



## Accessibility of Teaching Materials

Exploring Obtainability and Testing Usability  
in Design of Shareable Teaching Materials

Master of Science thesis in Learning and Leadership

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SEBASTIAN EVERETT ERIKSSON



MASTER'S THESIS 2018:NN

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## Abstract

For shareable teaching materials to work as intended, they need to be accessible to possible recipients. In this study, accessibility is defined as being obtainable and usable.

The obtainability aspect is primarily explored via literature study. The usability aspect is analyzed by testing of existing teaching materials. The methodology is inspired by usability testing methods found in computer science and IT.

Research questions created to be answered in this thesis are:

- RQ1: How can usability testing be used to improve the usability of teaching materials?
- RQ2: How can usability testing as a method be made accessible for teachers with limited experience of usability design?
- RQ3: What factors do teachers consider when deciding on how to use a teaching material?
- RQ4: From the perspective of a technological system, how can usability design for teaching materials be used to help teachers?

Keywords: usability, obtainability, teaching materials, accessibility, Kleindagarna, Steve Krug.



## Acknowledgements

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# 1

## Introduction

Teachers often design their own teaching materials. Many problems may appear when sharing these materials with each other, including: misunderstood abbreviations, unclear purpose and structure, and lack of adaptability that require time and resources for reworking the material.

Usability testing is a method used in software development to discover usability problems in a cheap, efficient and easy-to-do manner. As the usability testing proponent Krug proposes [KÄLLA], these tests can be used for other projects outside of software development. This study explores the use of usability tests in the context of teaching materials, and how it can be done effectively, even by teachers without previous knowledge of usability design.

### 1.1 Research Questions

More specifically, this study aims to answer the research questions below:

1. How can usability testing be adopted to improve the usability of teaching materials?
2. How can usability testing as a method be made accessible for teachers with limited experience of usability design?
3. What factors do teachers consider when deciding on how to use a teaching material?
4. From the perspective of a technological system, how can usability design for teaching materials be used to help teachers?

### 1.2 Background

[Kleindagarna, what more?]

### 1.2.1 Kleindagarna

To be able to test teaching materials, a teaching material must exist. For this study, all the teaching materials tested were created by a triannual three-day workshop called Kleindagarna. Kleindagarna is organized by the Swedish Committee for Mathematics Education (SKM), the Swedish National Committee for Mathematics (KVA), the Institute Mittag-Leffler and is funded by Brummer & Partners.

At this workshop, maths teachers from upper secondary school meet up with professors and maths teachers from universities and colleges at the Mittag-Leffler Institute outside Stockholm. During the workshop they collaborate to produce teaching materials in mathematics. These teaching materials are meant to be used for teaching upper secondary school, and often touch subjects that are not typically found in course literature.[SOURCE: [Kleindagarna.se](http://Kleindagarna.se)]



# 2

## Theory

### 2.1 Project types

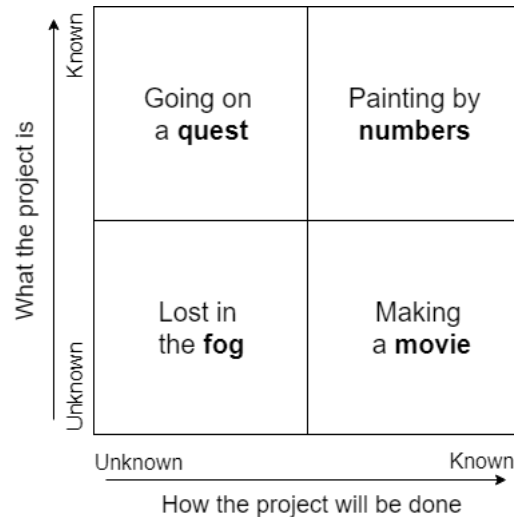
When working on a project, it can be advantageous to identify what kind of project it starts off as. One model put forward by Obeng describes four project types. This is roughly the same model presented by Dombkins, which itself is a revised version of a model made by Turner & Cochrane. Instead of labeling them Type 1-4 or Type A-D, Obeng made the labels descriptive.

The project types each answer yes or no to the two questions: *Is the project objective clear?* (or *Is it known WHAT the project is?*) and *Are the project methods clear?* (or *Is it known HOW the project will be done?*). [SOURCE: Putting strategy to work, 1996]

**Table 2.1:** Turner & Cochrane, Dombkins and Obeng described the same type of project differently.

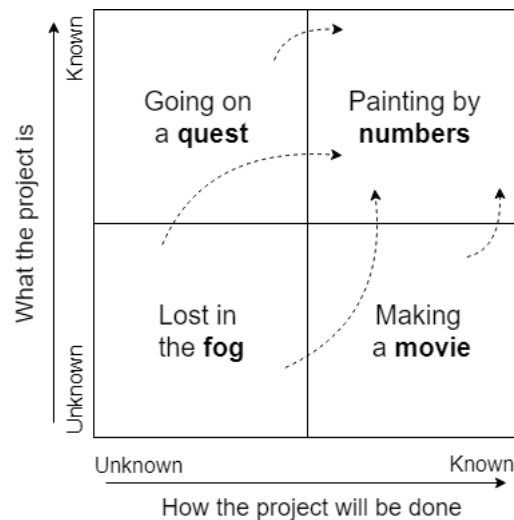
What	How	Turner & Cochrane	Dombkins	Obeng	Example project
yes	yes	Type 1	Type A	Painting by NUMBERS	Engineering
yes	no	Type 2	Type B	Going on a QUEST	Product development
no	yes	Type 3	Type C	Making a MOVIE	Application development
no	no	Type 4	Type D	Lost in a FOG	Research

Obeng visualized these projects with a 2-by-2 matrix. Although the types are categorical, the axes are continual. This means that a project can be represented by a point somewhere within the matrix.



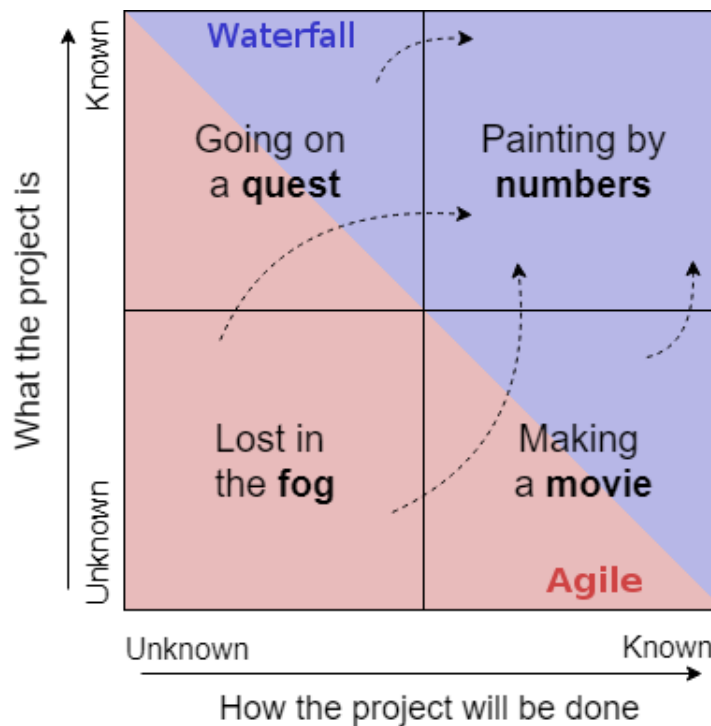
**Figure 2.1:** A redrawn illustration of Obeng's 4 project types.

