Sustainable procurement in a pandemic: a case study in pragmatic research

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Abstract

As organisations and Governments seek to tackle environmental, social, and economic issues, the role of the Procurement function has never been more important for driving sustainability throughout supply chains. In the UK's largest employee-owned organisation, sustainable procurement had not been a priority leaving both opportunity and risk unaddressed. Existing behaviours of Procurement professionals in the organisation did not consider sustainable procurement a priority as they balanced competing demands for commercial and operational deliverables. Through this research, I sought to influence sustainable procurement attitudes and behaviours to create improved outcomes. This research used a blended model of appreciative inquiry and action research to explore pragmatic change. Pragmatism provided the research paradigm, and a decision-making approach that resulted in an exploration of the implications of pragmatism for organisational change. This thesis articulates how the research was tested by factors outside of its control, and how pragmatism enabled progress despite the many and significant challenges faced.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

AI	Appreciative Inquiry – an opportunity-orientated approach to change
AR	Action Research – a problem-orientated approach to change
AAR	Appreciative Action Research – a blended approach to change that combines elements from AI and AR developed by Egan and Lancaster (2005)
CFO	Chief Financial Officer - equivalent to the organisation's Executive Director, Finance
CIPS	Chartered Institute for Procurement and Supply – the industry body for the procurement profession
COP	Conference of Parties – an annual United Nations conference of nations, NGOs, and other stakeholders to discuss and agree steps to tackle observed and expected climate change
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility – the organisation's previous nomenclature for sustainability
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs – the UK Government Department with a mandate for all environmental, food and the rural economy
DIET	Diagnosis, Intervention, Evaluation, Transfer – a blended approach to change that combines elements from AI and AR developed by Cady and Caster (2000)
E&S	Ethics & Sustainability – the department within the organisation responsible for setting the organisation-wide ethics and sustainability strategy.
ETI	Ethical Trade Initiative – an internationally recognised body that has defined a code of conduct for the treatment of employees and other forms of labour
GDP	Gross Domestic Product – a sum of the UK's national output
GFR	Goods For Resale – goods or services the organisation would buy to sell on to customers
GNFR	Goods Not For Resale – goods or services the organisation would buy in order to operate
HOT	Head Office Transformation – the organisation's restructure of all head office functions
NGO	Non-Government Organisation – organisations or groups that lobby for change on a particular issue or series of connected issues
NIMBY	Not In My Back Yard – a term used to describe an opinion that is pro-change as long as it does not impact on the individual
PAR	Participatory Action Research – the conducting of Action Research where the participants are coresearchers

PCD	Project Completion Document – a governance document required by the procurement function
PESO	A digital transformation programme centred on implementing a new source-to-settle system
PLT	Procurement Leadership Team – the collective senior leaders of the procurement function
RFP	Request For Proposal – the term used when procurement would take a requirement to market and ask suppliers to submit bids for a contract
RSCOP	Responsible Sourcing Code Of Practice – the ethical standards the organisation expected of its suppliers
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises – organisations considered to be micro, small, or medium sized organisations under Government policy
SMETA	SEDEX Members Ethical Trade Audit – a globally recognised standard for social and ethical auditing
SPCs	Sustainable Procurement Champions – collectively the volunteers who participated in cycle 1
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States of America

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1. Introduction

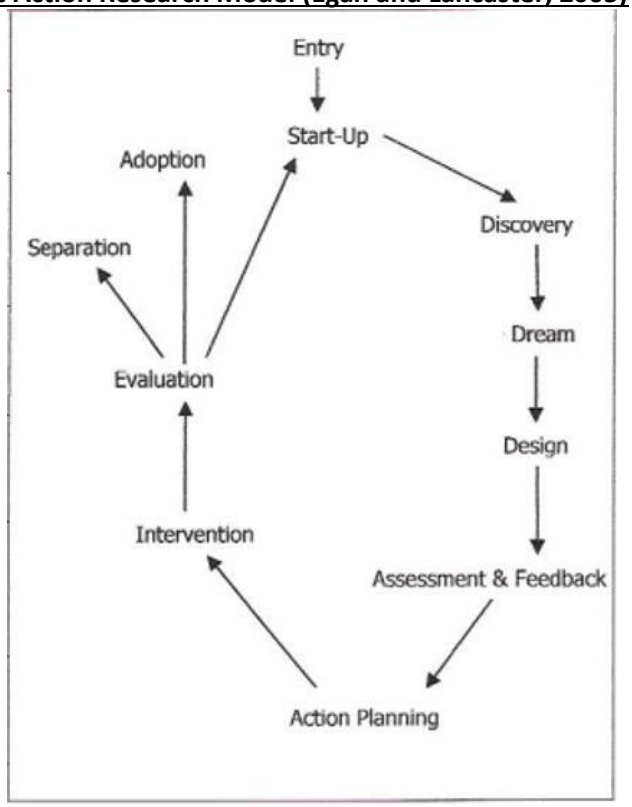
Having never conducted doctorate level research previously, this research was a self-guided journey into the unknown. This thesis explores a high-profile topic which I was passionate about and throughout I share both the experiences of a researcher of change and that of a participant in that change. This was a reflective piece of work that drew out the personal lessons taken from each situation and explores whether those lessons could apply for others.

