	54%	-	9%	6%	20%	11%	-	20%
	3. Contact another prospect (not an AB)	34	0.32	18%	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%	-	3%	15%	38%	-	3%	9%	6%	15%	3%	26%
	4. Hold a meeting with a SF person	35	1.06	-	-	6%	31%	3%	3%	-	3%	6%	40%	3%	20%	20%	9%	6%	-	3%
	5. Conduct a sales meeting with a prospect you con...	30	-0.20	10%	10%	13%	-	3%	10%	10%	7%	7%	13%	-	3%	33%	7%	7%	7%	13%
	6. Screen your warm leads and make sure you close	34	1.38	-	-	6%	6%	18%	3%	-	6%	26%	41%	3%	38%	6%	9%	12%	6%	3%
	7. Have an initial introductory meeting with your hos...	28	1.32	-	-	14%	7%	18%	7%	-	7%	14%	61%	-	32%	21%	25%	18%	-	14%
	8. Reflect on your learning	29	1.10	-	3%	34%	10%	7%	14%	3%	14%	17%	38%	-	28%	14%	21%	34%	7%	38%
	Totals	**260**	**0.84**																	
	Number of loops tagged with			**12**	**8**	**31**	**36**	**24**	**18**	**4**	**17**	**36**	**111**	**3**	**47**	**35**	**37**	**35**	**7**	**42**
	Amount of loops tagged with			**5%**	**3%**	**12%**	**14%**	**9%**	**7%**	**2%**	**7%**	**14%**	**43%**	**1%**	**18%**	**13%**	**14%**	**13%**	**3%**	**16%**

Figure 3.3. *Example of a task-tag matrix where different action tasks have been tagged in different ways by around 30 participants. This example relates to value creation pedagogy in higher education. A group of students has tried to engage external stakeholders in a collaboration where they jointly organise a marketing event.*

Read more about value creation pedagogy in higher education:

Lackéus, M., Hyldegård, J. S., & Færgemann, H. M. (2025). Value creation pedagogy across disciplines in higher education: Approaches and motivations. International Journal of Management Education, 23(3), 1-14.

The DAS form is used digitally and filled in directly after each completed action. It consists of a few open questions where the participant describes what was done, how it felt and what effects occurred. In addition, there is a feeling rating, choice of keywords to categorise the experience, and at the bottom a comment field where the study leader can initiate a dialogue with the participant about that particular action and reflection. In this way, both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of everyday experiences are captured.

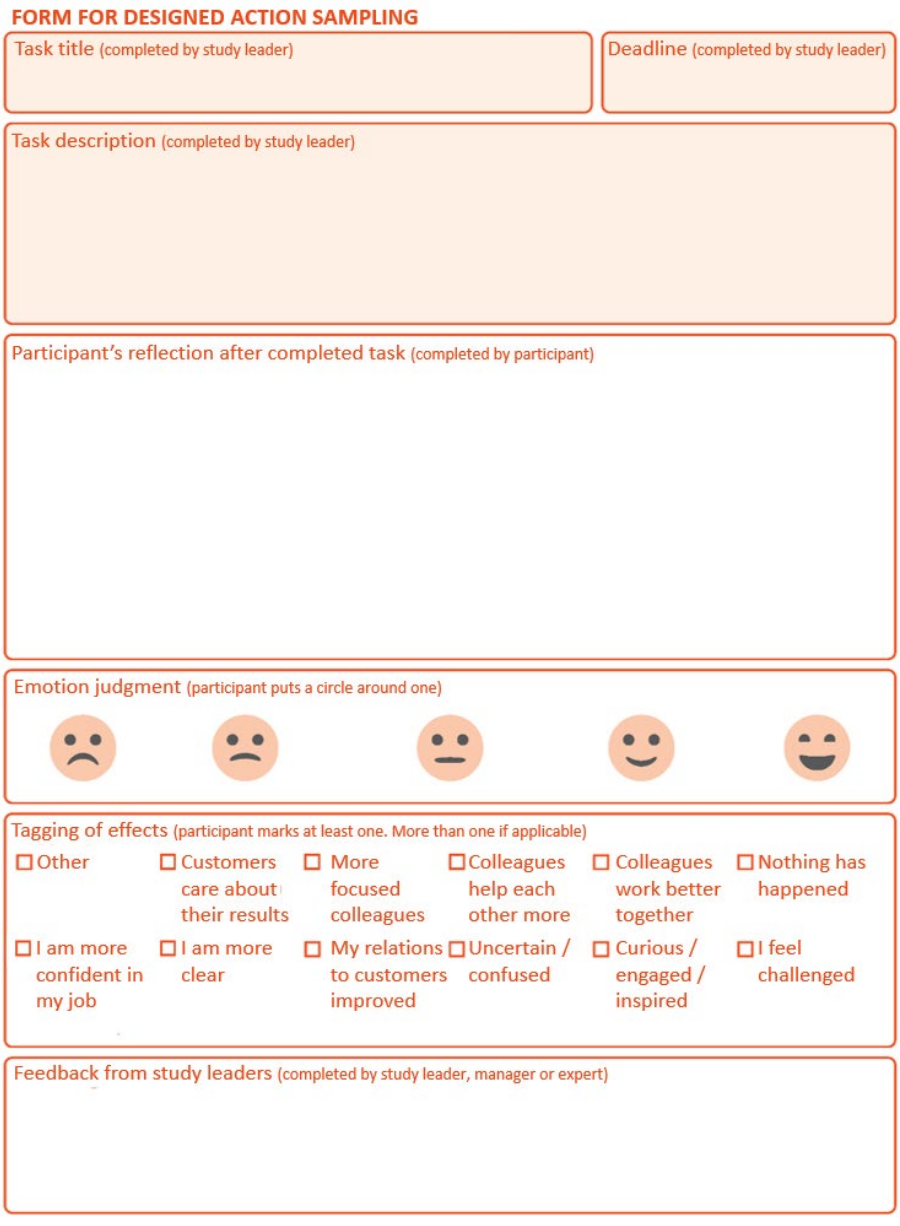


Figure 3.4. *The form for DAS – only the tags are filled in in this example.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 4.

The form is used not only to document insights and effects, but also to enable learning in the moment. It helps people reflect on their actions, make their experiences visible, and contribute to a shared analysis of what works, why and in what contexts. By being filled in continuously, it becomes a rhythmic part of the DAS process—each action is followed by a reflection, and each reflection becomes a data point in a growing knowledge system.

3.5 Action Task – An Experiment That Generates Learning

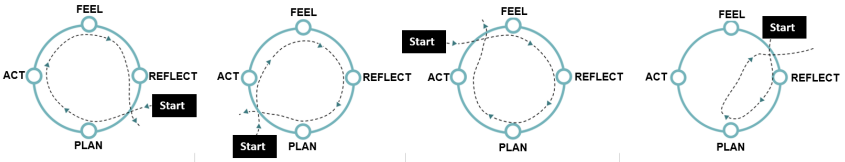
The action task is the core of DAS method because it transforms everyday actions and thoughts into high-quality scientific empirical data. An action task is a carefully thought-through action that is designed to evoke learning and insights among participants through practical doing. It is thus a kind of carefully formulated trial, a social experiment that is carried out by many participants and is always followed by written individual reflection. Action and reflection are thereby closely connected, which makes each action task a microscopic research process in itself. Ideally, each action task is also designed based on the inquiry question being explored, and which participants are keen to get answers to.

Actions can take many different forms. It might involve asking someone for something and being rejected, seeking feedback on a particular idea, trying a new way of working, speaking with different people in your network about something specific, testing a new method in customer contact, having a difficult conversation, or inviting a colleague to joint problem-solving. Regardless of form, the action task should feel meaningful and allow space for emotional engagement, because feelings often signal that something important has happened. Then the reflections become more interesting.

It's not always that action fits. Action tasks can therefore also be of a more reflective character. Figure 3.6 below describes four different basic types of action tasks: (1) planned actions that test an idea in practice, (2) attitude-changing actions that aim to try a very simple

action that doesn't require any planning beforehand, (3) reflection based on any emotionally strong event, and (4) pure theme-based reflection around a given topic. A common application of pure reflection is the so-called SWOT analysis, where DAS is used to collect reflections from a group of employees about how they view the organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

In Chapter 4, we go more deeply into how action task design works.



Task type	Planned reflective action	Attitude-changing action	Emotional event based reflection	Topic-based reflection
Step 1	Do a carefully planned activity	Do a very simple activity, preferably emotional	Pick a lived emotional event	Think about a given topic
Step 2	Reflect once the activity is done	Reflect once the activity is done	Reflect upon the emotional event	Reflect upon the given topic
Examples	"Develop your own personal cold-calling method. First, conduct five successful cold-calls. Then, reflect upon your favourite methods for making successful cold-calls."	"Share an insight with someone in another team. Reflect here in LoopMe what insight you shared and why you chose to share it. What did you learn by sharing your insight?"	"When you have had a really emotional and critical event related to your project, document the event and reflect upon it. What did you learn? How is it affecting you going forward?"	"Reflect individually upon today's group discussion seminar. What were your key take-aways from the seminar? How are these learnings related to literature and theory?"

Figur 3.5. *Four different task types, illustrated with Kolb's learninc cycle.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2020). Collecting digital research data through social media platforms: can 'scientific social media' disrupt entrepreneurship research methods? . In W. B. Gartner & B. Teague (Eds.), Research Handbook of Entrepreneurial Behavior, Practice, and Process. Edward Elgar Publishing.

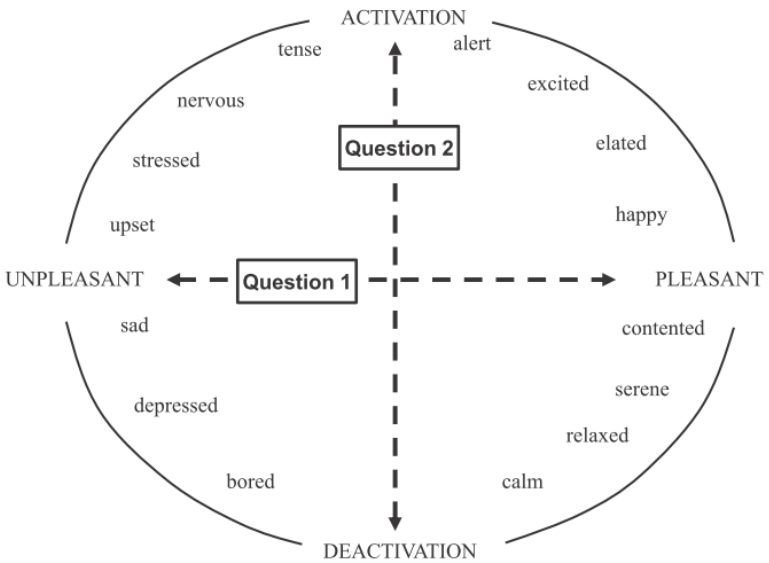
Lackéus, M., Sävetun, C., & Westlund, C. (2020). Lärares vetenskapliga lärande med IT-stöd – vad, varför, hur? [Teachers' scientific learning with IT support – what, why, how?]

3.6 Feeling Rating – When Feelings Become Scientific Data

Feeling rating is DAS method's way of systematically capturing the emotional side of human action. Each time a participant has carried out a task, their feeling must be rated—a choice among five possible

alternatives, from strongly negative (−2) to strongly positive (+2). This happens via a simple button press in the digital form, linked directly to the written reflection. In a few seconds, the feeling is transformed into data, which makes it possible to analyse how people actually experience their actions in the moment.

Behind this simple move lies solid science. The feeling scale is based on the so-called *Circumplex model of affect* (see Figure 3.6 below), which places feelings along two axes—valence (positive–negative) and activation (low–high energy). In DAS, primarily the valence dimension is used, which provides a clear and user-friendly measurement of the emotional direction of experiences. The design has also drawn inspiration from the *Self-Assessment Manikin*, a non-verbal method for expressing one's feelings through visual symbols, in this case via five emojis, which makes the rating quick, intuitive and inclusive.



Figur 3.6. *The Circumplex Model of Affect (Russell, 1980; Lackéus, 2014). The model shows feelings along two axes: valence (positive–negative) and activation (low–high energy).*

Feeling rating also helps participants. Pausing, sensing and rating the feeling deepens reflection. The feeling rating thus becomes both research data and reflection support. It shows when something feels meaningful, challenging or joyful, and points to the moments where learning is most alive. In the analysis, mean values for feelings are then linked to reflections, tasks and tags, which makes it possible to identify patterns in how different actions affect feelings, thoughts and development. Strong feelings, positive or negative, often signal that something important has occurred.

Read more:

Russell, J. A. (1980). A circumplex model of affect. Journal of personality and social psychology, 39(6), 1161.

Lackéus, M. (2014). An emotion based approach to assessing entrepreneurial education. International Journal of Management Education, 12(3), 374-396.

3.7 Tags – Indicators of Interesting Effects and Experiences

A tag in the DAS method is a brief phrase of no more than four to five words that summarises an experience, an effect or a behaviour of interest in the learning process. Tags can be both positively and negatively charged. They are displayed as digital buttons in the DAS form. The participant chooses the tag or tags that best describe the experience of a completed action task. In this way, complex experiences are transformed into structured data, without losing the connection to the person's own interpretation of the event.

Tags provide a quick overview of what participants experienced as important, meaningful or difficult, and simultaneously function as indicators of how the attempt to do something valuable in everyday life went. The tags constitute the numerical "door in" to a qualitative analysis of connections between causes (the action tasks) and effects (the resulting experiences participants write about). When many participants choose the same tags in connection with a particular action task, patterns emerge that show different effects in different contexts.

In practice, suitable tags are often chosen and designed together with participants at the beginning of a DAS study. Being involved in formulating tags creates participation—"What effects do we want to see?" New tags can also be created continuously based on patterns in participants' reflections. Examples of tags might be "New insight", "Improved relationships", "Meaningful", or "Difficult". Together they form a map of experiences and effects in everyday life.

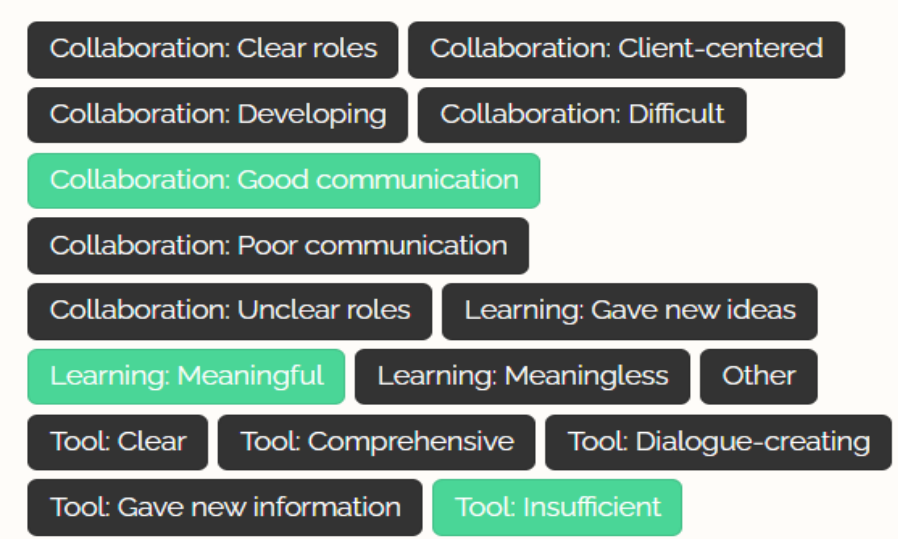


Figure 3.7. *An example of a set of tags in a study about teaching in schools.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 7.

3.8 Comment Thread – Confidential Conversations with Scientific Power

A comment thread in the DAS method is a formative dialogue that can follow each submitted reflection. A digital conversation often arises between the participant and those leading the study. A reflection then becomes the starting point for a personal conversation rather than an isolated survey response. The comment thread means that data collection doesn't stop at a submitted text, but often develops into a mutual exploration of experiences, feelings and insights.

The purpose is both relational and scientific. Relationally, the comment thread creates a confidential feeling where the participant feels seen and taken seriously, which in turn increases engagement and quality in subsequent reflections. Scientifically, it provides access to deep data. Deepened dialogue and initiated follow-up questions hold far higher quality than traditional survey responses. Where a free-text field in a survey often gives impersonal and anonymous snapshots, the comment thread creates a living, personal and confidential conversation sequence that can then be analysed as text-based empirical material.

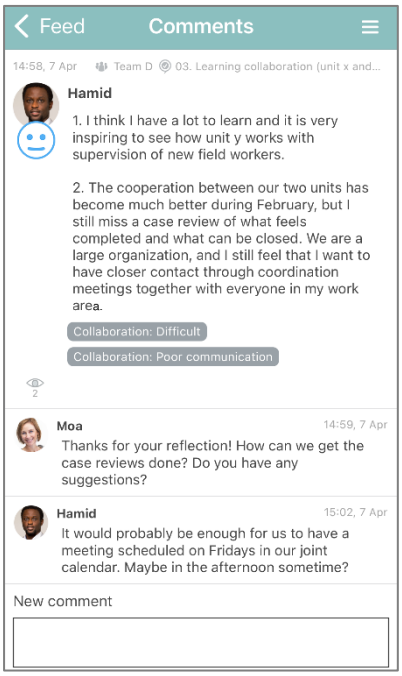


Figure 3.8. *Comment thread with a leader and a participant commenting on a reflection.*

Examples of areas of use are in leadership development, coaching, supervision, development work, teaching and organisational change. In practice, comments are written digitally in a social flow, directly under each reflection (see Figure 3.8). The IT support reminds the parties so they don't forget the ongoing dialogue. When giving feedback in a comment thread, leaders should keep in mind that the aim is to support deeper reflection, not to evaluate the participant or provide superficial positive remarks. Many experience this as difficult because it requires a balance between being curious, respectful, and challenging at the same time.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 7.

Magnusson, A., Lackéus, M., Ohlsson, K., & Holmén, P.-E. (2023). Praktiknära SKA-arbete: En ny modell för ett mer meningsfullt och mer vetenskapligt systematiskt kvalitetsarbete [Practice-based systematic quality work: A new model for more meaningful and more scientific systematic quality work]

3.9 Content Package – Shareable Structures for Proven Experience

A content package in the DAS method is a ready-made knowledge object—a complete set of between three and twenty action tasks with associated tags, designed to spread and test an idea among a wider audience. It is a comprehensible and usable form for sharing a well-thought-out set of actions and effects that others can access, carry out and further develop.

The content package fulfils many different purposes. It functions as a bridge between theory and practice, where research-based design principles are translated into testable actions. At the same time, it creates a structure for collective learning—different groups can use the same set of action tasks and tags, share and compare their results, and together refine the content. The content package also opens up for self-selection—practitioners can choose the themes that feel most relevant to their reality, which in turn shows the design team which issues seem to have the greatest practical relevance. Thereby the gap between research and practice is reduced, because knowledge can be spread in a more concrete and applicable form. The content package also contributes to a democratisation of research, by enabling many more people to participate in developing and testing different methods described in action task and tag form without themselves being academic researchers.

In practice, a content package can be used in a unit, organisation or municipality, for example around themes such as sustainable leadership, co-creating culture, or value-creating meetings. Each time it is used, new data is generated that can be analysed and compared. Study leaders can then further polish the language, action tasks, tags and structure. When many have worked with the same content package in different contexts but with similar results, it can be regarded as proven—a collectively developed and verified form of practical knowledge.

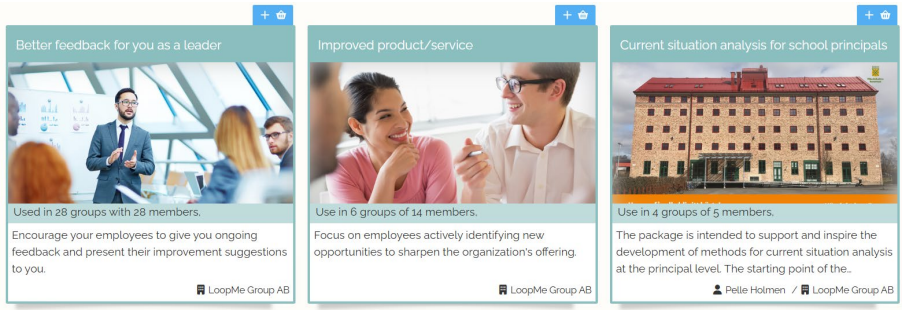


Figure 3.9. *Examples of three content packages in the Loopme library.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 6.

Lackéus, M., & Sävetun, C. (2025). Designed Action Sampling as a new research method to help build active communities in entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship Education & Pedagogy 8(2), 206-239.

3.10 A Comparison with Interviews and Surveys

This chapter concludes with a comparison between DAS and two more established ways of collecting people's thoughts—interviews and surveys. At first glance, DAS may resemble a survey, but the comment thread makes it possible to have ongoing conversations and ask follow-up questions, which rather brings to mind an interview. DAS can therefore rather be seen as a particularly successful combination of the two.

Table 3.10 below shows how DAS unites the interviews' strengths in depth, context sensitivity and handling of complex questions with the surveys' strengths in scale, pace and comparability. At the same time, several of each method's weaknesses are mitigated. Compared to interviews, DAS enables more voices to be heard at a lower time cost. Compared to surveys, contextual aspects, emotional nuances and participants' perceived value are preserved. The result is a method that holds together pace and depth, individual learning and collective analysis—a balance that makes DAS particularly suited for everyday inquiry.

Table 3.10. *Comparison between three different methods. Interviews, DAS, and surveys are contrasted based on a number of different dimensions.*

Dimension	Interviews	DAS	Surveys
Type of data collected	*Spoken words and body language presented in confidential meeting*	*Written text, numbers, and feelings presented in confidential social media*	*Numbers but sometimes also written text delivered as anonymous responses*
Typical number of participants	*15*	*15-100*	*50-500*
Quantifiability of results	*Low*	*Medium*	*High*
Time spent on preparation	*Medium*	*Medium*	*High*
Time spent on data collection	*High*	*Low*	*Low*
Time spent on data analysis	*High*	*Low*	*Medium*
Geographic challenges	*Medium*	*Low*	*Low*
Suitable for complex problems?	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Longitudinal studies possible?	*Yes, but resource-intensive*	*Yes, as standard*	*Yes, but problems with response rate*
Generalisability of results	*Low*	*Medium*	*High*
Suitable for generating new ideas	*Yes*	*Yes*	*No*
Allows anonymous respondents	*No*	*Partly*	*Yes*
Context sensitivity	*High*	*High*	*Low*
Value for participants	*Low to medium*	*High*	*Low to none*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2020a). Collecting digital research data through social media platforms: can 'scientific social media' disrupt entrepreneurship research methods? . In W. B. Gartner & B. Teague (Eds.), Research Handbook of Entrepreneurial Behavior, Practice, and Process. Edward Elgar Publishing.

4. Action Task and Tag Design: From Curiosity to Finished DAS Design

Designing action tasks and tags is the starting point for the entire DAS process – this is where the foundation is laid for both engagement and quality in everything that follows. The design work begins by formulating an *inquiry question* – a question that feels genuinely urgent to find new answers to. A topic that chafes, engages, or sparks curiosity. It might be a recurring challenge at work, relationships that aren't working as you had hoped, something that works well on a small scale that you want more of, or perhaps a new way of working that you want to understand better. For DAS to work, this curiosity needs to be translated into small, testable actions – *action tasks* – that others can carry out and reflect on.

This chapter is about that translation. How you move from an idea to an action task and tag design that both engages participants and generates meaningful data for analysis that can make a difference for everyone involved. In this chapter, you will therefore get support in designing the three most central parts of the entire DAS method – the inquiry question, the action tasks, and the tags. Together, they form the heart of every DAS study, and determine how easy and meaningful it feels for others to contribute, how deep and interesting the reflections become, and how useful the patterns that emerge in the analysis will be.

Working in research-informed ways follows a certain workflow, see Figure 4 below. First, we introduce our topic – what is the actual purpose? What is the key question we want new answers to? Why should we even care? Then we look at what humanity already knows about this topic – what we call theory and literature. It would be

foolish not to even look, to reinvent the wheel. After that comes methodology, in this case DAS. When the methodology has been put into practice, we get an outcome – a certain amount of collected data, or findings. We analyse and discuss this outcome, and finally we try to connect back to our starting point. What have we learned now? The arrows in the middle of Figure 4.1 also show natural connections between the different parts. Conclusions should link back to the introduction. The discussion should be grounded in what humanity already knows. The findings are a consequence of the chosen method.

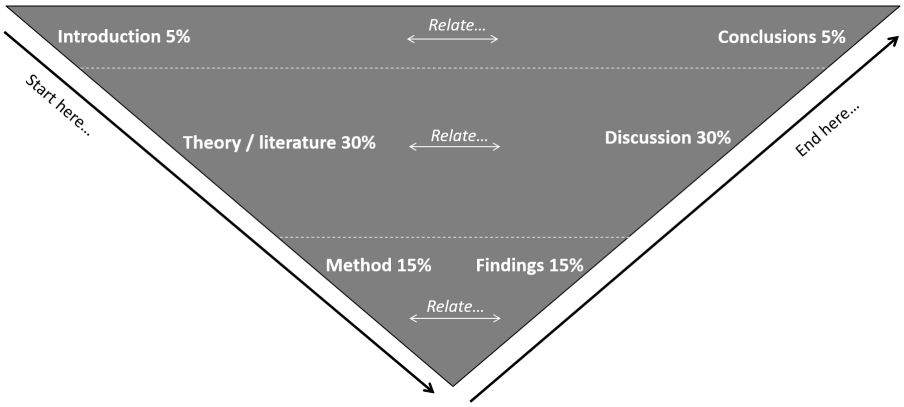


Figure 4.1. *Structure for research-informed work. Figure inspired by Professor Helle Neergaard at Aarhus University in Denmark.*

4.1 From Curiosity to Inquiry Question

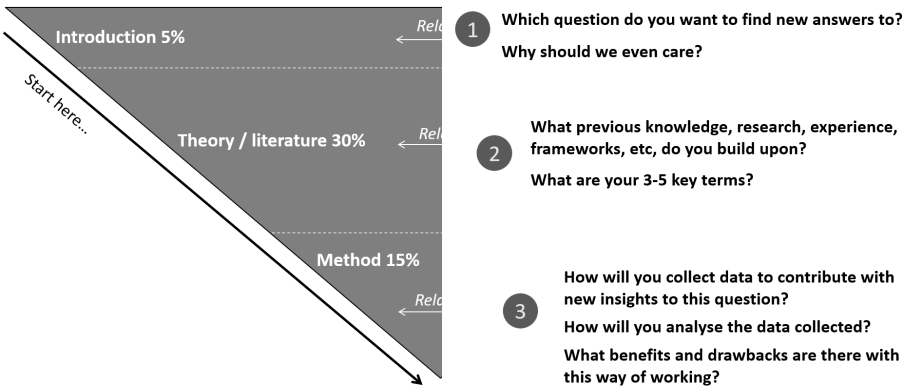
An inquiry question is rarely born at the desk. It grows from a feeling. Perhaps that something chafes, that something works unexpectedly well, or that you sense a connection you don't quite understand. In DAS, we call this the beginning of an *everyday inquiry* – an everyday attempt to study and understand when, how and why things turn out the way they do.