Robert Buttrick took Obeng's matrix further, introducing arrows to visualize that projects can change type as they progress. This is done by defining previously unknown HOWs and/or WHATs. [SOURCE ISBN:9780273745273].



**Figure 2.2:** Projects usually resemble a NUMBERS-project more as they progress.

Depending on the type of project, Obeng suggests different approaches to progressing them. If the WHATs and the HOWs are known, it gets easier to estimate the cost, time and result of a project. Conversely, a project with more unknowns requires work before it starts to look promising. The work required before projects with many unknowns show promise can vary, which is why Obeng recommends that at least the initial processes of these projects should follow an agile (iterative and/or parallel) methodology. Generally, projects closer to FOG benefit from agile methodology and projects closer to NUMBERS benefit from waterfall (linear) methodology.



**Figure 2.3:** Projects closer to a NUMBERS-project benefit more from a waterfall methodology. Projects farther from a NUMBERS-project benefit more from agile methodology.

### 2.1.1 Types of teaching material projects

It can be argued that designing teaching materials can start off as any type of project.

One project may for example start with a set of inspirational resources, and the designer knows exactly what to add and what to remove to finish the project. The designer has a clear vision both concerning the WHATs and the HOWs of the project, making it a NUMBERS-project.

Another project may stem from a forced need of new teaching materials, because of a governmental decision to introduce programming in mathematics. The WHATs are somewhat known but if it is unknown how to reach these objectives, the project starts off as a QUEST-project. If this project would be riddled with more question marks, for example if it would be unclear what programming language (if any) should be used and on what level the programming should be taught, then the WHATs are less known and the problem would therefore start as a FOG-project.

Designing a teaching material as a MOVIE-project would be if the designer had all the skills (pedagogical, technological etc.) needed to create the teaching material, but did not know at the start of the project what content the teaching material should include or what objectives should be met.

### 2.1.2 Types when revising teaching material projects

When a teaching material has been created, more or less successfully, the teaching material can be used in a new project aiming to improve it. The teaching materials may not only change HOW the previous objectives are met, because it may sometimes prove beneficial to also change WHAT the objectives are. These projects therefore start as FOG-projects.

## 2.2 Franklin's theory: Technology as a system

Taken from the planning report.

Since it is not obvious what the implications of shared teaching materials could be, it is important to stay critical and discuss the effects of certain material designs during the study. A certain perspective that can be used is one by U. Franklin, in the book and lecture series *The Real World of Technology* (Franklin, 1990). In it, she discusses technology as a complex system:

“Technology is not the sum of the artifacts, of the wheels and gears, of the rails and electronic transmitters. Technology is a system. It entails far more than its individual material components. Technology involves organization, procedures, symbols, new words, equations, and, most of all, a mindset. [...] Personally, I much prefer to think in terms not of systems but of a web of interactions. This allows me to see how stresses on one thread affect all others. The image also acknowledges the inherent strength of a web and recognizes the existence of patterns and designs.”

- Franklin, 1990, pages 16 and 95.

Since teaching materials encompass both a way of working and artifacts, they can be viewed as a technology, as defined by Franklin. As such, they affect how a teacher does their work in complex ways. For example, as Franklin also notes, materials can be used both to assist teachers in their lesson design, or to make them comply to certain standards and control structures. Therefore, it becomes important to consider effects on the teacher's work as a whole, instead of limiting the analysis to a specific lesson.

## 2.3 Krug's theory: What is usability, and how do you test it?

Steve Krug is a usability consultant who wrote books about usability. His usability books are mainly focused on websites, but as he writes himself, his methods are applicable on other things as well.

Krug defines his first law of usability as *“Don't make me think!”*, implying that users

should understand what a website is and how to use it without expending any effort thinking about it:

“A person of average (or even below average) ability and experience can figure out how to use the thing to accomplish something without it being more trouble than it’s worth.” [SOURCE: DON’T MAKE ME THINK REVISITED, p.9]

Aside from a few principles of usability, Krug puts a lot of effort into describing the usefulness of usability testing and how to do such testing in a cheap and easy manner. In his book specifically about usability testing, he defines such tests as:

“Watching people try to use what you’re creating/designing/building (or something you’ve already created/designed/built), with the intention of (a) making it easier for people to use or (b) proving that it is easy to use.”

Or, in simpler terms:

“A facilitator sits in a room with the participant, gives him[/her] some tasks to do, and asks him[/her] to think out loud while he[/she] does them.”

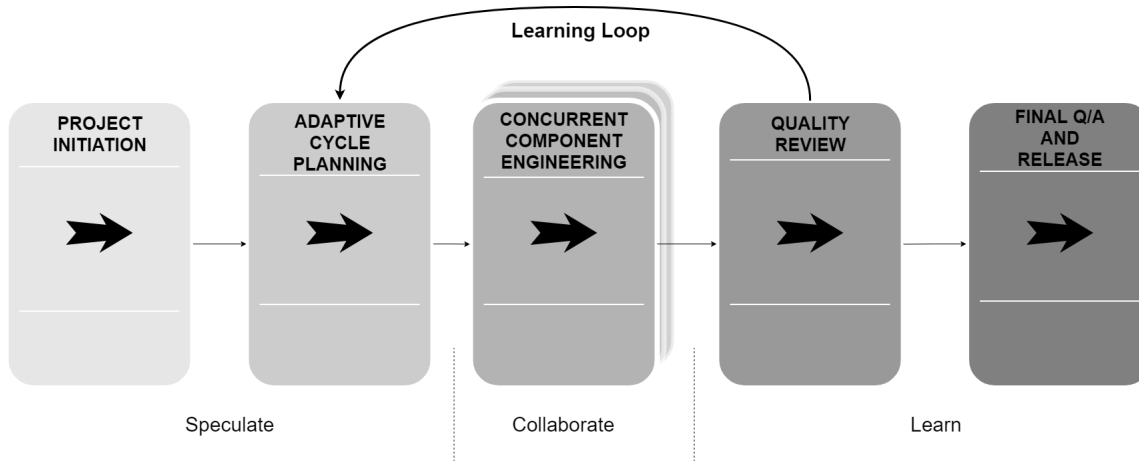
### 2.3.1 Making usability testing scientific

One important difference between Krug’s method and the method used in this thesis is that Krug’s focus is not to be scientific, but to merely improve what one is building [SOURCE: ROCKET SURGERY MADE EASY]. Thus, certain parts of his method have been adapted to make it easier to analyze:

1. In contrast to Krug’s method, the tasks in the tests are not altered mid-test. This makes them more comparable.
2. There is more data gathering involved in the form of recordings and notes, rather than having a group of observers watching the test, to make analysis and comparison easier long after the tests have been conducted.

