


# Collaborative Inquiry Fuelled by Reflexive Learning: Changing Change

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## Abstract

In this paper, we dig deeper into the reflexive learning that fuels collaborative inquiry by examining the unique ways in which changing itself takes place. We draw on two examples of collaborative inquiry, offering autoethnographic insights from our own lived experiences of changing change. These insights are underpinned by reflexive learning which we capture in textual form to show how learning in collaborative inquiry involves “impacting with” rather than “impacting on.” Our analysis reveals that reflexivity is not a homogenous or static experience but consists of several dynamically changing entangled “dimensions” of practice. Through dimensions relating to the process, content, and impact of reflexive learning, collaborators can arrive at a “stance”—a fluid, loosely shared basis for action that enables organizational practices to be reconfigured or preserve key principles.

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**Introduction**

The commitment to cocreating knowledge for impact continues to catalyze several different modes of collaborative inquiry in research or pedagogical programs (Sharma et al., 2022; Spencer et al., 2022). The quality of the collaboration itself is a central feature of cocreation and of the underlying dialogical exchanges that support it (Shani & Coghlan, 2021). Recent analyses of collaborative practices that foster cocreation, particularly in scholar–practitioner collaborations, have drawn attention to the importance of inclusiveness and principles that orientate impact, not only as a mark of change in the difference made but also in the process of changing that underpins such cocreation (Antonacopoulou, 2022). In this paper, we dig deeper into the reflexive learning that fuels improving actions that are marked by the unique ways in which changing itself takes place. This allows us to provide a fresh understanding of why the diverse definitions and associated concepts of reflection that are offered in the extant literature on management and leadership learning, call for a fresh positioning of reflexive practice and its configuration in relation to changing change.

Moreover, appreciating the richness of reflexive practice calls for new research approaches that do not treat reflexivity as a single “variable,” which can be tested for its mediating/moderating impacts on performance, creativity, and other outcomes. Instead, as we exemplify in our analysis, the process of learning that underpins reflexivity’s transformative power reveals the affordances or “possibilities” for generating new understandings, fuelling renewed confidence and clarity on courses of action. We recognize that central to this way of changing is not only the reconfiguration of practices. It is also a mark of the “stance” that is formed as renewed confidence fuels curiosity to search and research for improvements in actions. It is here we also recognize the power of choice in the stance taken, thus affirming that reflexive learning fosters not only identity development but also a related positioning. Such positioning marks a stance toward wider environmental changes and fosters responses to wicked problems with responsibility and accountability not only for the outcome but also for the process of impacting each other and the collective drive to serve a higher purpose—the common good.

“Reflection,” “reflexivity,” and “reflective/reflexive learning” (Cunliffe, 2002) are recognized in scholarship and practice as important tools for developing managers and leaders (Hibbert, 2012). Scholars have identified the process of reflecting on one’s own actions as a means by which individuals can connect abstract knowledge to practice (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015), develop a situated understanding of ethics in leadership and management (Cotter & Cullen, 2012; Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015), develop a more “critical” eye toward the norms embedded in everyday leadership assumptions (Antonacopoulou, 2019; Cunliffe, 2002; Reynolds & Vince, 2004) and come to identify themselves as a leader (Eriksen, 2009; Raelin,

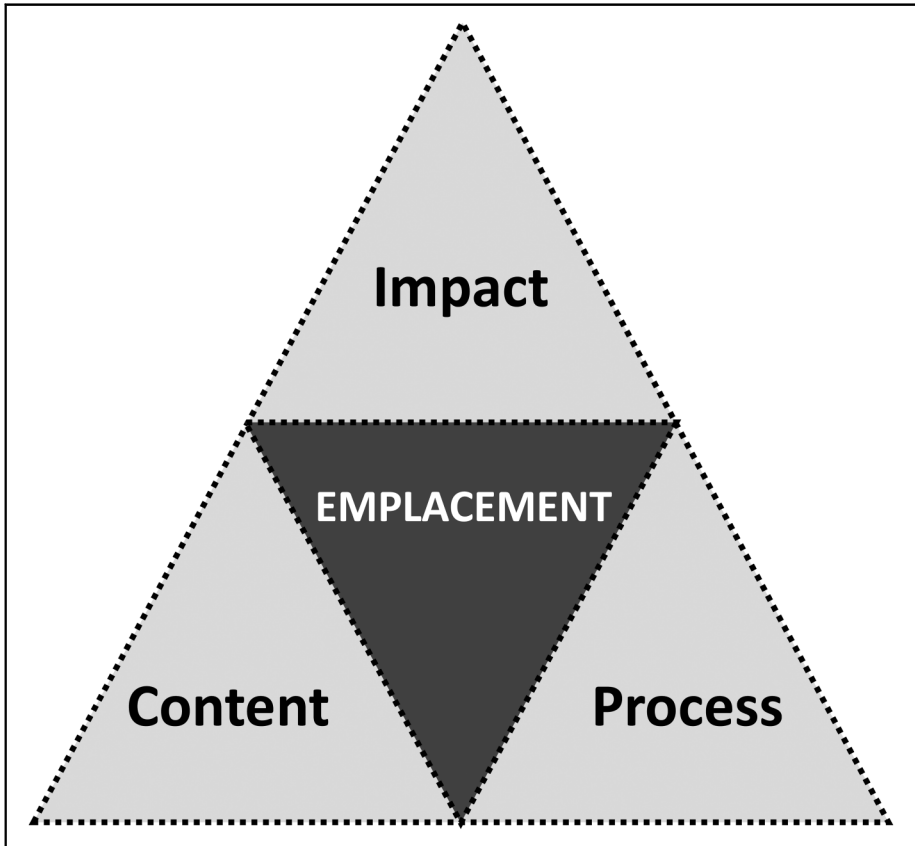
2011). This growing interest is informed by a number of different perspectives, such that the literature on learning through reflection and its implications is characterized by “definitional confusion and conceptual diversity” (Cotter & Cullen, 2012, p. 228).

In this paper, we offer further clarity by examining how reflexive management learning (RML; a meta-term adopted by Cotter & Cullen, 2012, p. 227) plays out in the context of collaborative inquiry where practitioners and academics cocreate knowledge for impact, substantiated by the reconfigurations of their practice and improvements in their action choices. Therefore, we capture these modes of impact as a mark of changing change, because we want to also account for the distinctive value that cocreation itself makes in fostering systemic responses, which we recognize as shifts not only in paradigms but also in action choices. Specifically, we expose hitherto unaddressed dimensions in RML and their implications for the transformative learning that such shifts entail. One such dimension is the position held toward issues marked by the stance taken. This dimension of RML mobilizes new ways of changing when practices are reconfigured and key principles preserved.

Our analysis is enriched by autoethnographic accounts of the collaborative inquiry of the authors and extends Cotter and Cullen’s initial framing of RML by adding further clarity that delineates the richness of RML, explicating further the *process* or mechanisms and techniques that enable reflexive practice, the *content* of the reflections, and finally, the associated outcomes which we position as the *impact*—what we refer to as changing change because the act of change is itself subject to transformation. In so doing, we address an important criticism of the literature identified by other authors (Iszatt-White et al., 2017), namely that RML focuses almost exclusively on the *means* of reflexivity, at the expense of the *content* or *outcomes (impact)* of learning.

We propose an RML framework, informed by all three dimensions (process, content, and impact) presented in Figure 1 and offer suggestions as to how this framework can usefully guide future collaborative inquiries orientated toward cocreating actionable knowledge. We define this cocreated knowledge in the context of collaborative inquiry as “taking a stance”—emplacement—a positioning through which new practices can emerge and existing practices reconfigured. As a result, we position RML as an entangled process derived from **impacting with** collaborators to form a stance, rather than *impacting on* “the other” or an external context. The RML framework we propose in Figure 1 highlights *content*, *process*, and *impact*, with all three components “animating” (as in the Latin “anima”—giving life, spirit, and vigor) and being “animated” by emplacement at the center.

We organize the paper into three sections. Following the introduction, we provide conceptual clarity by distilling the dimensions that so far have defined reflexivity both conceptually and in practice. We consider how these dimensions of reflexive practice have informed the reconfiguration of organizational practices and, more widely, system shifts. We then present our reflexive learning from the collaborative inquiries of the authors to illustrate how the dimensions of our new RML framework play out. In the discussion, we elaborate on the RML framework presented in Figure 1 and consider the wider implications for designing collaborative inquiries. We emphasize the importance of approaching reflexivity as a rich and multivaried phenomenon and not as a



**Figure 1.** The reflexive management learning (RML) framework.

single “variable,” which can be tested for its mediating/moderating impacts on performance, creativity, and other outcomes. As we exemplify from our collaborative research practice, the process of learning that underpins reflexivity’s transformative power through its affordances or “possibilities” also calls for an equally entangled approach to collaborative research.

### **Reflecting on the Reflexivity Literature: A Hall of Mirrors?**

Reflecting on experience has had a profound influence on management/leadership development (Raelin, 2001; Schön, 1983) across many professional contexts (Quinn & Bunderson, 2016). This affirms its central role in learning through “arresting moments” (Greig et al., 2013) that can be used as a basis for action, generating situated understanding, questioning the status quo, and seeking a “gear change” (Gorli et al., 2015), “learning to see more and differently” (Antonacopoulou, 2019) new

possibilities (through idea generation, promotion, and realization; Schippers et al., 2015), to name but a few. Reflection has rightly then featured as an integral component in learning interventions, be these orientated toward understanding experiences, pragmatically deriving lessons, or mobilizing transformations (Kolb, 1984). It is through such meaning-making that reflection is prompted by a sense of being “struck” by something during an experience (Cunliffe, 2002; McInnes & Corlett, 2012; Wittgenstein, 1980). This response generates a desire to attribute new meanings which better “fit” the experience, and hence catalyze a critique of meanings and assumptions, not only actions. Reflexivity, therefore, is positioned as an extension of reviewing or reflecting on experience to draw attention to the conscientization that it uniquely promotes (Antonacopoulou, 2019).