Shaping an inquiry question is like directing a spotlight. You choose what you want to illuminate, what you want to know more about, and what is actually possible to explore within the scope of your work. Most of us find ourselves in what I call the everyday

inquiry zone. We can't dedicate four years full-time to research, but we do want to work a bit more systematically with learning in everyday life. It's therefore about *inquiring* rather than *researching* – making it possible for more people to understand their own practice in depth, without having to leave it.

An inquiry question becomes the starting point for that work, see Figure 4.2 below. It helps us stay on course when everyday life spins on. Without a clear question, it's easy to get lost, to start collecting reflections just because it's interesting. The inquiry question is like an anchor that keeps your everyday inquiry in place, that pulls you back to the starting point when the wind blows.

The question doesn't need to be complicated. Quite the opposite. The best questions are often the simplest. They might start with "how can we..." or "what happens when..." or "why...". A good question sparks curiosity, and feels important not just to you but to several people around you. When colleagues spontaneously say "yes, I want to know that too!" – then you know you're close to something that has traction.



Figur 4.1. *The starting point for an everyday inquiry – inquiry question, literature and method.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inquiring teacher]. Chapter 1, 11.

4.2 A Strong Inquiry Question – Some Characteristics

There are several characteristics of a strong inquiry question, see Figure 4.2 below. Your question should be answerable with the data that DAS collects – reflections, feelings and tags that indicate effects. Otherwise, DAS isn't suitable for seeking answers to this particular question. Also make sure your inquiry question specifies what you want to study. If you want to study colleagues' learning, make sure that's clear in your inquiry question. Avoid yes/no questions. Few questions are interesting in the long term if they can be answered with yes or no. Also try to focus on a single topic or main problem, otherwise it easily becomes scattered.

The best questions are often simple in form but rich in possibilities. Try to make your inquiry question immediately comprehensible and clear. Perhaps by testing it on others. Do they understand without you explaining? Does the question feel important to more people than just yourself? Try to connect to relevant literature. Perhaps an author you like has written about this and thereby confirmed that what you're wondering about is an important continuation for the field as such. Also try to work with questions that can contribute to that very field, if we find good answers. It's always more enjoyable to work with something that feels relevant to a broader circle.

But don't forget the heart. An inquiry question that doesn't mean anything to YOU won't hold. It's the engagement that carries you through all the things that take time – reading, reflection, analysis, waiting for responses. That's why you need a question you really want answers to. A question you can bear to read a hundred reflections about. Otherwise, you probably won't manage to be as structured and persistent as you need to be to work in research-informed ways. Try to work with something that matters to us as humans.

When you have such a question – urgent, possible, meaningful and human – you have everything you need to move on to the next step: translating the question into actions.

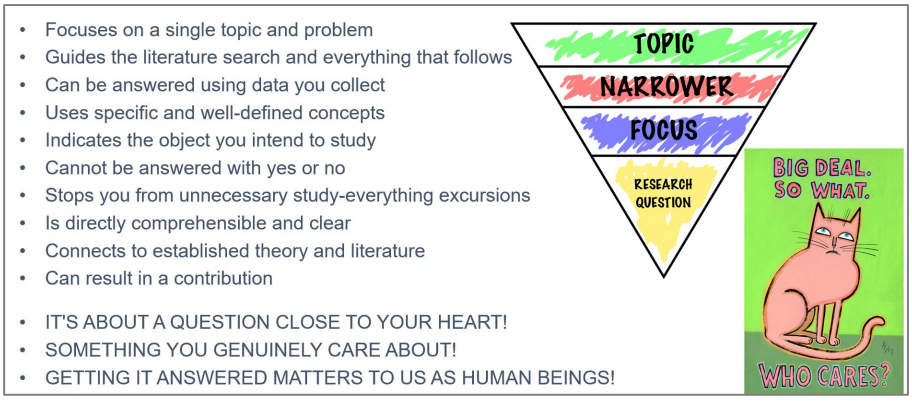


Figure 4.2. *Characteristics of a strong inquiry question.*

4.3 From Inquiry Question to Action Task Ideas

When the inquiry question feels stable, the next step is to let it meet reality. Here, thought is translated into action – a movement that is central to the entire DAS methodology. An inquiry question specifies WHAT we want to understand, while the action tasks formulate HOW we will understand it through testing. Have conversations with colleagues or other intended participants in your DAS practice study. Ask them to describe situations where your inquiry question comes alive. What moments, routines, actions or meetings lie at the heart of what you want to investigate? From these stories, ideas for small tests often grow – actions that can be tested directly in everyday life. Involving colleagues in action task design also creates ownership in the work.

You can also be inspired by others' action tasks, even if they might be about a completely different inquiry question. In the task and tag library at www.library.loopme.se you'll find many action tasks you can draw inspiration from. Browse around and see what ideas you get.

A good action task is concrete but not too narrow. It should be possible to carry out, but at the same time open to interpretation. If it's too loose, it becomes difficult to see patterns in the analysis; if it's too controlled, it becomes mechanical. Try to create structure without stifling curiosity and engagement. Base it on Kolb's learning cycle:

plan – act – feel – reflect. Ask yourself: what do participants need to do and then reflect on for us to get new answers here? Look for action task ideas that trigger both emotions and learning. The action task is the cause that we then hope will lead to effects of interest, see Figure 4.3 below.

After a while, you can start choosing. Save what is concrete, emotional and meaningful. Five to ten action tasks are enough for a first everyday inquiry. Together, they should ideally cover different angles of your inquiry question. This becomes your first action task design, ready to be refined. Some of the action tasks might be for all participants to try, other action tasks can be optional depending on context, interest and needs.

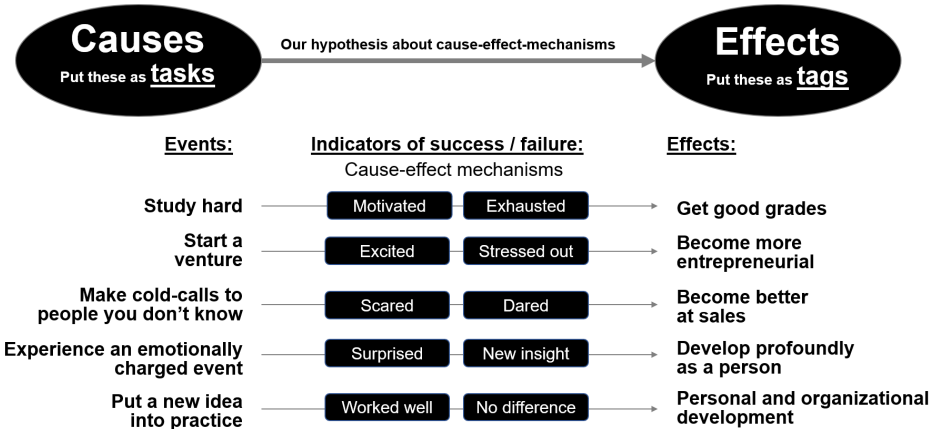


Figure 4.3. *The difference between tasks and tags in DAS.*

4.4 How to Build an Action Task Description: Title, Action, Reflection

An action task is a design in miniature – a planned reflective action. It's not just about doing something, but about creating a microscopic learning experiment where action, feeling and reflection form a whole. The action task should be able to take the participant through Kolb's entire learning cycle. It begins with a planned action: they do something concrete in their everyday life that requires more or less planning. The action should ideally be emotional – engagement,

hesitation, joy, risk-taking, frustration – because emotions trigger learning. Finally comes reflection: what happened, how did it feel, and why do they think it turned out that way? See Figure 4.4 below.

A well-formulated action task begins with a verb in the title: Do, Try, Discuss, Explore, Develop, Suggest, Ask, Create, Imagine, Call, Contact, Begin, etc. The verb signals action and possibility.

The action task should ideally be an invitation to exploration, not "just" an instruction to follow. Tone matters. The description should breathe courage and curiosity, not control. Therefore, add more reflective questions in depth, directly in the action task description: "What surprised you?", "What do you want to try next time?", "What new insights did you gain?". Such questions lead to more interesting and deeper reflections.

Think in terms of "constructive alignment". This is about the interplay between the study leader's intention, the participant's activity, and the effects one hopes for. An action task should therefore not only be engaging and possible to carry out, it should also be logically connected to the inquiry question you want to understand more about. By thinking about expected effects – in the form of feelings and results – already in the design moment, you create action tasks that contribute to the analysis later on.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 6.
Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2007). Teaching for quality learning at university. Open University Press.

4.5 Designing Tasks That Lead to Deep Reflection

Deep reflection doesn't happen by itself. It must be invited, awakened, guided. When we ask participants to reflect in DAS, we need to think about both what they should reflect on and how they are asked to reflect. A reflection becomes interesting only when it moves beyond a description of what happened toward an understanding of why it happened, what it awakened in them, and what can be done differently next time.

Figure 4.4. *Template for action task design with an example action task.*

Forty years ago, the researcher Donald Schön described the *reflective practitioner* as someone who learns by thinking in action. Reflection transforms experiences into professional knowledge. Therefore, reflection is not an unnecessary addition to the work – it is the work's most learning-rich part. DAS actively helps participants become better at precisely this, so they can more easily see connections, discover patterns, and understand themselves in their work. In every action task description, there should therefore be two to three probing questions, see Figure 4.5 below.

Gently but firmly, we push participants to think deeper, to pause before their own hidden assumptions. You can also ask them to relate to something bigger: a theory, a value, another person's perspective, something that surprised them. An interesting reflection moves from event to insight, from vague feeling to deep understanding. Our task as study leaders in DAS is to design an action task description that makes that movement possible.

Written deep reflection requires safety, dedicated time and a study leader who reads and responds confidentially. When participants then notice that their thoughts are taken seriously, they dare to open up and deepen their thinking. Most people also need to practise written reflection. In the beginning, answers might be short, but after a few action tasks, a clear deepening is often noticeable. Reflection is like a muscle – an ability that grows with use – read more about this metaphor in Chapter 9.

Read more:

Chan, C. K. Y. (2022). Reflection as assessment in experiential learning. In C. K. Y. Chan (Ed.), Assessment for Experiential Learning (pp. 160-191). Taylor & Francis.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 7.

Schön, D. A. (1983). The Reflective Practitioner, How Professionals Think In Action. Basic Books.

10 essential tactics to become a deeply reflective person:

1. Ask yourself why you think / act / feel
2. Connect events to theory
3. Articulate any new understanding
4. Focus on what surprised or moved you
5. Step back from the situation
6. Discuss many alternative views
7. Consider others' views
8. Analyze your changed deep beliefs
9. Critically review your deep beliefs
10. Consider the impact of hidden context

Ask those who reflect...

... to not only describe what they did, thought and felt, but also reflect carefully around **why**
... to relate their practical experience to **theory / literature**
... to articulate any **new** understanding that emerged
... to reflect around **unexpected emotional surprises**

Ask those who reflect...

... to **step back** from the events / actions / emotions
... to have a **dialog** with oneself by considering **alternative** ways to think / act / feel / perceive the situation
... to reflect upon how **others** might view the situation

Ask those who reflect...

... if they **changed** their deep / tacit beliefs or values
... to **critically review** their deep / tacit beliefs or values
... to reflect upon how **context** impacted their perceptions

Figure 4.5. *Some strategies for achieving deep reflection among participants.*

4.6 The Thinking Behind Tag Design

The purpose of tags is twofold: they should both support the participant's reflection and facilitate analysis. For the participant, they function as mirrors that help put words to what happened: "Did I feel courage?", "Did I see results?", "Did I get a response?". For the study leader, the tags create order in large amounts of text, making it easier to analyse the material.

When tags are designed, the DAS study's language for cause and effect is shaped. Therefore, always start from your inquiry question and ask yourself which effects, indicators and feelings – if captured repeatedly – can actually provide answers. Tags help us see the mechanisms at the micro level that likely link a certain effort to a certain result, see again Figure 2.8 in Chapter 2. Here, the tags function as small hypotheses about effects. They help participants quickly report how it went, so that you as study leader can more easily see patterns.

Start close to practice and use words that participants spontaneously understand. Avoid theoretical concepts that require interpretation. Create tags based on the goals, indicators or positive characteristics that are relevant to you. Also let negative tags take some space – what was absent, what chafed, or what went wrong. Then both progress and friction become visible, which makes the analysis sharper. Also strive for just-right granularity. Tags that are too coarse tend to swallow everything; too narrow ones are never used. A tag should be one to five words and grounded in everyday language.

Also think composition. A good set of tags captures both effects and emotions, because it's precisely the interplay between results and feelings that often reveals the mechanisms behind them. When an action is repeatedly tagged with "Courage", "Good response", or "Big difference", a mechanism begins to emerge. Tags are also living material – they can develop as data flows in, until they capture more and more relevant aspects. A reasonable number of tags is between

10-25. Categorise them by putting a letter before each tag that stands for something, for example "M: " for effects on the participants themselves ("Me"-tags), and "C: " or "S: " for effects on customers or students.

Figure 4.6 *Tags in a DAS study are like a door between numbers and text.*

Read more:
Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 7.

4.7 The Value of Tags in an Everyday Inquiring Community

When a group of people design, use and analyse tags together, something more than data collection happens – a community grows. The tags become a language for collective exploration, a way to put words on what is otherwise only sensed. Creating tags is therefore not just a methodological question, but also a cultural process.

When you formulate tags together, it becomes the first step toward building a community of reflection. By trying different words and expressions, the group begins to talk about their work in new ways. The discussion about which words fit best creates shared understanding about what counts as important. The collective learning begins here already.

When participants then start using the tags in their reflections, a common language for experiences and results is established. Participants see what's available to choose from, which influences their reflections but also their actions going forward. The tags also help the group share feelings and discoveries in a safe and structured way. This builds community, recognition and meaning.

In the analysis phase, the tags finally become a shared map of learning. The group sees their own patterns emerge: when courage increases, when frustration arises, what seems to create energy or resistance. This sparks conversations that would not have happened otherwise. The tag outcomes function as a mirror of collective learning – not as truth, but as an invitation to deeper interpretation. Because it's important to remember: tags don't give final answers about what works. They are not proof, but indicators – small signals about where to direct your qualitative curiosity. Their value lies not in exactness but in how they lead onward to conversation, understanding and shared meaning, see example in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7. *Image from a meeting where participants interpret the meaning behind different tag outcomes, read more in the blog post below.*

Read more:
https://vcplist.com/2023/05/01/retrofit-reflection-a-new-way-to-capture-on-the-job-learning/

4.8 Growing with Your Design – Action Tasks and Tags in Constant Development

A DAS study is never finished. Each round is a new prototype, a chance to learn and refine, see Figure 4.8 below. Action tasks and tags are living components that need adjusting when people start using them. The best design emerges through repeated small iterations – by testing, observing, adjusting and testing again. Perhaps over several years if it's an important enough question.

When you've designed a complete set of action tasks and tags, ask for feedback. Let three to five people comment on formulations and perhaps test the action tasks and tags before you invite all participants. Small adjustments in word choice, length or tone can make a big difference for engagement and meaningfulness. You can also ask for feedback from someone with long experience of DAS, perhaps outside your own organisation. Perhaps even from us who developed DAS as a method.

Make sure the action tasks and tags really connect with the inquiry question. Also adapt the rhythm to the organisation's calendar. How many action tasks are just right over how long a time? Which action tasks should be time-bound with deadlines, which should be optional in time?

During the study, you will get new ideas through participants' reflections, things you hadn't thought of. Dare to change action task descriptions and tags as you go. Gather feedback from participants about clarity. When the analysis begins to show patterns, let the insights feed back into the design. Test action tasks in different contexts, regard the variations as data.

End each study by writing down what you've learned about the design: which action tasks and tags worked, which lost energy, and why? In this way, each iteration becomes not just a study – but a new level of understanding about how development actually happens.

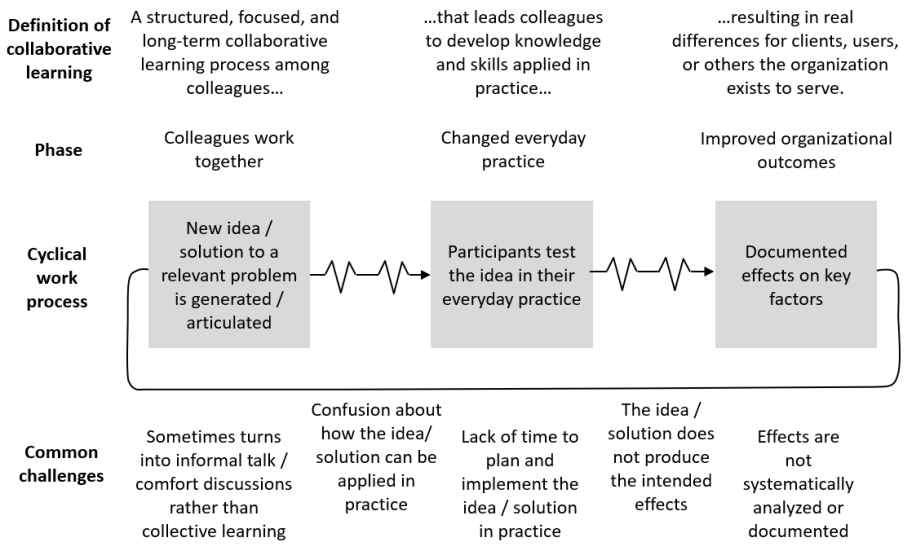


Figure 4.8. *DAS is a cyclical and collegial process with the purpose of improving practice.*

Read more:

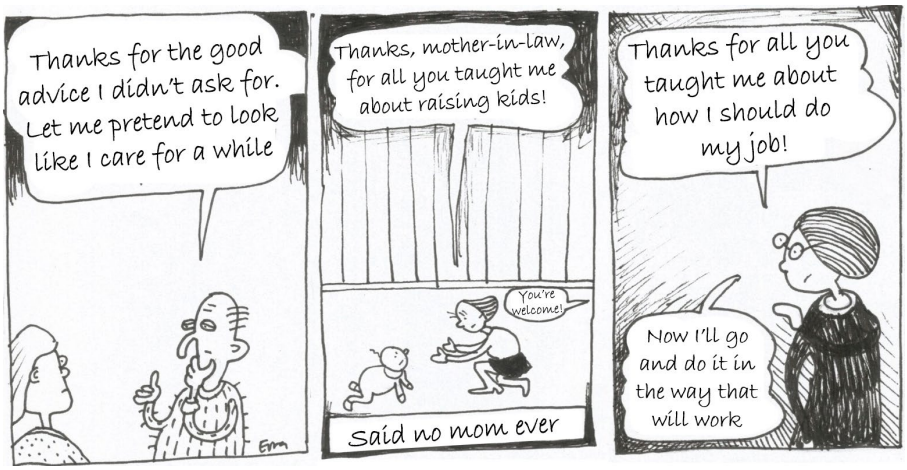
Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 3.

4.9 Designing Meaningfulness into Your DAS Study

Designing action tasks is about asking other people to do something. It's an invitation to action, but also a risk, see Figure 4.9 below. If the action tasks feel irrelevant, moralising, or like unsolicited advice, they quickly lose their power. That's why it's absolutely crucial that every action task is experienced as meaningful – both for the person carrying it out and in their environment.

One way to create this meaningfulness is to design action tasks that lead to something of value happening for others than the participants themselves. Asking people to do something that improves something for another colleague, a customer, a user, a student or the organisation as a whole often awakens positive feelings and engagement. When participants get to contribute to something that becomes noticeable to others, pride and responsibility arise, feelings that drive deep learning. It also creates emotional resonance. When you succeed in helping others, you often feel better yourself.

At the same time, it contributes to ethical sustainability. When action tasks do good for more people than those who participate, the everyday inquiry itself becomes a value-creating process. It doesn't feel like an unnecessary study that is "done to" people, but like a joint improvement effort that everyone benefits from. In the long run, DAS is about precisely this: helping an organisation understand how it can succeed better with its ultimate mission and overarching purpose. When the action tasks are experienced as contributing to this – to something real and genuinely important – the feeling of burdens and unsolicited advice disappears. Then the inquiry instead becomes a meaningful way to create value, together.



Figur 4.9. *Three cartoons by cartoonist Erik Johannson illustrating the risks of giving people unsolicited advice (Lackéus, 2021, p.101).*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher] Chapter 6.

5. Digital Datadriven Dialogue: Leading Your Colleagues' Learning

Now we come to one of the most beautiful aspects of everyday inquiry, but perhaps also the most challenging. That moment when we, as study leaders, invite a larger group of participants to carry out various actions we have designed for them, and then reflect on what they learn from it. We call this practical work a kind of *Digital Datadriven Dialogue* (DDD), because we invite a dialogue that takes place primarily digitally and thereby generates high-quality empirical data that we can then analyse together. The beauty lies in capturing moments of deep human insight, in spotting patterns that can make a difference for many, and in creating collective learning that sparks energy, builds community and creates trust. We get wiser decisions and more grounded change.

Leading an everyday inquiry is fundamentally a leadership task, a role that evokes feelings of all kinds – pride but also uncertainty, inspiration but also confusion, familiarity but also loneliness. It's about leading others' learning – a different kind of leadership compared to leading production or other everyday tasks. It's a role that sits somewhere between manager and employee. Sometimes the role is called middle leadership, which illustrates something of a dilemma. The role of learning leader is absent from most organisational charts, yet is informally carried out by many. This is an inherent ambiguity that makes everyday inquiry challenging to get started in many organisations. So-called imposter syndrome is common. Who am I to take on the leadership of others' learning?

Should it be the formal manager who takes on the role of learning leader / study leader / middle leader? Perhaps, but not necessarily. It

can actually be an advantage not to be the participants' formal manager, as they may then feel a little more relaxed and write a bit more openly and honestly about challenges and problems they experience. Which is often where the learning is greatest. At the same time, there are many leadership styles that fit well with everyday inquiry, for example transformative or coaching leadership, which focuses on engagement, meaning and personal development, see further in chapter 7. What we often see in practice is that the formal manager gives a close colleague the task of leading the inquiry.

Everyday inquiry is built on many people reflecting often and briefly, ideally in direct connection to a completed action. As we've already touched on in chapters 1 and 2, a digital tool like Loopme is therefore a prerequisite for everyday inquiry to work in practice. In this chapter we turn to how this partly digital "interplay" works in practice.

5.1 IT Tool for Datadriven Dialogue: The "Ball" That Makes a New Practice Possible

The digital interface functions as a research platform in miniature – a place where everyday dialogue and science meet. That's why we call what we do Digital Datadriven Dialogue, a concept coined by Per-Erik Holmén, development manager in Skåne in southern Sweden. He wanted to put words to the work we did together in the digital space.

A tool like Loopme is fundamentally a democratic platform. All participants get equal space, all voices are visible in the data, and every reflection is stored structured according to action tasks. The study leader can then work calmly and persistently. Follow their flow of reflections, respond as quickly as possible and simultaneously build a shared analytical foundation that the group can return to over time.

You can view everyday inquiry as a new kind of "ball sport" we have invented – and which many seem to enjoy. Everyday inquiry is a partly digital team game where action, reflection, data and dialogue merge together. Some formulate actions, many try them out, everyone

learns together by writing, reading and interpreting. It's science that touches the heart – a shared experience of interplay rather than a dry method.

In this game, Loopme is our "ball". It's the ball that makes the interplay possible and holds the whole together. A good ball must be light, responsive and reliable, so that reflections can fly back and forth without losing momentum. When the ball works well, it's barely noticed – it doesn't disturb the game, it carries it.

Behind this seemingly simple "ball" lie years of careful "stitching" through design, programming, testing and adjustments. Every function – action tasks, tags, feelings and comments – is like seams in the leather, each one necessary for the whole to hold its shape. When the ball is well-stitched and well-pumped, something often described as magical emerges: the game flows, people learn, and data begins to speak.

The sports metaphor used here is drawn from Couldry and Hepp's (2018) description of how deep meaning arises in lived contexts characterised by a meaningful purpose, clear roles, relationships, technical support, emotions and mutual dependencies (see figure 5.1).

***Figure 5.1**. – The IT tool is the "ball" that enables a new shared "sport" we call everyday inquiry. Concepts in figure drawn from Couldry & Hepp, 2018, pp.63-78.*

Read more:
Couldry, & Hepp (2018). The mediated construction of reality. John Wiley & Sons.

5.2 Configuring an Everyday Inquiry in DAS

The first thing the study leader does in the IT tool is to start a group for shared action-based reflection. The group can be "hierarchical" – only the study leader(s) can read participants' reflections, or "flat" – everyone can read each other's reflections, see Figure 5.2. A hierarchical group creates a more confidential and relational feel, while a flat group can create greater engagement because there is more activity in the group that each participant can take part in through the social feed. It's also possible to have two groups in parallel – a hierarchical group for the more confidential and personal learning, so that participants dare to write also about what hasn't gone well, and a flat group for collective learning and analysis in more general terms.