### 2.3.2 Connecting usability theory for websites to teaching materials

One can argue that there is a large difference between teaching materials and websites. While in some cases these can be the same, such as online materials shared through a blog post, a teaching material can sometimes take the form of a book, a single PDF file, and more. All the materials have in common is that they are used to facilitate and/or empower a teacher’s work. However, usability testing is still clearly applicable in the sense that it consists of observing someone using what you



**Figure 2.4:** A redrawn illustration of the ASD model

are testing.

Since teaching materials can be used in many different ways, the use case had to be narrowed down. Thus, in this thesis, the use case that the usability tests cover consist mainly of how teachers use teaching materials to plan their lessons. This does not mean that other use cases are ignored, such as a teacher simply using a material to learn more about a subject. However, the lesson planning is the main focus of the usability testing in this thesis.

## 2.4 Adaptive Software Development

The main method of collecting data for this study consisted of a process inspired by Adaptive Software Development (ASD). This method involves iterative development with strengths that fit this study, such as being flexible and low risk. This can for example mean that new information can be easily adopted in future tests and that results can be delivered even if test subjects decide to terminate involvement in this study early. (Sommerville, 2016)

ASD is an antecedent to Agile Software Development, paving the way for popular project management methodologies such as Scrum and Kanban. The methodology for this study has no need of being as complex as Scrum or Kanban, one of the main reasons being the relative small size of the development team (i.e. the two authors of this paper), whereas for example the Scrum model is generally used by splitting a larger workforce in teams of 3 to 9. (Schwaber, 2004)

As can be seen in Figure 2.4 ASD consists of three stages with a feedback loop, enabling developers to perform multiple iterations of improvement based on what they learn from users. This model is similar to the methodology that was developed in this study to collect data on usability of teaching materials. (Highsmith, 2000, p.84)

# 3

## Methods

When discussing *accessibility* of a teaching material, in this study, it has been separated into two aspects: *obtainability* and *usability*. A method was developed for collecting usability data, but to accomodate for collecting obtainability data, this method was slightly modified when implementing it. The following methodology describes the foundation of the methodology used in this study, as well as a methodology one can use when revising their own shareable teaching material.

### 3.1 The KRUT-methodology

While deciding on the aim of this study, a new methodology was developed for usability testing. The methodology was named KRUT, from the processes involved; **K**ick-off meeting, **R**evising material, **U**sability **T**esting. Developing KRUT helped clarify what the study did and did not aim to investigate and how that was expected to play out. As with ASD, KRUT includes a learning loop. The main purpose of KRUT is to use data collected by usability testing a teaching material to revise said material. Usability testing fills two roles; **identifying *satisfactory* usability** as well as **identifying *potential gains in* usability**. KRUT also describes the roles of the different actors, based on the current stage of the testing phase. It is designed with a team of two and a single subject group in mind. The KRUT-methodology is described in Figure 3.1.

#### Comparing ASD to KRUT

There are both similarities and differences when comparing KRUT to the ASD methodology presented in Figure 2.4.

The **Kick Off Meeting** used to introduce one or more teachers to the study, as well as deciding on a teaching material to work on and a date for the first usability test, is comparable to the ***Project Initiation*** of ASD, being prior to the steps contained inside the ***Learning Loop***.

What in the ASD methodology is called ***Adaptive Cycle Planning*** is the initial

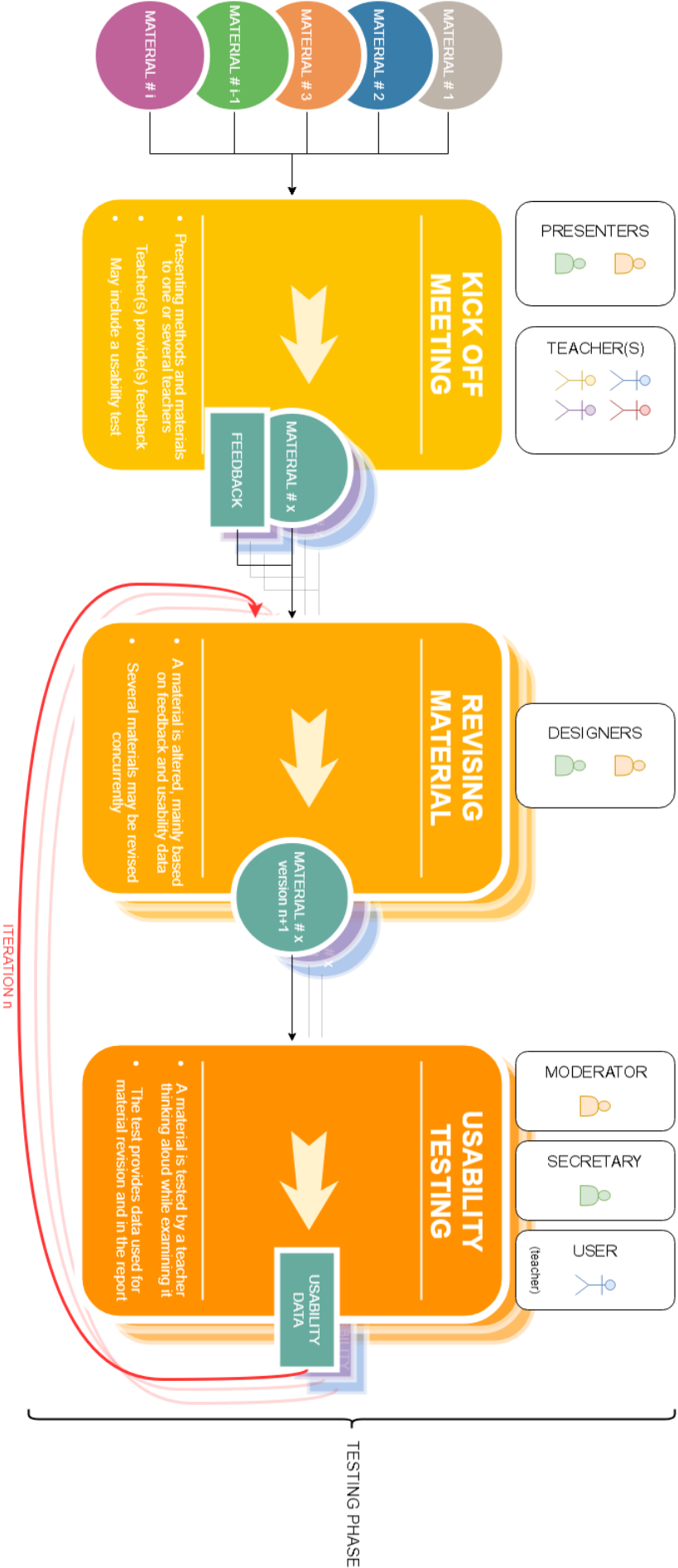


Figure 3.1: The custom KRUT-methodology, created for usability testing teaching materials



step of the **Revising Material** stage, deciding on how to rework the teaching material based on the data collected from a **Kick Off Meeting** or previous **Usability Test**. This is inevitably one of the stages where collected data is summarized and analyzed, even if just as a thought process.