The link between reflecting, reflexivity, and management learning has attracted scholars of a great many fields within organization studies, including organizational routines (Bucher & Langley, 2016; Dittrich et al., 2016; Edmondson et al., 2001), emotions and embodiment in organizations (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015; Vince & Reynolds, 2009), leadership development and practice (Denis et al., 2010; Eriksen, 2009; Raelin, 2001), strategy (Denis et al., 2007; Nicolini, 2012; Nicolini & Monteiro, 2017), organizational change (Antonacopoulou, 2004; Orlikowski, 1996; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Tucker & Edmondson, 2003), management ethics (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015), and sensemaking (Cunliffe & Scaratti, 2017; Lüscher & Lewis, 2008). However, all this attention has generated further conceptual confusion, not only about where reflection starts and reflexivity ends, but also about how these become integral to the quality of learning, especially if such learning is intended to support improvements in professional practice (Antonacopoulou, 2019). For example, the idea of reflexivity promoting a “shift,” as Soh et al. (2023) recount in their examination of the reflexive mindset compared to the previous compliance mindset that underlined internal audit practice, is not the same as Gorli et al.’s (2015) account of practitioners taking stock of their everyday practices and authoring themselves and their identities as they make sense of and develop ways of coping.

In this paper, our focus is on reflexive practice, and we draw on and extend Cotter and Cullen’s (2012) reference to “Reflexive Management Learning.” By doing so, we provide further clarity on reflexive practice as part of the learning process, especially during the cocreation of knowledge that collaborative inquiry is designed to address. We choose the latter focus because we feel that the post-Covid world calls urgently for a greater alignment between science and society to foster the systemic changes that can sufficiently respond to the grand challenges of our time. Understanding how learning can be supported through collaborative inquiry programs that support reflexive learning is essential, especially when navigating the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) conditions that underpin grand challenges (Antonacopoulou, 2022).

In framing more clearly our focus on RML, we explicate our treatment of reflexivity as a practice and in relation to learning and changing (Antonacopoulou, 2004). We agree with Cotter and Cullen (2012) who problematize the treatment of reflexivity. They highlight the varied conceptual origins, diverse definitions, and assumptions

about the outcomes and implications of reflexive practice in the literature, prompting them to expose the multiplicity of conceptualizations of “what reflexive learning is and of *how* it might be done in practice” (p. 228). One point of debate concerns whether reflexivity takes place “in the moment” or retrospectively. Cotter and Cullen (2012) identify a “decelerative/latitudinal” current in the reflexivity literature, in which individuals step away from or slow down their work in order to reflect. “Stepping back” is thought in experiential learning to support individual and collective transformation (Kolb, 1984; Raelin, 2001, p. 11).

However, Schön (1983) distinguished “reflection on action” (reflecting on past experiences) from “reflection in action” (reflecting on phenomena as they are experienced), to surface, test, and evolve previously tacit knowledge, in ways that help individuals act in their current context (Polanyi, 1966). *The reflective practitioner* (Schön, 1983) articulated reflexivity more overtly as a professional skill that connects learning to practice, rather than separating it (Raelin, 2011). Schön’s approach aligns more closely with Cunliffe’s (2002, p. 38) definition of “learning from within” emphasizing the “reflex” below the level of consciousness. Such primal response often equates to a form of dissonance whereby the learner realizes that their prior understanding does not adequately fit their current experience (Chia, 2009; Vince, 2002). This is what prompts recognizing reflexive practice as an embodied, emotional response akin to an awakening which broadens ways “of seeing simultaneously inside (within) and outside (above and beyond) the actions constitutive of one’s conduct in relation to that of others” (Antonacopoulou, 2019, p. 25). The “back-and-forth” nature of the reflexive process can be compared to the experience of being in a “hall of mirrors” at a fair or amusement park (Riessman, 2015). Davies et al. (2004, p. 386) explain it by saying:

Standing in front of one mirror, our reflection is caught in another, and that other reflects yet another image in a ceaseless infinite regression. (...). Yet the infinite regression captured in such a hall of mirrors draws attention to the backward looking of reflexivity, as if the process is always a return, a turning back. Yet the act of reflexivity creates new thoughts and ideas at the same time as going back over old thoughts and ideas. And is not going back in fact a new process in itself? If reflexivity is a process, a back and forth process, then the act of catching the moment, the doing of the reflexive gaze and of listening with the reflexive ear, must change the thinking that is being thought. That reflexive process is elusive and exhausting and often threatens to disrupt the very thing it sets out to observe. Yet it is necessary for finding both how that constitutive work is done and how it might (on occasion and perhaps temporarily) be done otherwise.

Reflexivity promotes curiosity, fostering the confidence to act beyond certainty. This is not just intuition: it is about cultivating judgment and, hence candor, to seize critical moments fuelling action choices. This extends our understanding of reflexive learning not only as an embodied, emotional response, described by “struckness” but also as an “emplacement”—by which we mean whole body presence such that practices are formed, performed, and transformed—that marks a *stance* (Antonacopoulou, 2022).

We see collaborative inquiry as a “hall of mirrors” which generates situated knowledge that allows collaborators to form a “stance” from which they can steer change. In the context of collaborative inquiry, a stance is not a fixed position, but a socially constructed, fluid, and temporary jumping-off point, from which collaborators can change change. Such a stance orientated toward the common good, withstands and embeds critique because it marks its relational character due to the collaboration. In other words, reflexive learning as a stance emerges not only as a mark of resilience to tolerate VUCA conditions but also as a mode of inquiry fuelling cocreation of future possibilities that the collaboration itself nurtures. This marks an emplacement as a stance-taking process that invites, beyond embodiment or enactment, the activation of responsibility. Antonacopoulou (2022) explicates this in her account of partnering for impact, also defining emplacement as “standing up for what we stand for,” which in collaborative inquiries propels a focus on impact where such impact is orientated toward the common good.

This focus on the production of knowledge(s) through entangled relationships, inseparable from process, content, or impact, requires us to understand change as “impacting **with**” rather than “impacting **on**.” Reflexivity as an integral part of learning then is more than abstracting knowledge to simplify and give order to experience, following Kolb (1984), or applying abstract theory to practice through a persistent critique in management learning (Antonacopoulou, 2010). Instead, reflexivity, consistent with Freire’s (1973) idea of “conscientisation” elevates “learning from within” by using the experience itself; engaging in a situated meaning-making process that does not simplify, but reveals contradictions, tensions, and opportunities (Antonacopoulou, 2019; Gorli et al., 2015).

It merits clarifying further that the *type of learning* that distinguishes “reflective learning” and “reflexive learning,” as Cunliffe (2002) points out, is that the former surfaces a new understanding of the assumptions underpinning their experience, so that learners understand *how* the world works. This is called “technical” reflection by Reynolds (2011) because the learner is thought to be able to view their experience through an “objective lens” (Cotter & Cullen, 2012, p. 229), distancing themselves from experience to give it meaning (Freire, 1973). This has shaped scholarship on how a learner moves toward abstract principles and ideas from concrete experiences and uses this abstracted knowledge to shape future actions (Kolb, 1984). In contrast, in “reflexive learning,” the learner learns to challenge their assumptions and identify how they themselves are implicated in constructing social reality, mastering the level of critique necessary to form a practical judgment for their subsequent action choices (Antonacopoulou, 2010). In accomplishing this process otherwise referred to as “critical reflection” (Reynolds, 2011), learners may consider how social reality might be changed (Cunliffe, 2002). People accomplish this through ongoing and evolving conversations that narrate experiences by authoring through language and, through everyday interactions, in dialogue with themselves and others (Cunliffe, 2002; McInnes & Corlett, 2012). Such “authoring” and “authorship,” as Gorli et al. (2015) explain, explicates further why reflexive learning is intimately connected to the identity work of the self both in terms of personhood and being a professional.

Put simply, reflexive learning catalyzes new possibilities by seeing issues differently and then together making public the social and political forces at play, so that the emerging stance guiding the response marks an emplacement. This is why reflexivity is intimately intertwined with modes of education that cultivate character and conscience and not only competence (Antonacopoulou, 2019), aligning it to “conscientisation” as a form of education and learning attributed to Freire (1973). This is also why emplacement as a stance-taking process activates responsibility because it necessary goes beyond the ability to respond (Haraway, 2016)

*Reflexive learning* goes beyond the cognitive sphere and into the social one (Cunliffe, 2002). Thus, it connects more clearly to wider sociological debates about the dynamics of structure and agency, as Archer (2012) and others show, to reveal the scope for reflexivity to catalyze critique (Antonacopoulou, 2010). Here lies another fundamental aspect of reflexivity as a relational practice of identity works in what is differentiated as “critical reflexivity”. Here, focusing on the external environment and one’s place and constitutive role within it is fundamental to the role of reflexivity. In what is well captured in interventionist action research, the reflexivity provoked by the cycles of action and reflection transforms professionals’ construction and enactment of their professional practice “generating content, process, and premise learning” (Coghlan, 2011, p. 62). This is also more recently echoed by Huber and Knights (2022), who draw on Mead’s pedagogy to argue that through meaningful social interaction, we come to “re-form” our identities and learn to think and feel differently. Reflexive learners, therefore, engage in relational dialogue to generate understandings about their own self-assumptions and actions, and the implications these have for their authoring of social reality and their own person (self)-hood. Hence, Cunliffe rightly argues (2002, p. 37), they are “becoming more aware of how we constitute and maintain our realities and identities in continued dialogue with the self and others.” In doing so, Huber and Knights (2022) also echo, they not only think but also feel differently. To which we would also add that those practicing reflexivity do so by engaging not only their thoughts and feelings but also their “sentience” (Antonacopoulou, 2019; Rigg, 2018).

Drawing on Antonacopoulou’s (2019) framing of reflexivity in relation to sensuous learning we can recognize the power of sentience in forming practical judgment (phronesis). Reflexivity is not only about ways of seeing and feeling but it is also about cultivating the resilience and strength of character to pursue both the (re)formulation and alternative expressions that provide consistency in conduct as part of the ongoing “ways of becoming” (Antonacopoulou, 2019, p. 27). As such, consistent with Bourdieu’s (2000) conceptualization of reflexivity, in terms of constant reformulation and expression of meaning and their use in action, the notion of stance-taking is not fixed nor an ideological one. Instead, what we emphasize in terms of learning is the realm of social arbitrariness reproduced in social institutions, structures, and relations, as well as in minds and bodies, expectations, and behavior. The latter for us provides the basis of our further elaboration of the richness of reflexive practice by accounting for the entanglement of multiple dimensions as a mark of its emplacement. This



enables individuals and groups to recognize that organizations are not neutral or “benign” (Brookfield, 2010 in Cotter & Cullen, 2012, p. 243) but capable of reproducing inequalities through oppressive practices (Duarte, 2009). For this reason, reflexive learning can be associated with a normative or “reformist” (Cotter & Cullen, 2012, p. 239) orientation that aims to liberate by rekindling their “sociological imaginations” (Duarte, 2009) or better still “desirable futures” (Gümüşay & Reinecke, 2022). As Hibbert (2012) points out, reflexive learning can help learners identify and engage with power, but reflexivity is itself not immune to power asymmetries. Making efforts to create “safe spaces” for collective or individual reflection, therefore, is challenging for educators yet not insurmountable, as Huber and Knights (2022) suggest. This is why our analysis is focusing on such systemic shifts drawing on emplacement as a stance-taking process that affords to navigate VUCA conditions by changing change.