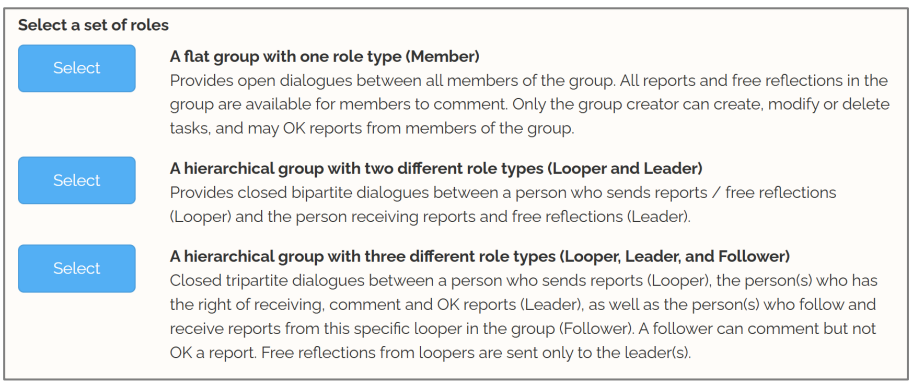


Figure 5.2. *This is what it looks like when you choose which group type you want in Loopme.*

The study leader first configures their new group with the action tasks and tags designed for the purpose, and then invites all participants to go in and read the action tasks and reflect when they have completed them. In Loopme there is a library of ready-made action tasks and tags, the so-called content packages. Such a package can be imported into a newly created group. After import, you then choose which of all the action tasks should be visible to participants. You can also edit each action task. In larger studies I usually create my own content package

with a shared set of action tasks and tags that I then import to several different groups. Then I can analyse outcomes for all groups combined, which is powerful and time-saving.

If participants are unfamiliar with everyday inquiry, it can be good to have a very first action task that invites to pure reflection. It might be about expectations, about introducing yourself, or reflecting a bit initially on the inquiry question that will be explored together.

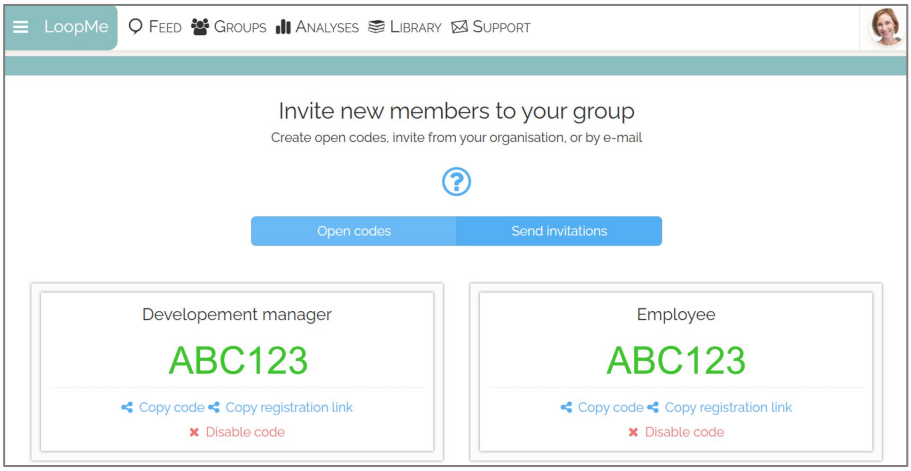
5.3 Introduce the Inquiry Clearly: Purpose, Why, How

The first time participants are invited to an everyday inquiry, some things need to be explained. Why should we even reflect together? What is the overarching meaningful purpose? What benefits do we expect from this? How long will the inquiry last? Why do the action tasks and tags look the way they do? What effects do we want to see? How much time will this take?

Do tell them that everyday inquiry is not about measuring or assessing, but about learning and developing the organisation together. Also tell them about your inquiry question, how it came about and why it matters. Explain the three steps in everyday inquiry – design, action and sampling/analysis, perhaps with a simple figure. Explain that together you will try out, reflect, read and analyse, and that learning happens all along the way, not just at the end. If participants have been involved in designing action tasks and tags, it also becomes easier to create engagement now that the inquiry is launched for real.

It can feel scary to introduce a new digital tool that requires registration and login. At the same time, our experience is that an IT tool like Loopme is a smaller threshold for participants than much else in an everyday inquiry. It can be good not to make too big a deal of the IT tool itself, but instead put the main focus on the meaningful purpose of systematic individual reflection and feedback. There will always be people who complain about IT regardless of design, because IT is a common source of irritation in people's lives. We must respect that, but just don't let it take up too much space.

Do set aside 15-20 minutes at a meeting to reflect together in silence on the very first action task, which can consist of pure reflection. Then you can walk around and help those who may have got stuck with login and other IT troubles. It can also work well to email a link to all participants a few days before a meeting, and then they can on their own register, get in and do their first reflection in peace and quiet. In an email, however, it can be harder to explain the purpose properly. Do it verbally as soon as the opportunity arises.



Figur 5.3. *Under the "Members" tab on your group in Loopme you can invite participants. If you want to invite other study leaders who will lead participants' learning, choose the code or link on the left. If you want to invite participants, choose the code or link on the right.*

5.4 The First Weeks – Feedback, Pace, Deadline

Now that your participants have been invited to a group, data collection has begun. The first weeks create their first impression, and then it's extra important to be active. As soon as you've received some reflections, give some feedback. If questions come about the study or methodology, answer quickly. If someone has problems logging in, help them if you can. If you're using Loopme, remember that they have a support desk that can quickly help new users with problems.

Feedback should be given quickly, ideally within 1-2 days, because tempo signals that the reflection is valuable. When several study leaders share the responsibility, you can take turns responding, but the tone should always feel human, curious and respectful. Write as you would speak to a colleague you respect – personally, encouragingly and with focus on learning rather than performance. I usually pick up on some specific detail in the participant's reflection, and develop my thoughts around that particular detail in a personal way. Sometimes I ask a follow-up question, especially if my curiosity has been awakened in relation to my inquiry question.

Early on it's also good to be responsive to the pace in your inquiry. Have participants been given enough time? Are the action tasks coming at the right pace and order? Do action tasks or tags need to be revised based on new insights you've gained since the start? In Loopme there is also a *participant-task matrix* where you see which participants have done which action tasks, see Figure 5.4 below.

Has everyone received a comment? Every green tick in the matrix should have a little speech bubble under it, then they've received a comment. If you see that some participants are falling behind in the action tasks, do get in touch with them and ask if they need help. A red dot in the matrix means that the reflection was submitted after the deadline, if one is set. It's good to set deadlines on action tasks, because then reminders are sent out automatically. But it's not always appropriate with a deadline, you don't always know when in time an action task can be completed. Nor is it appropriate with a deadline on optional action tasks.

5.5 Give Participants an Analysis Overview Early

The earlier you as study leader can offer all participants an early overview of their reflections so far, the better. Around 20 reflections from 1-2 action tasks usually suffice to give an early taste of the analytical capacity of an everyday DAS inquiry. Even better if you've received around 100 reflections on say 4-5 different action tasks. Then

you can also compare the different action tasks with each other via the task-tag matrix shown in figures 1.9, 2.3 and 3.3 above, and also below here.

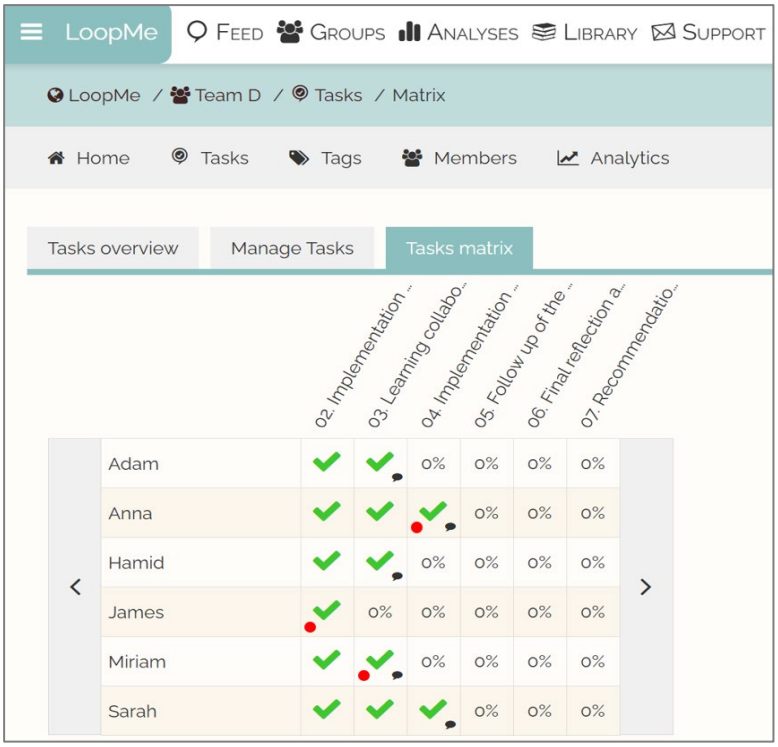


Figure 5.4. *Under the "Tasks" tab on a group in Loopme you'll see the following participant-task matrix.*

I usually show three different things in an early analysis overview. First and foremost, I put together a small analysis "potpourri" consisting of (1) a task-tag matrix, (2) a spider diagram, (3) a tag overview and (4) a participant-task matrix of which action tasks have been done by whom (with names hidden), see figure 5.5 below. I go to the respective overview in Loopme, take a screenshot via the "PrintScreen" button on the computer, and paste the images into a PowerPoint document. Then I show that slide to all participants.

I also usually make an AI compilation of patterns in everyone's reflections that I show participants, via the AI function in Loopme. Around 20 reflections usually suffice to show about ten patterns, but

with more reflections the patterns become more interesting. Then I usually cut out some quotes from particularly interesting reflections and show them to participants. They should then be anonymised.

If you've already received quite a lot of interesting reflections, you can print out analysis material on paper, but then we're approaching what is called a collegial analysis meeting, and that is described in more detail in the next chapter. At this stage, the purpose is not to begin a full-scale analysis together with everyone, but rather to give them a glimpse, to strengthen their motivation and perceived meaningfulness in trying out and reflecting.

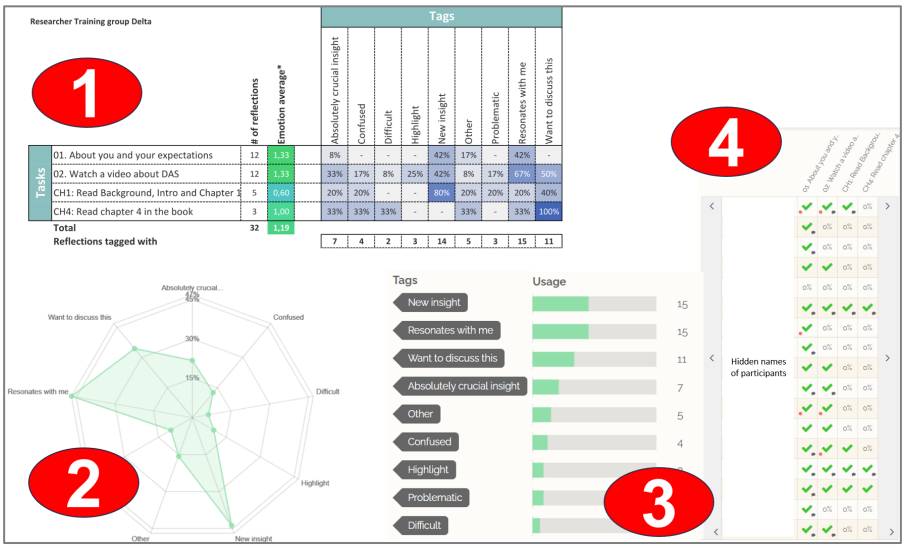


Figure 5.5. *Analysis overview with some different views from Loopme to give an early glimpse of the analysis capability of a DAS study.*

5.6 Trust, Integrity, Ethics, Anonymity, Risks

An everyday inquiry is built on relational trust. This is perhaps what distinguishes everyday inquiry the most from classic surveys. Even though the conversation takes place in writing and in the digital space, it often resembles more of a confidential verbal conversation. Sometimes even a bit like a deep interview. Participants often share personal thoughts, feelings and experiences in their reflections –

things that normally don't leave the inner conversation. As study leader you therefore manage something very valuable. It's important to show respect, be clear about purpose and act carefully. Talk openly about how the material will be used, who may read and who may not read, how anonymity is handled and that everything aims at collective learning, not scrutiny. Clear ethics creates trust.

In Loopme there are functions for GDPR compliance that must be used, see figure 5.6 below. The overarching principle behind GDPR legislation is clear – it's the purpose of storing personal data that is decisive. With a legitimate purpose it's fine to store personal data for a reasonable time. Therefore be careful to describe the purpose in the group's field "Why do you need to store the data for this time?". Also specify a time frame for how long reflections should be stored that is reasonable based on this purpose.

Avoid completely handling particularly sensitive information, defined in GDPR legislation as people's health, ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership or sexual orientation. Inform all participants that such things must not be in their reflections. Remove such things if you see that they come in anyway.

When you share quotes from participants' reflections with everyone, make sure they cannot be traced to a specific person. Remove names and events that are too specific. Try to preserve the quote's core, while protecting the person who shared something personal. It can also be good to warn that there is always a small risk that others figure out who wrote something. Best is to never share things that can really cause harm if accidentally spread.

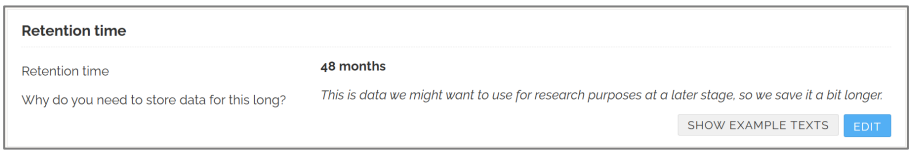


Figure 5.6. *Function for specifying data storage time and purpose for a group in Loopme.*

5.7 Response Rate, Reflection Depth: What to Expect

In all scientific work and in all data collection there are challenges with response rates. This is also the case with everyday inquiry, and it's completely normal. Not all participants who are invited will reflect. Not all action tasks will be completed by everyone. Not all reflections will be deep and interesting. It's common that a mere half of the participants are relatively active. Among the other half, the activity level often gradually drops to zero. If around 20% of participants don't do a single action task, it is still normal, especially if participation is mandatory. Such is life. It's also common to see a fatigue effect – for each new action task, the response rate drops somewhat.

There is much that can be done to maintain a high response rate. Above we wrote about how an everyday inquiry should be introduced to create motivation and meaningfulness, but formal leadership also plays a big role. If the top manager at a workplace is present at the start and also often mentions the inquiry work ongoing, the response rate increases. Reminders are important, and can be given in many different forms – manual, relational and automatic. We humans are forgetful when it comes to development, and tend to be consumed by a hectic everyday routine. A well-designed inquiry makes a big difference to response rates – a reasonable number of action tasks that feel meaningful and create value for participants to complete. A relational focus from study leaders also contributes much to response rates.

Writing down one's personal deep thoughts is an unusual activity in our stressed and heavily streamlined society. Reflection depth therefore often strengthens quite quickly when an everyday inquiry gets going, because participants quickly become better at deep written reflection. They are also often inspired by good examples of others' reflections, which strengthens reflection depth. A good level of feedback also strengthens reflection depth, because participants then feel that their thoughts are taken seriously and appreciated. It then feels more meaningful to share one's deep thoughts. Gibbs' classic

reflection cycle shown in figure 5.7 below can be used as support for study leaders in giving structured feedback that triggers deeper reflection. Setting aside time for reflection when everyone meets physically is an effective way to increase both response rate and reflection depth. Giving participants 20 minutes for reflection in silence is often very appreciated. The room fills with delightful keyboard clatter when everyone thinks deeply at the same time.

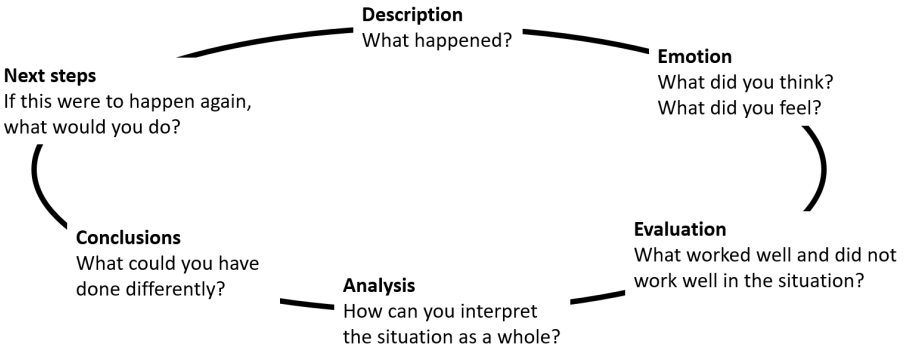


Figure 5.7. *Gibbs' reflection cycle for deepened structured reflection.*

Read more:
Gibbs, G. (1988). Learning by doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods.

5.8. End with a Meta-Reflection – Reflect on the Reflecting

A good way to end an everyday inquiry can be to ask participants to look back at all the action tasks they've completed, read their earlier reflections, and then try to sum up all the lessons from the whole process. When people read their own reflections in chronological order, learning becomes visible in a way that otherwise easily disappears in everyday noise. They see how their thoughts have deepened, how feelings have varied and how their insights have gradually emerged. It often creates pride, meaning and a sense of coherence. This can also be combined with what is described in the next chapter as a collegial analysis meeting.

It can also be good to give a final action task that is about reflecting on the inquiry process itself. What has it been like to work with everyday DAS inquiry? What has been good and challenging about it? This also provides support for study leaders who may doubt themselves. These meta-reflections can be used to strengthen continued inquiry work.

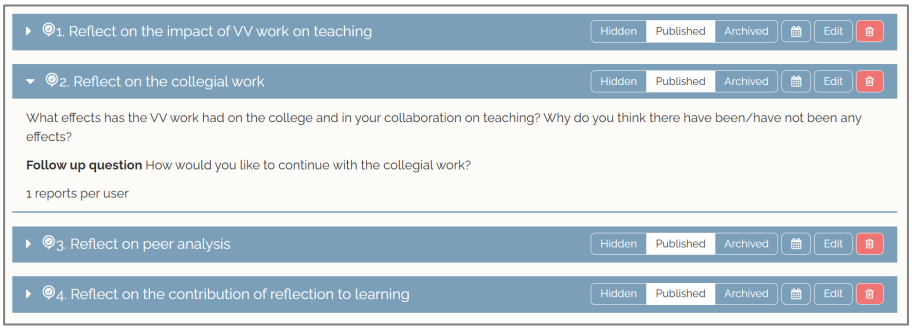


Figure 5.8. *An example of four action tasks that strengthen meta-reflection.*

5.9 The Reflective Practitioner – Schön's Ideas into Action with Everyday Inquiry

Already in the 1980s, researcher Donald Schön described a skilled practitioner as a *reflective* practitioner – a person who not only does, but also thinks and reflects deeply in the doing. She acts in complex situations where manuals are not enough, and learns by pausing in the middle of action (*reflection-in-action*) and afterwards analysing what happened (*reflection-on-action*). Schön argued that we need to reflect to understand our own actions in situations where there are no ready-made answers, to be able to think while we do, and thereby constantly refine our professional judgement.

Everyday DAS inquiry helps us with precisely this. When we ask participants to reflect at a certain pace based on short action tasks, we create space for *reflection-in-action*: the participant acts and thinks simultaneously – writes in direct connection to the event, receives quick response and adjusts the next action. When we show an early analysis overview and let the group interpret patterns, we shift focus

to *reflection-on-action*: participants step out of the situation, see the whole and draw conclusions together.

The choice of hierarchical, flat or hybrid group shapes the social conditions required to become a reflective practitioner – confidentiality when needed, visibility when it benefits collective learning. Principles for integrity and anonymity provide the ethical framework that makes reflection possible without people shutting down out of fear. Measures to increase response rate and reflection depth represent the DAS craft required to keep the rhythm going so that reflection actually happens in a stressful work environment.

Finally, Digital Datadriven Dialogue via the "ball", the IT tool Loopme, makes Donald Schön's ideas scalable. The digital tool captures the fleeting moments of thinking-in-doing and stores them as traces that can be revisited later, at analysis meetings and in meta-reflections. This is how a culture of reflection is built step by step, leading to the establishing of a learning organisation where people both act skilfully and learn together as a collective.

Being a study leader in an everyday DAS inquiry is thus fundamentally about creating very concrete structures for others' learning and reflection in their everyday working life. It is all about keeping the process alive, ensuring that action tasks are completed, that reflections are written and that feedback is given in time. This requires that you balance support and demand, are both clear and responsive, and ensure that learning doesn't get stuck in words and talk but also leads to action and insights in writing. You lead by asking good questions and creating occasions where others get to try out and think for themselves. Leading others' learning means keeping focus on the purpose, building trust and helping the group see patterns in what happens. When you succeed with this, a learning culture emerges. Reflection becomes a natural part of work, not something extra, but a way to together understand, improve and refine what everyone does. You get the ball rolling, keep the game going, and ensure everyone can participate. But it's the participants who play.

6. Data Analysis with DAS: Intelligent Thinking

Now we come to the third and final step in DAS, where the S stands for "Sample the impact". How did it go for us? What did we learn? And what would be wise to do next? At its core, analysis is about learning together at depth – stepping back to draw lessons from what has happened, what we have thought, and what we have tried. The goal is to make wiser decisions going forward. This is what separates intelligent action from thoughtless, habitual and unreflective action.

The brilliance of us humans is that we are equipped with a remarkable organ that does such analysis for us – our brain. The brain's most important role is to use previous results of social interactions as guidance for future decisions. The brain thus does not work in isolation. We learn by the body doing things out in the world – we plan, act, feel and get feedback.

Learning at work functions in the same way. We understand deeply only when we see what our various actions lead to at individual, group and organisational levels. When many people do and then share their experiences socially, something powerful happens – many brains begin to think as one. In our connected society this often happens with the help of various technical systems – computers and connected software from companies like Microsoft, Google and Facebook. We then get a particularly powerful form of socio-technical intelligence to "think" with. A classic example from cognitive science research is the aircraft cockpit. In the cockpit's socio-technical system, information is stored not only in a single pilot's brain or in a single instrument, but in a complex "thinking" network

consisting of two pilots' brains, the aircraft's support instruments and well-described work routines (Hutchins, 1995).

DAS works in the same way, but on a larger scale and with the purpose of answering the inquiry question we have posed. Through everyday inquiry, we establish a socio-technical system for intelligent learning consisting of people, actions, clear work routines and digital support that together constitute a collective "brain", a kind of "wisdom of crowds" we ourselves can steer in the desired direction. Then insights are gathered that would otherwise disappear in everyday life. Analysis is when this shared socio-technical brain "thinks" – when we see our collective actions from the outside, discover patterns and draw wise conclusions for a better future. It is in the analysis phase that DAS shows its real power to transform everyday activity into deep insight. We strengthen our shared intelligence and analytical capacity so that together we can better understand and develop our organisation's collective work.

Read more:

Clark, A. (2013). Whatever next? Predictive brains, situated agents, and the future of cognitive science. Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 36(03), 181-204.

Cowart, M. (2013). Andy Clark, Antonio Damasio and embodied cognition In A. Bailey (Ed.), Philosophy of Mind: The Key Thinkers (pp. 17). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Hutchins, E. (1995). How a cockpit remembers its speeds. Cognitive science, 19(3), 265-288.

6.1 Why Analysis – Deeper Insights, Better Decisions, Better Operations

If your organisation already performs at its absolute best, in a world that never changes – delivering exactly what is needed, across every dimension you can think of, as well as it possibly could, consistently over time – then you have no need for analysis. But of course, no such organisation exists.

Analysis is needed when we want to reach further than we have so far. When the world around us shifts and we need to adapt. When we want to get better at achieving our goals. When others seem to be succeeding where we are struggling. Perhaps someone from outside has told us that, given the resources we have, we ought to be doing better. In all of these situations, strong analytical capacity is exactly what is needed – and DAS can give us that.

Analysis helps us see ourselves more clearly and understand what is actually going on, so we can make wiser decisions and build better organisations. It also shows us what our new ideas are actually achieving. Outside critics may have pointed us towards something that has worked well elsewhere, and that can be genuinely useful. But we still need to find out whether it works here, in our own context. No new idea arrives with a guarantee for success. Analysis is needed.

Analysis also corresponds to steps 4, 5 and 6 in all scientific work, see figure 6.1 below. What findings did we get? For whom did value arise, when and how? How do these experiences relate to humanity's previous knowledge? What are the implications? How do we now answer our inquiry question? Such analysis also creates trust and engagement among participants – everyday inquiry becomes meaningful practice, especially through its practice-based "people's science" analysis.

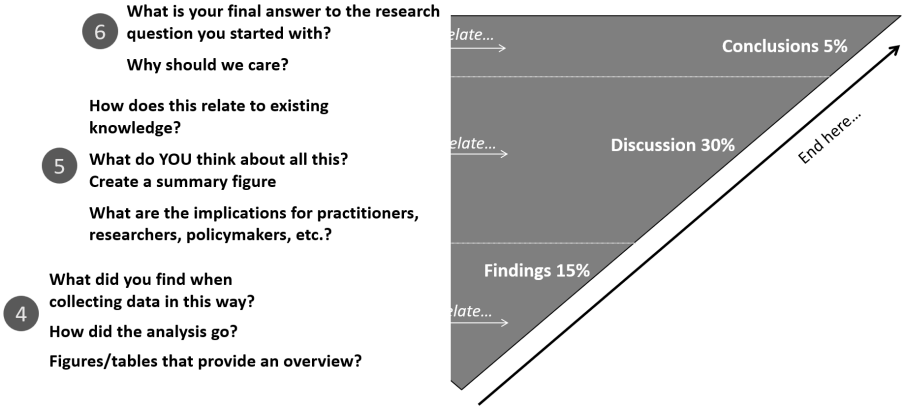


Figure 6.1. *The endpoint for an everyday inquiry – findings, discussion and conclusions.*

It may seem that analysis is the final step in everyday inquiry – but it is actually the second to last step. The very last step, and in many ways the most important, is to actually keep doing more of what works well for us. To sustain the change over time. To do less of what did not work for us. And to be willing to try again, rather than falling into the familiar trap of saying "we tried that once and it didn't work".