The ***Concurrent Component Engineering*** part of ASD is practically the same as the **Revising Material** stage. This is where a coder would revise the code of the program and this is likewise where the product, the teaching material, is being worked on with the intent of improving its usability.

What is called ***Quality Review*** in ASD is the **Usability Testing** part of KRUT. This is where the teaching material is tested on a teacher and the data needed to improve the usability of the teaching material is collected. The method used to test usability is based on Steve Krug's script for usability testing websites. Because a teaching material is quite different from a website, oftentimes focusing on interactivity, the script could not be used without some changes. There is however some important aspects of Steve Krug's script, e.g. not asking leading questions, that is of great importance to the quality of the data and thereby the quality of future revisions of the teaching material. (Krug, 2009)

The end goal of ASD is called ***Final QA and Release***. In the case of KRUT, this step has been reduced. Its original intent is to finalize a product, whereas KRUT defines every revision as an equally valid product, even though the latest revision would theoretically be the most desired.

### 3.1.1 Implementation of KRUT

Test subjects consisted of individual teachers and teacher students, instead of a team (or teams) of teachers, as would have been desired. Because of this, and to collect more data concerning the obtainability aspect, each usability tests began with a stripped down version of a Kick Off Meeting. This meant that the subject was able to choose from a detailed list what teaching material they wanted to use for their usability test. This list was compiled specifically for this study and consisted of sample teaching materials produced at Kleindagarna. This was done as a compromise between delimiting the study and offering teaching materials that felt relevant to the teachers. Even though KRUT was designed to be implemented by a team of two, there were no severe difficulties in executing KRUT when the team at times was forced to only one member.

mention Kleindagarna earlier or describe more here. /H

When revising material, the decisions of what to revise when is determined by a combination of data from usability tests and by studying literature. There may have been instances where a teacher's assumptions of how the next revision will look have been unmet. These cases need to be analyzed and mentioned in the final report, as they may lead to interesting discussions. If for example a revision is made following a certain pedagogic template, and the resulting material makes the test subject less inclined to use it on a lesson, new conclusions can possibly be drawn

The later part of this paragraph brings up something we don't do. /H

about accessibility of designing teaching materials.

#### **3.1.2 Test subject anonymity**

There are several ways of presenting the personal details of test subjects in scientific studies. In this study some personal details have been disclosed and some have been held anonymous. What is disclosed and examples of what is held anonymous are listed below.

##### **Disclosed information**

- Age – rounded to nearest 5 years.
- Current status – if the test subject is currently working as a teacher and if so on what stage of education, or if they are e.g. studying to become a teacher.
- Years in teaching – nearest year if under 10 years, can otherwise be rounded to nearest 5 years. No regard to the age of students taught. No regard to full-time or part-time employment.
- Subjects – what school subjects is the test subject certified to teach or studying to teach?

##### **Anonymous information**

- Sex/Gender – the risk of a reader finding false correlations from the data is assumed to be greater if the test subject's sex and/or gender is disclosed.
- Name – the name of the test subjects will not be disclosed, and because the sex/gender will not either, the label of the test subjects will also be as gender free as possible.
- Name of school – with this information, it would be too easy to identify the test subject.
- Place of school – all subjects studied will live and work in close proximity to Gothenburg, Sweden, as it has been decided to delimit the tests to personal meetings.

# 4

## Results

Results can be presented in different ways. One way would be to describe the usability tests in detail, and another way would be to only summarize the results in table. By describing all usability tests in detail, it would be hard to get a good overall view of the findings. Focusing more on something also means focusing less on something else, and there are other parts of the documentation that deserve that attention more. It would therefore not be ideal to do lengthy elaborations on each teaching material. On the flip side, only giving a summary on the findings would leave out describing the crucial process. The process mainly includes:

1. Performing a usability test
2. Identifying what can be learned from the data
3. Figuring out how the particular teaching material can be improved from the data
4. Revising the teaching material (preferably in an effective manner)

The ideal way of delivering the results should entail a compromise between these two extremes. The finding has therefore been divided into a sample case and a summary. The sample case describes a teaching material thoroughly, delving into details of the process and findings, exemplifying the usability testing process.

By results, do we limit ourselves to the usability tests? If not we need to change this opening text. /H

## 4.1 Summary of usability test results

**Table 4.1:** Summary of all usability tests of the study

Codename	Date for test	Material that was tested	Test subject
A1	2018-04-24	Mönster och talföljder - Pascals triangel ur slantsingling	A30T2
B1	2018-04-30	Nätverk - insamling av data	B25S
C1	2018-05-03	Vad ska lotten kosta?	C37T3
D1	2018-05-09	Konsten att bestämma arean	D33T6
E1	2018-05-09	Område statistik	E38T4
F1	2018-05-14	Modellering	F50T30
F2	2018-05-14	Nätverk - insamling av data	F50T30
G1	2018-05-24	Mönster och talföljder - Pascals triangel ur slantsingling	G26T2
G2	2018-05-24	Den dolda och tvetydiga matematiken	G26T2
H1	2018-05-30	Den dolda och tvetydiga matematiken	H27S1
I1	2018-06-12	Den dolda och tvetydiga matematiken	I30T1

## 4.2 Sample case 1. Kleinmaterial: Nätverk

Each teaching material tested has a different story to tell. Keep in mind that some of the content of the steps below are common to all teaching materials tested, while some are specific to the particular teaching material.

### 4.2.1 The preexisting work

The sample teaching material was produced by a team at Kleindagarna. These consisted of a handful of teachers, a subject expert and a Klein-representative. When the workshop at Kleindagarna was over, the teaching material was published on Kleindagarna's website.

### 4.2.2 Usability test I

The first usability test was performed by one of the authors of this report on the other author. As this was the second ever usability test performed, the intention was primarily to identify what to take into account for future usability testing and to identify the possibility of improving the usability testing methodology. The method consisted of following a script document on a computer including:

- A table made to be filled with personal information

- A list of keywords and questions (manuscript) inspired by the usability test script created by Steve Krug.

Results from this test included:

- Unclear if some tasks were meant to be executed by teacher or students.
- The material expected the teacher to be very familiar with the subject, tackling advanced areas of mathematics with mostly bullet points, expecting the teacher to provide the explanation.
- There was a concern on the material having too large scope. The material includes network theory, statistics, algorithms and data protection laws (GDPR), and aims to both explain and problematize all of these aspects.