Finally, reflexive learning opens a richer array of outcomes or what we consider impact(s). Identity work (both personal and professional) remains at the forefront of outcomes noted in extant research, especially because it places social interactions as the platform that serves to establish, reinforce, and/or undermine their sense of identity and engagement with the world (Gorli et al., 2015; Huber & Knights, 2022; Iszatt-White et al., 2017). Such identity work is continually enacted through the “language games” in dialogic social interaction (Wittgenstein, 1980), through which words are given their precise meaning in situ. These language games become part of the way that individuals “narrate” their own story in dialogue with the self or with others (Holquist, 1981). Reflexivity emerges as a form of identity work, in which people produce—and undo (Iszatt-White et al., 2017)—their self-understandings in an ongoing, dialogical process in which learning and “becoming” are entwined in the process of constructing social reality (Clegg et al., 2005). Recognizing the socially constructed, dialogical nature of self and learning enables us to explore and build a theory about reflexivity’s rich and diverse nature, in line with calls to develop scholarship which does not simplify but embraces the complexity and multiplicity of praxis (Tsoukas, 2017).

Hence, our aim is to extend references to reflexivity as impactful to individual cognitive and emotional states or team performance and innovation (Huber & Knights, 2022; Schippers et al., 2015) and explore the oft-hidden dynamics between the *process (form)*, *content* and *impact* of practicing reflexivity fuelled by emplacement. For the purposes of this paper, this aim is situated in collaborative inquiry—a practice we recognize as transcending and connecting units (individual/team/organization) of analysis. We approach arresting this richness as an understanding of how reflexivity is characterized by multiple dimensions entangled in the dialogic exchanges (Beech et al., 2012) of learners as they engage in a reflexive practice, itself a practice embedded in collaborative inquiry, thus also drawing attention to the recursive nature of reflexivity.

Following Hibbert (2012, p. 805), we position reflexivity as recursive: “if the patterns of our foundational assumption change as a result of the process of reflexivity then the actual process of thinking is also changed.” Such recursiveness we particularly

account as “impact” because we extend beyond thinking and emotions and attend to actions. This is why we focus on impact as “improving action” (Antonacopoulou, 2022). This means that we attend to the relational and collaborative nature of RML, in which reflections are not purely cognitive, but produced out of the political, social, sensory, and psycho-dynamics of experience (Rigg, 2018; Vince, 2002). Whilst we focus on the way people use language to make sense of experience (Fletcher & Watson, 2007), we also attend to the nature of reflexivity which helps in the way learners “learn how to learn” (Hibbert et al., 2010).

Precisely because we are settled in our position of learning as more than behavior change and knowledge acquisition, we feel no need to fall into perennial confusions between learning, unlearning, and relearning (see Antonacopoulou, 2019). We focus instead on the organic growth of the individual and the collective when learning propels forming, performing, and transforming management and organizational practices (Antonacopoulou, 2018). This way, we can reveal how reflexivity can take place formally and informally, during or after an experience, in groups or in dialogue with oneself, and may reveal what “learning for impact” means when relating to understandings of the self, the task at hand, or wider conceptions of social reality and the stance that guides our participation in cocreating the “system” (in the ecology and economy). This multilayered appreciation of reflexive learning orientates the improvements in action, as both intentions as well as, action choices that are informed by the process of cocreation, which is the process by which collaborative inquiry is underpinned.

This perspective enables us to address a number of current weaknesses in the literature. These include a lack of attention to how identity work plays out in RML (Iszatt-White et al., 2017), a typically exclusive focus on the *means* by which reflection is accomplished, as opposed to the *content* or *outcomes* (Gutzan & Tuckermann, 2019), and the presentation of reflection as a cognitive, individualized endeavor, as opposed to one entangled in the relational production of social life through interactions with others (Cunliffe, 2002). In addition, Gutzan and Tuckermann (2019, p. 333) highlight the need for more rich empirical evidence of how RML is played out in organizational contexts.

We illustrate reflexive learning in the next section by providing accounts of our lived experiences in two different collaborative inquiries. We also build on this process of coauthoring our reflexive learning as an additional illustration of how collaborative inquiry fosters reflexive learning. We bring the insights together in advancing our RML framework to support future collaborative inquiry.

## **Coauthoring Lived Experiences of Reflexive Learning**

The review of the literature in the previous section highlights the gap that the study reported in this paper sought to address by framing the research question: *Why is RML critical to the way collaborative inquiry takes shape and the impacts it realizes?* Consistent with calls for more complex, contextually embedded empirical analyses of how RML occurs in situ and from the perspective of the learners themselves (Cotter & Cullen, 2012; Gutzan & Tuckermann, 2019; Hibbert, 2012), this study presents a

longitudinal tracing of such learning in the organic growth of academics and practitioners engaged in collaborative inquiry and cocreation of knowledge for impact. We draw on our autoethnographic accounts of collaborative inquiry and, as coauthors, we present our learning and reflexively account for the impacts that our collaboration is cogenerating.

The first example draws insights from our collaborative inquiry on a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA) program. This example gave us the opportunity to reflexively learn how to embed “research as a management practice” where the reconfiguration of the internal audit approach catalyzed important changes and improvements in the way conduct risk was addressed in a financial institution. It also instigated a reflexive mindset as a key dimension in the way internal auditing (IA) is now being conducted in that institution, forming a stance toward the importance of balancing immersion into auditees’ activities to fully appreciate the contextual nuances, and yet also maintaining sufficient distance in order to uphold the independence that internal auditors must preserve in order to discharge their fiduciary duties.

The second example captures the reflexive learning of participants (educators) at the Royal Norwegian Airforce Academy (RNoAFA), where a collaborative inquiry instigated a reflexive critique of the approach to educating leaders and leadership in officers and specialists. The collaborative inquiry, in this case, catalyzed a reflexive critique of the pedagogical approach adopted and a forming of a stance toward the values and pedagogical principles upheld by the RNoAFA toward “growing” leaders and leadership in the military profession. This example signals that collaborative inquiry, especially when conducted in the wider context of a modernization program of the Norwegian Defence, became a vehicle for defending the pedagogical principles adopted by the RNoAFA. In doing so, it also affirmed that, in the face of modernization, standing for these principles demanded educating policy makers about the importance of sustaining these principles and providing the necessary continuity, even if this called for doing more with less resources. In this example, we recognize a mode of changing that retains the essence of learning leadership and, in doing so, the significance of defending and upholding these pedagogical principles as a mark of sustained excellence, pivotal to the emplacement that underpinned this systemic shift in Norwegian Defence.

The two autoethnographic narratives are different, as expected, not only because they convey the lived experiences of the protagonists, but because also they mark collectively an important and often missed aspect of reflexive accounts. We focus on the content, process, and impact of reflexive learning. Much as Johnson (2020) accounts for “lived compositions” in the past, present, and future, we reveal the vulnerability and becoming entailed by “thinking with” autoethnography, as Phillips et al. (2022) propose. In this sense, the autoethnographic accounts may be predominantly the voice of the “practitioner” but that is (as this paper itself represents) the emerging story that the ongoing coauthoring of “y-our story” reveals when the “thinking with” becomes also the “writing with.” This for us marks a critical aspect of cocreation, recognizing that collaborative inquiry is as much about the “co” in “co-creating knowledge,” hence our focus on impacting “with,” not impacting “on.” We recognize

Phillips et al.'s (2022, pp. 761–762) argument that power is “always in play in the research process itself, notwithstanding the democratic, collaborative, dialogic ideals and transformative aims of social justice and social change.”

Our experience and commitment to dialogical exchange cocreated the reality we arrest in the accounts of reflexive learning and mark our commitment to “rewrite the story” (to use Antonacopoulou’s, 2018 framing), thus marking our shared obligation to “impacting with” through the collaborative research. Impacting “with” (like thinking and writing “with”) shifts the focus to the cocreation of impact (serving a greater purpose—the common good), thus reflexively learning with each other and, in doing so, forming our stance toward emerging issues, not as a fixed position but as a reflection of our ongoing “relational becoming” (Phillips et al., 2022, p. 763).

It would, of course, be important to also make explicit the role of reflexivity in our collaborative inquiry and our coauthoring of our individual and collective learning experiences. We choose not to make “validity,” as other scholars do (e.g., Dennis, 2018), the focal point of the reliability or legitimacy of our accounts. We are entirely aligned with the methodological rigor that necessarily underpins all inquiry (scientific or otherwise). In this sense, the reliability or authenticity of our account is marked by the “truth” our communicative negotiations and responsibilities uphold in our shared commitment to not only capture our corresponding truth. Instead, our focus, inspired by James (1907), is that “Truth in our ideas means their power to work.” Put differently, although deeply personal to us as coauthors, our accounts of our individual and collective reflexive learning are also a mark of our commitment to practicing reflexivity, challenging and broadening each other’s appreciation and understanding of how we cocreate the systems and practices that we also seek to change and improve.

In this respect, our analysis goes beyond validity in our claims and focuses on our collaborative inquiry and the impacts it cogenerated. This is consistent with Dennis’s (2018, p. 112) reference to praxis as “the ethical labour of understanding the Self by recognising the Self as Other and the Self in Other.” This affirms that collaborations amplify the “inter-ness”—connection—that defines the quality of the relationship between partners, as well as the acts of partnering, which Antonacopoulou (2022) elaborates as the essence of “inter-being” as a mark of *sympoiesis*, which is the essence of cocreation: “Cocreation itself then is founded on inclusiveness that redefines the way interrelationships, interdependencies and interactions between multistakeholder partnerships unfold.” By implication, such a focus can potentially also extend the very ways in which impact is measured and accounted for” (Antonacopoulou, 2022, p. 10).