Research Purpose

The core purpose of this research was to contribute knowledge to the field of organisational change. This was achieved through conducting this research with the specific combination of participants, the department, the organisation, the macro-environment, and the temporal contexts which I describe in greater detail throughout this thesis. In summary, the research was conducted over a two-year period in the Goods Not For Resale (GNFR) procurement function of the UK's largest employee-owned retail organisation.

To achieve the purpose above, I pursued specific objectives to deliver value for the academic field of knowledge, and on behalf of the organisation. First was exploring the efficacy of a blended Action Research (AR) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach to change. I used the Egan and Lancaster Appreciative Action Research Model (2005) as a starting point, being one of the most established blended change models (see Figure 1.1 below for an overview of the model, and chapter 3 for a detailed analysis). My second objective was to explore the efficacy of a series of cycles of change to understand the impact that iterative change would have.

Figure 1.1 - Appreciative Action Research Model (Egan and Lancaster, 2005)



This research also had two objectives specifically related to delivering value for the organisation. First was to improve attitudes towards sustainable procurement. As Dolan et al. (2012) observe, "changing minds" can have a direct impact on behaviours and outcomes. So connected to this first objective was the second, to achieve improved sustainable procurement outcomes for the organisation. Collectively, the above will be referred to throughout this thesis as the research purpose, and below I provide further explanation of the importance of sustainable procurement, and why focused research in this area was not only justified, but necessary.

Why Sustainability?

The term 'sustainability' was inconsistently defined. The most common definition as applied to the context of this research came from the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (cited by UCLA, 2021) which borrowed from the earlier Brundtland Report (United Nations, 1987, page 41):
"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

The above definition would naturally make one think of resource utilisation - the extraction, use and replenishment of resources to meet one's needs. There was not a natural extension of the above definition to the role of people within sustainable development. It is interesting therefore that the United Nations also developed a set of 17 "Sustainable Development Goals" (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2021). Those 'Goals' go into detail regarding not only the utilisation of natural resources but also the impact of development on people and communities, covering topics such as equal rights, education, and poverty, among others. The potential conflict of definition highlighted a key challenge with sustainability – what should any individual, organisation, or government, focus on. There were innumerate Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) that represented different and often overlapping and conflicting interests that create pressure through action and visibility for organisations and governments to change their behaviour towards a specific priority. From an organisational perspective, it was often a challenge to commit resource, investment, and effort in a landscape of confused definition and conflicting priorities.

With the UN providing their view on sustainability at a global level, looking closer to home and in the context of this research, the United Kingdom Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (cited by CIPS, 2021a) defined sustainable procurement as:
"a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organisation, but also to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment."

This definition was equally interesting as while it broadened out to encompass societal and the economic factors, it implied a weaker position on the environment. This was achieved using the word "minimising" which could be interpreted to mean that the impact on the environment is a second-level priority compared to value for money, societal and economic impact. The option for individuals and / or organisations to use this DEFRA definition was reinforced in a 2011 publication from the UK Government of sustainable procurement tools (Gov.uk, 2011) and it also being adopted by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (as cited above – CIPS, 2021a) who were a UK-based and globally recognised industry body for procurement professionals.

What the definitions had in common was their broad approach. Within each, there was scope for significant interpretation as to exactly what constituted "Sustainability." A widely accepted tenet was that there were three key segments: people, planet, and profit, collectively known as the 'Triple Bottom Line' (Elkington, 1999).

Exploring some of the facets that sit within each segment of this Triple Bottom Line definition of sustainability, it became clear why researching the topic was a priority. Taking first the 'People' (or Social) segment, it covered topics such as Modern Slavery, skills development, employment, diversity and inclusion, community engagement, working with charities and social enterprises, and many more. The importance of addressing these topics could be seen in the statistics that sat behind them. There were an estimated 40 million modern slaves in the world (Anti-Slavery International, 2021), including more than 10,000 estimated victims in the UK when last calculated in 2019 (Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, 2019). Research showed that there was a significant gap in the skills that individuals had and the ones they needed for their current role, let alone to progress in their career or into new roles (Chastney, 2020). The skills gap could have significant implications for economic productivity, wage growth, immigration policies, and community cohesion. Some of the topics could be very nuanced when considering how organisations could contribute to addressing them. For example, organisations looking to support job growth may have had to consider regional differences in unemployment (ONS, 2021) or even in specific demographics such as youth employment to develop a talent pipeline that would have replaced existing staff as they left (Youth Employment, 2021). Some topics cross-pollenated creating an extraordinarily complex landscape to navigate, such as disability employment which covered demographic employment, diversity and inclusion, and potentially working with specialist charities and social enterprises to support persons with disabilities into work (Trust for London, 2021, Careers With Disabilities, 2021).

The 'Planet' segment was usually the easiest pillar to understand for those new to the subject of sustainability. In its broadest sense, it covered anything to do with the natural world. Starting with resource consumption, there was an International Day of Recognition each year marking the date that signified the point after which the Earth could not sustainably replenish its natural resources (Earth Overshoot Day, 2021). The day of the year was recalculated each year taking account of many local, national, and transnational themes and in 2021, the date was 29th July. The date meant that less than 7-months into 2021, we had consumed an entire year's worth of natural resources. Connected to natural resource consumption was the impact we had on biodiversity. Research commissioned by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, 2021) showed a 60% decline in populations of mammals, fish, birds, reptiles, and amphibians since 1970. The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019) found that approximately 1 million species of animals and plants were at risk of extinction, and that risk was accelerating faster than at any point in the last 10 million years.