### 4.2.3 Revision of methodology

After usability testing the teaching material, the authors identified that there was very limited information presented in the list of teaching materials on Kleindagarna's website. This made it difficult for the curious to know if the material was suitable for them. Because of that, a new list of teaching materials was compiled. This consisted of information not just what the subject of the material was, but also for what grade it was suited and a more detailed description of the teaching material. After the usability test, a discussion arose on what type of material the revisions would be. Two suggested possibilities were documents (i.e. pdf- or odt-files) and presentations (e.g. pptx-files). A document would have the strength of being easily skimmed and modified. A presentation would have the strength of being a ready-made lesson material, with the potential of not requiring as much planning time. The discussion culminated in the decision to choose type on a case-by-case basis. Some factors to take into account when deciding on the type would be: results from usability tests, perceived intent of original creators and what form would be most suited for the particular teaching material.

### 4.2.4 Watching the Klein-lecture

Before designing a teaching material, the participators on Kleindagarna receive a lecture by the subject-expert. This lecture was recorded and confidentially shared online. Before revising the material, it was decided that it would be beneficial to watch this lecture, to learn more about the theory the material was based upon and what the creators intended the students would learn.

### 4.2.5 Usability test II

The same revision was tested again. The test subject this time was a Klein-representative that had been involved in the creation of the original teaching material. Testing teaching materials on a subject that was not a teacher in upper-secondary-school or a teacher student aiming to teach at upper-secondary-school was not the norm. One purpose of this was to analyze how rewarding usability testing non-intended subject could be. The test subject is also teaching mathematics on an upper-secondary-school level, but to post-secondary school students (one additional difference is that the pace of the courses are comparably higher than in upper-secondary-school). Results from this test included:

- The teaching material wasn't considered complete by the creators.
- The biggest remaining problem of the material design lies in a student activity where the class are to compile data to create a network. To be able to make the network and its analysis meaningful, it was suggested that the compiled data should be personal and able to lead to a finding. Ultimately, the activity asks for generated data, instead of personal, more valuable data. The reason for this is because no conceivable alternative could eliminate the risk that personal data could result in undesirable findings. For example if the data collected answers what students had lunch together, outcasts are visible in the finding.

### 4.2.6 Revision of teaching material

From the data collected, the following revisions were made: A decision was made to revise the material in the form of a presentation, with the aim to offer a ready-made presentation with enough explanation of the required theory to be a desirable product. To realize this, changes were made to the structure and to content.

#### Structural changes

- The separation of information to the teacher and the main presentation was improved by implementing tabs similar to how many websites function. This also clarified the structure to the user, enabling the user to quickly get an overview of the structure.
- The presentation's first slides contains useful information targeted to a curious teacher including how to read the important presentation notes (as these consists of teacher instructions and explanations).

## Content changes

- As mentioned previously, the presentation contains teacher instructions and explanations in the form of presentation notes. These can be printed or read in the presentation program, and also viewed while presenting. This was previously missing from the teacher material, or carelessly intertwined with content that seemed to be aimed to students.
- Activities were altered to be either less vague or more closely tied to what the students are expected to learn.
- The content was modified to be easily understood and conveyed. An example of this was replacing the headings so that they describe their respective slide, instead of being named after the current 5E-phase.

### 4.2.7 What was learned from this case?

From this particular case, the following knowledge was obtained:

- Someone involved in the creation of a teaching material can have a very different experience and connection to the teaching material than what is conveyed to a reader. Maybe there is a part the creator is not satisfied with, but the reader might assume it is meant to be complete and only understand it as poorly made. This exemplifies the flaws of one-way communication.
- There needs to be a decision on how the teaching material is presented and what it aims to be. It can be everything from inspiring reading material to a documentary.

## 4.3 Sample case 2. Kleinmaterial: Vanliga missuppfattningar

### 4.3.1 The preexisting work

Just like the Sample case 1, the sample teaching material was produced by a team at Kleindagarna. See Sample case 1, section [REFERENS: Sample case 1], for more information.

The material was about common misconceptions in mathematics. It had a list of exercises in the beginning and a list of correct answers in the end. In between these lists, it had a lesson plan. One of the main points of the material was to categorize different mathematical exercises as "beräkning" (calculation), "förenkling" (simplification), and "ekvationslösning" (equation solving).

[FIGURE: MATERIAL ZOOMED OUT] [REFERENCE: MATERIAL APPENDIX]

### 4.3.2 Usability tests and problems found

There were three relatively similar usability tests done on this material. All test subjects were studying for a Swedish high school teaching degree. [MORE?]

The tests revealed that the material had some problems with structure and explaining what the exercises were supposed to teach. All subjects understood the main points of the material eventually, but it took them a while to do so. In order of the tests done, these problems were found:

- In test G2, the meaning of the different categories were unclear at first. The test subject first thought the exercises were examples of solutions rather than exercises. The subject also expressed that it took a lot of scrolling up and down to connect the first list with the lesson plan.
- The test subject in test H1 expressed directly that they wanted a written purpose, connection to the curriculum, and time estimations. They expressed a need for more descriptions in general since the material was lacking an introduction or background, though they didn't want too much text either.
- In test I1, the test subject scanned the text up and down more compared to the previous tests, rather than reading it from top to bottom. This time, it took even longer for the subject to understand the material. This revealed a possible problem with the material's adaption to scanning. For example, the material had headings called things such as "Part A" and "B:2", which didn't explain what the different parts were about. Furthermore, starting the material with a list might have meant that the subject did not know where to start reading, similarly to what happened in tests G2 and H1.

### 4.3.3 Lessons learned

Since three test subjects chose to test this material and revision, it proved to be a good chance to study how different subjects react to the same material. According to Krug [KÄLLA], testing the same thing several times tends to reveal the same problems, aside from a couple of differences. This was found to be the case with this material; the unclear structure and lack of introduction was prominent in all tests, but the subjects read the material differently. While in G2 and H1 the subjects read the material more in-depth, in I1 they used more of a scanning approach. This likely affected their abilities to understand the material. The most important lesson gained from this, however, was that test subjects do read the same material in different ways, possibly due to different reading habits in general. This is further strengthened by another test, D1, in which the teacher tended to read everything top-to-bottom and in-depth directly, including the list of materials.



Interestingly, despite complaining about the material's clarity, all test subjects found a way that they could hypothetically use the material in a lesson, and two of them expressed positive thoughts about the material. More specifically, H1 said that the material was "fun, with a lot of interactive parts" and "you can cut out [the exercises] and hold the lesson directly, which is good." In G2, the subject said that the material "feels very fun and doable", and "a fun way for the students to get a bit of a [habit]." This might point toward that a material which is difficult to understand still can be useful, if the rest of its content is good and relevant enough.

## 4.4 The materials list

The original list of materials was remade and revised continuously after feedback from the usability tests. It proved useful as a way to study how the teachers picked their materials, and what information they want when doing so.

[Blah more intro blah]

## 4.4.1 Revisions of the materials list

**Lektioner**

Här finns lektionsmaterial som utvecklats under tidigare Kleindagar.  
Och mer kommer allt eftersom fler lektioner utvecklas. Använd och sprid gärna!