### **RML in IA**

This collaborative research emanated within the DBA program at an international business school and started with enrolment to the program. The design of the DBA drew from the literature on how merging theory and practice leads managers to engage in scholarly practice (Raelin, 2007), phronesis (Flyvberg, 2001), and collaborative inquiry (Coghlan et al., 2012). It is grounded on an epistemology of practice (Raelin, 2007) and underpinned by ideas of praxis and phronesis. Praxis, the art of

doing, acting, and enacting, is described as a form of critical thinking that combines reflection and action with a commitment to human flourishing, a quest for truth and respect for others (Kemmis, 2010; Küpers & Pauleen, 2013). The Aristotelian idea of *phronesis* denotes practical wisdom based on ethics and values and informed by reflection (Antonacopoulou, 2010; Flyvberg, 2001; Ramsey, 2014). In Heidegger's terms, *phronesis* is concerned with a way of being in the world (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2014). It is pragmatic, context-dependent, and oriented toward action (Kinsella & Pitman, 2012).

Informed by these ideas, the DBA design has three stages of development: firstly, a period of structured classes, run through action learning (Revans, 1982); secondly, a 10,000-word Doctoral Development Plan as a transition from taught modules to thesis; and finally, an Action Research thesis which takes an action-orientated research approach, typically as an insider-action researcher approach (Coghlan, 2019) is adopted to problematize, investigate, and take steps to resolve a significant issue in the student's own organization or management practice.

The program design develops three interacting practices that facilitate the becoming of a scholarly practitioner: a disposition that treats management practice as a subject of inquiry, employing research to inform and evaluate practice; a propensity for critical reflection or reflexivity; and engagement in collaborative dialogue (Rigg et al., 2021). We concur with Spencer et al. (2022) that dialogue and dialogical sensemaking are fundamental to the learning process and at multiple levels. Engagement with literature we see as a dialogue with the ideas of others; the change process involves dialogue or public reflexivity with coworkers; the doctoral journey involves dialogue with peers (other students), as well as the quality of dialogue between academic supervisor and practitioner. In addition, there is a further conversation with examiners within the doctoral viva.

In the IA example, we refer to here, our partnership for impact goes beyond the confines of the DBA journey. Dialogue has continued between the practitioner, supervisor, and the two examiners in the three years since DBA completion, as we have explored further sensemaking to write for publication. This constitutes a different and ongoing kind of "partnering for impact" (Antonacopoulou, 2022), through which all of us are learning from the collaborative dialogue about the ways we inquire. In fact, the quality of our relationship over time was founded on the trust that underpinned our initial critique of ways of searching and researching everyday practices, and not only malpractices that amplify into crises. We discovered that focusing our formal meetings during the DBA supervision, but also subsequent to DBA completion, inviting each other to account for our respective ways of coping with everyday challenges, has elevated our collaboration beyond seeing each other professionally and instead, as trusted friends who share all that life presents us with.

This has transformed our inquiry from one that looks at how we study a phenomenon, to how we understand one another and our perspective of trusting and upholding one another, especially when we meet ourselves in moments that we simply do not know what to do. An example was the way the research collaboration started by recognizing the persistence of risk that was undermining an IA approach and its capacity

to arrest and address conduct risk. Conduct risk constitutes any behavior a firm engages in that would cause problems to consumer protection, market integrity, or competition (Llewellyn et al., 2014). It took courage, patience, and perseverance in the initial meetings for the supervisor and the DBA candidate to present this IA challenge with the typical approach followed by identifying and resolving “wicked problems.” It was clear that the mode of inquiry was not only problem-driven but the search for a solution superseded the identification of the causes. Moreover, we recognized that the inquiry would tend to be restricted to ready-made solutions by seeking “best practices” instead of investigating in situ what conditions created and permitted conduct risk to persist.

Reflecting on our collaborative inquiry we recognize that an important part of our “learning together” and not only “learning from each other” (Beech et al., 2022) was the commitment to embed “research as a management practice” (Antonacopoulou, 2022). This means that we were actively deliberating and asking ourselves and one another how and why searching to understand the phenomenon of conduct risk would call for more than simply a search for understanding its causes and consequences. Instead, we were realizing the importance of searching and researching as an act—a practice around which we could reorganize how the IA function would improve its approach of arresting conduct risk. We were embarking on an inquiry into the very approach of search and research (Antonacopoulou, 2018). This provided a very different approach to the way we turned the “problem” into a “research question” that an action research intervention was designed to address.

In this respect, our collaborative inquiry was framed as a strategic learning agenda that engaged us all in dialogue and with the shared commitment and purpose of understanding the issue at hand by including as many and varied perspectives as possible. This shifted the approach of conducting the research from one that would simply meet the guidelines of the DBA program to one which would also meet the learning needs of all those that agreed to participate. Addressing conduct risk was the driver toward designing the action research intervention as a collaborative inquiry platform. Our reflexive learning through collaborative inquiry became our stance and our “impacting with” emerged as our emplacement. This means that we have remained fully present and alert to the challenges we encountered in our action research. However, our collaborative inquiry adopted a stance that motivated our collaboration beyond personal interests or agendas and instead toward a commitment to serve the common good. By doing so, the actionable knowledge that emerged from our collaborative inquiry not only fulfilled successfully the award of the DBA degree but more importantly it fuelled the sentience that has sustained our shared drive to continue to explore and learn from each other, producing a series of joint publications, sharing our insights and inviting others to join in this conversation and approach to researching and reconfiguring management practices.

In our collaborative inquiry, the key Internal Auditor led the process with the team of colleagues in the organization that was created to undertake the reconfiguration of the IA practice. Alongside their own systematic reflections in diaries and ongoing conversations with colleagues, there were continuous reflection sessions with the academic supervisor. They maintained the degree of distance necessary so that at every round of

searching and researching (in collecting data across different levels and perspectives to include auditees as well, redesigning the IA approach, and testing the new approach to arresting conduct risk in mainstream IA assignments) there was debate and joint unpacking of the nuances in the exegesis provided to how to conduct risk manifested, persisted and could be averted.

In Table 1, we provide a summary of reflections by the Internal Auditor who was leading the collaborative inquiry within the organization and with the academic partners (supervisor initially and subsequently examiners). By providing this longitudinal account of learning, this summary reveals that, as illustrated in our RML framework in Figure 1, the *content* of the reflections was changing as did the *process* of reflexivity, enabling the emerging insights that mark the *impact* of reflexive practice.

We could devote the remainder of this analysis to unpacking the learning and lessons we continuously derive; suffice it to say that we collectively agree that our collaborative inquiry is characterized by a deep trust in one another as friends and not only as collaborators. We bring to our planned and ad hoc interactions our respective life challenges, which are both the subject of collective deliberations as well as an integral part of the quality of the relationship that underpins our collaboration. Giving voice to the scholar-practitioner collaborator who distills the process of reflexive learning through the DBA in a before, during, and after account (based on diary notes throughout our collaboration) as summarized in Table 1, offers an additional important insight into a collaborative inquiry that is underpinned by reflexive learning. Namely, that when we form powerful connections with one another, it genuinely does not matter who is doing the talking (authoring), because we place the focus on the space-in-between “y-our story.”

Any one member of our collaborative team authoring his/her account captures both his/her lived experience and our collective journey. Such “authoring” of a “story,” as an accurate account of events past, transcends their version of events (what we would frame as “his-story”). Instead, they have the capacity to speak for the team experiencing and participating in shaping the story and it is unfolding. The latter bears particular attention as it reveals that reflexive learning’s impact (beyond process and content) is in nurturing the common sense that must necessarily underpin the common good, as Antonacopoulou (2022) also explains with reference to partnering for impact. Our learning from our collaborative inquiry is reflexive because it implicates us and our identity as scholars, scholar-practitioners, and practitioners (all of us assuming these identities simultaneously even if serving in different positions/roles) in appreciating the significance of this phenomenon and the commitment to address it.

In other words, what we demonstrate here is that the *content*, *process*, and *impact* of reflexive learning in collaborative inquiry place the grand challenges we are facing as a common priority (not only a common concern) that begs joining forces in addressing, because it serves the common good. We have also been able to capture this empirically (Soh et al., 2023, 2024) in demonstrating that averting conduct risk and reconfiguring the IA approach (impact) in this case was possible because the collaborative inquiry between us amplified to also a collaborative inquiry within the organization (process). We are also now collaborating with colleagues in the Finance and

**Table 1.** Reconfiguring the IA Approach Through Reflexive Learning.

Pre-DBA	DBA	Post-DBA
<p>1. Being a professional practitioner, I maintained that there is a communication gap between the practitioner and the academic. I had no interest in communicating with the academics and I was apprehensive as to how our conversations could converge constructively.</p>	<p>During the online classes, interactions with the module tutors helped me to adapt my communication and listening approaches to understand the language used by academics and their perspectives. I also had to interact frequently with the thesis supervisor and on a few occasions at the residency module with the program director. Listening to how management research is intended to bring value to my workplace shifted my mindset somewhat to embrace the possibility of making meaningful conversations with academics. I began to like the idea of having to identify a workplace problem and doing research to address the problem. I started to see some practical relevance in interacting with academics. This was further reinforced through more intensive dialogues on different questions to ask, different ways of asking the questions, ways of analyzing data, the need to be more reflexive, etc., with the thesis supervisor throughout the last 2.5 years of the DBA program. I decided that continued interactions with academics after my DBA might help to narrow my perceived communication gap with them. I would need to find the opportunity to do it.</p>	<p>The privilege to be invited by my thesis supervisor, internal examiner, and external examiner to work on publishing my thesis started for me a new learning journey with increased interactions on many aspects of writing and attending to reviewers' comments. The questioning and editing of my writing by these three academics helped to sharpen my writing skills and caused me to pay attention to the nuances of what I wrote. This has enabled me to capture more succinctly all the IA work and findings that have to be presented to senior management. Besides learning from the contents of the papers to be published, I also come to know them as friends as they share their lives and experiences. This increases my confidence to interact with professionals in different fields, especially in education. In this learning process, I realized that my perceived language gap between academics and the practitioner has narrowed notably. I have learned constructively from every interaction with them (via email or Zoom).</p>
<p>2. Problem-solving for me was to adopt a pragmatic approach to assess available resources and constraints and fix whatever gaps needed to be addressed efficiently so that business could resume as usual.</p>	<p>My pragmatic problem-solving mindset was challenged again and again by the thesis supervisor during the thesis proposal stage. After almost 9 months of rigorous questioning sessions, I learned what is problematization. I learned the importance to be precise in defining the problem so that I would be able to address it. I recognized the need to identify the root cause(s) of problems so that they could be fixed effectively.</p>	<p>Learning to problematize continues, as there are emerging issues caused by the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, employees' maladjustments to remote working conditions and more critically how to conduct IA remotely. I cannot rely on past experience and others' expertise to address these problems because no one was more experienced than another. Being able to problematize and identify the root causes of problems at hand becomes my advantage to deal with and evaluate the changing platforms of the activities being audited and the changing behaviors of the auditees and auditors. This advantage equipped me to successfully</p>