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher]. Chapter 8.

6.2 As You Sow, So Shall You Reap – Garbage In, Garbage Out

How do you actually do the analysis work in practice? We will get to that shortly. But first we must remember that strong analytical capacity requires that we have done our homework in steps one (D) and two (A) of everyday inquiry work. In my own research I have many times become painfully aware that my analytical capacity is completely dependent on how I proceeded when I designed the study and then collected data. I sit there with worthless data.

In computer science there is a basic rule for this, abbreviated GIGO – Garbage In, Garbage Out. If we feed a computer with rubbish data, we will also get a rubbish analysis. No AI engine in the world can save the analysis if we've been sloppy getting there. If participants receive action tasks that don't let them reflect on their own actions or experiences, the reflections often become uninteresting. If the reflection tasks don't feel genuinely important or emotionally engaging, then we get pretend-reflections. If the action task text doesn't give participants support in how to reflect deeply, then we get rubbish data. If I didn't set aside time to give participants feedback on their reflections while the data collection was ongoing, then I pay dearly for it in the analysis work.

What every farmer knows therefore also applies in everyday inquiry – as you sow, so shall you reap, see figure 6.2. A good sowing consists of good action tasks and tags, good support for participants that builds up good habits of reflecting and leadership that supports.

But the combine harvester and tractor are equally important. Imagine harvesting a whole field by hand with a scythe. No farmer works like that today. Time-efficient data collection and visualisation of well-structured data is absolutely necessary for functioning analysis work. Here IT tools like Loopme can help us collect high-quality data and then produce numbers and diagrams that help us see patterns. Only then do we get rewarding analysis that genuinely helps our organisation become better over time.

Figure 6.2. *As you sow, so shall you reap. Strong analytical capacity requires well-functioning data collection.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren. [The inquiring teacher]. Chapter 8.

6.3 Starting the Analysis Immediately – Walking Alongside Formatively Instead of Following Up Later

A strength of DAS is that data is collected over time. You can compare it to the difference between photo and video. A classic survey is like a photo. What did it look like right there and then? "Oh, he was blinking!" With DAS we instead capture processes more continuously, a bit like recording video that captures movements and dynamics. This is called working longitudinally, a word that comes from the Latin word *longitūdō*; the study continues over time. Longitudinal studies are preferable because we can then follow dynamic processes. However, they are often expensive and difficult to achieve in practice

via traditional surveys or interviews. How fortunate then that DAS is an inherently longitudinal method – the same form is filled in many times by the same people, albeit with different action tasks.

In the analysis we should try to take advantage of DAS being a longitudinal method. We should begin the analysis as soon as data collection has started, in a *formative* way, while the study's outcome is still being "formed". Then we can be there and walk alongside people in their ongoing practice, rather than relying on traditional after-the-fact follow-up. We become fellow travellers on participants' journeys, every week or every other week, as they try out different things. We give encouragement, ask curious questions, puzzle together about why it went the way it did. The action tasks we designed for participants become a kind of fine-grained weekly learning we ask them to engage in together with us, see figure 6.3 below. This makes an everyday inquiry much more relational, intimate and personal than classic survey follow-up.

In an approach based on walking alongside, reciprocity is therefore essential – a mutual give-and-take. Try to strive for the work to be experienced as study leaders and participants learning together. Not just receiving participants' reflections, but also giving something back in the form of feedback and analysis overviews. One participant said it feels like getting a pen pal. Try to create that feeling.

Figure 6.3. *– Fine-grained learning is triggered by DAS and captured via formative analysis (figure from Lackéus, 2021, p.119).*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inquiring teacher], Chapters 6-7.
Neale, B. (2018). What is qualitative longitudinal research? Bloomsbury Publishing.
Lackéus, M. (2025). "I have All the Feelings": Navigating the Emotional and Practical Challenges of Research Method Innovation in Entrepreneurship Education. ECSB 3E, May 20-22, Munich.

6.4 Mixed Analysis in Five Steps – Tags, Action Tasks, Free Text, Anonymisation, Dialogue

When all action tasks are completed, it's time for a summarising analysis. First transfer the group's reflections to a spreadsheet. In Loopme you do this by going to the Members tab in your group, and choosing "Export loops and reports". Then you download a so-called CSV file ("Comma Separated Variables"), a text file with commas between each value. Don't open the file directly. Instead, open a blank spreadsheet in Excel and import your CSV file via the Excel tab "Data" -> "From text/CSV". Then you import all reflections so that it becomes easy to sort them by action task, feeling or tag, see figure 6.4.1 below. If you see text and numbers all jumbled up in Excel without the ability to sort anything, then something has gone wrong.

What we now have before us is so-called mixed data – a mixture of numbers and text. We will now engage in mixed analysis, and it happens in five steps, see figure 6.4.2 below. Start sorting by tags, feelings or action tasks, and then move on to reading interesting texts at the top of the sorting. Increase the size of the reading window so you can read a whole reflection in the window above all the cells. I usually start by reading reflections with the highest and lowest feeling values respectively. What has been most positive? Most challenging? Then I might move on to a certain tag or an action task that stands out. Which action task is this tag most common on? What do participants write then? Then I cut out interesting texts and paste them into a PowerPoint document that I can show to participants in my inquiry.

There are many good ways to engage in mixed analysis beyond following these five steps to the letter, but mixed analysis is fundamentally about going back and forth between numbers and text,

creatively searching for interesting insights and patterns, and bringing along those nuggets of quotes that can then be shown anonymously to many.

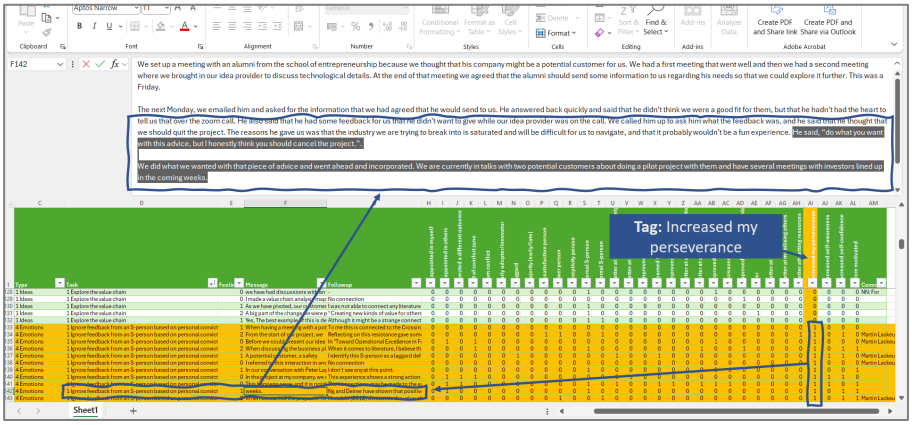


Figure 6.4.1. *What it looks like in Excel when you move between tags, action tasks and free text.*

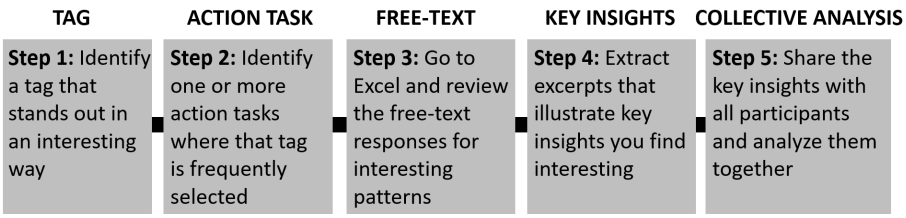


Figure 6.4.2. *Mixed analysis in five steps from tag and action task via free text to collective analysis.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inquiring teacher]. Chapter 8.

6.5 Collegial Analysis – Analysis Meeting, Digital Analysis Space, Other Ways

A collegial analysis meeting can be conducted in many different ways, but the main focus should be to let participants engage with different summaries and discuss them together, see for example the overview with different figures from Loopme in figure 5.5 in the previous chapter. The purpose should be to gain new insights that are then

captured via concluding written reflection, around questions such as: Why do we think we got this outcome? What is it that deeply makes a difference here? How can we succeed better next time? What do we now want to suggest to others? What changes do we now want to implement?

The meeting can follow the structure IPAI – Individual reflection, Pairwise discussion in small groups, All discuss together in the whole group, Individual reflection again. The study leaders can begin by going through the analysis material they have produced, consisting of say 4-6 images with graphical compilations and thematised extracts of anonymous reflections, see example in figure 6.5 below.

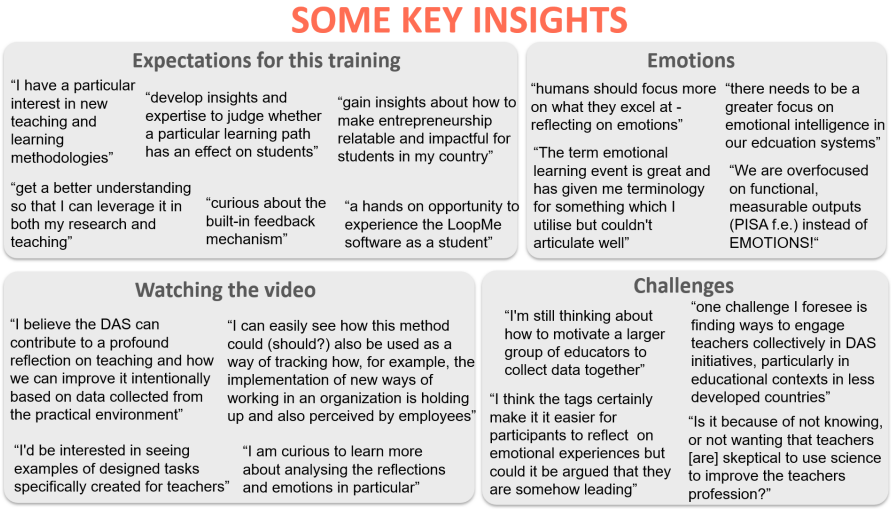


Figure 6.5. *Example of a thematic analysis in PowerPoint with pasted free texts from Excel, consisting of illustrative reflections among participants in an inquiring practitioner training.*

It can be good to print out the analysis material in a few copies on paper so that participants can browse around at their own pace. Sending out support material digitally in advance can also work. Collegial analysis can also take place digitally in a separate flat group in Loopme, ideally then as a complement to a physical collegial analysis meeting.

Many think they have an open sharing culture. But the fact is that most workplaces struggle with various group dynamic phenomena such as defensive colleagues, secrecy, competitive mentality, resistance to change, rivalry. Anonymous sharing is then a useful technique and constitutes a middle way between total openness and total closure.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inquiring teacher]. Chapter 8.
Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1978). Organizational Learning: A theory of Action perspective. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

6.6 Thinking Like a Data Analyst: Some Advice from Wendy Ruona

How should we actually think as an inquiring practitioner when it comes to data analysis? I think the chapter "Analyzing Qualitative Data" by researcher Wendy Ruona is an excellent introduction to precisely this. Analysis according to Ruona is about slowly letting understanding grow out of the material. Sensing what is happening, becoming deeply familiar with the data until it almost begins to talk back. By reading, listening and returning to the material over and over again, insights slowly emerge, first as faint hints, over time clarifying into clear patterns.

The next step is to make constant comparisons – compare different reflections with each other, sketch suitable categories, reformulate the categories and try to group the insights into different themes. Every new observation you make casts new light on the old, every new category you try to put words to you can test against everything that has already been written. In an everyday inquiry this begins already during the data collection itself. In this way, understanding, categories and themes of insights grow in parallel. To not get lost in this complex flow of ideas we need to work from our inquiry question which sets a clear direction, holds the work together and helps us determine what is most relevant.

When increasingly clear patterns begin to emerge, it's good to draw models and figures. Such visual work deepens thinking, makes the diffuse more graspable and helps to see relationships between different parts. Throughout the process it's also important to alternate between letting insights rise from the data and formulating hypotheses in advance that are then tested against the reflections. Finally comes perhaps the most difficult but also most satisfying step: to theorise. To generalise from the concrete, test our interpretations against new reflections and slowly approach a coherent explanation – our own theory that grows out of both the material and our newly gained insights around reflections, categories and themes. I have tried to summarise Ruona's advice in Figure 6.6 below.

It's also good to work with triangulation, which means comparing different data types with each other. Or why not count the number of occurrences of different interesting phenomena – both high and low occurrence is interesting. Do look at extreme cases of various kinds, in both positive and negative senses. Think about deviant phenomena that stand out, often unusual reflections. Also look for things that surprise in general.

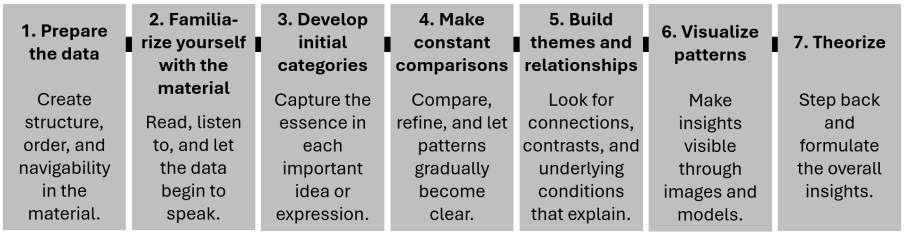


Figure 6.6. *Seven steps in Ruona's proposed process for qualitative data analysis. Research is not linear, however, so we need to go back and forth a lot between these seven steps.*

Read more:

Ruona, W. E. A. (2005). Analyzing Qualitative Data. In R. A. Swanson & E. F. Holton (Eds.), Research in organizations: Foundations and methods in inquiry (pp. 233-264). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

6.7 Critical Perspectives on Data Analysis

It is a great advantage in analysis work to be well familiar with what we are studying, but it also involves some challenges. In DAS we are both observers and participants simultaneously, which means that our own expectations, feelings and experiences easily influence what we see. We need to learn to recognise different kinds of *bias* in our analysis work – distortions due to our partial preunderstanding – and actively handle them.

The most well-known is confirmation bias – the tendency to notice things that confirm our expectations and downplay things that disturb. But there are more, see figure 6.7 below. Availability bias makes us overestimate what is easy to remember or already close at hand. Group bias can arise when colleagues share the same perspective and thereby reinforce each other's interpretations. Positivity bias makes us overemphasise what works well, especially when we ourselves are part of the studied system. All research methods are affected by hidden bias, but we can make them more visible by writing short analysis memos, for example as comments on participants' reflections. Such reflective notes show how our insights have continuously grown and make our interpretations traceable so we can more easily see afterwards where bias may have crept in.

Another important step in the analysis is to critically test one's own understanding, to consciously seek what chafes. Look for contradictory examples in the data. Reflections that break the pattern, feelings that go in another direction, quotes that don't fit in, thoughts we would rather not have read about. Such deviations make the analysis both deeper and more credible. Also compare different data types – numbers, feelings and text – to see if they point in the same direction. Another simple technique is to count. How often does a theme or a feeling recur, and where does it differ? Both frequent and unusual themes are interesting, though for slightly different reasons. We can also let others read the same material and compare interpretations, for example at a collegial analysis meeting. We can

also test our conclusions against rival explanations, alternative ways to understand the same phenomenon. When we actively try to disprove ourselves, the analysis becomes more robust.

Attribution	**Confirmation**	**Availability**	**Anchoring**	**Positivity**	**Authority**
We attribute success to ourselves and failure to others	We focus on information that confirms our existing beliefs	We overestimate what is easy to recall or notice	We rely too heavily on initial impressions	We focus more on what works than on critical aspects	We give more weight to views from people in positions of power
Groupthink	**Selection**	**Conformity**	**Absence**	**Prematurity**	**Convenience**
Shared group views reinforce the same interpretation	The data does not represent all participants or situations	We adjust our interpretations to align with group norms	We overlook what is not said or not captured in the data	We draw conclusions before we have sufficient evidence	We base conclusions on what is easiest to access or see.

Figure 6.7. *Some common distortions or biases in analysis work that risk leading us astray.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inquiring teacher], chapter 8.
Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, Fast and Slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

6.8 Quality Management with the Help of DAS as Analysis Engine

All organisations conduct some form of quality work. In schools it's called school improvement work or systematic quality improvement, in healthcare quality management systems, in social services continuous improvement work and in business quality management systems or PDCA cycles – Plan-Do-Check-Act. Regardless of name, it's about planning, implementing, following up and improving operations based on data and reflection. The difference lies in the degree of life – whether quality work is administrative paperwork or a living quality dialogue. DAS makes quality work concrete: in the Design phase (Plan) action tasks and purposes are formulated, in the Action phase (Do) participants carry out their actions in everyday life and in the Sample phase (Check/Act) data is collected, analysed and fed back. In this way quality work does not become a separate process but part of everyday learning.

In Hässleholm in Sweden, around 60 headteachers have used DAS to make quality improvement work more practice-based. They call it

practice-based systematic quality work. Follow-up now happens continuously instead of a few times per year, and the work has become simpler, more frequent and more meaningful. The headteachers describe a shift from extensive to simplified, from seldom to often, from individually to together and from superficial to deeper, see figure 6.8 below.

With DAS as analysis engine in quality work, improvement cycles are moved more into everyday life. The analysis then does not become a heavy final step carried out by a few managers or quality managers, but a continuous and collective learning process that drives practice forward. When planning, action and analysis are bound together in digital everyday inquiry loops, the PDCA cycle becomes a more human and meaningful process driven by curiosity rather than control.

Read more:

Magnusson, A., Lackéus, M., Ohlsson, K., & Holmén, P.-E. (2023). Praktiknära SKA-arbete: En ny modell för ett mer meningsfullt och mer vetenskapligt systematiskt kvalitetsarbete [Practice-based systematic quality work: A new model for more meaningful and more scientific systematic quality work]

6.9 Use of AI in Qualitative Data Analysis

In an everyday inquiry there can be large amounts of text to be analysed by study leaders – from a few thousand words to up to a hundred thousand words, which corresponds to several thick books. I have myself done many such text analyses manually over the years, and it has long been the most difficult step to teach in everyday inquiry. Here AI technology recently came in as a welcome rescue. Now we can ask an AI engine to look for patterns and anonymous quotes from participants' reflections, both while the study is ongoing and when it's time for summarising. It goes quickly and works exceedingly well, our method research shows. Participants in collegial analysis meetings also place great value on the AI overviews.

We have built in a first version of AI support in Loopme, so that users with a single click can get an AI analysis of everyone's reflections

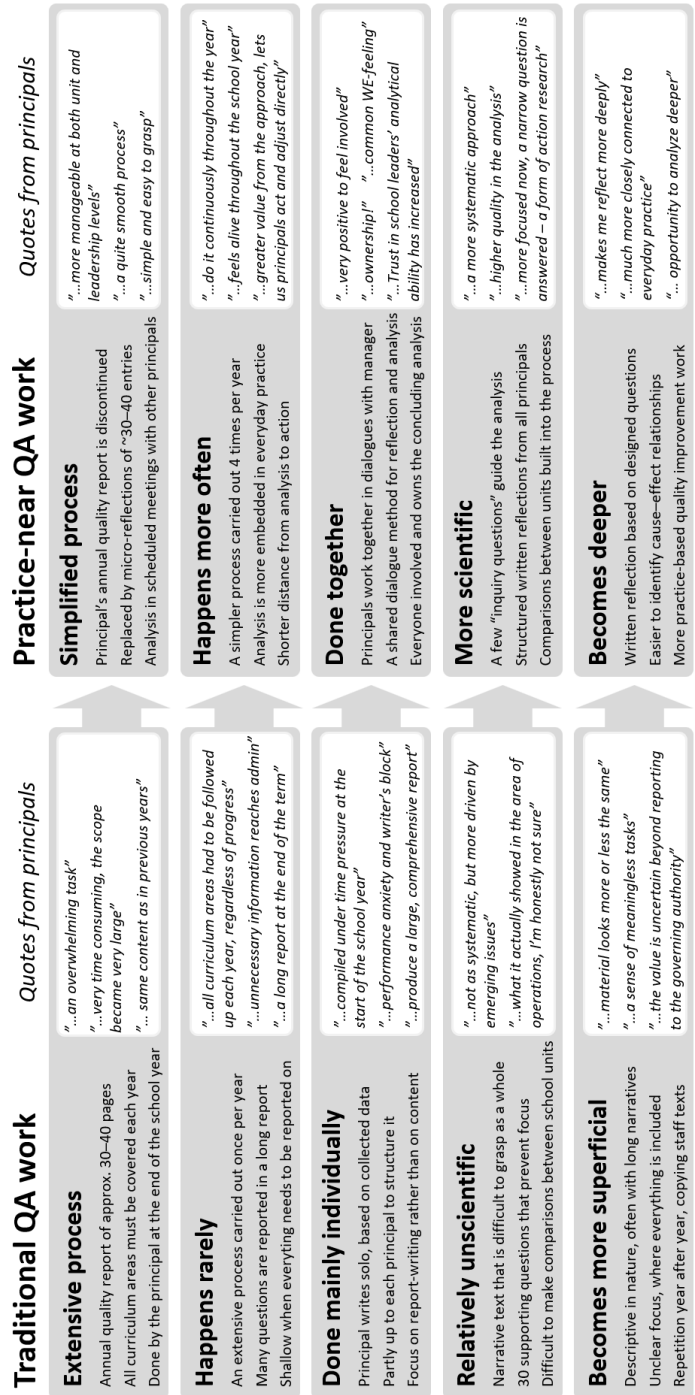


Figure 6.8. *Traditional and practice-near quality work (Magnusson et al., 2023).*

in a group or on a specific action task, see an example of such an analysis report in figure 6.9 below. AI thereby becomes yet another component in the socio-technical system DAS represents – yet another brain that participates when many brains think as one.

At the same time, AI-supported everyday inquiry analysis requires a critical stance. Algorithms carry their own distortions and lack understanding of context. Therefore the results always need to be tested against people's experience via collective reflection. The AI analysis's quality is also affected by how well we have managed the sowing – the GIGO rubbish rule also applies to AI analysis. There are also legal, security and ethical perspectives that need to be taken into account. But we see that it is worth the effort. AI opens up completely new possibilities through a radical simplification of DAS analysis. Quality work now becomes even simpler, and more people can participate.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2025). "I have All the Feelings": Navigating the Emotional and Practical Challenges of Research Method Innovation in Entrepreneurship Education. ECSB 3E, May 20-22, Munich.

6.10. Concluding Reflection on DAS Analysis

After having gone through the craft of DAS analysis based on a number of practical steps and techniques, I want to end this chapter by raising my gaze. Analysis in DAS is fundamentally about quite a lot of practical work with numbers and text, but it is also about collective sense-making. When people pause and together try to understand what their actions have led to, something deeply human emerges – a collective capacity to think, feel and learn. It is in this sense-making process that quality and development work draws its strength. Analysis then becomes not just a technical task but also a shared reflection process about what works, why it does and how we can get more of it.

At the same time, analysis is also emotional. Our reflections carry joy, frustration, pride and doubt – all that makes us alive. Where there

AI analysis of patterns in 26 teachers' reflections around using DAS for school development

Emoji	Heading (frequency)	Summary	Quote 1	Quote 2	Quote 3
🤔	**Deeper reflection (18)**	The method led to more reflection on teaching. Teachers were given the opportunity to analyze their practice, which increased their awareness of teaching methods.	*"The approach has given me opportunities to reflect on and analyze my own teaching, both on my own and together with others."*	*"I think it has been rewarding to take part in a collegial analysis, as it has provided inspiration and ideas for ways of working from others."*	*"It has been valuable to reflect together in mixed groups."*
🤜🤛	**Increased collegial collaboration (16)**	The method fostered collaboration among teachers. They were able to share experiences and ideas, leading to greater alignment in their approach to teaching.	*"We have supported each other within the team when planning activities. It has also been valuable to discuss activities with other teams."*	*"I experience that colleagues now talk much more about teaching with each other."*	*"The DAS method has contributed to increased collegial dialogue, collaboration, and awareness of how joint development work can create a systematic approach in which everyone contributes to the results."*
📑	**Focus on key concepts (15)**	The work increased the focus on subject-specific concepts. Teachers became more aware of the importance of conceptual understanding, which led to new ways of working with concepts in teaching.	*"It has probably made me focus more on concepts when teaching, especially in the social sciences."*	*"Yes, I have really become more aware of how important language and conceptual understanding are."*	*"I find it has been valuable to pay attention to subject-specific concepts, as well as to classroom materials that may not be as obvious as one might think."*
🔄	**New teaching methods (14)**	Teachers tested new methods in their teaching. This resulted in more varied approaches and increased student engagement.	*"Working with the DAS method has given me new methods for language-development-focused teaching, such as creating a word wall and making my own memory game."*	*"I have become more inspired to design activities where language development is at the center."*	*"By varying our approaches and using new perspectives, we have been better able to meet students' diverse needs, which has increased their engagement and interest."*
📊	**Systematic quality improvement (12)**	The method contributed to a more structured approach to quality improvement. Teachers experienced a clearer sense of systematic development work, leading to better follow-up and improvement.	*"The DAS method has strengthened our systematic quality improvement work by creating clearer structures for all teaching staff."*	*"Systematic quality improvement is about planning, implementing, following up, and improving the organisation, and here I think we have clearly succeeded through the DAS method."*	*"Through this shared and structured work, documented and analyzed partly with the support of AI in LoopMe, we have developed a well-organized and clear foundation for further work."*
🧩	**Shared language (10)**	The work created a shared language among teachers. This facilitated communication about teaching and led to greater alignment within the staff.	*"I feel that we have developed a shared language around teaching—we can now talk about and recognize how we work more than before."*	*"It has also led to us talking about language development, etc., in a more professional way, regardless of the subject we teach—a shared language."*	*"Working together has strengthened us both individually and as a group, and has given us a shared language."*
🔍	**Increased awareness (9)**	Teachers became more aware of their teaching. They reflected more on the effects of different methods, leading to more deliberate pedagogical choices.	*"However, the method may have made me more aware of how I teach and what benefits the students."*	*"I feel that the approach has contributed to some changes in my teaching as an individual teacher."*	*"I have become more linguistically clear with my students."*
🔄	**Repetition and variation (8)**	The importance of repetition and variation in teaching became clear. Teachers observed positive effects from repeating and varying activities, leading to increased use of these strategies.	*"Repetition really works."*	*"What has become visible is what has worked well. It has been helpful that we did the same thing, which allowed us to see what produced good results."*	*"In addition to this shared understanding, it became clear that repetition and variation in teaching are important."*

Figure 6.9. *AI analysis of what 26 teachers thought about using DAS.*

are strong feelings there is also strong learning. When we dare to let feelings become an important part of the analysis, we gain access to the energy that drives deep learning and real change. Therefore analysis needs to happen in trusting relationships where people dare to do, share, listen, feel and think together. Everyday inquiry makes this possible by weaving together the cognitive and the emotional, the individual and the collective, the written and the spoken, the digital and the human.