Kleinföreläsare	Ämne	Lektionspiloter	Lektion
Torsten Ekedahl	Algebra	Kerstin Pettersson och Anny Markussen	<a href="#">Lektion</a>
Magnus Fontes	Modellering	Christer Bergsten och Peter Berggren	<a href="#">Lektion</a>
Axel Hultman	Kombinatorik	Samuel Bengmark och Elisabeth Samuelsson	<a href="#">Lektion</a>
Torbjörn Lundh	Differentiallekvationer	Ola Helenius och Torbjörn Jansson	Saknas
Jana Madjarova	<a href="#">Geometri</a>	Samuel Bengmark och Roger Willför	<a href="#">Lektion</a>

2012

Kleinföreläsare	Ämne	Lektionspiloter	Lektion
Veronica Crispin Quiñonez	<a href="#">Abstrakt algebra</a>	Samuel Bengmark och Åsa Ek	<a href="#">Lektion</a>

**Figure 4.1:** The original list of materials on Kleindagarna's official website [SOURCE].

Note that the design of Kleindagarna's list of materials changed in the middle of the thesis. Most of the information in the list remained the same, but colors and fonts changed. A screenshot of the list before Kleindagarna's change wasn't made and thus the exact changes were lost. The first and second thesis-revisions of the list were made before Kleindagarna made changes to their list.

## Material från Kleindagarna

### Lektionsplaneringar med nya matteperspektiv

Titel	Beskrivning	Relevant(a) gymnasiekurs(er)	Koppling till ämnesplan	Länk
Primtal och kryptering	Beskriver några metoder för att hitta primtal och hur de kan användas i kryptering.	Ma 1b, 1c och 5	Taluppfattning, aritmetik och algebra: primtal, potenser med heltalsexponenter, strategier för användning av digitala verktyg. Innehåller övningsuppgifter.	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Modellering	Eleverna får skapa en modell som mäter hur mycket som går åt av ett stift på en penna per millimeter streck som ritas.	Ma 1b, 1c och 2a	Matematisk modellering	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Ramseytal	Eleverna får lära sig om begreppen permutation och kombination genom något som kallas Ramseytal. Innehåller blad som kan delas ut till eleverna.	Ma 5	Permutation och kombination, grafer och grafteoretiska problem.	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Geometri: Definition, sats och bevis	Eleverna får ställa upp sig på ett sätt så att de bildar en mittpunktsnormal. Sedan får de formulera hypotes och bevis, och fördjupa sig i ämnet med fler geometriska problem.	Ma 1b och 1c		<a href="#">PDF</a>
Operationer: Associativitet och kommutativitet	Undersöker ifall operationer är associativa och/eller kommutativa.			<a href="#">PDF</a>
Område statistik	Går igenom statistiska begrepp genom att låta eleverna rita streck utan att prata med varandra, och efteråt analysera strecklängderna.	Ma 2b och 2c	Statistik, beräkning av lägesmått och spridningsmått mm., normalfördelning.	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Randvinkelsatsen	Går igenom randvinkelsatsen laborativt.	Ma 2b och 2c	Geometri, randvinkelsatsen.	<a href="#">PDF</a>
Den dolda och tvetydiga matematiken	Går igenom vanliga missuppfattningar i algebran och aritmetiken.	Ma 1 och 2	Aritmetik och algebra.	<a href="#">PDF</a>
	Utforskar hur en mäter längd, area och			

**Figure 4.2:** The second revision of the list of materials, based on Kleindagarna's original [FIGURE REFERENCE?].

Comparing the original list with the revised list, a couple of things were changed:

- A tagline was added under the title: "Lektionsplaneringar med nya matteperspektiv" in Swedish, or "Lesson plans with new mathematical perspectives" in English. This was meant to change the expectations of the teachers looking through the list, so they knew the materials were about mathematics, and that they had innovative perspectives on mathematics rather than remaking typical maths lesson materials.
- A description was added for every material due to teachers expressing during the tests that they wanted to know more about the material they were going to choose. The descriptions were originally taken directly from the materials and slightly reworked, leading to some materials lacking a description due to not having one in the material itself. This further lead to teachers ignoring the materials that were lacking a description during some tests. Thus, descriptions were added to all the materials.
- The "Lektionspiloter" and "Kleinföreläsare" parts of the list were removed since few of the test subjects would understand what it was or know the people by

name, and more space was needed for other information.

- "Relevant(a) gymnasiekurs(er)", in English "Relevant secondary school course(s)", were added due to them existing in most of the materials themselves, and thus easily added into the list. Likewise, "Koppling till ämnesplan", "Connection to the subject curriculum" in English, was added in the same way, also replacing "Ämne" in the original list..
- A title was added to every material in the list to make the materials more scannable instead of having to read the whole description to understand the general idea of the material.

### 4.4.2 Results from studying how teachers chose their materials

Studying how the teachers chose one material from the materials list generated a few findings that might point toward how teachers choose materials in general. This is relevant for discussing obtainability later in the report.

One common finding was that the teachers want to know what type of material they are picking. For example, they want to know whether the material is a practical lab kind of lesson, or if it's a more common combination of lecture and exercises. Information about the material's connection to the curriculum, and what courses it can be used in, was also appreciated by the test subjects.

Another finding was that teachers looked for materials that connected to what they were teaching at the moment. For example, in test E1, the teacher chose the statistics material to get some perspective on what they had taught recently. This is important to consider in the case of innovative or different materials, since teachers might ignore such materials in favor of those that connect more strongly to their teaching curriculum.

Important to note about these findings is that the teachers were told to choose one material per test, without opening it. Thus, they didn't learn anything about the materials other than what was shown in the list of materials. This is different from reality, since if a teacher would visit a website containing several materials, they would be able to open each of them and look them over before picking one that they'd use in a lesson. However, the findings in this study might still be useful for getting some pointers in what teachers are looking for in a material, and what they want to know about it.

## 4.5 General perspective: Things that were learned from all the usability tests

The previous usability test cases in this chapter described how results were produced from a couple of specific tests. In a similar manner, more results were produced by going through the tests one by one and summarizing the findings from a holistic perspective - in other words, by comparing the tests next to each other. Below are some findings from this general analysis.

### 4.5.1 Comparisons between the teachers' typical lessons

As described earlier [REFERENS? GÖR VI DETTA I METODKAPITLET?], part of the usability test consisted of asking the teachers what their typical lesson looked like. Here are some comparisons between these typical lessons.

- Pretty much every teacher used a combination of lectures in group and individual student exercises, even if their lesson lengths and structures were different. [...FÖRSLÄTT?]

### 4.5.2 Making the material intuitive for different behaviours is important

Because of the difference in how teachers read a material, where one might instantly read the material in-depth and the other might just scroll down while scanning it, having a material be intuitive at first glance is a good thing. Some materials took the teachers a while to understand, which could have been rectified through a more clear structure and by following typical patterns that the teachers are used to. One pattern that was asked for directly in two of the usability tests [REFERENSER: UBH,UBI] was to have an introductory text, which was lacking for the specific material that was tested. At the same time, in one of the tests [REFERENS: UBA] the teacher completely ignored the introduction to make sense of the material's content by itself. In either case, the material should ideally be clear to understand for both types of material reading behaviours.