The consumption of natural resources and the decline in biodiversity were connected to the topic of climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), human activities had already caused a 1.0°C increase in average global temperatures (IPCC, 2018). The impact of this increase was already being felt in more frequent extreme weather. The UK Met Office explained that there was an increasing number of attribution studies, where scientists sought to examine potential connections between extreme weather events and climate change, and that there was a growing body of evidence demonstrating human induced impact (Met Office - Crown Copyright, 2021). In nearly all cases of extreme heat, in about half the instances of drought and in a small but growing number of extreme rain events, there was a connection to human activity. In the context of this research, notably the United Kingdom held the rotating presidency of the United Nations Conference of Parties (known as COP). The event, held in November 2021 meant that the UK's positions on environmental topics were in the spotlight, and the UK attempted to lead and coordinate negotiations that built on the achievements of the Paris 2015 COP agreement to limit average global temperature increases to 2.0°C, and to try and limit it to 1.5°C. The event included negotiations across hundreds of delegations each with their own perspectives and priorities (UK COP26, 2021). The importance of achieving positive outcomes that manifested as tangible commitments to limit average temperature increases was

summarised succinctly by an earlier report from NASA. Summarising an IPCC Special Report, NASA highlighted that the differences between a 1.5°C warmer world and a 2.0°C warmer world was 37% of Earth's population being exposed to extreme heat events, compared to 14% in a 1.5°C warmer scenario. In a 2.0°C warmer scenario, more than 61 million additional people would be exposed to sever drought, up to 270 million additional people would experience water scarcity, and up to 3 times more insect species could disappear having a significant impact on pollination and food production around the world (Buis – NASA, 2019).

From the above, it is easy to see why the "Planet" aspect of the Triple Bottom Line was often the easiest to comprehend as it produced significant, direct, and tangible impacts. What was less easily understood was the inclusion of the "Profit" pillar. Most consider sustainability to be separate and distinct from normal economic considerations. Whether there was a causal effect was beyond this research, but there was perhaps a correlation between the detachment of the environmental and social aspects from the economic, and the observed behaviours of individuals and organisations over the years that gave rise to the major sustainability stories such as Nike sweatshops (One Green Planet, 2022), and Boohoo.com Leicester factory (Daily Mail, 2020). Klein et al. (2021) argued that it was the fundamental job of procurement – to deliver savings for their business, however the broad scope of the "Profit" pillar encapsulated more than the simple profitability of the organisation in question.

"Profit" in this instance was a synonym for the economic impact of decision making. This in and of itself was subject to interpretation, or more accurately, prioritisation. The UK's Social Value Act 2012 and the associated Procurement Policy Note PPN06/20 articulated two policy outcomes under the theme of "Tackling economic inequality" (Crown Copyright, 2020). These policy outcomes broke down further into "Delivery Objectives" covering topics such as supporting entrepreneurship and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow, creating employment, training, and development, improving educational attainment, supply chain diversity, innovation, supply chain resilience, and cyber security and risk management. These delivery objectives, and their position in public sector procurement, meant that a sizeable proportion of UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which was represented by Government spending, was done in a way that theoretically enhanced the economic benefits and not just spending based on lowest cost proposals. The logical connection to public sector objectives was easily tracked. By improving employment prospects, the government can generate greater tax revenues through income and national insurance. Those in work both take fewer social benefits from the welfare system and contribute to the economy through their new spending power. That drives business growth (so more tax revenues through corporate tax) and improved sales tax revenues (VAT). The business growth potentially then creates more jobs to fill, boosting employment further. The virtuous cycle that this creates made it easy to understand the UK Government's contract award criteria of the "Most Economically Advantageous Tender" introduced in the update to the Public Contracts Regulations in 2015 (Crown Copyright, 2015).

The conflicting definitions, conflicting priorities, and the potentially significant variations in acceptable behaviour that they drove, highlight why the topic of sustainability was important. There was a need to push past the confusion and to seek positive change. There were some businesses out there which had fathomed this complicated picture. Throughout the years, these businesses were recognised at industry award shows. One of the most recognisable sustainability awards in the UK was the Edie Sustainability Leadership Awards, though interestingly out of 24 award categories for the 2022 awards, only two referenced "social" in their award criteria – the rest were all environmentally focused (Edie, 2021). Looking more broadly at procurement industry awards, there were two main events. First were the industry body awards from CIPS, the Excellence in Procurement Awards. The second were the World Procurement Awards from Procurement Leaders. CIPS' 2021 awards had three categories dedicated to either environmental or social projects, while Procurement Leader's plans for 2022 included two categories (Haymarket Media Group Ltd, 2021, Procurement Leaders Limited,

2021). Notably though, the criteria for the other awards categories from both bodies allowed for submissions from across the sustainability spectrum suggesting that the procurement profession viewed environmental, social, and economic achievements on a comparatively level playing field.

