

By using an appropriate model of reflection identify one aspect of your own practice or behaviour that you may choose to modify and how this would contribute to a more sustainable society. Your proposed change should be supported by reference to theories of sustainability.

The framework I have chosen for this assessment is the 'Model of Structured Reflection', which was developed for ethical practice by Johns (1995) and was in turn, based on an earlier reflective model proposed by Carper (1978). This appears to me to be an appropriate model, as I feel the issue of ethics and sustainability are inextricably intertwined. Kibert *et al.* (2012) refer to sustainability as being inherently ethical, its success dependent upon the foundation of strong moral concepts.

Johns' Model of Structured Reflection (1995)

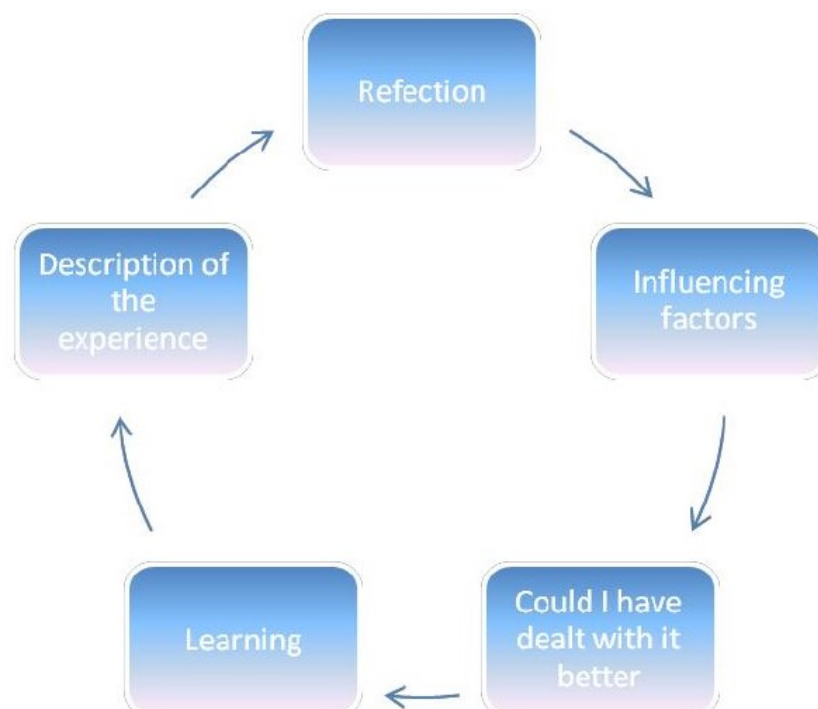


Image 1 (IDOC PUB, 2019)

Description of the Experience

In an effort to make a positive contribution to environmental sustainability, I have made a personal commitment to find a more eco-friendly alternative to buying milk in plastic containers.

Reflection

I buy milk quite regularly, but only in small quantities. I typically buy a 1 pint plastic carton and on occasion, a 2 pint variant. Even though I only buy a small amount, it quite often expires before I use it all. Every time pour the last few lumpy dregs down the sink and wash the container ready for recycling, I cannot help but feel guilty at the waste and this is despite an accusation by Meneses, Pasqualino and Castells (2012) that too much emphasis is placed on prolonging the life of products, as opposed to reducing the environmental impact of the packaging.

I have considered not buying milk at all as I already drink coffee without milk and aside from the occasional bowl of breakfast cereal, my only other use is as an ingredient for homemade pancakes when my youngest daughter comes around. I thought about replacing fresh milk with powdered milk, or even pancake mix but I feel the time we spend making pancakes together, is an important activity in terms of bonding and certainly something I wish to maintain. De Neve and Sachs (2020) suggest there are empirical links in the synergy between sustainable development goals and the inevitable trade-offs that arise from the need to satisfy personal, albeit subjective, emotional well-being.

Influencing Factors

Although plastic is generally recyclable, the source for the raw material is almost always fossil fuel. The Center for International Environmental Law (2019) reported that since 2015, over 8000m metric tonnes of new 'virgin' plastic had been produced and of that, almost 10m metric tonne is estimated to end up in the ocean each year. Vince and Stoett (2018) say the issue of oceanic plastic debris, including micro-particles, has rapidly escalated from being a problem to a full-blown crisis. Parker (2018) believes this is partially due to reluctance by some to measure the scale of the problem, but did quote figures published in an article by Geyer, Jambeck and Law (2017), that estimates an incredible 91% of plastic fails to get

recycled with around 9% being incinerated and the remaining 79% ending up in landfill sites, the ocean or other natural environments.

Could I Have Dealt with it Better?

Initially I thought it would be fairly straightforward to change from plastic to cardboard containers, I knew I wanted to avoid cartons that had a plastic spout and lid but my research soon revealed that I had not considered all the relevant factors. The issue is somewhat more complex, as Blount (2020) explains. Cartons that contain liquid are not purely cardboard and usually contain an inner foil lining to prevent leakage, as well as a polyethylene coating. How easy the product is to recycle depends on your local recycling authority. Thankfully, my local authority has the ability to recycle the whole container, using a process that pulps the carton to separate the individual layers, which can all be re-used (Wales Recycles, 2020).

That being said, cardboard cartons still seemed preferable to my next choice, which was to arrange for a local Milkman to deliver bottled milk. I am not aware of anyone in my street having milk delivered by a milkman and given the small quantity I use; it seems unlikely that it would be worthwhile, either economically or environmentally, although I could find no specific research to evidence this. However, Le Flemming (2019) hypothesises that the absence of traditional milkmen, and returnable packaging in general, is largely the result of capital efficiency; the process of shifting the cost of packaging from the provider to the consumer. Regarding the general role of transport in sustainable development, Banister (2007) argues that it is in fact dichotomous, in so much as the transport we largely use is, by its very nature, unsustainable.

Learning

A simple study of changing one aspect my current behaviour, has given me a revealing insight into the complexities of sustainability. Even smallest of changes can involve difficult choices when trying to balance sustainability alongside well-being and ethical choices quite often come at a greater financial cost. Murray (2011) believes the emphasis on professional sustainability has somewhat detracted from our own personal responsibility and has resulted in a half-hearted approach, rather than tackling the issue full-on. The planet does not saving he goes on to say, but rather it us that needs saving from ourselves. This is a view shared – to

a degee – by Gifford (2011) who also acknowledges the psychological barriers which appear to suppress cognition, but believe the problem is exacerbated by an infrastructure that is inherently climate-averse.

Having seen how one small change can raise so many issues for consideration, I am going to continue to modify my consumer habits, one step at a time. My next goal is stop buying bread in plastic packaging. In order for this to work, I need to locate a bakery supplier, preferably a local supplier who sells local produce. The only truly local supplier I currently know of runs a local market stall on the first Saturday of the month, which at present is not accessible enough to be a viable option. Within the next month I am determined to identify an opportunity to facilitate my next sustainability goal.

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Image References

IDOCPUB (2019) *Johns Model Of Reflection*. Available at:

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