

EXERCISE 2.1

First-person knowing in action

The following exercises are aimed at stimulating your own skills in learning-in-action. There is an extensive literature that is aimed at helping people learn to develop skills in awareness, attentiveness and mindfulness through, for example, Tai Chi, Yoga, Gestalt, Focusing and the meditation practices in all religious traditions. These are most useful. In this context we build on these and seek to provide tools for you to develop skills in a more focused area: namely, insider action research. Fisher et al. (2000) provide very useful attention and reflective exercises that you may practice to develop your skills in learning-in-action in the workplace. For illustrations of teaching reflective practice, see Taylor et al. (2008).

Exercise A. General empirical method

1. Take any puzzle with which you are confronted – crossword clue, Sudoku, jigsaw, arithmetic teaser, how to get the kite down from the tree, how to prevent the water from leaking, how to help your class learn differential calculus, etc.
2. Attend to your experience of movement, from puzzlement or confusion to understanding through insight your search for an intelligible solution, and the flash of insight (the 'aha!' moment) that you receive.
3. Attend to how you verify and test your insight, and how you may go through many iterations of trial and error and of testing alternative insights.

Keep doing this exercise in as many of your everyday activities as is feasible or appropriate, so that you learn to appropriate how you know.

Exercise B. The ladder of inference

Take Figure 2.4 and apply it to an incident in your project. Retrace your steps from what you saw and heard during the incident.

1. What evidence did you select from all that was going on around you?
2. What inferences did you draw and did not test?
3. What conclusions did you draw?
4. What actions did you take or did not take?
5. Now review the whole process, and receive what insights come about as to how you may have moved from data to reasoning to conclusions.

Exercise C. Double-column

1. Take a blank sheet of paper and write down the progress of a conversation that you are having with another person, with whom you are working on your project.
2. Then, on another page or column, write down what you have been thinking privately about what is being said in the conversation, and what you have *not* said.
3. Notice how you make inferences and attributions privately in your own head out of what is rather hazy evidence, and how you act on them by what you say in response.