### 4.5.3 Having student handouts as part of a material is appreciated

All materials didn't have parts that could be handed out to students, such as a list of exercises. However, many teachers seemed to appreciate such "handouts", or ask for them when they were missing. For example, one teacher wanted a handout for the student that explained a difficult word that they hadn't encountered before

[REFERENS: UBD]. Another teacher said that they could use a list of exercises by itself without following the exact lesson plan [REFERENS: I1], which shows that exercises as a part of a material can improve the adaptability of the material. In contrast to this, one teacher expressed that materials can also work as a source of inspiration rather than something concrete and finished as a handout or a finished lesson plan. An important aspect of both of these materials, the "concrete handout" and the "source of inspiration", is the amount of work that these different types require for adaption into a real lesson: The handout can be printed and handed out directly, while the inspiration has to be reworked into a new material.

### 4.5.4 Accounting for teachers' and students' previous knowledge

A common problem among many materials was the teacher's lack of previous knowledge about the subject that the material presented. The most common and concrete problem that appeared was when new vocabulary was used, such as RSA [REFERENS: UBC,UBH] and Dido's problem [REFERENS: UBH]. There was also an issue with one teacher not feeling competent enough to teach a subject that a material covers [REFERENS: UBE]. In contrast, another teacher expressed that a material could be explored together with the students when the teacher didn't know everything about it either [REFERENS: UBC]. Similarly, some materials seemed too difficult for certain teachers to use due to their students' lack of previous knowledge [REFERENS: UBD,UBE].

### 4.5.5 Finding common usability problems

In every test, at least one unclear explanation or structure, unanswered question, or other smaller, easily rectified usability problem was found. Thus, the usability tests proved effective in finding these problems. Examples of the problems found include:

- No clear explanation about what part the student should do and what part the teacher should do during a lesson.
- A lack of description of the axes in a diagram.
- Mixed use of comma (,) and dot (.) as decimal separator.
- An undefined word that needed explanation (Galton board).
- Unclear use of the 5E-structure when it wasn't used as the teacher expected it to be used.
- Unclear whether "degrees" was referencing temperature, geometric angles, or "levels."
- Misunderstandings about what a list of exercises was, where the teacher de-

scribed it simply as a "list" of unknown purpose.

- Instructions that required more explanation. In this case, the instructions merely showed a couple of numbers without describing what the numbers were for; "0,0,0,50...", where it was explaining a point system for gambling with dice.

Although many of these misconceptions were often understood by the test subject after a while, it often took a lot of time, and likely frustration, for them to figure it out.





# 5

## Discussion

### 5.1 Answers to RQ1: How can usability testing be used to improve the usability of teaching materials?

Looking at what issues were found during the usability tests in this study, usability testing of teaching materials seemed to work similarly to how they work with websites, according to Krug's method. Both methods are effective in finding problems with misunderstandings and lack of clarity. However, when it comes to testing how the teachers would choose and use their material, the results are dependent on what is possible in a realistic teaching situation. For example, as described in [REFERENS: ACCOUNTING RO TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE], some teachers evaluated a material according to their students' previous knowledge. Similar results were also found relating to how well a material connected to the school curriculum [REFERENS?]. Without previous experience with working as a teacher, such things could be difficult to evaluate. That said, this study did not directly test and compare doing usability testing done with non-teachers, so specifying what difference having non-teachers as test subjects would make for the results is difficult to say. Studying what test subjects would be eligible for testing different aspects of teaching materials is an interesting subject for further study.

Aside from finding common usability problems, the usability tests also produced a few results that were unique for teaching materials, compared to testing websites or other things. For example, student handouts specifically seemed appreciated in many tests [REFERENS: HAVING STUDENT HANDOUTS AS PART OF A MATERIAL IS APPRECIATED]. This likely has several reasons:

- Student handouts require little preparation to use, since they often simply require printing, in contrast to for example having to write a slideshow from scratch.
- Student handouts are concrete and easy to understand, as long as the teacher understands that they are student handouts. This is because teachers know what student handouts are, and they know intuitively how they are supposed

to be used, compared to more abstract materials.

Even if many materials could be improved with student handouts, it is likely not an all-encompassing solution. Similarly, future usability tests might find problems with student handouts that this study did not find. However, the result shows a strength in usability testing teaching materials, in that similar findings might be possible in more tests. Furthermore, the finding says something about the importance of being concrete: If a teaching material is to explain something abstract, having an example of what an explanation to a student would look like might make the explanation easier to understand for the teacher. Such realizations are a reason why the usability testing also makes the tester a better usability designer, aside from finding specific problems for specific materials.

Finally, testing the materials list as well as the materials in it showed an important distinction: The difference between making good content, and making the content easier to understand. While solving common usability problems is an important part of designing good teaching materials, it's also important to consider how useful a materials' theme or content is. For example, in Sample case 2 [REFERENS: Sample case 2. Kleinmaterial: Vanliga missuppfattningar] it was revealed that the material was appreciated, despite big usability problems. The teacher expressed interest in the material's theme, which was common misconceptions in mathematics. The material also had student handouts. Usability testing can likely be used to find whether or not a teacher appreciates a specific theme, but figuring out what themes teachers are looking for, among other things, can be difficult to do by testing only one material. In other words, usability testing does not seem effective in testing whether a material asks the right questions, but it is effective in testing whether it answers its questions clearly.

### **5.2 Answers to RQ2: How can usability testing as a method be made accessible for teachers with limited experience of usability design?**

While there are different forms of usability testing, the tests in this study were based on a method designed to be accessible to a wide audience, which is the one designed by Krug. To do similar tests, a material designer could use the usability test script supplied in this study [REFERENS: APPENDIX SCRIPT]. This script is adapted from web development to teaching materials. However, due to the difference between doing a scientific study and a usability test meant for material development, there are some things that could be further simplified from the method used in this study.

To start with, the test subjects could consist of teacher colleagues. As this study found, it's a good thing if the test subjects have teaching experience due to being able to find problems with the curriculum, student experience, and similar issues. If the material that is to be tested is to be reused locally in a school, doing these tests

could then be as simple as asking teacher colleagues to "have a look" at the material. This would save a lot of time and effort in looking for test subjects elsewhere.

Important to note when testing teaching materials is that there is a difference between simply asking a test subject "what they think", and to actually watch them try to use the material. The difference between these methods is less obvious in the method used in this study compared to when testing websites. This is due to the teachers actually not using the material in conjunction with real lesson planning, and thus the subjects end up thinking how it would be to use the tested material in an imaginary lesson. However, the main difference lies in watching the test subject read and/or analyse the material while they think out loud, instead of asking them what they think after they have read or scanned the material.