Fundamentally, DAS analysis is thus an expression of a kind of scientific democracy – research for the people, or people's science. It is a method that distributes thinking and speaking space to many more, where insights are not so much produced by experts at a distance but rather grow where everyday life unfolds. The purpose of analysis is therefore not to control but to understand, not to scrutinise but to improve. When we close the analysis loop with new and wiser actions, learning becomes more sustainable and operations more human. We return to this in chapter 10.

But analysis is also about rhythm – creating balance every week between working and learning. If we seldom pause and reflect we lose direction, but if we only analyse nothing new will happen. In everyday inquiry these movements alternate all the time: work triggers learning, and learning triggers new work. This is what creates a sustainable *work–learn balance* in the organisation, where improvement and production go hand in hand. Everyday inquiry is thus about *learning-oriented value creation*: creating more value through learning – for those we are here for, for each other and for ourselves. Translating new insights into actions that make a real difference in everyday life for all those affected by our work. For a deeper exploration of how work and learning can be better balanced in everyday life, see my article on "Work-learn balance" below.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2023). Work-learn balance - a new concept that could help bridge the divide between education and working life? Industry and Higher Education, 38(2).

7. Organising for DAS: The Inquiring Leader

Organising for DAS is, at its heart, a leadership task. DAS itself is straightforward, but it requires leadership that holds together structure, priority and psychological safety. Leaders at different levels work together to create an environment where people feel confident enough to experiment, reflect honestly and analyse without preconceptions. Space, conditions and boundaries need to be secured: knowledge of DAS, designated people with responsibility, protected time, a manageable pace, sustained commitment, clear priority over competing demands and well-designed forums for dialogue. DAS also needs to be legitimised—leaders must explain why and how the organisation is now going to work more systematically with action-based learning. When a clear structure is in place, working in everyday inquiry ways becomes natural for everyone.

This chapter begins with the role of formal managers—legitimising the work, giving it direction, and creating a sense of safety. Without a clear "why", the process loses momentum. We then look at how the work is organised in practice: who does what, when and why. Managers, study leaders, analysts, subject experts and participants all have distinct roles, and everyone needs to know what is expected of them. We also look at what DAS knowledge different roles need, and how time, rhythm and annual planning cycles can give the work a steady pulse. From there, we go deeper into the practical work of study leadership—guiding other people's learning.

We then explore several leadership philosophies that sit naturally alongside DAS: evidence-based, transformational and trust-based

leadership. Evidence-based leadership means that leaders draws on the patterns emerging from DAS analysis and make decisions grounded in real everyday data rather than gut feeling or tradition. Transformational leadership means that leaders use DAS as a tool to inspire, make meaning visible, and draw people into a shared learning journey that helps both individuals and the organisation to grow. Trust-based leadership means that leaders use DAS to build psychological safety and follow staff members' learning journeys without resorting to control—strengthening trust through attentiveness, transparency and presence.

The chapter closes with some perspectives on community leadership across organisational boundaries—a distinct form of leadership with its own set of possibilities and challenges.

7.1 Legitimising DAS – The Organisation's Unique Why

Throughout this handbook, I have touched on many different reasons why an organisation might want to work with DAS. There is no need to rehearse them all here. Ultimately, every organisation must carve out its own answers to the question "why DAS?". Those answers need to be closely connected to the organisation's own history, current situation, and the direction it wants to move in. Is the goal stronger analytical capacity and wiser decisions? Is it about building a learning organisation? Or is it more about creating a genuine sense of participation among staff? Does an important development initiative need to be followed up? What should now be studied in relation to all the processes already under way?

A strong and lasting answer to "why DAS?" is a prerequisite for leaders and staff to sustain the work over time—long after the initial excitement has faded. Working systematically and in writing with everyone's learning will always demand more effort than letting it happen spontaneously through gut feeling and corridor conversations. Without a clear "why" anchored among key people in

the organisation, DAS will quickly become the latest abandoned fad from enthusiastic champions who ran out of steam.

One way to build a strong "why" is for the leadership team to discuss and write down a long-term vision for what DAS should lead to over three to five years—why that matters, and what steps are needed to get there. Can this vision be illustrated visually? How do we create genuine buy-in among staff? Leadership can also signal the priority of DAS by distributing mandates, spreading knowledge about the method, and protecting time in meetings. DAS can be connected to a leadership philosophy already in place or pointing in the desired direction. Perhaps the leadership team wants to shift the culture away from loose talk and towards action, evidence-based decision-making, and real impact.

Whatever the leadership strategy, there will always be some resistance to DAS from individual staff members and managers who are initially sceptical. This may stem from fear of being scrutinised, anxiety about writing difficulties or other hidden weaknesses being exposed, a culture of control rather than learning, scepticism towards new technology, or simply the stress and unease that comes with any change.

7.2 Organising for DAS – Who Does What, When and Why

In many cases, it is not the most senior manager who leads the everyday inquiry work. That responsibility is often delegated to a person or group close to the manager—someone in a deputy or informal leadership role, ideally someone with a particular interest in development. Guiding colleagues' learning can certainly be said to fall within the formal manager's role, but in practice line managers rarely have the time for learning leadership. Alternatively, responsibility for DAS is shared between formal managers and informal study leaders.

DAS involves a number of practical tasks that are best delegated to people who have protected time to work on the details: designing

action tasks and tags, preparing and launching digital reflection groups, giving feedback to all participants, and compiling and collectively analysing the data collected. The formal manager, however, is usually deeply involved in deciding what should be studied through DAS—and what is not well suited to DAS. It is also valuable when the formal manager can find time to engage in the practical DAS work itself. We return to the study leader's role in section 7.5.

Another leadership role that often appears in everyday inquiries is that of subject experts. It is not always possible to bring in an expert, but if it happens, they often take on an advisory role—offering reading suggestions and deeper knowledge within the specific area being studied, so that the organisation has a firmer foundation when formulating inquiry questions, designing action tasks, and analysing data. An expert can bring a research perspective, give concrete meaning to key concepts, and contribute qualified interpretation of the data. Experts sometimes comment directly on participants' reflections. This tends to be very well received.

IT managers also play an important role in digital support, data protection and privacy. They are often deeply involved at the start-up and implementation stage of IT support for DAS. A common issue they have to handle is login, since many organisations use so-called SSO—Single Sign-On—a technology that simplifies access across different IT systems.

The role and involvement of participants in everyday inquiry work should not be overlooked. They take action, reflect in depth and contribute to the analysis. This is a form of self-leadership that requires courage, initiative and discipline. It often also involves leading others, since participants in their own work frequently guide the people affected by the action tasks they carry out—service users, customers, students and others whose lives are shaped by the value-creating work participants do in practice in a DAS study.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inquiring teacher]. Chapter 10.

7.3 Knowledge of DAS – Who Needs to Know What?

For DAS to work, different roles need different levels of knowledge. The goal is not for everyone to become a methodology expert, but for each person to understand their part in the whole. Managers need enough DAS competence to lead the work, interpret analytical material and make decisions based on data rather than loose opinion. They also need to understand how rhythm, pace and priority affect engagement and data quality.

Study leaders need a deeper understanding of DAS. They must be able to design testable actions, choose tags, conduct formative dialogue in comment threads, and hold the collective analysis together. This means they need to feel confident both in the research logic behind DAS and in the practical steps within the digital tool. That kind of depth only comes through actually running a complete everyday inquiry process with participants—from design all the way through to analysis. Analysis is a specialist skill that not every study leader necessarily needs to master in full. Those who do analyse DAS data in depth need to be able to work with both numbers and text, organise data into thematic summaries, and use AI support in ways that save time and improve the quality of the analysis.

HR professionals and development leads need to understand how DAS connects to professional development, projects, organisational culture and quality improvement work. Project managers need to be able to manage timelines and phases when several DAS cycles are running simultaneously. Subject experts contribute primarily through their knowledge of the specific area being studied, and therefore rarely need deep methodological expertise.

Participants need to understand the purpose of the reflections and how to write in ways that are useful for analysis. New colleagues need a quick introduction, experienced staff need opportunities to go deeper, and the organisation needs a simple method library where the essentials are gathered in one place.

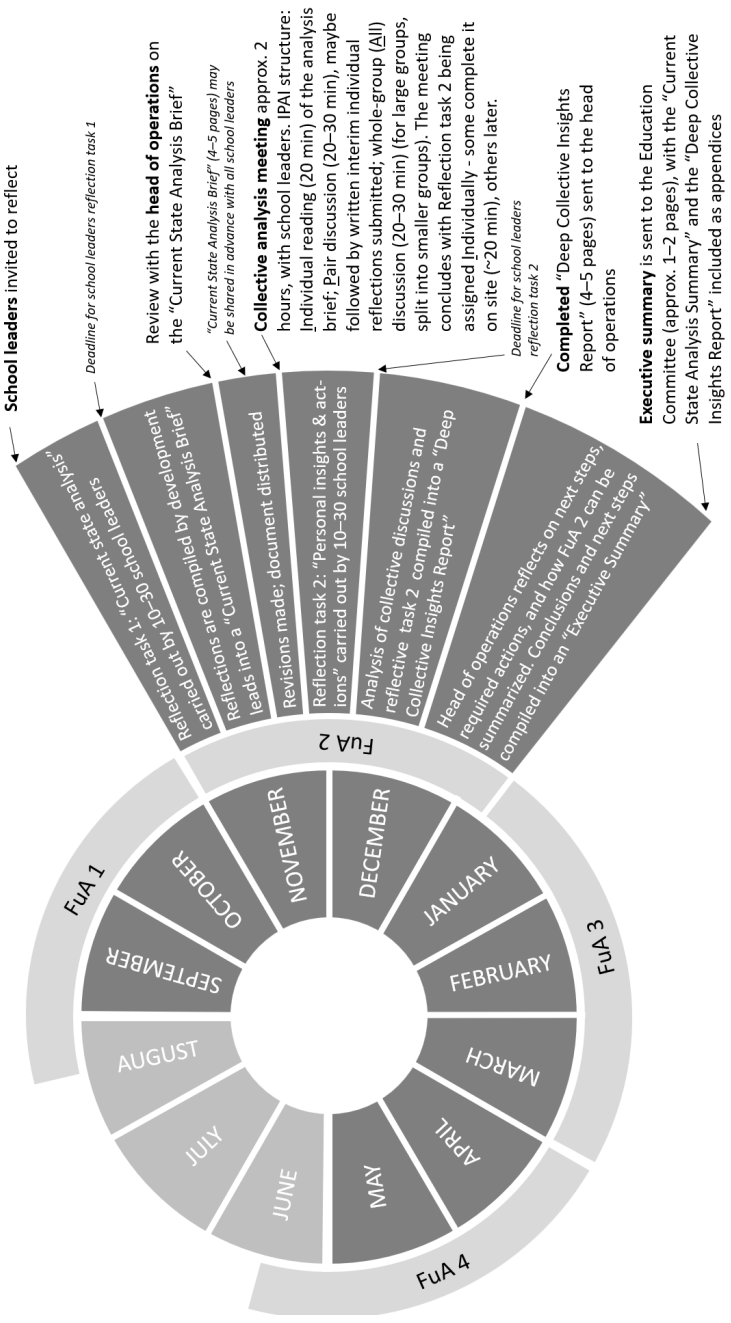
The practitioner training of which this handbook is a part can be used differently depending on role: managers need an overview, study leaders need to work through all the elements in both theory and practice, and other roles can manage with a lighter introduction. Participants need the least DAS knowledge of all—the whole idea of DAS is that anyone can take part without needing to be a methodology expert.

7.4 Time and DAS – Annual Cycles, Rhythm, and Protected Time

Time is often the single most decisive factor in whether DAS works or quietly fades away. The approach itself is simple, but it requires a rhythm and a priority that the organisation holds to even when everyday pressures mount. A clear annual cycle helps create that predictability. It shows when decisions about focus and design should be made, when a new everyday inquiry begins, when action tasks are carried out, when analysis meetings are held, and when decisions are made about possible changes going forward. A well-thought-through annual cycle means DAS does not compete with other processes—it is woven into them. See Figure 7.4 below for an example of a DAS annual cycle.

The rhythm of reflection also needs to be clear. Short reflection immediately after action is the heart of DAS, and leaders need to protect that micro-time. A weekly pulse, reminders and formative comments keep the learning alive. When participants notice that their reflections are being read and responded to promptly, both engagement and data quality increase.

Collective analysis meetings are another important fixed point. They need to be scheduled well in advance, with enough time and frequency to allow the group to work through the material and discuss patterns together. For large groups, a face-to-face meeting may need to be complemented by digital analysis before or after.



Figur 7.4 *An example of an annual cycle for DAS work. Four times a year, all 50 school leaders in a municipality are invited to reflect on a selected Follow-up Area (FuA) (Magnusson et al., 2023).*

Study leaders need particularly well-protected and carefully planned time to design action tasks, comment on reflections, and prepare analysis material. Without this time, quality drops and the pace becomes uneven. The organisation therefore needs to be explicit about which time is set aside, for which key people, and what may need to be removed to create that space.

Ultimately, time leadership in DAS is about defending pace and rhythm when urgent everyday matters compete for attention. It is when the organisation holds on and holds out that the inquiry work becomes sustainable and meaningful.

Read more:

Magnusson, A., Lackéus, M., Ohlsson, K., & Holmén, P.-E. (2023). Praktiknära SKA-arbete: En ny modell för ett mer meningsfullt och mer vetenskapligt systematiskt kvalitetsarbete [Practice-based systematic quality work: A new model for more meaningful and more scientific systematic quality work].

7.5 Study Leadership – A Different Kind of Leadership

The study leader is the hub of everyday inquiry. It is the study leader who brings the DAS method to life—translating the organisation's most important questions into testable actions, and creating a safe environment where participants feel confident enough to reflect openly. The role is less about knowing everything and more about guiding the process with calm, clarity and curiosity. The study leaders don’t lead people's day-to-day work, they lead their learning. Trust is built through consistent attentiveness, relational presence and genuine care for participants' development—while at the same time gently but firmly keeping the group moving forward in a development process that would otherwise easily be crowded out by everyday demands.

The study leader holds the direction throughout the entire cycle, so that the work does not become a series of isolated events but forms part of the organisation's long-term development logic.

The role is also cultural—keeping collegial curiosity alive and creating a climate where professional practice is shared openly and without prestige. Another central task is setting boundaries around ethics, anonymity and access. Safety is built when everyone knows how their words will be used and by whom. The study leader must be able to represent the group's learning to managers and others in ways that are both transparent and careful—without exposing individuals or compromising the sense of safety.

Dialogue is the study leader's primary tool. Short, warm and curious feedback keeps reflections alive. One of the hardest tasks is giving feedback that both affirms and challenges—creating safety while also pushing development forward.

Many study leaders lack formal authority—a kind of middle-leader dilemma—and therefore need clear role boundaries. They are not controllers, experts or managers. They are enablers of learning. In the analysis phase, they lead the process without dominating it, and make sure that many different voices get space. Also sceptical voices are invited in, because these often contribute important nuances to the collective understanding.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inuqiring teacher]. Chapter 10.

7.6 The Manager's Leadership – Trusting, Learning and Being Emotionally Present

DAS gives managers a new set of leadership tools and methods. With access to a collective "brain" through DAS, leadership can be grounded in the best available knowledge among colleagues to a far greater extent than before. This takes pressure off managers who might otherwise feel they are expected to have all the answers. A climate can more easily be created where staff get to show what they do and know—the insights they hold and generate, the opportunities and challenges they encounter, and how they navigate everyday work through continuous learning. DAS becomes a kind of relational tool that makes it easier for managers to follow staff members' learning

journeys at close range. This resembles the classic idea of "management by walking around"—but in partly digital form. Used well, DAS creates an intimacy in leadership that can otherwise be hard to build in a busy working day.

The manager's task is to hold the direction without controlling the content too tightly. This means modelling openness by reflecting themselves, normalising uncertainty and showing that feelings are a legitimate part of learning. Emotional leadership becomes central here—when staff share frustration, anxiety or joy in their reflections, managers need to meet those feelings with curiosity rather than judgement. Managers need to demonstrate trust, so that DAS is not perceived as a tool for control but as a tool for learning. Reflections should be used for development rather than performance monitoring. That requires a balance between being present and interested without it becoming surveillance. This often happens in close collaboration with study leaders, who exercise a complementary form of leadership. Quick, warm, brief feedback from the manager can significantly strengthen trust and generate energy in the process.

Managers are also learners in the process. DAS gives them access to rich everyday data that makes it easier to make wiser decisions and understand what is actually happening in the organisation. When managers stand firm in the purpose and hold the rhythm, they create an organisation where deep reflection is normal rather than an exception—where learning becomes a shared concern rather than an individual side project for a few motivated people. The focus should remain on the concrete actions being tried, not on opinions or general reasoning, so that action-based learning stays at the centre. This constitutes a design-based leadership in which the group together designs, tests, adjusts and tests again—where small experiments are seen as a natural way to understand the organisation better.

7.7 Evidence-Based Leadership

Evidence-based management (EBM) is one of the most well-grounded leadership philosophies we have—precisely because it consistently

shows that organisations which steer their decisions through data, systematic thinking and reflection perform better than those relying solely on gut feeling, tradition and authority. EBM is about making decisions based on the best available evidence rather than on intuition or organisational myths. It means that leaders systematically collect relevant data, question habitual explanations and let patterns in reality guide what actions to take. EBM also requires formulating clear questions, knowing what data is needed to answer them, and being prepared to revise assumptions when the data points in a different direction. It is a form of leadership that works against cognitive bias, gut-feeling-driven decisions, and the kind of "this is how we've always done it" logic that so often slows development. Within EBM, IT support plays a decisive role in leadership, because digital systems make it possible to collect, structure and analyse data in ways that give leaders access to the right evidence at the right time.

In DAS, EBM is translated into a concrete and everyday practice. Managers gain access to real-time data about how the work is actually functioning, and decisions can be made on the basis of concrete actions, feelings and effects—not assumptions. Study leaders drive the process by designing testable actions, analysing patterns and supporting colleagues in seeing what the data actually says. Participants contribute by documenting their actions and reflections, making their knowledge visible in the organisation's evidence base. In this way, the whole organisation becomes more exploratory, more open to evidence and more willing to change course. IT tools such as Loopme support evidence-based leadership—see Figure 7.7 below.

The deeper meaning of EBM in a DAS context is that leadership becomes a form of intellectual humility: a willingness to ask questions before giving answers, to let reality speak, to acknowledge that no one holds the complete picture. It means a willingness to let go of the control that rests on assumptions, and instead lead through curiosity—designing, testing, listening, analysing and adjusting. It is a leadership style that takes people and data equally seriously, and

that sees wisdom as something built collectively, step by step, through the small experiments of everyday work.

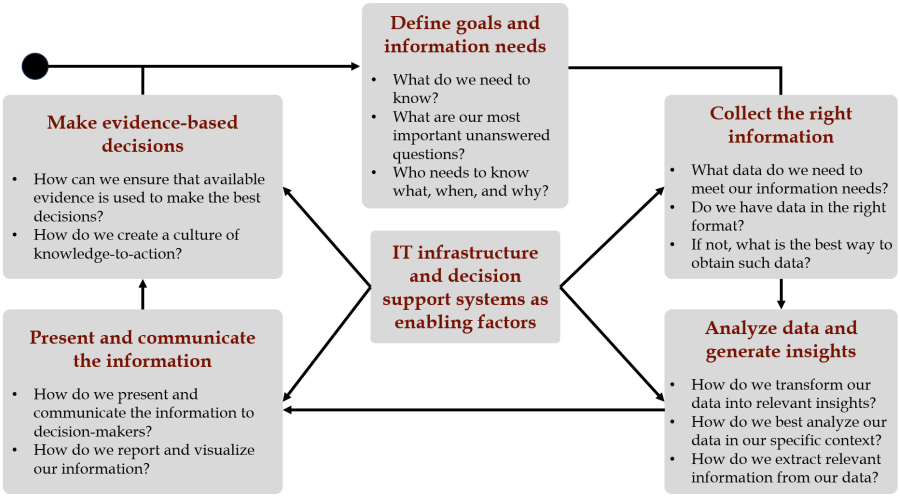


Figure 7.7. *A model for EBM illustrating how IT support has a central role in evidence-based leadership (figure revised after Cannon and Doyle, 2020).*

Read more:

Cannon, M., & Doyle, C. (2020). Challenges to advancing evidence-based management in organizations: Lessons from Moneyball. Management Teaching Review, 5(4), 363-373.

Pfeffer, J., & Sutton, R. I. (2006). Evidence-based management. Harvard business review, 84(1), 62.

7.8 Transformational and Trust-Based Leadership

Transformational leadership is a philosophy built on awakening people's intrinsic motivation. Rather than steering primarily through targets, monitoring and rewards—the hallmarks of transactional leadership—transformational leadership directs its attention towards vision, values and meaning. The leader shows where the organisation is heading, why it matters and how each individual can contribute to something larger than their own immediate task. At its core, it means being a role model who stands for clear ideals, articulating an inspiring direction, stimulating critical and creative thinking, and meeting each person with care and support. Figure 7.8 shows how this complements more structure-driven leadership. Stability and follow-

up are necessary, but it is vision, intellectual stimulation and relational safety that create genuine capacity for change.

Trust-based leadership is a closely related philosophy, centred on creating a relational safety in which people feel confident enough to be open, try new things, and show uncertainty without fear of being controlled. It rests on confidence in staff members' competence and willingness to take responsibility, and on the leader strengthening the profession by reducing unnecessary micromanagement and giving genuine room to act. Such leadership is characterised by attentiveness, openness and dialogue—where curiosity comes before suspicion, and where data is used for learning rather than for control. When the profession is trusted, engagement, quality and courage grow organically. In the Swedish context, Bringselius (2017) has developed a framework for trust-based leadership, emphasising autonomy, professional judgement and reduced reliance on control.

In DAS, both transformational and trust-based leadership become concrete and grounded in everyday practice. The vision is expressed through how action tasks are formulated, what inquiry questions are asked, and what patterns are highlighted in the analysis. Action tasks and tags function as markers of what is strategically important—and provide intellectual stimulation by inviting new perspectives and experiments. At the same time, the reflections create a structure in which the leader can invite accountability, offer individualised support, gain sight of the profession's knowledge, follow people's development, and see their different needs and strengths. The trust-based perspective becomes central here—staff only share their real actions and thoughts if they feel that the reflections are being used for learning rather than for monitoring performance.

DAS thus becomes a leadership tool in which vision, courage, curiosity and trust are woven together. The leader becomes a catalyst rather than a conductor—someone who helps people find meaning, dare more, draw on their knowledge, and develop together towards a shared vision.

Table 7.8. *Transactional and transformational leadership, and their connection to DAS.*

Transactional leadership	Transformational leadership	Connection to DAS
Transaction-oriented. *Leading through target-setting, conditional rewards and sanctions, based on external motivation.*	***Charismatic****. Leading through clear vision, values and an emotionally engaging overarching purpose that awakens intrinsic motivation.*	*Vision, ideals, and values can be clarified through the overall set of inquiry questions, action tasks and tags that staff work with through DAS.*
Deviation-based. *Focus on existing ways of working, structures and deviations and problems in the here and now.*	***Inspiring.*** *Focus on strategic questions, learning and new ways of working that challenge and motivate.*	*Leaders challenge staff through different action tasks in DAS. Leaders signal in concise terms through DAS what is strategically important, in inquiry questions, tasks and tags.*
Role-focused. *The driving force is individual and plan-driven, centred on the staff member's own tasks, agenda and goals.*	***Stimulating.*** *The driving force is collective and vision-driven, centred on intellectual stimulation, critical thinking, creativity and new ideas.*	*Questions, action tasks and tags in DAS that focus on new ideas and ways of working, stimulating staff intellectually, challenging them, and making them more creative.*
Hierarchical. *Leaders lead by acting on the issues and staff members that are currently demanding attention.*	***Distributed.*** *Leaders coach each staff member to take initiative and exercise leadership in everyday work. Interaction and honest dialogue with each individual are prioritised.*	*Reflections on completed actions by each staff member are read by leaders through DAS. Everyone receives individual coaching in a confidential dialogue within DAS.*

Read more:

Anderson, M. (2017). Transformational leadership in education: A review of existing literature. International Social Science Review, 93(1), 1-13.

Bringselius, L. (2017). Tillitsbaserad styrning och ledning: Ett ramverk [Trust-based governance and management: A framework]. (2nd ed.) Tillitsdelegationen.

Westlund, C. (2020). Tillitsbaserat ledarskap i skolan – Från ord till handling [Trust-based leadership in schools – From words to action]. Self-publishing.

7.9 Community Leadership: Leading Learning Across Organisational Boundaries

We have seen many examples of study leaders who grow into the role of leading communities of practice. Leading such a community means creating and holding together a larger group of people who develop their profession collectively. The leader's primary task is to build a structure that makes it easy to meet, share experiences and explore shared questions. Leaders are responsible for the rhythm—ensuring that meetings recur, that everyday inquiries are followed up, and that learning is kept alive even when everyday pressures push back.