(continued)



**Table 1. (continued)**

Pre-DBA	DBA	Post-DBA
<p>3. Consulting literature to inform my professional practice and for problem-solving was never an option for me because I regarded literature to be dated and theories are normally derived from activities in classroom conditions instead of "real life" events.</p>	<p>The need to review literature as a requirement for all the module assignments compelled me to consult literature just to complete assignments. However, the modules on action learning and action research created in me an unexpected interest because of the importance accorded to the identification of workplace problems and finding solutions for them.</p> <p>During the thesis proposal stage, the thesis supervisor shared my thesis proposal with another professor (unknown to me then) who had undertaken some research in IA. I was pleasantly surprised by the relevance of literature and the feedback of an academic when she asked if I had considered "organizational silence." I had no prior knowledge on this topic. However, I reviewed and critically reflected on the literature on this topic and realized that organizational silence exposed me to the importance of communications between hierarchical levels and its inherent deficiency in allowing the suppression of critical information for collaborative learning across the organization. Learning the weakness of hierarchical communication started to erase the hierarchical barrier between the thesis supervisor and me. This in turn broadened and deepened our conversations to new knowledge and experiences and enriched our learning. I embraced with much delight the learning from conducting the action research because I could see the link between literature and academic learning with practice and the value of addressing implementation glitches as they arise. I started to appreciate the value of literature in practice.</p>	<p>supervise an audit assignment with a different orientation than the classical assignments.</p> <p>When I had to take over the supervision of an audit assignment with a demoralized team on short notice, I realized that I had a problem. I also had to complete the assignment within a very tight deadline. Subconsciously I started problematizing and reflexively questioning (learning and mindset change from #2) as to how to improve the morale of the assignment team and complete the assignment timely. I was amazed that the idea of applying CAL came to mind. Having grown in confidence in interacting with the academics (learning and change in mindset #1), I courageously reached out to the internal examiner to clarify my understanding of CAL and adopted it to conduct this assignment.</p> <p>Through CAL, I facilitated the assignment team (the learning set) to complete the assignment with a focus on commercial steering. It was a great success proven by the IA APAC management's request for a few assignments to be conducted with this new focus.</p> <p>As I was reflecting on my learning after this assignment, I was reminded of my external examiner's answer to my question of "how would I know when I can use research in my workplace?" in one of our earlier conversations (having overcome the fear of talking to academics as in #1). The external examiner's reply was "when the seeds have been sown, the tree will grow in due time." This answer planted in me a curiosity to know when is "in due time." This curiosity keeps me sensitively looking out for the changing problems emerging from the accelerating changes in my workplace. I realized that I am not apprehensive of the unknowns in the emerging problems but I am interested to apply my learning on</p>

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Table 1. (continued)

Pre-DBA	DBA	Post-DBA
<p>4. As a practicing auditor for many years, I have honed my skill to corroborate information (verbal or written) to reach sensible conclusions. This is an important skill to ensure quality internal audit deliverables.</p> <p>An auditor traditionally adopts a "telling" role when IA recommendations are issued to rectify control gaps or instances of non-compliance with policies and procedures. This has inherently blocked many learning opportunities which could come with "listening" to auditees/stakeholders.</p>	<p>This information-corroborating skill has further enhanced when I learned to triangulate different perspectives in the literature reviewed for my residency project and my thesis.</p> <p>After the class presentation of my project at a residency module, the program director explained that I should not merely review literature that supports my case. She illustrated how I could interact with the literature of differing views to further question and analyze the validity of the conclusions drawn only from supporting literature. This called for me to move beyond my comfort zone to critically review more literature, understand nuances in writing and discussions, and corroborate the different perspectives to reach more grounded conclusions.</p> <p>This important skill was further improved during the data collection and analysis phases of my thesis. Following repeated challenges from the thesis supervisor on the bases of data collection and the depth of data analyses, I grew to be alert to listen out for stakeholders' dissenting views and their bases for disagreements. I also adopt a critical lens to review documents and auditees' behaviors that did not seem to align with my initial understanding of market practices and malpractices. The thesis supervisor's continued rigorous questioning and my</p>	<p>problemization and reflexive inquiring skills to commence with problem definition and finding solutions of the problem.</p> <p>I appreciate the periodic invitations by the thesis supervisor to review and comment on her works prior to publication as these serve as reminders of my "scholar" role amidst my professional practices. This gesture proactively engages me with academic works using a practitioner's lens. This opportunity to offer views from practice helps me to see the relevance of practice in advancing new theories.</p> <p>In a technology-driven environment and with the availability of more and bigger data from more sources, my skill to reflexively question information received and then corroborate with that from other sources has been further tried and improved.</p> <p>I purposefully seek and consider dissenting views and negative evidence and use them to challenge positive verbal and written information provided by auditees as these are often superficial responses provided by auditees to "get rid" of auditors from their daily activities. This approach is particularly beneficial for unveiling misconduct and conduct issues that are often embedded in what is unspoken.</p> <p>I have benefited from my learning and change through the DBA program as I am now distilling findings and new knowledge in my professional practice in a more habitual and rigorous way. I am equipped to derive stronger conclusions after the investigative process of the IA assignment and projects that I undertake.</p> <p>I recognize the need to be engaged in extensive reflexive dialogues and cross-sharing and learning to grow the agility of both the practitioner's and academics' mindsets</p>

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**Table 1. (continued)**

Pre-DBA	DBA	Post-DBA
	<p>attempts to justify my findings led to the definition of findings that were directed to the root causes of misconduct and auditors' past failure to identify and address conduct risk. The thesis supervisor's role-modeling of asking recursive questions spun off in me to ask critical reflexive questions and to listen out for unanticipated responses that could add value to my research.</p> <p>I had to replace my "telling" role with a "listening" role so that I could learn from others' sharing and learning. I unlearned my traditional role through the thesis supervisor's guidance in framing semistructured interview questions for auditees (disciplinary committee members, sales and trading persons, and their managers). Listening to the responses to these questions allowed me to elicit rich and deep perspectives of others' views contributing to how the IA approach could be reconfigured.</p>	<p>and to stretch them extensively. This approach helps me to leverage and integrate the scholar's deep access to academic knowledge and the practitioner's wide access to contextual issues and organizational voices to collaboratively deliver robust solutions and research. Hence, I remain open to the invitations for collaborative dialogues with my thesis supervisor and examiners despite toggling between the roles of scholar and practitioner is by no means natural or habitual.</p>
<p>5. IA has been performed with a compliance mindset and as assignment supervisor, I am also responsible for silently endorsing this mindset because I allowed the compliance-based auditing approach to remain status quo.</p>	<p>The action learning and action research components of the DBA program were highly instrumental in changing my compliance mindset to a reflexive one. The learning sets in the various modules placed the practitioners in our comfortable environment to discuss literature and how to write assignments and share new knowledge gleaned from literature—all the academic stuff that we were unfamiliar with. Our diverse professional and educational backgrounds nudged us to question one another's assumptions and opinions. This "comfortable" platform created in us the readiness to acknowledge our lack of knowledge and understanding in a different sphere than our professional practices. There were no prescribed rules, policies, or procedures to follow. To admit new knowledge and others' learning, I progressively changed my mindset to one that is collaborative and inquiring. This enabled us to pursue learning from one another without limitations to discussion topics but only constrained by time</p>	<p>As an IA manager, I cannot overemphasize the growing importance of IA's governance role over conduct issues in the financial industry and the expectations of the regulators.</p> <p>To exercise oversight on employees' behaviors as reflected in the voluminous transactions they executed, it is no longer possible to identify employees' deviations from the organization's ethical objectives just by selecting transaction samples to check for their compliance with policies and procedures. Constrained by the assignment duration, selected sample sizes are too small to reflect an employee's behaviors and motivation adequately.</p> <p>Regulators' expectations on the effective assessment of employees' business conduct now call for the deployment of data analytics and visualization tools to identify transaction trends that surface exceptional</p>

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Table 1. (continued)

Pre-DBA	DBA	Post-DBA
<p>to complete module assignments.</p> <p>This collaborative and inquiring attitude was further honed during the data collection phase of my action research. I had to abandon the idea of asking standard questions and anticipating expected responses and binary outcomes. As misconduct is a sensitive topic, with the guidance of the thesis supervisor, I learned to design reflexive questions that could draw out qualitative views and comments that could unveil the root causes of conduct issues and incentives for malpractices. I learned from the literature and analyses of the stakeholders' responses that no amount of rules and policies could stop misconduct. This suggested that sourcing for binary responses based on a compliance IA approach would not help me to arrest conduct risk. I urgently abandon my compliance mindset and practice reflexivity as the thesis supervisor repeatedly reminded me. I also helped the participating auditors to do the same. We critically analyze data with collaborative inquiries to draw out the different interpretations of auditees' responses and data trends that seemed to signal unusual activities and this enabled us to conduct the two field assignments successfully to see the impact of the reconfigured IA approach.</p> <p>As we reflected on our learning from the field assignments, we acknowledged that our compliance mindset had contributed to our failure in our governance role on conduct. Our compliance mindset was a roadblock to perceiving differently how we could arrest conduct risk, which is a key risk but not commonly attended to in a classical audit assignment.</p> <p>Having to do research that brings value to my organization called for a paradigmatic shift from what I had been doing, that is, bringing changes for economic efficiency and improving the financial bottom line.</p> <p>This change did not come easy or fast, as I had to be regularly</p> <p>6. Throughout my professional career, I have introduced significant changes in all the organizations I worked for. I introduced and implemented the outsourcing of US dollar clearing activities for an entire bank group. I changed processes and infrastructures to integrate the</p>	<p>to complete module assignments.</p> <p>This collaborative and inquiring attitude was further honed during the data collection phase of my action research. I had to abandon the idea of asking standard questions and anticipating expected responses and binary outcomes. As misconduct is a sensitive topic, with the guidance of the thesis supervisor, I learned to design reflexive questions that could draw out qualitative views and comments that could unveil the root causes of conduct issues and incentives for malpractices. I learned from the literature and analyses of the stakeholders' responses that no amount of rules and policies could stop misconduct. This suggested that sourcing for binary responses based on a compliance IA approach would not help me to arrest conduct risk. I urgently abandon my compliance mindset and practice reflexivity as the thesis supervisor repeatedly reminded me. I also helped the participating auditors to do the same. We critically analyze data with collaborative inquiries to draw out the different interpretations of auditees' responses and data trends that seemed to signal unusual activities and this enabled us to conduct the two field assignments successfully to see the impact of the reconfigured IA approach.</p> <p>As we reflected on our learning from the field assignments, we acknowledged that our compliance mindset had contributed to our failure in our governance role on conduct. Our compliance mindset was a roadblock to perceiving differently how we could arrest conduct risk, which is a key risk but not commonly attended to in a classical audit assignment.</p> <p>Having to do research that brings value to my organization called for a paradigmatic shift from what I had been doing, that is, bringing changes for economic efficiency and improving the financial bottom line.</p> <p>This change did not come easy or fast, as I had to be regularly</p>	<p>patterns and unusual practices. To draw out impactful outcomes from big data, I now reflexively analyze big chunks of data collaboratively with the auditors of the assignments that I supervise. Critical inquiry on data trends has been incorporated as a mandatory phase of conduct-related assignments. Outcomes of the inquiries are corroborated with relevant conduct policies, notes on interviews with auditees, auditees' performance reports, and disciplinary reports, if any. This is a notable change in our auditing approach which draws on my learning and the learning of auditors who participated in my action research.</p> <p>Working to publish my thesis provided a lot of opportunities for me to continue my interactions with my thesis supervisor, internal examiner (program director), and external examiner.</p> <p>Apart from sharing knowledge and their academic</p>