Despite the industry recognition, the legislative landscape and the media attention, the challenge remained. At the time of starting this research, the organisation within which this research was conducted had not developed or published a sustainability strategy that encapsulated the breadth of its operations. Commitments to sustainability were generally made across three dimensions, General Merchandise GFR, Grocery GFR, and group Operations, the latter of which focused almost exclusively on Property and Transportation categories and were primarily concerned with associated emissions, known as 'Scope 1' and 'Scope 2' emissions (World Resources Insititute and World Business Counsil for Sustainable Development, 2004). This focus left a significant swathe of Goods Not for Resale expenditure unprioritized, or only considered in response to specific customer expectations driven by heightened and / or prolonged media attention, such as the use of single use plastics. Making progress towards a more sustainable business was therefore incredibly important and a journey full of opportunity.

Why Procurement?

Like sustainability, procurement had something of an identity crisis. Although a widely used name to describe the buying function for an organisation, what it meant to different people, organisations, industry bodies and outside stakeholders was often different and disparate.

CIPS, the industry body for procurement professionals, defined procurement as "Procurement and supply management involves buying the goods and services that enable an organisation to operate in a profitable and ethical manner" (CIPS, 2021b). It was an interesting inclusion of ethics within the definition of the profession by its governing body, a clear sign of the importance placed on that aspect of the profession's conduct. Exploring an alternative definition, one where profitability was not necessarily a primary decision factor, was this definition from the Institute For Government (2018, page 4):

Procurement is the purchase by Government of the following from the private sector, charities, and other organisations:

- *Goods – items such as pens, paper, laptops, desks, hospital beds and medicines*
- *works – the construction, repair, and maintenance of assets such as roads, hospitals, and military equipment*
- *services – the delivery of functions such as adult social care, IT support, human resources, and consultancy.*

This definition was more utilitarian than the CIPS definition, with greater attention given to activities involved as opposed to concepts. Interestingly, the Institute For Government definition did not reference profitability (or a public sector equivalent such as economic value as explored above), and there was no reference to ethical practices in the purchasing of those goods, works or services.

The differences in the definitions of procurement from these sources highlighted a fundamental difficulty. When your profession meant different things to different people, in the activities you might be able to support or execute, it impacted the potential value that you could have added by making it context specific. This could be seen in the evolution of the procurement function.

An article from Sourcesuite.com (2021) succinctly summarised the history of procurement. From the earliest recorded use of scribes in 3000BC in Ancient Egypt, who tracked orders and fulfilment on materials to build the pyramids, to the first reference of a 'Supplying Department' at the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1886, there has always been a need in any business, trade, or state endeavour to manage the supply of required materials. As Sourcesuite.com highlighted, the profession only took on a

managerial role from the mid-1960's and, as business and entrepreneurship boomed through the 1980s, the recognisable core competencies of procurement (sourcing, tendering, contracting, and managing orders) coalesced. As of the start of this research, more and more organisations had recognised the role of Chief Procurement Officer, in some instances with that individual having a seat on the board.

There has also been a proliferation of procurement technology, with an array of platforms that could automate a considerable proportion of the procurement remit. These platforms however could be very expensive to implement and maintain on an ongoing basis. In my experience, this has led to a remarkably diverse profession, and arguably to a growing contrast between the 'haves' and the 'have nots.' Those organisations without the resources to invest in the latest technology, or where their external spend was not significant enough for that investment to produce a viable return, found themselves with procurement professionals playing a more traditional role. Those with the resources or the scale of external spend that could justify the investment, found themselves re-evaluating the role of procurement and either significantly scaling back the size of the department, or pivoting their focus to new frontiers such as business partnering, establishing internal consultancy-style centres of commercial excellence, or driving innovation and risk management practices. This could be seen playing out in the CIPS Excellence in Procurement Awards and the Procurement Leaders' World Procurement Awards with the companies that were pushing the boundaries of excellence (Haymarket Media Group, 2021, and Procurement Leaders Limited, 2021) while the definitions of procurement from industry or state bodies reflected an almost unrecognisable function.

These challenges of definition and practice cut across the profession, in all industries and sectors, but did not capture the local nuances of how procurement functions were defined within any given organisation. Responsibilities that one business would see as sitting with procurement, another might have allocated to their Finance function or their Supply Chain function. In some cases, the responsibilities might have been spread out across the entire business. The function could have effectively been separated from itself depending on the relative perceived priority of each buying remit.

This research brought together both topics, sustainability and procurement, exploring them in the relation to each other and in a specific organisational context. The research was conducted from the perspective of a procurement practitioner with extensive experience, across three major UK organisations.

2. Research Context

Organisational Context

Beyond the procurement function, this research was rooted in the organisational context in which it took place. The John Lewis Partnership was a UK retailer with two major trading brands: John Lewis & Partners (General Merchandise) and Waitrose & Partners (Grocery). The origin of the company dated to 1864 as a draper's shop in London. A revolution in the company occurred in 1928 when it published its first constitution, and then in 1929 it incorporated as a limited company and the first trust settlement was made (John Lewis Partnership, 2022). These moments were pivotal as it defined an employee-owned organisation. The organisation was the largest employee-owned organisation in the UK, with more than 85,000 employees sharing in the management of the organisation through democratic structures. These structures empowered colleagues at all levels of the organisation, enabled elected Partners to sit on the Board of Trustees, and for the Partnership Council (the top level of democratic representation) to hold the Chairman to account, ultimately having the power to remove the Chairman if they lost faith in their management of the organisation.