Finally, what seemed to help while making revisions in this study was to use short iterations. The idea behind this is that less time is spent guessing between different design decisions, and more time is spent gathering data that facilitates these decisions. Doing tests early and often also has the advantage of finding expensive problems early, where expensive means that redesigning the material late in the process would take significantly more time and effort than choosing the better design early in the process.

### **5.3 Answers to RQ3: What factors do teachers consider when deciding on how to use a teaching material?**

Answers to this question can be found in the Results chapter, under section [REFERENCE: HOW TEACHERS PICK THEIR MATERIALS SECTION THINGY]. Instead of reiterating these results, the results will be discussed here about what they say about the obtainability of teaching materials.

Obtainability, in terms of the ability for teachers to get access to a material, is difficult to measure. This study limited its obtainability research to a single materials list, and what the teachers looked for in that list. In reality, a teacher might not have access to a list. A school might for example have an internal network where they share files. Some teachers may also share their materials online through blogs. However, as long as the teacher has the ability to choose between materials, knowing what the teacher wants to know about a material before they pick it can be an important factor in making said material obtainable. If a material is accessible online, for example, but no teachers understand what it is, chances are that this material will never be looked at.

Designing systems that make teaching materials more obtainable is an important part of making teaching materials accessible, just like

- according to demands from the educational system: connection to curriculum,

time, workload, what they are working on now. - student needs; previous knowledge and/or motivation. - how clearly the material is described in "the list;" What it is, how it is used. They want to know what they're getting.

### 5.4 Answers to RQ4: From the perspective of a technological system, how can usability design for teaching materials be used to help teachers?

- help how? workload, quality of teaching, collaboration between teachers and teachers, and teachers and other material designers. - making U.T. part of teaching material technology, in a holistic manner: making teachers better usability designers rather than prescribing "the way to design materials." (Avoid institutionalizing usability testing) - increasing teacher confidence vs. making teachers feel like bad designers. - negative effects on innovation: what if Kleindagarna limited themselves to the curriculum?

### 5.5 Required adaptability depends on the teacher's autonomy

Some speculations that I decided to write down to see where the final report might end up. Better make risky speculations early rather than late, so we get a chance to revise them. /S

The effects of teaching materials on teacher workload is complex. A lot boils down to the autonomy in which the teacher can choose and work with a material.

If a teacher is forced to use a material, either due to rules or due to external factors, the material might have negative consequences. But if a teacher has the right to use or not use a material in the way they want, they can choose to use the parts that help them, and ignore the parts that hold them back. For example, *"I use the book for simplicity's sake, but when something requires extra attention I find a material that better suits the students' needs."*

How materials are used in a school is part of the school's material technology. Teachers and students both learn habits that affect the rest of the school. Thus, the school as a whole should consider how to best make use of materials as a resource: Do they have access to new material when needed and/or wanted, and do they have a stable method to fall back on when the materials produce too much workload? Note that being forced to use some new and different material is just as negative on the teacher's autonomy as being forced to do like everyone else.

## 5.6 Obtainability

Words like obtainable and teaching materials are broad by definition, and school as an institution is complex by nature. This discussion on obtainability can therefore be expected to fail at giving a complete explanation to how these words fit together, but it will try to answer some of the difficulties teachers are facing in obtaining teaching materials.

this could possibly be the first paragraph of this section in the final report. It is phrased as it aims to answer an RQ, so maybe it shouldn't be in discussion(?) /H

## 5.7 Limitations of the study

### 5.7.1 Homogeneity of usability test data

The study's focus could be different if the test data collected was more homogeneous. A good way to achieve this would have been to collaborate with teachers from the same school. Regular testing with the same teachers could then be established, which better reflect the way this study's findings are proposed to be used. Interest was showed by representatives on schools contacted, but claims were made that the teachers' schedules didn't allow for this kind of collaboration. Any effects exclusive to collaboration within a school's teacher base has therefore not been examined. The usability tests was instead exclusively tested on math teachers and students nearly eligible to teach maths. Even though the data less homogeneous, it can be assumed this has led to findings that would not have been made when testing exclusively teachers of a single school.

### 5.7.2 Control of usability test data

In this study, exploring accessibility has encompassed studying both obtainability and usability. To collect more data on obtainability, usability tests were preceded by the usability subjects choosing the teaching material they wanted to test. This reduced the authors' control of testing certain teaching materials. This removed the ability to focus on a particular teaching material and usually prevented the authors to get the desired familiarity with the teaching material ahead of time.

### 5.7.3 Balancing revision sizes

Usability testing makes it possible to revise the tested teaching material. Much of the data collected during the testing figuratively screams to be put to use in a revision. Adding alteration to a teaching material is in itself a project. When tackling a project, one should have a plan on how to reach the goal. Seeing that the development cycle in this study is iterative, adopting an iterative development

Should this be included in conclusions instead? /H

process when making a revision is appropriate. That means that one should make many smaller changes, instead of trying to implement everything at once. A benefit of this is that one can have a new, albeit smaller, revision ready each time the teaching material is put down. This smaller revision is then ready to be usability tested on, if such an opportunity emerges.

## 5.8 Future work

### 5.8.1 For teachers

A suggestion is that teachers can use the methods presented in this thesis as activities in collaborative meetings, as a way to assess the accessibility of teacher materials. They could also discuss how they are affected by accessibility of teacher materials created by others. To assess accessibility on an institutional level, the following questions could be asked:

- In what ways might their economy deny better quality education (obtainability issue)?
- Is the quality of their education unreasonably dependent on the teachers finding teaching materials themselves (obtainability issue)?
- Do their teachers use teaching materials that can not be shared to others, e.g. substitute teachers, without a significant drop in educational quality (usability issue)?
- Do their teachers produce their own material with the sole intent of only using it themselves (obtainability and usability issue)?

### 5.8.2 For universities and colleges

Future theses could be made to e.g. verify, falsify, implement, expand and/or improve upon this thesis.

### 5.8.3 For others

Other fields of study could adopt a usability testing method, perhaps one inspired by the iterative method developed in this thesis, to identify the unknown in their particular field.

# 6

## Conclusion

[insert more text here]

### 6.1 Answers to research questions

#### 6.1.1 RQ1: How can usability testing be used to improve the usability of teaching materials?

By usability testing a teaching material, feedback from a teacher is collected. This feedback can then be used as input when revising the teaching material. This process can be repeated, both to validate that the revision improved the material and to collect further input for future revisions.

#### 6.1.2 RQ2: How can usability testing as a method be made accessible for teachers with limited experience of usability design?

A usability testing script in a suitable language can be presented to teachers. Such a script involves everything a teacher is supposed to do and say, making it easy to follow and execute without any preparations.

#### 6.1.3 RQ3: What factors do teachers consider when deciding on how to use a teaching material?

[data from usability tests, obtainability]

**6.1.4 RQ4: From the perspective of a technological system, how can usability design for teaching materials be used to help teachers?**

[har S någon särskild tanke med denna?]



# Bibliography

- [1] Frisk, D. (2016) A Chalmers University of Technology Master's thesis template for L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X. Unpublished.



# A

## Appendix 1

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