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Pre-DBA	DBA	Post-DBA
<p>operations of two merged financial institutions. I also spearheaded and implemented the in-sourcing of global markets transactions processing and settlements for all the Asia Pacific branches of an international bank. I was responsible for the regionalization of the internal audit function of another financial institution. Based on my CV, the recruitment consultant summed up my professional career as a "change enabler."</p>	<p>prompted by the thesis supervisor's questions and remarks on how to bring value to the organization with what I was doing in my action research. This questioning process focused me on a more important objective for my organization than improving its financial bottom line. Realistically, I did not bring visible change to the organization per se but through the action research, I was able to identify the problem of IA's failure to improve the organization's governance to arrest conduct risk. Interacting and learning with the thesis supervisor in our discussions on observations, analyses of auditees' responses, triangulation of data and preliminary outcomes, validating our differing views, etc., through the action research project changed my orientation of how the IA approach could be reconfigured to be effective for addressing conduct risk. All these seemingly academic discussions reshaped my thoughts about introducing and implementing changes in the organization. This is a change to me ("the change enabler"). I realized that the effectiveness of the reconfigured IA approach is dependent on auditors who also adopt an inquiring and reflexive mindset. As I conducted the two field assignments for the action research, I concurrently modeled reflexive questioning to the audit team so that they could apply the reconfigured IA approach as how it should be and not be ticking off checklists as they would do so with a compliance mindset.</p> <p>As a changed "change enabler" in an IA function, I helped the auditors who participated in my action research to better appreciate our governance role in the organization as the third line of defense, identifying conduct risk as the key risk underlying the commonly known risks—credit risk, market risk, operational risk, regulatory risk, etc.</p>	<p>experiences, they also share their lives and encourage me to learn from newly published literature. Receiving these multiple sources of knowledge is like drinking water from a spring with multiple jets. Their burning interests in bringing value to management and professional education ignite in me an interest to do likewise in my professional practice. I have recently accepted the invitation from the local chapter of the Institute of Internal Auditors to participate in the consultation project for the new draft of the IA standards for professional practices. I can reflexively review the standards and contribute to revising them as best practices for application in the Asia Pacific. Embarking on this consultation project with industry participants and coupled with learning from emerging knowledge from relevant literature will continue to change my thinking and perceptions of professional practice in an environment of accelerating changes. This will enable me to bring best practices (change) to the IA profession in the evolving marketplace. This is changing the changed "change enabler."</p> <p>The reflexive learning spirit in me constantly directs me to apply reflexive and collaborative inquiry in other areas. As observed by my co-interviewers in the workplace, I typically ask reflexive questions in recruitment interviews and consciously complement the other interviewers' questions (collaboration) to extract contents that are not featured in CVs or the candidates' verbal representations. This has helped us as an interview panel to pry beyond the superficial information to the candidates' motivation in making their job switches.</p>

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**Table 1. (continued)**

Pre-DBA	DBA	Post-DBA
		<p>Adopting a reflexive mindset and listening and learning orientation have transformed my management style in chairing meetings using questions as my agenda items as a means to elicit inputs from meeting participants. This is well-contrasted with the traditional management meeting approach wherein the chairman dominates the meeting with his/her instructions/perspectives (i.e., a "telling" style).</p> <p>In the first 2 years of the DBA program, I acquired theoretical knowledge from all the modules sequenced for the course work but I gained no understanding of what constitutes practicing reflexivity, except through the module on Action Research and Action Research Thesis, Doctoral Development Program, and the thesis journey. My understanding and practice of reflexivity are highly dependent on the module tutors' and thesis supervisor's conviction and practice of reflexivity. This demonstrates to me the cultivation of reflexivity starts with the person who intends to nurture the same in another person. With this conviction, I continue to be reflexive so that I can influence the IA team and those in the IA profession with the need to cultivate this attribute.</p>
<p><b>The "change enabler"</b></p>	<p><b>The changed "changer enabler"</b></p>	<p><b>Changing the changed "change enabler"</b></p>

Note. IA=internal auditing; DBA=Doctorate in Business Administration; CAL=critical action learning.

**Table 2.** RML in the RNoAFA.

At the RNoAFA, we have a particularly important principle. We start all classes, courses, and programs by investing time in establishing a safe learning environment. We challenge participants to share some degree of vulnerable experiences, for example, from lived stressful events or previous military service challenges, in order to stimulate the learning environment to greater openness, honesty, and psychological safety. Our experience is that this contributes to a rapid growth of trust in an environment that is otherwise often characterized by the drive for achievement and the toughness we find in such male-dominated environments as the military.

For first-year student regular groups, we use experienced supervisors who are responsible for the guidance of leadership development through exercises and cases. This leadership development is followed up with a lot of time set aside for reflection on practice. This often happens through training on a fixed debriefing concept (Holistic Debrief). In all exercises we carry out, we always have a stop/timeout in the “game” every day, preferably over several hours, where military skills are examined, reflected upon, and adjusted as needed, individual experiences are shared, communication and cooperation challenges in teams are reflected on and given feedback on, all with the intention of developing military leaders and teams.

Our experience over many years with this structured reflective approach is that sharing vulnerable experiences in regular groups has a self-reinforcing effect on cohesion, psychological security, and relational trust.

Another principle we use is *Hot Wash Up*. When a military exercise has been completed, we always end with a session where the participants can evaluate and offer any critical feedback on the implementation. We call this *Hot Wash Up*. This is important to do before we start the learning process. If someone carries frustrations or unresolved issues after completing an exercise with stress or physically tough challenges, it is very important to create this frustration release before we start the learning process. The alternative will be that these frustrations characterize the learning process and will prevent openness and willingness to see new learning perspectives.

Here are examples of what cadets express in bachelor theses, term papers, and the concluding “my leadership philosophy” when they are encouraged to write about their own development process.

**On the importance of reflection for dealing with stress:**

“RNoAFA places a lot of emphasis on debriefing as a learning tool and sets aside a lot of time for its implementation. The advantage of this is that it allows the cadet to extract more learning through reflection. In a stressful situation, cognitive functions will be limited, which makes it difficult to learn during the situation. Therefore, it is beneficial to set aside time after a situation/incident to go through what happened and reflect on why things happened and how to do it better next time. The reflection also serves as recovery after a stressful experience. It helps the body to process what has happened and to calm the mind and body so that one is ready for new assignments.” (Cadet in bachelor’s thesis 2021)

This quote exemplifies how theory (about stress), practice (experienced stressful situations), and reflection on one’s own response are integrated because individual and group reflection is systematically carried out after practical exercises.

**On reflection as a tool for understanding coherent processes in an organization:**

“The Air Force operates with a calculated risk of accidents with military aircraft. It is nevertheless important to carry out continuous work to improve safety and reduce risk in the Air Force. The incidents at Sola and Mosken (near miss accidents 2019 and 2020) showed that a number of human and organizational factors contributed to the situation developing. As Antonacpoulou points out through LiC, not two crises are the same. Mistakes and accidents usually happen due to a coincidence of various conditions that influence the assessments that are made (A & S, 2013). Learning through the LiC model is about being open to new information, learning and ways of interpreting and handling situations. Through reflection and dialogue around one’s own practice, one links the organisation’s learning circle to the practical process. Reflection is a way of understanding the relationships between the various processes in the squadron’s learning circle.

(continued)

**Table 2. (continued)**

Throughout the school years, students are encouraged to write their own reflections in a reflection book that they always take with them to various practice arenas. These reflections are again shared in groups with other students and you learn from each other's experiences and reflections.

The Air Force's safety culture—Just Culture—has a principle that states that if you make a mistake, unintentionally, it is absolutely crucial that you stand up and admit the mistake and share it so that others can learn from it, rather than hiding it. This means that one is not punished for an unintentional mistake, but rather recognized for admitting the mistake.

It is important to implement this culture during education. We therefore encourage students to test their limits and challenge their own imperfections with the aim of being able to learn from their own and others' mistakes.

Eventually, students become so used to these learning processes that it feels completely natural and expected that it is carried out in connection with practice arenas. As the skill of carrying out such reflection processes develops, the students are given more and more responsibility for leading these learning and reflective processes themselves. After all, they will be responsible for and lead such processes when they enter their jobs as military leaders after graduating from RNoAFA. In this way, this reflection and learning competence is gradually added to the Air Force as part of the organizational development.

In our experience this way of approaching leadership development—combining practice with open and honest reflection contributes to a much faster maturation process both as a person and as a leader. The reflections, about their own strengths and weaknesses, that young growing leaders express in our reflection practice often surpass the maturity that more mature and experienced leaders are able or willing to reflect on. It has often struck me how quickly these students grow on a human level and become responsible leaders with a high degree of human insight. This makes them better able to lead others based on an understanding of what people need to be met with when things are difficult, or relationships have gone awry—and that is primarily what we need leaders for.