The employee-owned structure of the Partnership enabled longer-term thinking. The average tenure of CEOs in 2019 in the UK was 6.6 years for men and 3.8 years for women (Statista, 2019). The Partnership on the other hand had only 7 Chairmen (the equivalent to the role of CEO in other businesses) since 1864. Instead of paying dividends to shareholders, colleagues, as co-owners of the organisation, took a share of profits. In 2008 the bonus given to Partners reached 20% of salaries, but in 2020 the Partnership chose not to pay a bonus at all, the first time it had not since 1953 (Financial Times, 2021).

At the time that this research began, the Partnership welcomed its seventh Chairman, Dame Sharon White who was a notable appointment for a few reasons. She was the first female, and first black Chairman of the Partnership. This was notable because only 8% of the UK's top companies were headed by women (The Guardian, 2021a), only 11% by people from ethnic minorities, and none were black people (People Management, 2021). Dame Sharon White's appointment therefore broke the mould for the Partnership and for senior leaders of large businesses in the UK.

Her appointment was also notable because she did not come from a retail background (Financial Times, 2020). It came at a time of significant overhaul of the senior leadership and the traditional route to the top of the Partnership had been to spend most of one's career in the business. Dame Sharon White continued with the restructure of the senior leadership team, to the point that at the time of writing, only two of the Executive Directors pre-dated Sharon with the others all external appointments. This degree of change at the senior level inevitably impacted the whole business, and was often a negative impact (Dissanayake et al., 2021) though this research passes no judgment on the impact of the Partnership specifically. Some of the changes manifested during this research as a restructure of all Head Office functions, a new long-term strategy, and a new emphasis on sustainability. These organisational changes formed one part of a shifting landscape that presented both challenges and opportunities to this research.

Functional Context

Procurement as a profession was outlined in the previous chapter, but there were some unique aspects to how that profession was incorporated into this organisation. As a retailer, the Partnership differentiated between GFR and GNFR. This research took place in the GNFR procurement function, which other organisations may refer to as 'indirect procurement'. In essence, this was the procurement of any goods or services to support the organisation to operate, compared to GFR (or

'direct procurement') which was the procurement of goods or services for sale to customers (Israel and Curkovic, 2020).

The organisation's procurement function, at the start of this research, consisted of 80 colleagues. Led by a director and a team of 'Heads of' (see Appendix 1.01), the function was responsible for approximately £1.4bn of spend each year. Responsibilities within the function were split into two main areas. First a delivery team, responsible for sourcing, negotiation and supporting contract management activities, and structured around a category management model. The delivery team consisted of approximately 75% of the colleagues within the function, and the remainder formed a support team. The support team was responsible for ensuring appropriate governance, procedures, policies, systems, and operational support were in place to support not just the delivery teams but the overall organisation as they engaged with procurement. Over time, the total staffing numbers, and ratios of delivery versus support, shifted significantly (see chapter 12).

Also, to note was the cultural and practical position of the procurement function within the organisation, which impacted when and how procurement were engaged by their stakeholders. The ideal engagement for the procurement profession was as early as possible in a project. Decisions made early on could impact commerciality. For the organisation however, engagement usually occurred once requirements or specifications had been set which often then required procurement colleagues to just manage a process. This was frustrating for both the stakeholder, who would see procurement as a process barrier that added little or no value, and for procurement colleagues who felt underutilised. As with any organisation however, there were examples of good practice and early engagement. These were largely due to the efforts of the individuals involved building positive relationships with their stakeholders so that they were seen as part of the team. With the structural changes discussed in Chapter 12 came a different emphasis on engagement and an attempt to establish a more blended category management / business partnership approach. There were signs of success during the research period as procurement gained seats at senior leadership meetings and opportunities to engage earlier in projects, however significant barriers remained throughout the research.

Environmental Context

This research also had to be cognisant of the macro-environment in which it was operating. Over the course of the 2-year research, several significant events occurred. They demonstrated Brown et al.'s (2010) perspective of 'wicked problems' - challenges where the boundaries cannot be fully defined and controlled by a change process. Significant proportions of this thesis are given over to investigate, reflect and articulate the impact that external factors had on the outcomes.

Some of these factors took a negative toll on the research. Covid-19 detracted from the aims of this research to improve sustainable procurement attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes (see chapter 5). Other factors had a less tangible but positive influence on the research. The UK's commitment to Net Zero Carbon by 2050 (UK Government, 2019), China's commitment to Net Zero Carbon by 2060 (BBC, 2021), USA President Biden re-joining the Paris accords (US Department of State, 2021) and cancelling a major oil pipeline project (The Guardian, 2021b). These events, and more, increased the profile of sustainability issues. The increased media coverage supported awareness raising among participants in this research, and some referenced this in the results survey as a factor that they believed helped to improve sustainable procurement outcomes. It was for this dynamic context, that the methodology had to be selected and the methods had to be effective.

Methodology

Later in this chapter I outline the key research methods that were employed. Here I explore the philosophical underpinning for those methods – or research paradigm. To begin with, there are many answers to the question: What is reality? For some there is a single universal truth that is waiting to be discovered. For others there are multiple truths that depend on perspective. And for others still, reality is something that is constantly negotiated or reinterpreted. These are all ontological positions, and a researcher influences their research through their chosen perspective. When this research was first proposed, it was positioned within an ontological perspective that there were many realities held individually by the participants, and that this research would seek to influence these held views towards more positive sustainable procurement behaviours. By the point of starting the research, however, it had become obvious that reality was in flux. The research recognised that truth was defined at a point in time by the individual. Events over time, some of which were briefly highlighted above and others that could be more personal to the individual, changed the attitudes that the individuals held, and this research had to successfully navigate this fluctuating landscape.