A community becomes particularly powerful when it is led across organisational boundaries. Leaders of such a community bring together strengths and perspectives from different organisations, which leads to richer analysis, greater development capacity and a more varied base of experience. More long-term, community work is also a strategy for more sustainable organisational development. The DAS work becomes more resilient and less dependent on individual people. Community leaders lift local champions, build a culture of development and ensure that the community becomes a self-renewing engine in the long-term learning of several organisations. Figure 7.9 below shows an example vision for such a community.

Leading a community also means cultivating among participants the *courage* to share personal experiences, the *heart* to help one another, and the collective analytical capacity—the distributed *brain*—that DAS gives them. Community leaders make these values visible, strengthen them, and help the group carry the responsibility together.

Read more:

Lackéus (2024). Hur kan skolledare i utsatta områden få hjälp? Tre etablerade sätt och ett nytt arbetssätt [How can school leaders in disadvantaged areas get support? Three established approaches and one new way of working]. Unpublished essay written for the Swedish National Agency for Education, available on request.

Lackéus, M., & Sävetun, C. (2025). Designed Action Sampling as a new research method to help build active communities in entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship Education & Pedagogy, 8(2), 206–239.

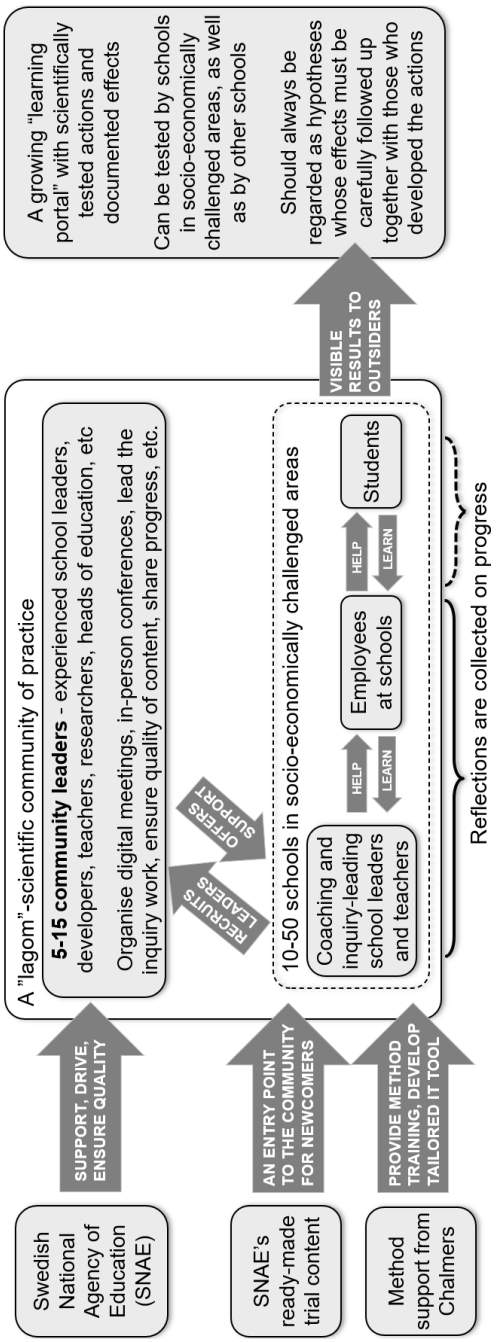


Figure 7.9. *A vision for a research-informed "lagom"-scientific community for schools in areas facing socioeconomic challenges (Lackéus, 2024).*

8. Challenges with DAS: A New Method Meets the Everyday Rhythm

There is no shortage of challenges when working with DAS. The resistance that can arise is nothing unusual or specific to this method – it reflects well-known human patterns of response to change. Thanks to 1,200 reflections from around a hundred participants in my practitioner training programme in DAS, we also have a solid understanding of what those challenges are and when in the process they tend to appear. In our work so far, we have identified around thirty recurring challenges, falling mainly into four broad areas: time and workload, the method's complexity for study leaders, psychological factors for participants, and organisational and cultural conditions. This chapter walks through them so that you are not caught entirely off guard when the challenges and resistance arrive. The focus here is less on how to handle them – that is covered in other chapters.

Many of the challenges in DAS studies reflect people's hesitation in the face of the new, their attachment to the familiar rhythms of everyday life, and a natural discomfort with having to put their thoughts and feelings into words more openly. When purpose, roles, or expectations feel unclear, resistance grows – as it also does when digital data collection is misread as surveillance or evaluation. Often it is less about the method itself and more about the fact that something new and unfamiliar is making demands on time and attention, and in doing so, disrupting the daily flow. The important thing to remember is that these reactions are normal and expected. They are not signs that something has gone wrong. When participants genuinely understand the purpose, see the power of DAS, and

experience for themselves the value of working in research-informed ways, the resistance tends to fade and is replaced by enthusiasm.

Many of the challenges are rooted in the practicalities of everyday life. Time pressure makes it hard to establish the rhythm that DAS needs, while the method's various components can feel unfamiliar and complex at first. Many study leaders struggle to formulate good action tasks and tags, many participants feel uncertain about sharing feelings and reflections in writing. It is not uncommon for colleagues to express scepticism, or for the purpose to seem unclear – especially when roles and mandates have not yet been established. Concerns about data collection, ethics, and a sense of being monitored are another source of friction. DAS also tends to challenge organisations at their weakest point: the capacity to analyse their own learning in a systematic way. Add to that the persistence required to keep the momentum going over time, and what emerges is a picture of a way of working that both challenges and develops an organisation's ability to learn.

8.1 A Model with Eight Challenges

Figure 8.1 summarises eight recurring challenges that we have seen time and again when DAS is introduced to new participants. Together they form a model that captures the breadth of the obstacles people encounter – from individual feelings to organisational structures, from the technical details of the method to the entrenched cultures of academia. That something is listed as a challenge does not necessarily mean it has been a problem in practice – it may also reflect participants' anxiety about potentially running into such problems. We often hear that DAS is received better than people expected once they actually get a study going with their colleagues or other participants.

The model in Figure 8.1 is described in more detail in a research article I presented at a conference in Germany in June 2025 – see the reference below. The three challenge types on the left of the model relate primarily to practitioners: organisational and psychological challenges and difficulties connected to working in research-informed

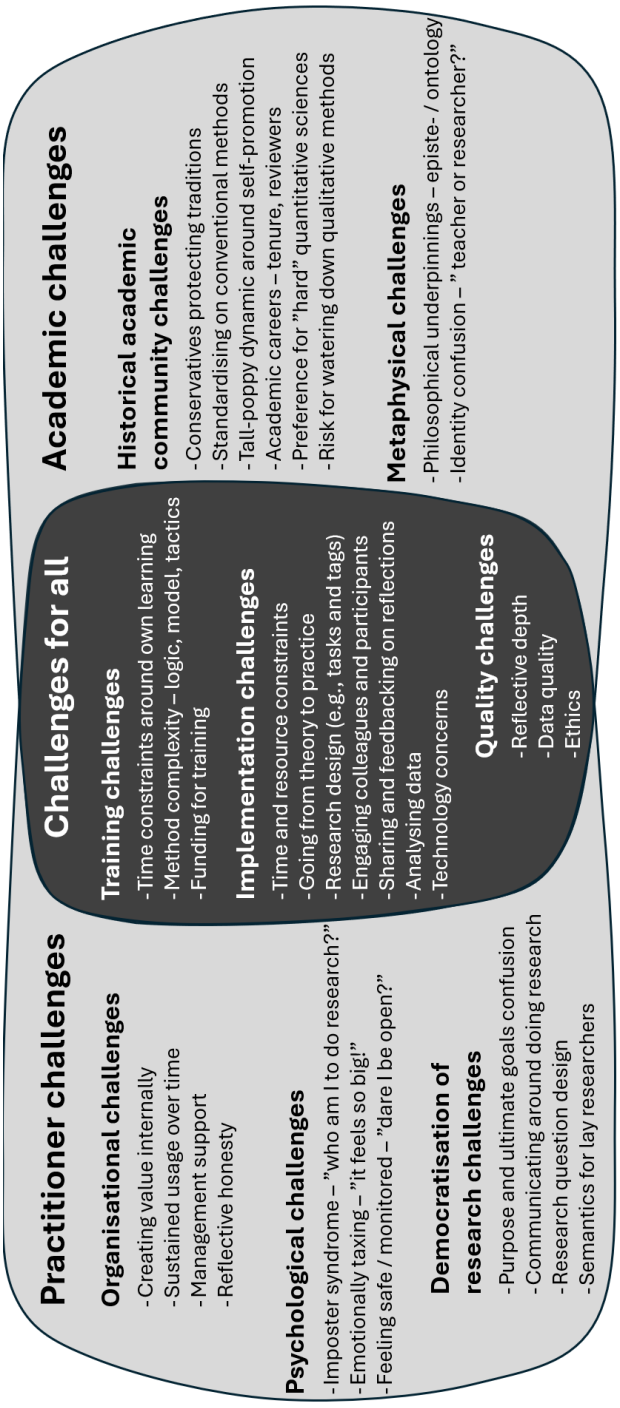


Figure 8.1. *A model with eight challenges in DAS. (Lackéus, 2025).*

ways within ordinary organisations. In the middle of the model are challenges that all participants describe, regardless of whether they are practitioners or researchers. These include the difficulty of keeping up with a DAS training programme while everyday life rolls on, implementing DAS in a pressured working environment, and concerns about achieving sufficient quality in participants' reflections. On the right in the model are challenges raised primarily by participants in higher education institutions. These can involve conservatism, tall-poppy dynamics, career concerns and resistance from colleagues who prefer more traditional research methods. Some academics also raise deeper challenges connected to classic philosophical questions of epistemology and ontology.

Together, these eight challenge types provide a realistic map of the terrain that participants move through when they begin working with DAS. In the rest of this chapter, we use the model as a compass and work through participants' reflections on each area. The challenges are presented concisely, without addressing how they can be handled – that is covered in other chapters of this handbook.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2025). "I have All the Feelings": Navigating the Emotional and Practical Challenges of Research Method Innovation in EE ECSB 3E, May 20-22, Munich.

8.2 Organisational Challenges – Creating Sustainable Value, Management Support, and Honesty

Participants' reflections from previous practitioner training programmes show that the first organisational challenge is about *creating value internally*. Many express uncertainty about whether colleagues will appreciate or even understand the benefits of DAS. Several describe their organisation as "not particularly open to change", as prone to "getting stuck in old routines", and say that it therefore takes both courage and pedagogical sensitivity to show why DAS actually helps people in their everyday work. It is not the value itself that is missing – it is the ability to help others see it.

The second challenge concerns *sustainable use* over time. Reflections from both Swedish and international participants describe how the pace of everyday life makes continuity difficult. Action tasks are forgotten, the rhythm slackens, analysis meetings are cancelled. Time pressure and workload appear here not as individual problems but as structural barriers to persistence.

The third organisational challenge is *management support*. Several participants write that success depends on managers who "give legitimacy", protect time, and show genuine interest in the results. Without this, DAS risks "falling through the cracks" or becoming a side project that participants drive on their own.

Finally, participants highlight the importance of *honest reflection*. Many write that genuine reflection requires psychological safety, clear boundaries, and a culture where feelings are not misread as criticism. When that safety is absent, reflections become cautious and uninteresting. When it is present, both learning and courage grow.

8.3 Psychological Challenges – Impostor Feelings, Emotional Weight, and Safety

A clear psychological pattern emerges from participants' reflections. Many wrestle with a sense that they do not quite have the "right" to do research. This form of impostor syndrome – feeling like a fraud or a pretender – surfaces in comments such as "who am I to be doing this?", "I feel like a complete beginner", and "what if I get it wrong?". The feeling intensifies when formulating action tasks, interpreting data, or giving feedback – moments traditionally associated with expertise rather than everyday practice. Several describe this as both exciting and frightening at the same time.

The next psychological challenge is that the work feels emotionally demanding. Participants write that it "feels big", that exposing their thoughts makes them nervous, and that it can be unsettling to see their own feelings and failures in written form. The reflections show that learning is deeply connected to vulnerability – and that it is precisely

this vulnerability that makes DAS developmental, but also challenging.

The third psychological challenge is about safety. Many ask themselves: "do I dare to be open?" Fear of being judged, misunderstood, or "found out" causes some people to hold back at first. Where safety is established – through a warm tone in feedback, clear boundaries, and a purpose that feels meaningful – the courage to write more honestly grows. Participants describe how this step often becomes the turning point. When safety is in place, the real learning begins.

8.4 Democratisation Challenges – Studying Your Own Practice Without Being a Researcher

When research moves out of academia and into everyday practice, established reference points for what "research" actually means in this context are often absent. Many participants therefore experience an initial confusion about the *purpose and goals* of DAS. Several write that they "don't know what is expected", that they find it hard to tell whether the focus is on their own development, collegial learning, or producing research findings. This uncertainty slows things down and leads some to wait until the picture becomes clearer.

A second challenge concerns the *language* around working in research-informed ways. Many participants express that the language of research feels unfamiliar – terms like research question, data quality, empirical material, and scientific method feel academically loaded. This creates a sense of distance: "is this really for me?" At the same time, the reflections show how liberating it becomes when that language is demystified and a more accessible vocabulary for everyday inquiry is established. That is when the door to working in research-informed ways truly opens. Many appreciate the idea of using their own terms for when practitioners work in this way – speaking of studying your own practice, formulating an inquiry question, and being part of an everyday inquiry group creates engagement and a sense of pride.

Finally, several participants describe difficulties in *formulating* inquiry questions and *designing* their own everyday inquiry. They wonder what is "the right scope", how to choose a relevant focus, and what a question needs to look like in order to be empirically testable. This is not a sign of limited ability – it is a sign that the role of the inquiring practitioner is still being claimed. Taken together: when support is clear and language is accessible, the step from "the person who does the work" to "the person who studies the work" becomes considerably smaller. This aligns with a vision we set out early in developing DAS as a methodology – we talked about phrases like "research for everyone", "people's science" and working in ways that are genuinely accessible to all.

8.5 Training Challenges – Time, Methodological Complexity and Funding

Many participants describe how the first major challenge is a *lack of time* for their own learning. In both Swedish and international reflections, the comment recurs that the practitioner training moves too quickly, that they "haven't had time to read the book", or that they need more time to truly understand and try out the different elements in practice. They write that it is hard to set aside the mental and organisational energy needed to learn an entirely new method while everyday life continues at full speed. This creates a feeling of inadequacy, despite high motivation. These challenges prompted a complete redesign of the practitioner training into the form now available at Everydayinstitute.se, and a fairly substantial shortening of the book from 260 to 160 pages. But some of these challenges will probably persist regardless.

The second training challenge concerns *methodological complexity*. Participants express that the logic of the model – how action tasks, tags, feelings, commenting and analysis fit together – is more extensive than they first expected. Several describe difficulties in "getting the whole picture", understanding the thinking behind good action task design, or grasping the analysis steps as a whole. Beginners

find the method "overwhelming" until they have seen it work in practice. This may be less because DAS is inherently complicated and more because there are so many new components to master at once.

The third training challenge relates to *funding* and *organisational support* for the practitioner training in DAS. Several participants express concern about how long-term learning will be prioritised financially – whether their unit will be able to allocate resources for training everyone who needs it, whether colleagues will get the same opportunity to participate, and how the work can be scaled up without breaking the budget. The reflections show that this uncertainty affects motivation: when funding and time are secured, participants feel able to invest fully in their own learning. This was also a major reason why we set up Everyday Institute and developed a way of delivering practitioner training and a handbook free of charge.

8.6 Implementation Challenges – Practical Barriers, Technology, and Human Friction

In their reflections, participants describe how limited *resources* and *time* often become the first obstacle when implementing DAS. Several say they "want to do more than they have time for", that action tasks end up squeezed between other responsibilities, and that they have to choose between commenting on reflections and keeping up with their everyday tasks or management work. Lack of time also means that many hold off on introducing the method to colleagues until they feel more confident themselves.

The next obstacle is the move *from theory to practice*. Participants write that DAS feels clear when someone else explains it, but becomes vague when they themselves have to "get the first loop going". The transition from understanding to doing is a delicate phase where many ask for support, examples, and collegial reassurance.

A third cluster of challenges relates to *research design* – creating good action tasks, formulating a manageable number of tags, and choosing a pace that suits the organisation. Many describe this as the most technically demanding step.

Then there are the difficulties of *engaging* colleagues and participants. Some encounter scepticism, others face anxiety about openness or uncertainty about the workload. Once the work is under way, challenges arise in sharing and giving feedback – particularly with large groups. Participants describe the pressure of commenting quickly, genuinely and without losing quality. At the same time, many find the data analysis overwhelming at first: how to read heat maps, cluster quotes, and make sense of patterns.

Finally, several participants mention *technical problems* as an unexpected but real obstacle. Login difficulties, uncertainty about features in the IT support Loopme, and concerns about data protection. These issues are rarely serious in themselves, but they can disrupt momentum if support is not immediately available.

8.7 Quality Challenges – Data Quality, Ethics, Trust

Participants' reflections show that the first quality challenge is *depth of reflection*. Many describe how hard it can be to find the right level of writing. Not too short and superficial, but not so extensive that the threshold becomes too high. Some write that they "rush through" reflections when time is short, others struggle to articulate why something turned out the way it did. This creates variation in the material – from deeply self-reflective texts to more descriptive accounts of what happened. Participants often express a wish for more examples of "good reflections" to help them calibrate.

The second quality challenge concerns *data quality* more broadly. Tags are applied with varying consistency, feeling ratings are interpreted differently by different people, and the wording of action tasks affects what actually shows up in the data. Some describe concern about missing important nuances, others feel that the tags are "too broad" or "too narrow". In the early stages, many find that the data feels scattered before patterns begin to emerge.

Finally, several participants express a strong awareness of the ethical dimensions of the work. They ask themselves how open they can be, how feelings and vulnerability should be handled, and how

reflections may be used further down the line. There is also concern that data could be misinterpreted or experienced as a form of control. Participants therefore highlight the need for clear boundaries: voluntariness, transparency and care as the cornerstones of good quality.

8.8 Academic Challenges – Traditions, Status Hierarchies and Methodological Norms

In several reflections from participants in academic positions, a sense emerges that DAS collides with a *conservative tradition* in higher education. Methods that are new, iterative and grounded in everyday practice are sometimes perceived as less "serious" than established approaches. Participants describe colleagues who "stick to what they have always done" and institutions where change happens slowly.

A second challenge is that many academic environments are shaped by standardisation towards *conventional methods*. Peer review systems, doctoral training and journal requirements tend to push towards familiar formats such as surveys, interviews or experiments. Several participants express concern about how DAS will be "received by reviewers" and whether it will be seen as legitimate.

There is also a cultural dimension: a *tall-poppy dynamic* around self-promotion. In their reflections, participants describe a fear of standing out, of driving their own methodological development, or of presenting something "too new". Being associated with an innovative method can feel risky. Many also point to academic career logics. Qualifying for positions typically requires publications in traditional journals, which makes methodological innovation a professional risk.

DAS also challenges a longstanding preference for *quantitative science*. Participants describe colleagues who primarily value numbers, while qualitative data – feelings, stories, processes – is seen as too soft. Finally, several express concern that qualitative methods risk being *diluted* when made accessible to more people. At the same time, this is described as a necessary price for democratising research methodology and bringing it closer to practice.

8.9 Metaphysical Challenges – The Foundations of Research and Academic Self-Image

Metaphysical challenges concern the deeper questions about the nature of research – what counts as knowledge (epistemology), how reality can be understood (ontology), and what identity one actually holds as a researcher. Many participants express uncertainty about how a method built on feelings, micro-situations and real-time learning should be understood in relation to traditional scientific ideals. Questions surface in the reflections such as: "is this knowledge in an academic sense?", "how should I relate to subjectivity?", and "is it possible to draw conclusions without distance and control?" Several researchers describe how DAS unsettles their established assumptions about what data is, what evidence can consist of, and how causality can be understood when both action and feeling are included in the analysis. This methodological shift creates a kind of existential methodological discomfort – a feeling that the ground is not quite solid.

The second metaphysical challenge concerns researcher identity. In reflections from academics, a clear uncertainty emerges: "is this still research?", "how will my colleagues see me if I use this?", "does this risk undermining my professionalism?" DAS blurs traditional boundaries between researcher and practitioner, between detached analysis and participatory co-production. For researchers trained in objectivity and methodological rigour, this can feel like an intrusion into their disciplinary self-image. At the same time, some describe a genuine attraction to working in close relation to lived practice for the first time – alongside a fear of how this positions them within their institutional cultures.

In summary, researchers' reflections show that the metaphysical challenges are not technical but identity-based. They are about the fact that DAS requires a new understanding of what research can be and who a researcher is allowed to be. It is precisely at this intersection of

practice and theory that much of the academic friction arises – and where the potential for methodological renewal also lies.

8.10 Where It Chafes, There Lies Opportunity – Challenges as a Welcome Sign

When we look at the eight challenge types together, it becomes clear that resistance is not a sign that something has gone wrong. It is a sign that something important is in motion. Friction arises whenever people try new ways of working – especially those that touch habits, feelings and relationships. That DAS sometimes chafes is therefore not only a problem. It is also a signal that everyday life is beginning to change.

It is important to normalise this resistance. Much of what initially feels like worry or hesitation turns out, on reflection, to be entirely natural steps in the process. Something interesting often happens after the first period. When purpose, rhythm and safety fall into place, resistance is replaced by a kind of momentum. Participants describe how they suddenly see the value, feel more courageous, and notice that the work is beginning to bear fruit. I often hear this after an analysis meeting: "Why didn't you tell us this was the point?" Well, I think to myself, you wouldn't have understood even if I had tried to explain it. Some things have to be experienced in the body before they can be appreciated at depth – just as I described in section 5.1.

Perhaps the most hopeful thing in all the material is precisely this: that DAS so often works better than people first expect. A method that never generated friction would probably not produce any deep learning effect either. DAS makes a difference precisely because it goes deep – close to people's real work and real feelings. The challenges that arise are therefore not obstacles to be avoided. They are signposts. Small markers that show where learning, development and cultural change are most possible.

9. Metaphors That Give DAS Meaning: "DAS Is a Way to…"

The method DAS has so far been described as a way of working with clear components, processes and definitions. In this chapter, I take a step back and describe DAS through nine very different metaphors that have emerged over the course of the work. Metaphors are not primarily simplifications – they are tools for making meaning. They help us find our bearings in territory we have not yet fully mastered: "DAS is a way to take responsibility together", "to strengthen the profession", "to think more slowly", "to write our way to wisdom", "to sustain the energy for development", "to ask better questions", "to make the invisible visible", "to train our judgement", or "to cook nourishing 'food for thought' together".

The metaphors take many different forms. DAS can be a kind of guilt-free moral system in organisations that otherwise get stuck in the question of whose fault something is. It can be a way for professions to reclaim ownership of their own development, beyond temporary projects and top-down initiatives. It can be a practice of slow thinking in environments that otherwise reward confidence, quick answers, and decisive action. It can function as a kind of everyday writing, or as an organisation's critical conscience. It can represent a concrete craft for quality development work, a microscope that makes details visible, or a reflection muscle that needs to be trained over time.

These metaphors do not claim to be exhaustive or unambiguous. Nor are they intended as descriptions of how DAS is always experienced in practice. They function more as analytical lenses – different ways of looking at the same practice from different angles. Each metaphor illuminates something, but simultaneously obscures

other perspectives. Taken individually, they are incomplete. Taken together, they form a broad interpretive framework for what DAS can be, do, and make possible over time. What they share is an attempt to capture DAS as human practice – not merely as scientific method.

9.1 DAS as a Moral System – But Without the Guilt

For many years I searched through theological literature looking for answers to what DAS fundamentally is. It was a difficult journey for someone like me, an agnostic. But eventually, among atheist theologians, I found perspectives that helped me understand more deeply why DAS can help us as human beings.

According to evolutionary biologist David Sloan Wilson, religions can be understood as social systems that increase group cohesion and thereby improve a group's chances of surviving and functioning over time. In line with this, I see DAS as a secular equivalent – not as a doctrine, but as a moral system that strengthens professional collectives in their ability to hold together, learn and collaborate in complex environments. In his book *Darwin's Cathedral*, Wilson writes about how such moral systems are vastly superior to hierarchical governance models built on rewards and punishment. People's beliefs guide them towards behaviours that benefit the group, even when this occasionally comes at a cost to individuals. One of Wilson's prime examples is sixteenth-century Geneva, which flourished under Calvinism. In a similar way, I believe that organisations working according to DAS principles can collaborate more effectively and develop their practice to function better year on year.

The philosopher Alain de Botton writes in his book Religion for Atheists that priests tend to describe human beings as forgetful, fragile and weak-willed. We so easily forget what we actually know to be right. De Botton (2012) argues that we are often far less wise in practice than our knowledge would suggest. That is why many religions have introduced rituals and annual cycles that regularly remind us of what we deep down believe and "know" to be right – Christmas (to be humble), Easter (to endure suffering), All Saints' Day (to remember

the dead), Sunday (to rest). In the same spirit, DAS can help us remember what it means to be a "good" colleague.

It is worth noting that DAS, in line with Schön's "reflective practitioner", seeks deeper understanding of what went wrong rather than absolution from guilt. We should learn from our failures, not moralise about them. But developing yourself and your workplace is still hard work – everyone wants development, but few want to be developed, as Figure 9.1 illustrates. Development work is therefore, at its core, a moral question, and DAS can become a supportive moral system within it. I remember the first time a group of teachers asked me to remind them every fortnight about the development work they had agreed to carry out together. At the time, I did not understand what they were asking for. Today I see it clearly: they were asking for a moral system – a rhythm that would help their development work weave more naturally into a hectic everyday life.

Figure 9.1 Classic cartoon illustrating the challenges of development work.

Read more:

de Botton, A. (2012). Religion for Atheists: A Non-Believer's Guide to the Uses of Religion. Penguin Books.

de Botton, A. (2019). The school of life – an emotional education. Penguin books.