In order to gain insight into these, continuous reflection is necessary. Through reflection on their own practice, the squadron as a whole and as well each individual can uncover discrepancies between what is practiced and what one actually wants to achieve." (Cadet in bachelor thesis 2021)

This exemplifies how experience with reflection and theory during the RNoAFA study is converted into value for the development of one's own organization after the study.

**Reflection on "My leadership philosophy" at the end of two years of study at the RNoAFA:**

"I think that the environment of a fighter squadron can be perceived as cynical and uninclusive to outsiders, but most people feel comfortable inside the environment. Group affiliation is high and we feel like "world champions." This has given me a good sense of togetherness, closeness and security, but at the same time I have felt a distance between the management and myself as a young pilot. It took a couple of years to be accepted by the experienced and I was afraid of not being good enough. Today I am one of the experienced ones and have probably been too poor to look after the youngest. Unfortunately, the focus has been on myself and I have probably been perceived as cold and cynical by others. I have received feedback on this from some of the younger people who have experienced fear in their first meeting with me. It was a strong signal to me when a young pilot told me that he was afraid of me when he came to the squadron. I want to do something about this in the future by being aware of how I am perceived by others. I see that it is important to give a first impression that shows that I am genuinely interested in the well-being of the youngest and not come off as creepy. This will be important in the future when I will be given more personal responsibility. I want to focus much more on looking after and developing my subordinates and less on my own professional skills." (Cadet in presentation of "my leadership philosophy")

This exemplifies how increased confidence through feedback and reflection on one's own point of view contributes to development and growth as a leader.

(continued)



**Table 2. (continued)****About the peer-support conversation as a tool for personal growth:**

“For a long period of time I had been troubled by memories of an incident that took place several years ago. The incident was something I had kept hidden from others and I judged myself for what had happened. This affected me and I was very depressed. After some time at the Air Force Academy, I found that I had to share this with someone and chose to tell my partner in a confidential peer-support conversation. The mate made me think about the incident from a different point of view. I was seen and understood in a way I couldn’t manage on my own. After this, a completely different process began and I was able to let go of the guilt I had been carrying. Holistic Debrief is a tool for, among other things, handling stressful incidents. It is an arena where challenges can be addressed and ideas tested. It provides good opportunities to learn from stressful events. In my case, a peer-support conversation with a safe buddy turned into a growth. Through my own experience and what I have learned about the concept of the Holistic Debrief, it will be easier to teach others. For me, a peer-support conversation, where negative thoughts were challenged by a trusting buddy, became breeding ground for constructive reflection which has contributed to increased self-esteem. This illustrates the importance of learning through reflection in a social community with others. The importance of vulnerability and trust in such relationships must also be emphasized. The insight and development this gave me I would not have come to on my own. (Cadet self-reflection in a term paper).

This quote exemplifies how important it is to build this vulnerable trust among the students in order to create a basis for personal growth.

Note. RML=reflexive management learning; RNoAFA=Royal Norwegian Airforce Academy.

Accounting profession to realize the impact of this analysis in supporting the IA profession to rethink the education and professionalization of Internal Auditors. By identifying through our research that the IA profession fosters learning practices that instigate a compliance mindset that may augment conduct risk, we now have recommendations that can help avert it, drawing on our collaborative research. Namely, we are proposing that the future education of IA professionals should foster a reflexive mindset. For us, the importance of this recommendation is not only the support it finds

in our research findings, but also for the difference it makes in identifying and addressing conduct risk in practice.

We recognize that we draw on our own experiences of practicing a reflexive mindset in the way our reflexive learning has catalyzed this capacity in our ongoing collaboration. In this respect, we are not only practicing what we preach. We embody reflexivity as a way of living and working, anchored by our learning. Reflexive learning, therefore, is emerging as our stance for how we choose to conduct ourselves not only in our collaboration, but also in our professional and personal life as individuals. Such emplacement reframes our reflexivity and our learning in service of a higher purpose—the common good—by bringing conduct risk to focus and joining forces in cocreating actionable knowledge that can address it.

### *RML in the Norwegian Defence*

We echo the same stance in the second example, where our focus is on RML in the Norwegian Defence. This is a typical research collaboration that initially started by codesigning a research study with the intent to capture the way the RNoAFA grows leaders and leadership in the officers and specialists in this branch of Norwegian Defence. Having pioneered the use of reflection alongside theory and practice as a central principle of their signature pedagogy, it has also supported, through this approach, the development of military leaders across the Norwegian Defence. It was important, therefore, to understand not only what the approach to growing leaders entails and how learners engage in RML to develop as leaders, but why reflexivity was so critical to leadership practice as well. Placed in the context of the venerable commitment to learning from failure and the changing nature of the military profession in peace (and not only in crisis and war) these conditions perforce entail the need to examine the process, content, and impact of growing leadership.

A qualitative case study approach underpinned the research design, supported by a combination of data collection methods including ongoing participant and nonparticipant observations, formal semistructured interviews, and ongoing informal conversations. These data methods were part of a six-year collaborative partnership between the RNoAFA and the GNOSIS Research Institute, founded on the commitment to cocreate knowledge for impact, a principle that guided the design of the study. The study was jointly shaped by two of the coauthors whose shared commitment to action research (Coghlan, 2011; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Marshall, 2016) also catalyzed abductive reasoning at all stages of the research process (Golden-Biddle, 2020; Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021).

An abductive orientation and action research-informed approach meant that academic and practitioner perspectives were interweaved, allowing us to observe and confirm patterns and anomalies without seeking closure. We sought in these patterns and anomalies episodes of creative social activity and allowed ourselves to live through the surprise, doubt, and possible exegesis these generated. This means that we maintained both inner and outer arcs of attention, engaging in self-critical observation of the ways concepts and practices are framed, interpreted, and felt in any given

situation as well as focusing externally, to observe what is going on and to question taken-for-granted assumptions and practices with others (Marshall, 2016). Such an “immersed reflexive” (Coghlan, 2011, p. 64) approach to research is not only interventionist by design but is also designed to support the noticing of how taken-for-granted ways of doing and perceiving can influence the choices made and the transparency of such choices. This means that we introduced an emplacement approach to our collaborative inquiry by taking a stance toward the process, content, and impact of knowledge cocreation (Figure 1). The cycles of action and reflection, and the reflexivity provoked by abduction, were intended to capture the approach adopted by the RNoAFA in growing leaders as well as to strengthen it, thus “generating content, process, and premise learning” (Coghlan, 2011, p. 62).

Such a process, otherwise acknowledged as a way to build theory by developing “new ways of seeing” (Bansal et al., 2018), uniquely embeds a reflexive gaze in the very process of studying why reflexivity matters and how RML is conducted. This characterizes “emplacement” (Pink, 2009)—a mode of research that always implicates the intertwined nature of sensual bodily presence and perceptual engagement of social, material, and environmental conditions shaping social practices and imperative in rewriting the story (Antonacopoulou, 2018).

In advancing practice-based studies, applications of emplacement (e.g., in entrepreneurship as practice; Antonacopoulou & Fuller, 2020) already pave the way for an ontology where subjects, objects, ideas, images, discourse, and practices give voice to the *place* of multiplicity in everyday life and from which disclosure is possible. Emplacement is not just about researchers embedding and collaborating with practitioners to understand and interpret accurately the issues in a given context. It is also about interbeing—when a reflexive gaze enables retaining the level of critique that notes the entanglements in the place leadership holds in a given moment. This is so that, beyond the occasion that marks leading, we also notice and account for its impacts, not all of which may be improvements in action, but revelations of human fallibility.

By living the experience with those we study, entangling ourselves in the epistemic and civic renewal (Sklaveniti & Steyaert, 2020), our methodological approach embedded reflexivity at all stages of the research process, enabling us to expose contradictions and tensions, as well as mark the extensions in the (positive) impacts we were seeking to generate. For example, this study was being conducted coincidentally at the time when the Norwegian Ministry of Defence launched a major modernization program across all branches of the Norwegian Military. This study became both entangled in this process of modernization and contributed to the transition by inducing reflexivity. From this entanglement, we were better placed to appreciate how our methodological approach (as a stance toward research practice as a collaborative inquiry) served to support systemic change, through shifts that were not necessarily paradigmatic but action and choice-based.

Reflexively accounting for our methodological approach is itself a mark of our reflexive learning and the recognition that the collaborative inquiry enriched our capacity to “see” the response to the modernization challenge. The fact that someone

standing on “the outside” is asking questions that led those of “us” in the RNoAFA to go deeper into WHAT *we* do, and HOW *we* do it, WHY *we* do what *we* do, is of great importance. In this way, *we* get to challenge and explore *our own* leadership development practice. The fact that this is done with skilled and knowledgeable researchers is very relevant because the exploration becomes wider and deeper. Through the interpretation and analysis of the researchers’ observations “we see ourselves in a different way,” and “we understand ourselves in a new and perhaps different way than we did before.” New ways of seeing ourselves become new ways of being, and our collaborations foster our interbeing in that our collaboration gives us new concepts, new vocabulary, and renewed motivation to carry on improving our actions through choices that also preserve our principles.

Table 2 presents the account of two RNoAFA educators (and coauthors of this paper) describing their stance toward leadership development and how this is also illustrated in the reflexivity exhibited by the cadets—learners they educate. What we explicate in this table is the way reflexive learning acts as a connecting tissue to not only align different participants within the RNoAFA but also enable the embeddedness of external learners (in this instance the scholar who initially embarked on the research collaboration) and then progressively the team of researchers—as conduits for bringing attention to issues. For us as a collaborative inquiry team of researchers, this attentiveness is not a matter of “issue selling,” as Lauche and Erez (2022) usefully explain relational dynamics in change processes. Instead, for us it is a means of activating the response that the modernization program was instigating. It was a mark of the collective responsibility to uphold pedagogical principles that the modernization program was threatening to undermine. By fostering ways of seeing the organizations’ practices, the underlying principles, and their consistency placed under closer scrutiny, this instigates a process of changing that is not as much a transition or a transformation, but a case of emplacement—taking a stance—as a critical aspect of RML.