Building on the ontology that recognised a reality in flux was the epistemological stance - a consideration of how this research would understand the realities or truths that existed. One possible stance was that reality could be measured and defined. This held some relevance as I sought to measure the status quo through baselining at the outset and aimed to have quantifiable improvements by the end. However, this stance assumed a fixed reality which I have accepted above was not the perspective of this research. An alternative stance was that interpretation was required to understand the realities. Again, there was relevance as I utilised my own reflections and the feedback of participants to provide insight. However, the epistemology most apt for this research posited that reality should be examined with the best tools to solve the problem at hand. This best reflected the research experience, as I sought to utilise many different methods to gather information and to influence change. I reference the concept of 'bricolage' – a flexible approach that utilises the tools at hand to make progress (Rogers, 2012) - in many chapters and it was an important factor in my blended approach to change. Bricolage is the epitome of the common use of the word "pragmatism" which throughout this research I reserve for the philosophical concept as I discuss below.

With an ontology that accepted a landscape of individually held truths that changed over time, and an epistemological stance that embraced flexibility and adaptability, there was a clear research paradigm – pragmatism. Pragmatism as a philosophy emphasised the connection between knowledge and practice. Conclusions were drawn through rigorous research but understanding came through lived experience of the participants involved *"and the supremacy of the agent point of view"* (Putnam, 1987, cited in Bacon, 2012). Although this school of thought was a more recent philosophical approach than traditional positivism or constructivism, pragmatism had spread around the world helped by its results focus. In the context of this research, there was a clear set of objectives to be achieved which carried influence on the research paradigm. This research also embraced the idea that attitudes and held truths change. In chapter 5, I explore the impact that an external event had on the attitudes that participants held towards sustainable procurement. This was a real-world example of truths changing and moving with the times, participants changing their views on a topic that was previously of greater importance to them and the research having to work with that changed reality to deliver its purpose.

Michael Bacon traces the philosophical tradition of pragmatism, showing the term was first coined by William James in 1898 and credits the founding tenets to Charles Pierce in 1878 (Bacon, 2012). Pierce was the first to propose that philosophy should be connected to what makes a difference in human behaviours (James, 1977, cited in Bacon, 2012). Bacon (2012) provides a rich summary of the evolution of pragmatism and, when considering James, Pierce, and other classical pragmatists such as Dewey, positions the philosophy as a "tradition of thought, not set of doctrines" (Bacon, 2012, page 2). Bacon's description reflected the agility and responsiveness required throughout this research.

Beyond the classical pragmatists there were two other categories of theorists. The first was termed neo-pragmatists, epitomised by Rorty who built on the classical views and posited that norms of behaviour and understanding are arrived at through a social contract, rather than deferring to science or religion to answer questions or to guide us through life (Rorty, 1982, cited in Bacon, 2012). This research had some sympathy with Rorty's view. There were examples of collective behaviour that stemmed from a localised culture rather than referencing some moral imperative or higher authority. However, the overall experience of this research found more in common with the second group, termed new pragmatists. Habermas staunchly disagreed with Rorty's dismissal of any behavioural influences beyond social contracts and instead argued that the world around us exerts influence over us (Habermas, 2000, cited in Bacon, 2012). Habermas' argument particularly resonated with the experience of this research, as outside influences played a significant role. In addition to Habermas, Brandom, another new pragmatist, reasoned that expressive freedom could only be possible in the context of social norms that constrained behaviour – without the barriers it is difficult to push or go beyond them (Brandom, 1979, cited in Bacon, 2012). Cycles 4 and 5 of this research capitalised on the enthusiasm for change that individual participants held. The ideas for change that were generated were in response to frustration at existing ways of working, and the promise of something better. Bacon, reflecting on Brandom's writing, provides a helpful summary of new pragmatism that pithily described the philosophical tradition when he said that pragmatism holds the "primacy of the practical" (Bacon 2012, page 199).

Building on the research paradigm outlined above, I must acknowledge the axiological position of this research. Axiology describes the values held by the individual or that are implied through research. It is closely associated with Ethics and Aesthetics philosophies, providing a concept of worth and articulating why something is held valuable. In the context of this research, there was an underpinning assumption that improved sustainable procurement outcomes were a desirable thing. There were logical arguments to the contrary. The organisation was already going through significant change, both internally and externally, and therefore there was neither the capacity nor the desire to prioritise any other change – stability and other change projects being deemed a more valuable prospect. Alternatively, in a hyper competitive retail environment and suffering through a global pandemic that took a significant toll on the organisation's financial position, the priority should be to protect the bottom line. Indeed, this message came from the Executive Director, Finance (CFO equivalent) towards the end of cycle 2. As I discuss elsewhere in this thesis, this clear message from above had the opposite effect among some procurement colleagues who were galvanised to do more on sustainable procurement because of it. This demonstrated at least a shared view among some participants of the value of sustainable procurement. It was this perspective that was the driving force for this research, that improved sustainable procurement outcomes – driven by behaviours and the attitudes that underpin them – were the right thing to aim for. Combined with the pragmatism research paradigm, this research sought to find the best methods to achieve the purpose.