Gino, F., & Staats, B. (2016). Why Organizations Don't Learn. Harvard business review, 94(1-2), 24-24.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The inquiring teacher]. Chapter 6.

Wilson, D. (2002). Darwin's cathedral: Evolution, religion, and the nature of society. University of Chicago press.

9.2 DAS as Professional Stewardship – Because We Own Our Profession

If you own and live in a house, you look after it properly – you carry out ongoing maintenance and take on various improvement projects. The same is true of professions: they too need to be maintained and developed. You own your profession, and you spend a great deal of time inside it. Many others will claim to know how you should do your job. But you and your colleagues usually have the deepest understanding of what your professional everyday life actually involves. That is why you should also take the greatest responsibility for stewarding and developing your profession. But you need tools and methods. This is where DAS comes in – as a toolkit for professional stewards.

DAS makes it easier to take ownership of your profession, to feel genuine professional pride, and to find real satisfaction in its development. This is especially true when you compare it with the alternative: someone else coming in and knowing best how your job should be done. Unsolicited advice and top-down development work are common, but they can be draining. External researchers, politicians, consultants, managers, central support functions, self-appointed experts, public commentators – people who no doubt mean well but still often fail to help you in your actual professional practice. Imagine if they knew about DAS. Then you could work together on professional stewardship far more effectively. You and your colleagues lead the development work; they support it. Rather than the other way around.

Looking after a house is hard work. So is looking after a profession. There are many dimensions to develop – yourself, your colleagues, your organisation, your clients, as Figure 9.2 illustrates. Ideally, everyone should be thriving and at their best. And of course, outsiders should have oversight and be able to offer good advice and ideas. In complex professions, going it alone is rarely the answer. But when you have genuine agency and feel competent, the work tends to be more

enjoyable and the results better. The joy and pride of looking after your own house is unmistakable in those who manage it well.

Figure 9.2. *The moral arena of a profession. Revised from Fjellström (2006).*

Read more:

Fjellström, R. (2006). Lärares yrkesetik [The Professional Ethics of Teachers]. Studentlitteratur.

Lackéus, M. (2021). Den vetenskapande läraren [The Inquiring Teacher]. Chapter 6.

9.3 DAS as Slow Questioning – Slowing Down to Ask the Right Questions

The psychologist Daniel Kahneman and the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche both distinguish between two modes of thinking: the fast, intuitive and automatic – and the slow, reflective and effortful. Both are needed in everyday life, but many organisations prioritise speed and decisive action. The problem arises when fast thinking is allowed to dominate even in situations that call for careful consideration. DAS is designed to strengthen precisely those situations. We deliberately slow our thinking down from time to time, in moments when everyday life would otherwise push us towards hasty conclusions, overconfident oversimplifications, emotional laziness, and unconsidered solutions. DAS thereby elevates careful deliberation, critical analysis, deep reflection, uncomfortable truths, self-control,

and the practice of pausing to think – sometimes called Apollonian "ordered" thinking, in contrast to Dionysian "intoxicated" thinking.

But where should we direct our thinking once we have managed to slow down? I have had a lifelong affection for what is known as Appreciative Inquiry (AI). This is an approach based on the idea that organisations change most effectively by systematically exploring and building on what is already working well, rather than focusing on problems and deficiencies. By asking generative questions about strengths, past successes and desirable futures, energy, shared learning and direction for continued development are created. Rather than taking the judgemental path ("whose fault is it?"), I recommend using our thinking pause to take the learning path ("what can we learn here?") – drawing on what has worked well for us before. The questions we ask can genuinely change our lives. Figure 9.3 comes from the Appreciative Inquiry literature, and may be one of the figures that has influenced me most deeply.

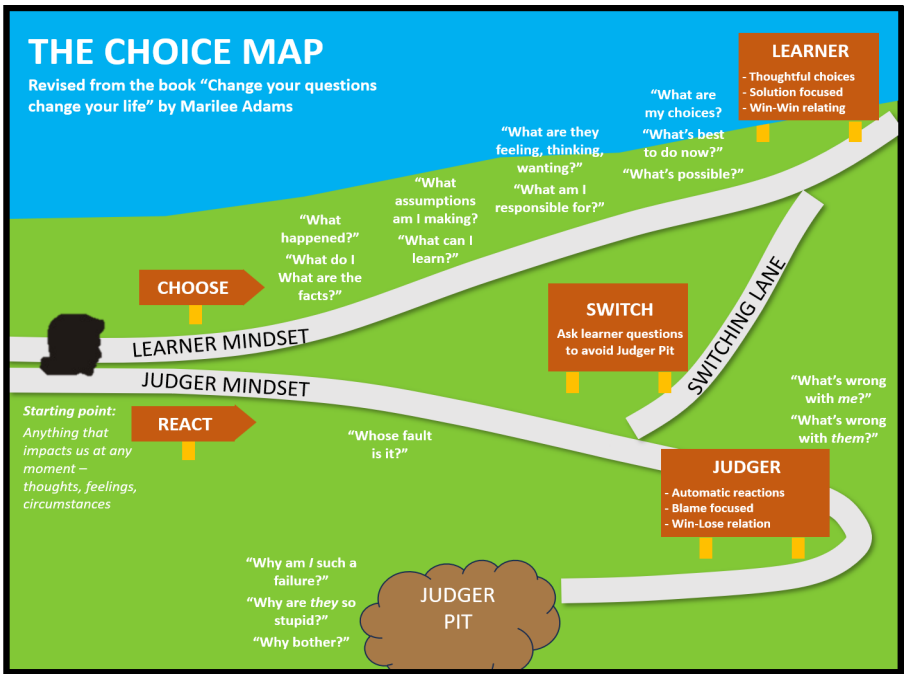


Figure 9.3. *The choice you face in every difficult situation in life. Revised from Adams (2004).*

Read more:

Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, Fast and Slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Nietzsche, F. (2000). The Birth of Tragedy. Oxford University Press.

Adams, M. G. (2004). Change your questions, change your life: 7 powerful tools for life and work. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Cooperrider, D. L., Whitney, D., & Stavros, J. M. (2008). Appreciative inquiry handbook: For leaders of change. Crown Custom Publishing Inc.

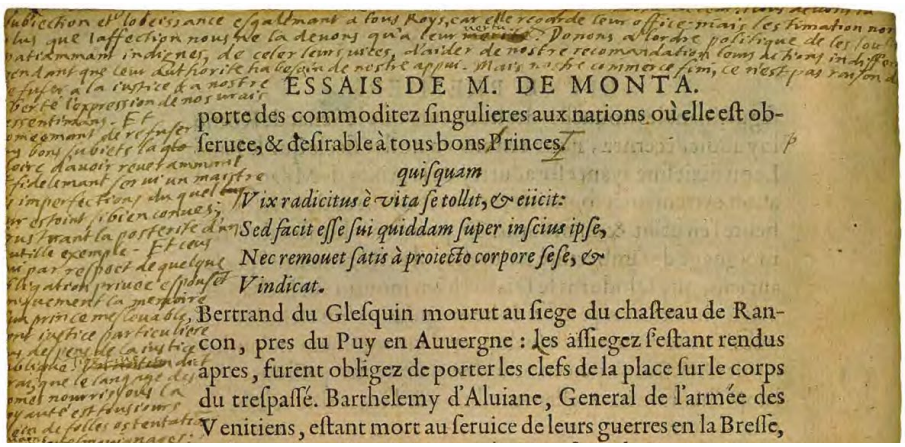
9.4 DAS as Everyday Writing – An Essayistic Tradition

In our eagerness to be efficient, we easily lose sight of deep thinking. I often hear the question: "who is going to have time to read people's reflections?" My answer is usually this: if none of those who lead the organisation – whether formal managers or informal leaders – have time to read their colleagues' genuine insights, then the problem is not DAS as a method. Then the problem lies elsewhere. The organisation has organised away its own learning. What we are seeing is not a lack of time, but a lack of curiosity about the organisation's own practice, and a lack of long-term commitment to learning and analysis. The result is that action is prioritised over understanding and follow-through, and the same mistakes are repeated again and again. We do and do and do – but it is what the literary scholar Emma Eldelin (2018) calls a "living death": thoughtless, lazy, blameworthy doing (pp. 61, 67). Sooner or later, the outside world punishes this harshly. In the private sector it can lead to bankruptcy. In the public sector it can lead to failed inspections. But the laziness of non-learning is unfortunately often allowed to continue for many years.

Through DAS, we write and read our way to wisdom in everyday life. Many write, some read and summarise, everyone analyses. I am often asked: "but how should we write?" My answer is that we need to write essayistically. The essay is an unusual but powerful literary genre, founded in the sixteenth century by the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne – see Figure 9.4 below. The French word essayer means to try: to attempt to write down a personal sketch of thought, rooted in personal experience. In silence, preferably in solitude,

perhaps after a walk, ideally in a state of idleness. Restlessness sets our brains working at full speed on reflection. That is precisely why we tend to avoid it – many of us actually feel uncomfortable with idleness because it forces us to confront ourselves. But DAS helps us stop and meet ourselves, at least for a little while, from time to time.

Mellberg (2013) describes the essayistic approach as an alternation between detached stillness and active movement, anchored in both past experience and the concrete present, with an eye on the future. My experience is that in organisations where staff are encouraged to pause essayistically – to write short, concentrated essays of five to twenty sentences, which are then read and reflected upon by managers and leaders – people do not want to stop. It feels deeply meaningful. Time is found. The essayistic writing ability of staff develops quickly. Leaders want to read.


ESSAIS DE M. DE MONTA.

porte des commoditez ſingulieres aux nations où elle eſt ob-
ſeruee, & deſirable à tous bons Princes.

quiſquam

Vix radicitus è vita ſe tollit, & eiicit:
Sed facit eſſe ſui quiddam ſuper inſcius ipſe,
Nec remouet ſatis à proiecto corpore ſeſe, &
Vindicat.

Bertrand du Gleſquin mourut au ſiege du chaſteau de Ran-
con, pres du Puy en Auuergne : les aſſiegez ſeſtant rendus
apres, furent obligez de porter les clefs de la place ſur le corps
du treſpaſſé. Barthelemy d'Aluiane, General de l'armée des
Venitiens, eſtant mort au ſeruice de leurs guerres en la Breſſe,

Figure 9.4. *A page from Michel de Montaigne's Essais with marginal annotations in Montaigne's own hand. Montaigne (1533–1592) was the originator of the essay genre, and regarded essay writing as never finished.*

Read more:

Eldelin, E. (2018). Att slå dank med virtuositet: Reträtten, sysslolösheten och essän [Idling with Virtuosity: Retreat, Idleness, and the Essay]. Ellerströms förlag.

Mellberg, A. (2013). Essä – urval och introduktion [Essay – Selection and Introduction]. Daidalos.

Pollan, M. (2018). How to change your mind: The new science of psychedelics. Penguin.

9.5 DAS as the Stone in Your Organisation's Shoe – A Critical Conscience

The researcher Olof Hallonsten (2021) has written a book about the role and value of the social sciences in society. He summarises it as constituting the "critical conscience" of modern society, and identifies five key aspects of how working in scientific ways contributes. The aspects are: 1. Critical ("scrutinising prevailing conventions"), 2. Qualitative ("combating our over-reliance on quantification"), 3. Consequence-neutral ("not shying away from uncomfortable results"), 4. Demanding ("disrupting the established order in irritating ways"), and 5. Constructive ("contributing to dialogue and conversation").

These five aspects map closely onto how we have seen DAS contribute to an organisation's long-term wellbeing. On many occasions, DAS studies have led to frustration and disappointment when results did not turn out entirely as hoped. One example is the Swedish National Agency for Education, which has worked with DAS in various forms for over a decade together with me and my colleagues. Several of their studies have generated friction of different kinds – but also genuinely productive conversations. My role in those moments has been to facilitate dialogue and then respectfully document and publish the lessons learned in various research articles and books. We have also seen organisations that could not sustain this kind of uncomfortable learning process and chose to step away instead.

I find one particular metaphor in Hallonsten's book especially apt: the idea that a scientific way of working can serve as an organisation's "stone in the shoe" (p.183) – a disruptive presence with an important purpose. DAS helps us notice and question the prevailing order. It allows us to discuss various forms of harmful groupthink, established smokescreens, and simple but mistaken ideas, as Figure 9.5 illustrates. Strengthened analytical capacity and respectful dialogue then help build what Hallonsten calls an "antifragile" organisation – one that, like an immune system, is strengthened by challenges through careful,

systematic learning. DAS becomes here a kind of mechanism for managing conflict: internal tensions are surfaced and can be discussed, "good" ideas can be sifted out and tested in practice alongside a wide range of less good – perhaps even "bad" – ideas that are systematically set aside, and in some measure fairly, because everyone gets to contribute in writing and in conversation.

Read more:

Hallonsten, O. (2021). Modernitetens kritiska samvete: En samhällsvetenskap som gör nytta [The Critical Conscience of Modernity: A Social Science That Makes a Difference]. Santérus förlag.

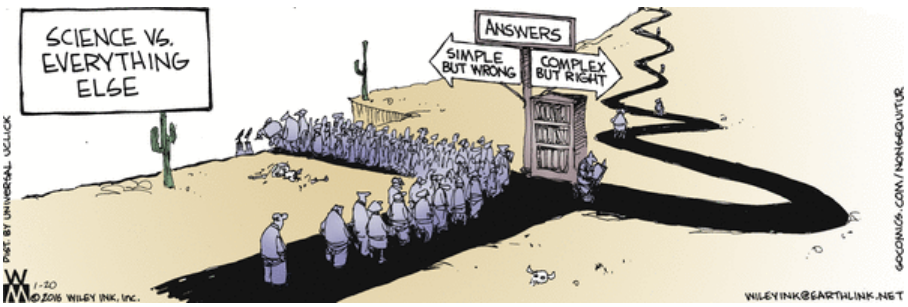


Figure 9.5. *A classic cartoon showing science's winding, unpopular path.*

9.6 DAS as a Quality Craft – One That Generates Pride

The development work of many organisations gets stuck in what has been called the "activity trap". We carry out many development activities, but often without clearly understanding which of our own everyday needs they address or what effects they actually produce. Without thoughtful local needs analysis and systematic follow-through, development work easily reduces to activity: projects are launched, meetings are held, reports are written – but the effects never materialise. The activity trap closes around us for Dionysian reasons – we so badly want to demonstrate that we are taking action.

DAS can be understood as a remedy for the activity trap, by treating the DAS process as a quality craft that we carry out carefully and with pride at every significant development effort. When each step in the DAS process is handled properly as intended, it also becomes a kind

of development brake for the organisation. We do not take on more development work than we can plan and follow up in a craft-like, robust way. Our development capacity may be reduced, but the effects of the development that actually takes place become visible.

In fact, our capacity may well be strengthened when we do fewer things more thoroughly and more responsively to real needs. We end up with development work we are prouder of. Proud not just of having done something, but of having understood in depth what we did, why we did it in that particular way, and what it led to in detail in our own specific context. DAS contributes here with language, structure, and rhythm for a quality craft that both holds up over time and feels more meaningful to be part of.

Seeing DAS as quality work has been common among practitioners over the years as the method has developed. One established framework for quality work is Deming's PDCA cycle – Plan, Do, Check, Act, as shown in Figure 9.6. At the same time, DAS has grown out of a different tradition, with a stronger focus on learning, reflection, interpretation and professional judgement in complex everyday situations. The two approaches have clear points of contact, but also important differences. How they can best be combined in practice remains an open question.

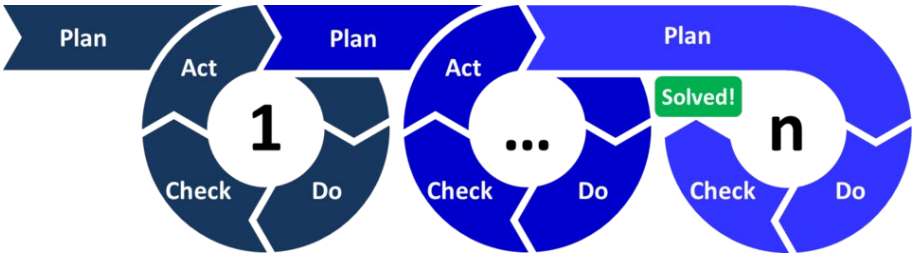


Figure 9.6 *PDCA cycles illustrated by Christoph Roser at Allaboutlean.com.*

Read more:

Katz, S., & Dack, L. A. (2013). Intentional Interruption: Breaking Down Learning Barriers to Transform Professional Practice. Corwin.

9.7 DAS as a Microscope – Making the Invisible Visible

Now we come to the metaphor that has been with us on the DAS journey the longest. The goal of making learning, knowledge and skills visible that would otherwise remain unseen has been with me in my research since the very beginning of my doctoral work in 2009. I wanted to make visible the powerful entrepreneurial learning I had experienced so strongly at Chalmers School of Entrepreneurship ten years earlier. It began as an unusual IT experiment, and eventually led to us building a digital "microscope" – Loopme – that made emotionally charged learning visible in new ways. What we were then able to see generated enormous engagement in many quarters – both the pedagogy (value creation pedagogy) and the methodology (DAS).

Our new microscope was taken up each year in more and more unexpected places. Many others seemed to have felt the same frustration about learning that was hard to capture or had been rendered invisible. The microscope was tried in vocational education, leadership, early years settings, hospitality, strength training, healthcare, and more. Everywhere there seemed to be powerful learning, deep expertise, and important effects that had previously never been made visible.

Today I think the word that best captures the microscope effect is not "Loopme" but "micro-reflection". When we ask participants to reflect in depth on very precisely defined questions or actions, the quiet knowledge of everyday practice is captured – along with the emotional learning that is so hard to pin down. Each micro-reflection contributes like a pixel to an increasingly high-resolution image that becomes clearer and clearer as you zoom out. We often say that DAS is a bit like the arrival of colour television. In a well-conducted DAS study, the wow effect can be experienced in a similar way. Black-and-white learning without reflection becomes full-colour learning with reflection. We therefore like to joke that if repetition is the mother of knowledge, then reflection must surely be its father.

When micro-reflection is added to the learning process, we see more deeply what is happening and what people are learning. Micro-reflection on feeling, thought and action makes people's knowledge and skills visible, as Figure 9.7 illustrates. Previously, we had assessed knowledge through written responses (tests and exams) and assessed skills through action (so-called portfolio assessment). What was new here was the repeated capturing of feeling in the moment through micro-reflection. Learning processes that had previously been invisible became visible.

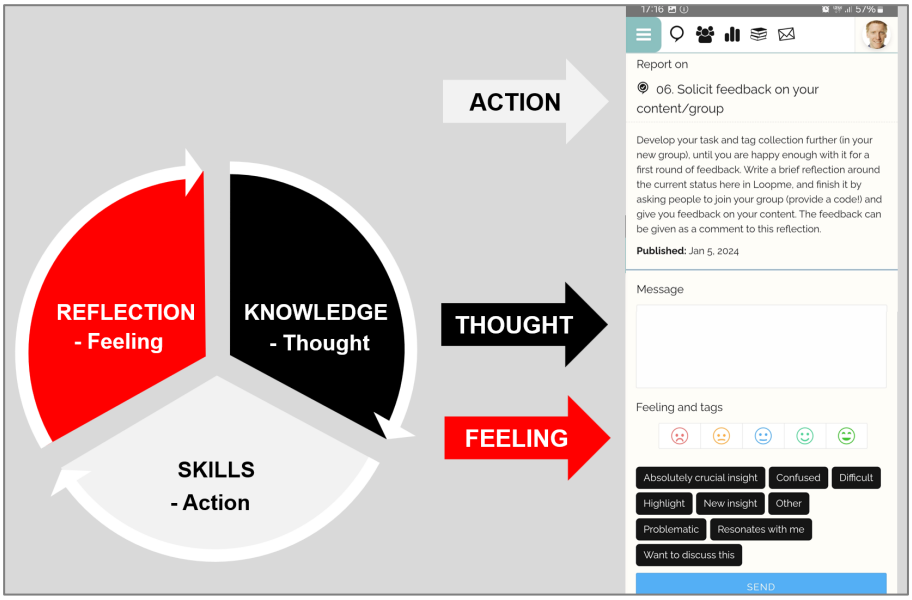


Figure 9.7. *DAS makes knowledge and skills visible through feeling-based micro-reflection. Example task from my everyday inquiry training.*

Read more:

Lackéus, M., & Sävetun, C. (2025). Designed Action Sampling as a new research method to help build active communities in entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship Education & Pedagogy 8(2), 206-239.

9.8 DAS as a Reflection Muscle – Training Our Judgement

No one expects to become strong without training, yet when it comes to reflection and professional judgement, we rarely think in those terms. The historian of ideas Sverker Sörlin (2019, p.90), in his book *In Defence of Bildung*, asks how one develops good judgement. He then quotes François de La Rochefoucauld, who wrote as far back as 1664: "Everyone complains of their memory, but no one complains of their judgement." I think of our capacity for reflection as a muscle that needs to be trained. When we become strong at reflection, what we gain is precisely good judgement – and that judgement then helps us make wiser decisions in everyday life.

With DAS, we train together. We practise writing down insights. We highlight particularly wise formulations. We test our interpretations and talk them through. Analysis is not a one-off event but a judgement skill that is gradually refined. And just as with strength training, regular visits to the gym are required – ideally every week.

Training reflection and judgement is also a leadership responsibility. Study leaders do not build others' good judgement by doing the heavy lifting themselves – by telling people how to think. Instead, they create moments in everyday life where wise thinking can take place.

The connection to essayistic writing is clear here too. Putting your thoughts into words forces precision and careful consideration, and strengthens your ability to articulate the quiet knowledge of everyday practice. Over time, skill and a shared language for wisdom are built up. We become increasingly good at recognising good judgement – and at developing it further.

Read more:

Sörlin, S. (2019). Till bildningens försvar [In Defence of Education [or rather: Bildung]]. Natur & Kultur.

9.9 DAS as Home-Cooked Food For Thought – From Restaurant Visits to Your Own Gourmet Kitchen

Another way to understand DAS is through a cooking metaphor. In development work, we need food for thought – the accumulated nourishment of ideas, research, experience and professional insight that sustains the development of our practice. I have been inspired here by the notion of "spiritual nourishment" – the intellectual and moral sustenance we receive through literature, learning, conversation and lived experience. Advice, models and methods can then be seen as different kinds of food for thought: prepared somewhere, served in different ways, and – hopefully – digested in our own organisations.

When it comes to developing our practice, we face several choices: 1) Who cooks the food – who gives us advice? 2) Where is the food delivered – where is advice created, handed over and discussed? 3) How is the food consumed – how does the practical application of advice actually work? And 4) How nutritious is the food – how do we know whether the advice works for us? The answers to these questions have consequences in terms of cost, agency, impact, time and staff involvement. Four possible answers are shown in Figure 9.9.

Going to a "restaurant" means attending conferences and expert-led events. The food for thought may be sophisticated and well-prepared – but how much of it is actually digested once we return home? How much is left uneaten? "Takeaway" means bringing ideas home from books, courses or distance learning. Some find this inspiring; others find it difficult to relate to their own context. A "potluck" involves practitioners sharing their own experiences with one another – a collective table of ideas, uneven perhaps, but often grounded and relevant. The final category – "home-cooked" – is where DAS comes in. Instead of consuming someone else's food for thought, professionals are invited to prepare their own, together, within their own context. As I have often heard leaders say: "we already have the expertise we need." Where that is true, DAS offers a

way to turn that expertise into nourishing, locally grounded food for thought – often at a fraction of the cost of external solutions. Or you can combine them.

This metaphor makes responsibility and ownership visible. In DAS, there is no distant chef in an industrial kitchen. Those who prepare the food for thought are also those who will live with its consequences. It also reminds us that good nourishment takes time. Calories can be rushed, flavour cannot. In the same way, development activities can be produced quickly, but wisdom and judgement takes time to cultivate – like locally sourced, carefully prepared food for thought. It's a bit like slow food but for organisational development. It is less about consuming ready-made ideas and more about cultivating one's own insights.

Read more:

Lackéus, M. (2024). Hur kan skolledare i utsatta områden få hjälp? Tre etablerade sätt och ett nytt arbetssätt [How can school leaders in disadvantaged areas be supported? Three established approaches and one new way of working]. Unpublished essay written for the Swedish National Agency for Education, available on request from the author.