This prompts us to suggest that in the collaborative inquiry, we account here, the key insight we derive is that despite the modernization of Norwegian Defence, which resulted in changes in the resource allocation and the education of future military leaders, the RNoAFA affirmed its stance toward its pedagogical practices and avowed the retention of core principles that define its unique approach of developing leaders and leadership. In other words, the reflexive learning at the heart of the collaborative research inquiry enhanced clarity and confidence in the existing practices and prompted adjusting to the modernization program by retaining and sustaining the educational principles and practices that continue to serve the development of leaders and leadership suitable for the military profession. By strengthening the resolve and stance taken toward the approach of growing leaders and leadership the collaborative inquiry strengthened the trust in the process already in place. It also prompted a further education exercise by engaging in dialogue with senior figures in the Norwegian Defence and the Ministry of Defence who were enforcing the changes. This did not only entail extending the study to include their perspective in the process of data collection. It also entailed invitations to “external players” to witness directly the educational practices and better appreciate why the current pedagogical principles were essential to

retain. By taking this stance, the RNoAFA navigated the modernization of Norwegian Defence by retaining those aspects of its pedagogical practice that mattered most to its capacity to continue to meaningfully serve its purpose. To arrive at this firm and “unnegotiable” stance necessitated support from the external researchers who delivered presentations at internal conferences, and organized workshops to bring the research team and other members of the Norwegian Defence together to debate the emerging findings from the study and their relevance in constructing the response to the modernization agenda.

In this respect, the reflexive learning embedded in (and by) the collaborative inquiry strengthened the ability to respond to the wider system change the modernization called for, by preserving that which would be essential to its effective implementation, taking a stance toward what matters most, to retain and honor the impact it has in growing leaders and leadership. In this sense, the impact of the RML in this example of collaborative inquiry was the realization of what matters and the conviction to fight that it be retained. This is not to suggest that there was no improvement in action and that keeping things as they are is what emerged. On the contrary, the emplacement that this impact marks is the defending of core principles. In other words, it is what Antonacopoulou (2022, p. 6) frames as an axiology in collaborative practice where “how we value ourselves, each other and the value we attribute to being worthy” marks the way values are emplaced, not only embodied. By honoring ourselves and each other we elevate the quality of trust that the collaborative relationship calls for, so that the inquiry can sustain the level of critique necessary to reveal issues that need to be attended to, engaged with, and addressed.

## **Discussion—RML as Changing Change**

Our analysis in this paper reveals both the importance of reflexive learning in collaborative inquiry as well as the character of such learning and reflexivity in terms of content, process, and impact (Figure 1). It is these three dimensions of RML that we discuss further in this section to inspire the design of future collaborative inquiries that foster not only change but the way changing is supported.

Our lived experiences of collaborative inquiry and their reflexive analysis highlight the importance of embedding reflexive practice in any inquiry but especially collaborative inquiry and in doing so approaching reflexivity through multiple dimensions, through which a stance can be generated that facilitates “impacting with” in changing change. Figure 1 illustrates diagrammatically these dimensions in our proposed RML framework. The dynamics of reflexivity in our RML framework call for an appreciation of an entangled approach to the process of learning through affordances and possibilities of reflexivity. It is in the character of the reflexivity itself and the connections between content, process, and impact that emplacement is also activated as the stance formed not only in the inquiry itself but also in the collaboration. Emplacement is a foundational element of a reflexive approach to collaborative inquiry because it invites collaborators to approach their collaboration and the quality of the relationship that underpins it with a stance toward the value of learning from each other, as Beech

et al. (2022) also promote. This is achieved through creating safety in vulnerability when learning that goes beyond recognizing, addressing, resolving, and forgiving occasional mistakes. Such a safety in vulnerability indicates that the quality of relationships among learners enables them to bring their whole selves into the learning process, open to being vulnerable with each other to see the other, and through the other to see themselves.

Beyond Beech et al.'s (2022) suggestion that partners collaborate "*as if*" (emphasis in the original) they have a "shared understanding," we make the case for emplacement as a dimension of collaborative inquiry where the reflexive learning goes beyond "paradox boxes." Instead, we invite working with tensions that could be afforded a place, in "figuring out" the stance that emerges as a guiding principle for the changes that can be afforded. As our own lived experiences exemplify, context remains an important dimension for reflexive learning. However, as our analysis marks the importance of emplacement, we feel that this also calls attention to the place and space in developing a reflexive approach in collaborative inquiry. This is why emplacement marks a positioning toward issues and affords practicing reflexive learning in ways that activate responsibility toward such issues. Taking a stance is more than a response to issues. It is a mark of the choices made based on the governing axiology which instills in reflexivity the conscientization toward changing and the learning necessary to make change possible. Choice, therefore, as a mark of stance-taking, affirms the entanglement in the system and explains systemic changes as a process, content, and impact of collective action, especially when supported by collaborative inquiry.

### *Implications for Practice*

Extending the insights from our analysis to support future collaborative inquiries, we suggest here that other practitioners and researchers can employ our framework, illustrated in Figure 1, to develop a multidimensional approach to RML in their collaborative inquiry that allows them to recognize the stance they take toward changing change. We offer some questions that explicitly harness the process, content, and impact embedded in reflexivity learning that could support collaborators to explore their hall of mirrors.

**Process Questions:** These questions focus on how the interactions between collaborators come about—that are the mechanisms used for reflexivity.

- Does reflexive learning emerge through writing, observation, participation, and discussion?
- How formalized is the inquiry process?
- Is the inquiry embedded in a structured program of collaboration, or does it occur through informal "corridor" discussions?
- Where is collaboration happening?
- What places and spaces are collaborators interacting within?
- How are participants feeling about their engagement?

- To what extent are they fully present?
- To what extent do they experience discomfort or dissonance?
- To what extent do they feel safe being vulnerable when learning with and from each other?

**Content Questions:** These questions focus on the topic or area of inquiry from a relational perspective.

- What entanglements (relationships, priorities, inequalities, and other social phenomena) are the focus of the collaboration, and how might these surface?
- How and why have specific issues emerged as the focus of the collaborative inquiry?
- What interactions have led to moments of “struckness”?
- What is the emplacement—stance formed—seeking to defend?
- What does emplacement seek to preserve?
- What is emplacement seeking to change?
- What principles form the underlying axiology of emerging emplacement?
- Are we ready to embrace the shifts that changing entails?
- What understandings have we (or should we) “let go”?
- How might we enhance resilience through the stance taken?

**Impact Questions:** These questions focus on how reflexivity fosters readiness for change, accounts for improvements of action in reconfiguring practices, and renewing purpose and focuses on what matters and strengthens resilience.

- What guides impact?
- How is the learning changing me/us and our ways of interrelating?
- What facilitates or obstructs our ability to impact *with* each other?
- What is our stance, and what does it mean for our capacity to shape change?
- How will we account for the impact of the improvements of action?
- What are we choosing and why?
- How do we experience and “label” shifts?

We distill as a key emerging insight from our lived experiences of collaborative inquiry the idea that RML is fostering shifts—modes of changing as part of a wider movement that entails progress, which can be marked by improvements and reconfigurations (as we illustrated in the Internal Audit example), or marked by affirming and retaining principles that serve well the governing axiology and purpose (as we illustrated in the Norwegian Defence example). Such shifts invite us to rethink RML not only marked by changes that are visible and reportable. Instead, it prompts attending to the unfolding changing invited by processes of reflexivity, alongside the content of such reflexivity, to consider the possibilities for the emerging impacts of practicing reflexivity. In this respect, RML is as much about the ways collaborative inquiry

supports interventions that are transformative both for the reconfigurations that it supports, as well as the affordances for changing that it nurtures.

Our analysis makes a compelling case for collaborative inquiry not only as a means for development and change initiatives as this special issue invites us to appreciate. We feel that our lived experiences of collaborative inquiry add substance to calls for creating practical knowledge about organizational change (Beer, 2021) and, in doing so, explain the “learning mechanisms that provide both a platform for integration of multiple perspectives, enabling discoveries, development of new mindsets and creation of new meaning” (Shani et al., 2022). More specifically, our RML framework invites future collaborative inquiries to more systematically account for the process, content, and impacts that the cocreation of actionable knowledge supports, by attesting to the stance that it also fosters.

We show in our analysis that a stance is not only a testament to the governing axiology of the collaborators and their collaboration. It is also an emplacement as a methodological approach that promotes the entanglement of collaborators in the inquiry as they individually and collectively “figure out” how to respond to wicked problems or grand challenges by assuming their responsibility and realizing their impact. It is about how the collaborators, and their inquiry invite, through their joined critique, the possibilities afforded in different situations, be it by reconfiguring current practice, or by affirming and preserving that which is unique, valued, and a key to sustained excellence, especially when serving their purpose. By introducing emplacement as a methodological orientation, we extend current approaches to cocreating actionable knowledge and provide fresh insights into the way collaborative inquiry advances science-practice transformations.

## Conclusion

In this paper, we presented autoethnographic accounts of our lived experiences of collaborative inquiry and illustrated both our reflexive learning and the value of practicing reflexivity in arresting change and changing in ourselves, our collaboration, our respective practices, and the wider systems we are part of. Perhaps more importantly, we have drawn attention to the change that is afforded when collaborative inquiry focuses on the process, content, and impacts of RML. By embedding RML as integral to the collaborative inquiry we exemplify the way collaborators “figure out” the emerging reality as they search and research together to address any given “research question” or identified wicked problem. By repositioning wicked problems as inquiry-driven research question(s), this invites collaborators to “meet” each other with trust in their vulnerability to experiment with learnings, so as to recognize, forgive, address, and resolve occasional mistakes of previous action choices.

By bringing the choices closer to focus, this radically shifts the emphasis of the collaborative inquiry on the stance that collaborators are invited to form toward issues. Such a stance is not only a mark of clarity of meaning and purpose, or a new mindset and understanding. It is a vantage point that allows disclosure, which promotes the emplacement of collaborators and their inquiry into the system that sustains the



issue at hand. It is only when the collaborative inquiry exposes that the issues are unsustainable that it also invites collaborators to inquire differently, so that, supported by their reflexive learning, they are afforded changes and modes of changing that propel them toward cocreating forward both their desired future, and also their stance toward changing.

As we have discovered in our own collaborative inquiry, such changing is as much about transforming as it is about growing, maturing, and standing up for what we stand for. Such an emplacement centers reflexivity beyond context, culture, and space, driven by the identity of location of collaborators. Instead, emplacement amplifies the inter-being of collaborators such that their inquiry is governed by an entangled approach to the process of learning and changing through affordances and possibilities of reflexivity, which we see as bringing about significant shifts. We invite future collaborative inquiries to explore and extend the proposed RML framework capturing dimensions of reflexive learning that an emplacement orientation to collaboration and inquiry will no doubt promote, provoke, and support.

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