Data Gathering Methods

The research purpose outlined in chapter 1 provides context for the selection of research methods, and to achieve it, I needed to capture a broad set of data. A blended approach required participation and reflection of both myself as researcher, and of colleagues in the department. Participatory approaches to change are a field of their own. There are a range of methods that share a common value, which Cargo and Mercer (2008) describe as "recognizing the value of engaging in the research process (rather than including only as subjects of the research) those who are intended to be the beneficiaries, users, and stakeholders of the research." Cargo and Mercer go on to reference a spectrum of participatory research approaches each having a greater or lesser degree of 'participation.' Cornwall and Jukes (1995) shared this perspective but defined the extent of 'participation' as determined by the level of control and influence held by the participants versus the

researcher. Contemplating the key stages of the research, Table 2.1 considers the level of control and influence held by myself as the researcher compared to other participants. As Table 2.1 shows, there was active participation, to a greater or lesser extent, at nearly every stage of the research. At no point was the research an entirely 'done to' exercise for the colleagues, who had multiple opportunities at different levels to challenge the approach, to propose and implement their own initiatives, and to provide their feedback and interpretation of what happened into the learning cycle. While I do not pretend this research was wholly participatory throughout, I will describe this research as participatory in the context of the definitions provided and the consideration of the important role played by the participants in shaping and delivering the changes.

Table 2.1 - Degree of 'Participation' by Participants

Research Stage	Researcher (myself)	Participants
Defining research approach	This was proposed by me, aligning to academic principles required for a doctoral-level thesis.	PLT held final approval of the research approach and provided robust challenge to ensure it met their requirements. Other participants did not have a role in defining the research approach.
Baselining	This was conducted by me on participants, with myself as a participant as well. Analysis and interpretation of the baseline was largely controlled by myself.	PLT and cycle 1 participants provided challenge and interpretation to the baseline but did not interrogate the raw data for themselves (not prevented from, but showed no interest in).
Initiating Cycles	Initially controlled by myself following the structure of the core model used for this research.	Later cycles were initiated by participants eager for change. Control shifted to participants to initiate change more organically.
Determining Initiatives	Collaborative process with participants putting forward ideas, assessing initiatives against relevant criteria (or aligning with the identified strengths in later cycles)	
Analysing Success	This was largely conducted by me on participants as a rerun of the original baseline activities to assess the overall success, or otherwise, of the research. Participant feedback was sought as a key determining factor of success.	Initiative owners considered their own success or otherwise and shared their insight. Interpretation of overall success and of specific initiatives considered by participants and shared through structured feedback interviews as part of the results analysis.
Write up of this Thesis	Wholly my responsibility	No role.

With the participation element defined, the reflection was gained through observation, interviews, group feedback sessions, and interpretation of the qualitative data these provided. Similarly, to establish a baseline of sustainable procurement attitudes and outcomes, assess the impact of Covid-

19 on attitudes, and to evaluate if this research had successfully achieved its purpose, quantitative data was required. I employed primary methods throughout the research as the objectives required an understanding of the impact that this research had on the procurement department, something that had not been explored previously. The only area in which secondary information was utilised was in the selection of the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005). Egan and Lancaster proposed their blended model of change based on interviews with organisational development practitioners. They assimilated the feedback that they received to distil what they believed were the core advantages and disadvantages of traditional approaches and synthesised these within their proposed model. I have used their model as the starting point as I assess the efficacy of a blended approach in this research context.

Utilising the principles of AI, AR, and AAR, the vehicle for change in this research was to use a series of cycles. These cycles would each utilise the AAR model as their core structure and would enable each iteration to build on previous experience. The intention was to run five consecutive cycles, setting an agreed scope or focus for each one in partnership with the Senior Manager, CSR. This collaboration was to be supplemented by participants for each cycle.

The community of potential participants, in its broadest sense, was defined by the research context. The pool of participants was limited to employees of the organisation. The intent had been to recruit a group of volunteers to be SPCs within the procurement department. This happened in cycle 1 however, that cycle ultimately failed. The participant groups fluctuated in each cycle, with few participants in common. Those participants provided a core data source through each cycle, as they contributed initiatives and feedback through the process. Beyond the participants, key data sources included colleagues in the procurement department and external professional groups to help create the attitudinal baseline and submitted governance documents to help create the behavioural baseline. These data sources were mined again at the end of the research to explore the impact that the research had and whether the overarching purpose had been achieved. All these data sources are explored in more detail in later chapters where greater situational context and justification is provided for their selection.

Throughout the research, an issue that arose frequently was the inability to control all the variables that impacted progress. This was either positional inability to control certain influences (such as mandates that came from the organisational leadership) or unforeseeable events that were uncontrollable (such as the Covid-19 pandemic). Brown et al. (2010) described these as 'wicked problems', where it is impossible to accurately define the boundaries of problems because of unknowable and uncontrollable factors that influence outcomes. Variables such as changing participant groups because of staff turnover or organisational restructures, had to be absorbed into the research process.