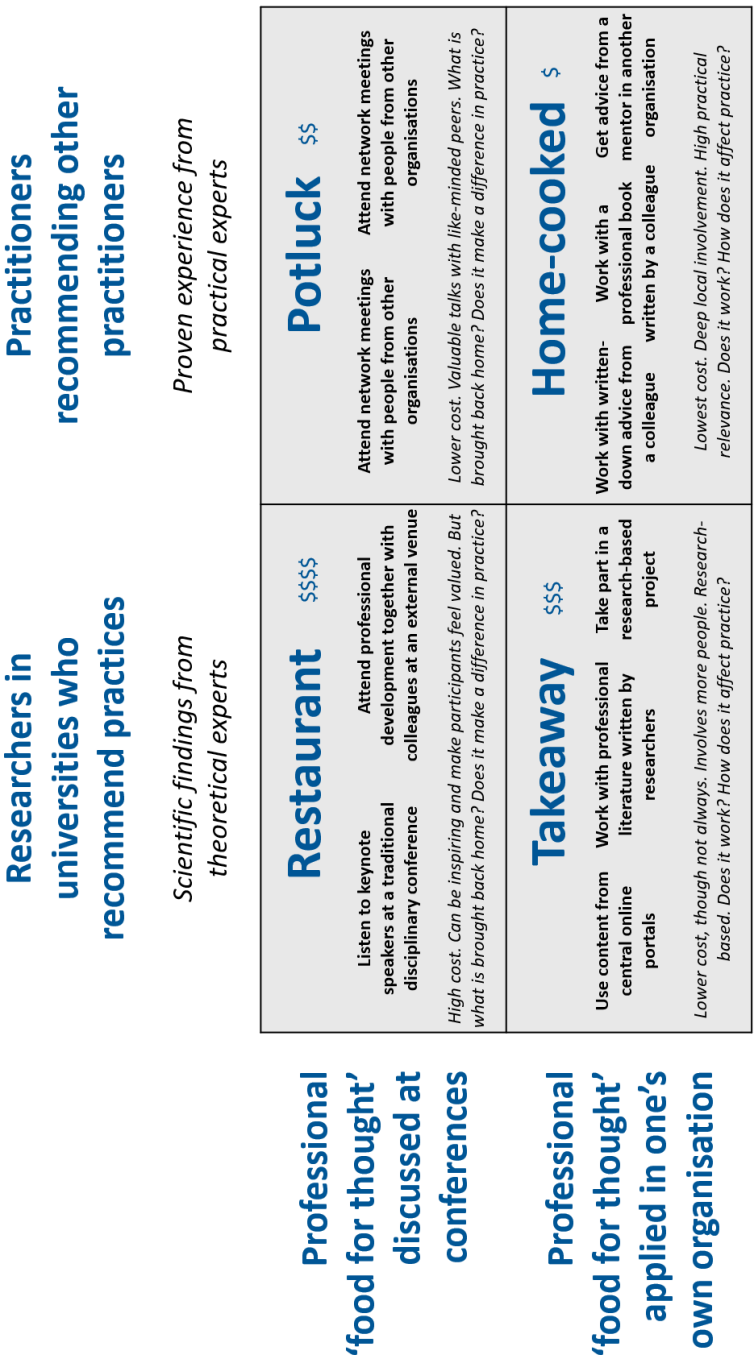


Figure 9.9. *A four-quadrant model using a cooking metaphor to illustrate four different ways of organising development work (Lackéus, 2024).*

10. Everyday Inquiry in World History – Enthusiasts and Surveillance

Everyday inquiry is considerably older than universities and their formalised sciences. We have probably engaged in testing, reflection and sharing of experience for as long as we have been able to speak. During the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, however, we took an important step forward when systematic observations, experiments and explicit methods began to be used more widely. This happened mostly in practical settings outside university walls. It was not until the nineteenth century that research became an institutionalised mission within academia, with established organisations, professional roles and career structures. Before that, medieval universities had primarily been tasked with preserving and transmitting established doctrine – not with generating new knowledge.

Everyday inquiry as a concept, as used in this handbook, therefore connects to an ancient, practice-rooted tradition of working in quite scientific ways. I use the term "everyday inquiry" to describe a non-academic form of systematically documented – and thereby shared – practice, which takes place primarily through iterative, exploratory attempts to develop our own and others' everyday lives. If by "systematically documented" we mean practice recorded in writing, we can place the starting point of humanity's everyday inquiry at around 5,000 years ago (around 3000 BCE). Curious and exploratory people certainly existed long before that, but the earliest traces of

collective, documented inquiry are found in the early civilisations of Egypt and Mesopotamia.

For most of world history, everyday inquiry has been small-scale, context-bound, and largely controlled by those directly involved. It is only in modern times that this has changed fundamentally. Digitalisation has created entirely new conditions for collecting, analysing and using data about people's everyday lives. With that, the character of everyday inquiry has also changed – in scale, pace and above all in its balance of power.

In the rest of the chapter, I explore this development and its consequences in more depth, and set it in relation to DAS. I discuss different ways for individuals and collectives to study everyday life, what these mean for professions and organisations, and why everyday inquiry today is a question of ethics, democracy and responsibility.

10.1 1 The Professional Development Crisis – Prisoners in a Digital Panopticon

For thousands of years, everyday inquiry was controlled by those who actually lived the everyday life being studied. People studied their immediate environments and shared problems, often with limited resources but with deep contextual understanding. Over recent decades, however, this has changed fundamentally. The development of IT, global connectivity and near-infinite computing power have made possible a new form of inquiry: large-scale, continuous and often invisible data collection about people's learning, work, relationships and behaviour – see Figure 10.1. Everyday inquiry has thereby shifted from being something *people do*, to something that is increasingly *done to people*, by actors far beyond their control. Mass inquiry – or, as it is more commonly called, mass surveillance.

Today, working life, welfare services, schools and other sectors of society are studied on an enormous scale. Digital platforms collect data about employees' efficiency, pupils' performance, service users' behaviour and citizens' movements. Technology companies, consultancies and public authorities analyse these data to predict

risks, optimise processes and steer decisions. This typically happens without the professions themselves having any insight into which questions are being asked, which assumptions are built into the systems, or what consequences the analyses have in practice. When professions lack their own inquiry practices, they are reduced to raw material in others' knowledge production – they become data sources rather than knowledge creators.

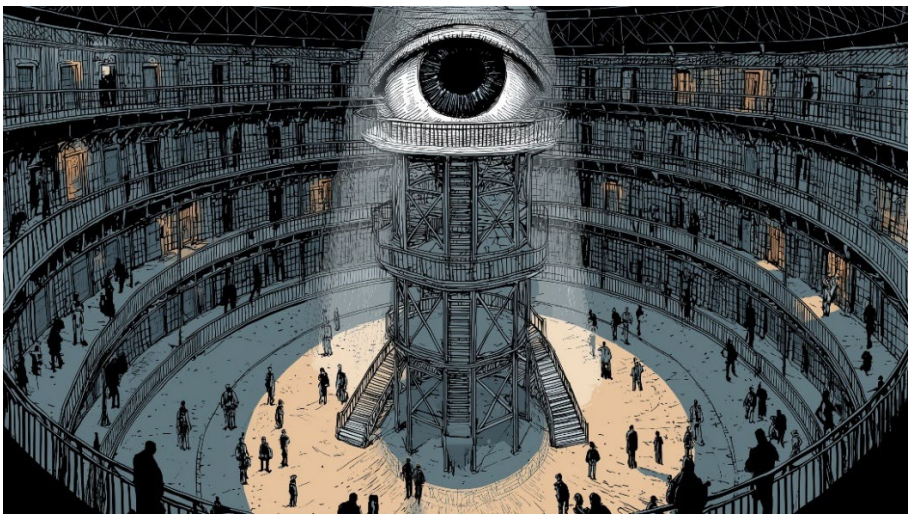


Figure 10.1. *The professional development crisis can be understood as a digital panopticon – a prison-like structure of asymmetric visibility in which those being watched never know when they are being observed. Professional everyday life is studied from a distance; analytical power is concentrated away from those it concerns.*

It is against this backdrop that the ethical awakening of recent years around data collection and algorithmic governance should be understood. Revelations and analyses from figures such as Edward Snowden, Max Schrems, and Frances Haugen have shown how large-scale algorithmic inquiry, when combined with concentration of power and lack of transparency, risks undermining both professional judgement and democratic values. The crisis of the professions is therefore not about unwillingness or lack of competence – it is about

lost control over how professional everyday life is studied and interpreted.

In our time, the question is not whether everyday life is being studied, but by whom – and in whose interest. Professions that do not study their own everyday practice will sooner or later be studied by someone else. Either you are an inquiring practitioner, or you are raw data.

10.2 A Four-Quadrant Model of Everyday Inquiry Through the Ages

We will now use a four-quadrant model to show how the study of everyday life has changed over time – see Figure 10.2. Not only in form, but also in scale, pace and balance of power. The model is an analytical tool for understanding everyday inquiry as practice rather than as method, and for showing how different ways of studying everyday life have far-reaching consequences for learning, ethics and professional agency.

The model in Figure 10.2 is built on two fundamental dimensions. First, who studies everyday life – whether this is done by individuals or by collective, even industrial, actors. Second, what tools are used – from simple analogue instruments to increasingly sophisticated digital systems. This gives us four ideal-typical forms of everyday inquiry.

The arrows in Figure 10.2 mark a historical movement that has shaped the development of everyday inquiry over several thousand years. Inquiry has moved largely from individual, small-scale and context-close practice towards increasingly collective, technologically amplified and large-scale data collection. At the same time, the centre of gravity has shifted from everyday reflection and local interpretation to centralised analysis and industrial knowledge production. What began as deep, slow and personal inquiry has gradually become more efficient and generalisable – but also more distant from those whose everyday life it actually concerns.

The purpose of the model is not to romanticise the earlier forms of inquiry or demonise the later ones. Each step in this movement has enabled new insights and new forms of development. At the same time, the model reveals a recurring pattern: the larger the scale and the more sophisticated the tools, the greater the risk that inquiry slides from shared learning towards power, and from participation towards surveillance.

DAS should not be understood in this context as a quadrant of its own, but as a deliberate attempt to combine the possibilities of digital technology with everyday participation, individual responsibility, collective analysis and professional interpretive authority. In doing so, DAS points towards a different way of using the power of inquiry – not by accelerating the shift towards industrialised mass inquiry, but by reclaiming technology, data and analytical power, placing them back in the hands of those it concerns.

Figure 10.2. *The four-quadrant model reveals a historical movement from everyday-close inquiry to large-scale, technologically amplified mass inquiry.*

10.3 Quadrant 1: Individual + Simple Tools – The Classic Hero Inquirer

In this quadrant, everyday life is studied by individual people using relatively simple, analogue tools. The inquiry is slow, persistent and deeply rooted in personal experience. It takes place close to what is being studied and is built on repeated observations, reflection and exploratory action over a long period of time. Formal mandates, resources and institutional support are often absent, which makes the work vulnerable – but also highly sensitive to context. The individual inquirer takes their own everyday life seriously as a source of knowledge, and gradually develops a personal system for seeing, understanding and documenting what would otherwise risk remaining invisible.

History is full of examples of this kind of inquirer. Hippocrates laid the foundation for the medical profession through systematic observation of patients. Aristotle combined empirical observation and classification in studies of nature and society. Charles Darwin developed his theory of evolution through decades of careful notes, comparisons and reflections. Florence Nightingale used observation and statistics to fundamentally transform nursing practice during the Crimean War. The geologist and baker Robert Dick devoted his life to everyday observations in his north Scottish surroundings, showing how valuable geological inquiry can grow entirely outside academic settings. Ivan Illich analysed education, medicine and social institutions through sustained reflection on everyday practices, developing his critique as an independent inquirer rather than as part of an established academic research programme. Rachel Carson built her environmental critique on persistent documentation of ecological changes that would otherwise have remained invisible. What these inquirers share is their ability to hold together observation, reflection and action in a coherent, practice-close way over a long period of time – often at the margins of dominant institutions.

Viewed through DAS's three phases, the pattern becomes clear. *Design* happens implicitly: the inquirer formulates their own questions based on what sparks wonder in everyday life. *Action* takes shape in repeated attempts, experiments and changed ways of acting or observing. *Sampling* happens through careful, often manual documentation in notebooks, sketches, tables and texts, which enables reflection over time. The strength of this quadrant lies in its depth and contextual sensitivity. Its limitation is low scale, high personal burden, and difficulty reproducing the work in larger settings.

Read more:

Svensson, P. (2022). Den lodande människan: Havet, djupet och nyfikenheten [The Sounding Human: The Sea, the Deep, and Curiosity]. Albert Bonniers Förlag.

10.4 Quadrant 2: Collective + Simple Tools – The Learning Organisation

In this quadrant, everyday life is studied collectively by many people, often within organisations or professional collectives, but still using relatively simple tools. The inquiry is less dependent on individual people and more embedded in shared routines, meetings and conversations. Observation, reflection and learning happen collectively and often close to daily practice. The tools can be as simple as whiteboards, stopwatches, minutes, checklists, meeting notes and conversation. Compared to Quadrant 1, robustness and continuity increase, but the inquiry is still strongly dependent on culture, leadership and sustained discipline rather than on technology.

There are many historical and contemporary examples of this kind of inquiry. The Benedictine Order developed early collective forms of systematic everyday reflection through regular observations, shared conversations and carefully preserved documentation of work, learning and ways of living across generations. The British Navy used reporting, logbooks and collective analysis of naval battles, navigation and accidents to gradually improve safety, efficiency and tactical decision-making in complex environments. Frederick Taylor's time-and-motion studies in the early twentieth century can be seen as an

early attempt to systematise collective observation of work, even if the interpretation was strongly centralised. Toyota developed forms of continuous improvement work after the Second World War in which employees' everyday observations and reflections played a central role. Bell Labs combined everyday experimentation with collective analysis in cross-disciplinary environments. In the public sector, community learning groups, quality improvement circles and local improvement work have functioned as collective inquiry practices, turning everyday life into a shared laboratory for learning. What these examples share is that inquiry happens together, often over the long term, and with a focus on shared understanding rather than individual performance.

Through DAS's three phases, the logic of this quadrant becomes clear. *Design* happens collectively, as groups formulate questions and problems based on shared experiences in practice. *Action* takes shape in jointly tested changes – often small and incremental – that are integrated into everyday work. *Sampling* happens through collective documentation in the form of minutes, metrics, stories and summaries that are shared and discussed. The strength of this quadrant lies in its learning culture and its ability to spread experience within an organisation. Its limitations relate primarily to low technical scalability, difficulty preserving detail over time and a strong dependence on local cultures and leadership.

10.5 Quadrant 3: Industrial + Digital Tools – Everyday Inquiry at Industrial Scale

In this quadrant, everyday life is studied collectively and at industrial scale using technically sophisticated digital tools. Data collection is continuous, large-scale and largely automated. Inquiry no longer happens primarily through human observation and shared reflection, but through logs, sensors, platforms and algorithms that steer and record behaviour in real time. The scale is without historical precedent, as is the pace of analysis and feedback. At the same time,

the distance grows between those who live the everyday life and those who interpret and use data about it. The character of inquiry changes fundamentally: from situated understanding to pattern recognition, from local learning to centralised governance and power.

The clearest expression of this quadrant is found in digital platforms and large organisations. Companies such as Google, Meta, Amazon, TikTok, and LinkedIn conduct continuous A/B tests and analyses of user behaviour to optimise engagement, attention, and consumption. In working life, HR systems and productivity platforms are used to measure performance, collaboration and attendance. At the same time, state mass surveillance has emerged as a parallel practice, in which movement patterns, social interaction and everyday behaviour are collected and analysed for security or governance purposes – for example through facial recognition, mobile tracking and databases integrated with social media. What these examples share is that inquiry and governance merge: analysis leads directly to decisions, incentives or sanctions.

Viewed through DAS's three phases, both the immense power and the serious problems of this quadrant become apparent. *Design* happens centrally, often by thousands of experts and engineers, far removed from the everyday life being studied. *Action* happens automatically through system changes, algorithmic adjustments, or policy decisions that affect millions – even billions – of people simultaneously. *Sampling* is massive and continuous, but rarely transparent to those who contribute the data. The strength lies in precision, speed and the ability to detect patterns no individual human could discern alone. The limitations are equally clear: concentration of power, lack of transparency, absence of shared reflection, and a risk that inquiry is reduced to an instrument of power rather than collective everyday learning. Mass inquiry is, however, enormously profitable – as illustrated by the extreme wealth of pioneers such as Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), and Larry Page (Google).

Read more:

Foer, F. (2017). World without mind. Penguin Press.

Taplin, J. (2017). Move fast and break things: How Facebook, Google, and Amazon have cornered culture and what it means for all of us. Pan Macmillan.

Lackéus, M. (2020). Collecting digital research data through social media platforms: can 'scientific social media' disrupt entrepreneurship research methods? . In W. B. Gartner & B. Teague (Eds.), Research Handbook of Entrepreneurial Behavior, Practice, and Process. Edward Elgar Publishing.

10.6 Quadrant 4: Individual + Digital Tools – The Dissident Everyday Inquirer

In this quadrant, everyday life is studied by individual, free-thinking and often critical people using technically advanced digital tools. Here, the sharp individual gaze of Quadrant 1 is combined with computing power, data access and analytical capabilities that were previously available only to large organisations. The individual inquirer collects, processes and analyses large datasets, sometimes in real time. At the same time, organisational support, collective grounding and structures for shared learning are typically absent. The inquiry becomes powerful but solitary, fast but vulnerable, and the results risk remaining as insights rather than leading to lasting change.

Many of the most prominent critics of our digital social structures are examples of inquirers in this quadrant. Whistleblower Frances Haugen analysed internal data from Facebook and showed how the platform's algorithmic governance deliberately amplified harmful effects on individuals and society. Engineer Guillaume Chaslot investigated YouTube's recommendation system and showed how it systematically favoured polarising and extreme content. Statistician Nate Silver used statistical models to predict election results and analyse sport in ways that challenged established institutions. Lawyer Max Schrems used legal proceedings and juridical analysis to expose how global technology companies circumvented European data protection legislation. Whistleblower Edward Snowden showed how advanced technical systems are used systematically by US intelligence services for mass surveillance of people's everyday lives without their

knowledge or consent. Mathematician Cathy O'Neil used mathematics and programming to expose how algorithmic systems reproduce inequality across different sectors. What these inquirers share is that they saw things large organisations did not want to see – and that their work often culminated in books, reports or revelations rather than in collectively decided change. Many of them have also ended up in court, usually in the dock when powerful organisations felt provoked.

Through DAS's three phases, the structure of this quadrant becomes clear. *Design* happens individually and analytically: the inquirer formulates questions about systemic effects, bias and consequences. *Action* takes shape in code, simulations, analyses or public disclosures rather than in changed everyday practices. *Sampling* is typically built on already existing data – logs, platform data or open datasets – rather than on participatory documentation. The strength of this quadrant lies in its ability to make visible the darker sides of complex digital systems and power structures. Its limitation is dependence on individual people, low reproducibility and a lack of collective processes for learning and action. The quadrant is therefore powerful but structurally unstable – and points towards the need for more collective, democratised forms of technologically enhanced inquiry.

Read more:

O'Neil, C. (2016). Weapons of math destruction: How big data increases inequality and threatens democracy. Broadway Books.

Haugen, F. (2023). The power of one: How I found the strength to tell the truth and why I blew the whistle on facebook. Hachette UK.

Silver, N. (2012). The signal and the noise: Why so many predictions fail-but some don't. Penguin.

Snowden, E. (2019). Permanent record: A memoir of a reluctant whistleblower. Macmillan.

10.7 Building a Digital Learning Organisation – Both Ethically and Democratically

Based on the analysis above, DAS can be understood as an entirely new way of building a *digital learning organisation*. DAS may even be an ethical and democratic innovation that takes the best from each of the four quadrants in Figure 10.2. From the first quadrant comes strong personal engagement and an everyday focus in which professional practice is taken seriously as a source of knowledge. From the second quadrant comes the emphasis on collective culture, shared language and leadership that enables learning over time. The third quadrant contributes powerful digital technology for systematic reflection, analysis and knowledge building. Finally, the whole is grounded in the fourth quadrant's ethical responsibility, transparency and local control over data, decisions and development.

DAS also means that many of the classic drawbacks of the four quadrants can be avoided. Personal engagement does not need to take the form of decades-long heroic effort, but can be carried collectively and shared among many. Collective learning does not need to lean on time-consuming and vulnerable analogue routines. Digital power can be used without the organisation becoming trapped in unethical, authoritarian or centralist solutions that hand over the development control to external global actors. And there is a clear mandate to translate good ideas into action.

Taken together, this gives us Figure 10.7 – a vision for a digital learning organisation through DAS, resting on: 1) a high level of scientific rigour, 2) a clear focus on developing one's own profession in an everyday-close way, and 3) action-based reflection in both written and oral, individual and collective forms. Everyday experiences are systematically made the subject of shared analysis and learning, with the aim of strengthening the organisation in an ethical, democratic and independent way.

Could there be other tools besides Loopme for achieving the benefits of everyday inquiry without its drawbacks? Perhaps. But

right now we are probably living through a brief period in which Loopme is in practice the only tool for this kind of inquiry. More tools will come. That is how we humans work – we build the tools we need. If ethical and professionally driven digital inquiry matters to us, the future will soon offer us more options to choose from.

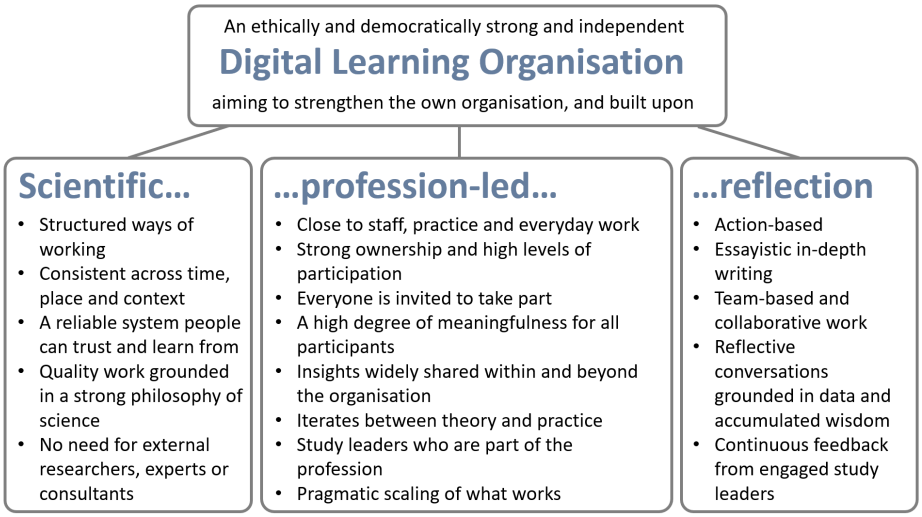


Figure 10.7. *A summary vision for a digital learning organisation.*

10.8 Who Is Actually an Inquiring Practitioner?

Who can actually call themselves an inquiring practitioner? Can you work in scientific ways without holding a doctorate or being employed at a university or college? The short answer is, of course, yes – absolutely. There is good reason here to issue a friendly warning against academic snobbery. Scientific rigour resides not in the title but in the way of working – how questions are formulated, how observations are made, how empirical data are collected and analysed, and how conclusions are drawn. Even if a classical research training naturally helps considerably.

It is also perfectly possible to study your own everyday practice without leaning on external experts, consultants or global IT companies. Some form of digital support is in practice necessary, but that does not mean that collected data must be sent halfway around

the world to be analysed by an algorithm in the United States, far outside the profession's own control. There are local, ethical, data-protected and practice-close alternatives.

But can you make a scientific contribution without being a researcher? Yes – it happens all the time. I have seen school leaders, lead teachers, social workers, coaches, managers and small business owners do this again and again through their work with DAS. One problem, however, is that their contributions rarely fit the classical format of academic publication. The structures for documenting, sharing and recognising proven experience from practitioner inquirers are still strikingly underdeveloped.

Can you count as an inquiring practitioner even if you do hold a doctorate? That is a harder question. There are many borderline cases that challenge easy answers. If you previously were in academic circles and then leave them to contribute to the world's knowledge in other ways, are you then an inquiring practitioner? The answer probably depends on how we choose to define and interpret the concept. Cathy O'Neil holds a doctorate in mathematics but made her most influential contributions outside academia. Guillaume Chaslot completed a doctorate in computer science but then conducted his most significant inquiry as a private individual after leaving YouTube. Eli Pariser introduced the concept of the filter bubble without himself systematically collecting data. Are they inquiring practitioners? Perhaps.

Let us try to formulate a definition:

> ***An inquiring practitioner systematically studies, through practical exploration, their own or others' everyday practice with the aim of understanding, improving and changing it, WITH the support of documentation, reflection and analysis that is sufficiently rigorous to be shared and tested by others, but WITHOUT the support of academic titles, academic employment or other research structures.***

Such a definition shifts the focus from hero inquirers and individual geniuses to everyday inquirers in entirely ordinary organisations. We need fewer exceptional individuals and more everyday inquirers who together build knowledge where the work actually happens. If this definition holds, then the answer to the question of who is an inquiring practitioner is considerably broader than traditional research structures allow. Academic researchers may dismiss us as quasi-scientific or semi-scientific practitioners if they like. We are proud all the same.

Because I have noticed that "inquiring practitioner" is a title that generates precisely that: pride. One manager began their emails to the leadership team about their everyday inquiries with: "Dear inquiring practitioners,". The title creates a professional pride in entirely ordinary people by making visible that their everyday work is not merely being carried out, but also understood, developed and taken with the utmost seriousness.

10.9 How Do We Want to Study Our Profession?

In the end, the choice is ours. Do we want to hand over the study of our profession to global technology companies that treat us as raw data and keep their deepest insights about us to themselves? To academic institutions that observe our professional practices from a distance and then return with texts that few of us can read, let alone use? Or to state systems that bureaucratise everyday life and then, with a certain air of superiority, instruct us in how our work should be carried out? Or do we want to take responsibility for the inquiry and the decisions ourselves – there, in the everyday life where the work actually happens?

The question is ultimately about agenda and power. Whose questions should determine what is studied? Whose problem formulations should count? Who sits at the controls when data is collected, analysed and interpreted? Who makes the decisions, and how far above our heads are they made? If we do not make a conscious choice, someone else will make it for us. Power and responsibility then

move away from the professions – often without us even noticing when it happens.

This book is now finished, and you are left alone with this choice. I am aware that becoming an inquiring practitioner can feel both demanding and uncomfortable. But the possibility is there now, at least. If you want to and dare to, you can start today. Begin an everyday inquiry in your own practice, with your colleagues, and much will become clear through learning by doing.

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The Inquiring Practitioner

What if the full power of every employee's knowledge could be put to use? What if development did not come from the outside, but instead grew through systematic learning in the everyday work of organisations? It is an appealing idea. At the same time, learning is difficult — especially when the pace is high, demands are many, and situations are complex. The approaches commonly offered are either too advanced for everyday practice or too simplified to make a real difference. As a result, a gap emerges between theory and practice.

This handbook presents Designed Action Sampling (DAS), a method developed at Chalmers University of Technology to bridge that gap. By enabling many employees to systematically try out actions, reflect on what happens, and analyse patterns together, deeper and broader workplace learning can be developed. The method builds on clear design and structured analysis — without relying on external experts to drive the process. Here, scientific thinking is combined with the realities of everyday work — in a practice that is both robust and feasible.

DAS has evolved through fifteen years of practice-based research and is now used by thousands of professionals in both the public and private sectors, as well as by academic researchers. This book is aimed at **employees**, **managers**, and **organisational developers** who want to strengthen quality, learning and professional ownership — and unlock the full potential of a truly learning organisation.

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