Key to the methods employed was their suitability to achieve the research purpose. In each chapter, where there was a data capture activity, I provide a detailed description of that process. Here I will focus on articulating the connection between research methods, the research purpose, and the contribution to knowledge. Starting first with the surveys used three times throughout the research, they offered the best route to near-in-the-moment insight into the attitudes held by respondents. This was critical data to form the baseline, assess the effect of Covid-19 and to evaluate the impact of the research against its purpose. The design of the surveys had to address the common flaws; imprecision and bias (Evans, 1991). Imprecision comes from the phrasing of the questions being insufficient to get detailed and accurate responses, and from too small a sample to properly represent the population. The common biases come from how the sample population is selected, and the non-response element (Evans, 1991). The question design was intentionally simple and precise, only allowing for open interpretation as a direct requirement of the research paradigm (such as Question 1 in each of the

baseline and results surveys which explored how respondents personally defined 'sustainable procurement'). In chapters 4, 5, and 11, I consider the sample of respondents for each survey and the implications for the analysis of the results. Alternatives to issuing surveys, as a way of addressing the known weaknesses of surveys, would have been to have focus groups or to hold individual interviews with each participant. Those options would likely have achieved a higher participation rate but came with their own drawbacks. Interviews would have lost the safety of anonymity and, in the case of the focus groups, have potentially suffered from group think or peer pressure responses. There was also the inherent imbalance of power in interviews which could have influenced the participation and the integrity of the responses (Nunkoosing, 2005). Interviews were used in this research, but where the benefits of detailed responses that could be further probed outweighed the additional logistical effort and the implications of the power imbalance. These examples are cited in the relevant chapters.

Next was the analysis of submitted governance paperwork, the PCDs, to understand behaviours and sustainable procurement outcomes. These were forms completed by procurement colleagues to gain approval to sign contracts and submit their benefit claims (covering things such as how the project was run, what the outcome was, whether any savings were achieved, and what CSR considerations had been made). An example of the PCD template is available in Appendix 4.01. As behaviours are the intermediary between attitudes and outcomes (Dolan et al., 2012), this was an important step to achieving the research purpose. The alternative to analysing submitted paperwork would have been to interview either the individuals or other stakeholders involved in the project. This could introduce the potential reporting bias as individuals attempted to articulate a more positive outcome than had been achieved or recorded at the time. Another alternative would have been to commission an independent audit of the contracts in question to assess the sustainable procurement benefits. Whether that was done by myself or by a third party, that would have required funding and resource beyond the ability of this research and therefore was not a viable option. Instead, the governance paperwork provided a contemporary account, approved by at least one other member of the procurement department of the sustainable procurement benefits recorded for each project. Analysing these submissions for themes provided insight into how participants viewed sustainable procurement and informed some of the initiatives developed through the cycles.

The analysis of the themes was a manual process, initially identifying common words and phrases. This enabled a collation of the feedback into more accurate groupings rather than sticking with just verbatim commentary. Appreciating that this could introduce some error, the second step was to review the sentiment in the verbatim comments to ensure the extraction of common phrases was a true representation of the feedback rather than being taken out of context. Due to the relatively small number of comments to be reviewed, and the unique structure and format of the PCDs, a manual analysis was preferred over utilising an analytic software package.

Conversations with participants formed a significant data capture technique used throughout the research. This took the form of individual sessions, both formal and informal, with participants to gain their input, work with them to assess proposed initiatives, and to gather feedback on initiatives to support the evaluation phase. In the case of cycle 3, these also occurred as a focus group with the participants. This was to experiment with a group feedback session compared to individual feedback interviews and worked well in the context of a small participant group working together on common initiatives. This was not the case for other cycles where participants in cycles 4 and 5 worked on individual initiatives at different paces. As a data capture technique, these interviews (both individual and group) provided rich data that could be analysed for effective learning. Alternatively, I could have used surveys with participants and the wider procurement department to get an understanding of how effective specific or a collective set of initiatives were. Surveys of the participants would have likely been less time consuming and ensured a consistent question set. However, it was also likely to have resulted in less engagement (based on the response rate of the surveys that were used) meaning

less valuable feedback. It also would have removed the possibility to explore and probe the feedback that was given in real time. This yielded significant insight as later chapters explore. Surveys of the wider participants would equally have suffered from a lack of engagement and would have been ineffectual for cycles 1, 2 and 3 where no initiatives were implemented in a way that had an immediate impact on the department. There was also additional pressure from PLT to optimise communications as there was a sense of survey fatigue during the research, not as a result of it but because communications that occurred in the natural course of business were sent out and at times, colleagues were being asked to answer a survey almost every week. Response rates across all surveys dropped during this peak period and that would have impacted the insight gained for this research.

Finally, the most informative data capture technique was through overt participation and observation. As both researcher and participant, I ensured that all colleagues who were either directly or indirectly involved or impacted by the research knew that I was conducting this research. This was a core part of my ethical commitment to this research and to the organisation. Being a participant in the research enabled me to experience the challenges and triumphs first-hand, to empathise with other participants experiencing difficulties with their initiatives and to support the delivery of the research purpose. Writers, such as Johnson et al. (2006), highlight the challenges involved with researcher participation and the need to find an appropriate social role for the researcher to anchor themselves in, however participation was a necessity as my role, at least at the time of cycles 2, 3, 4 and 5 was directly responsible for sustainable procurement in the department. My role in the research moved regularly from traditional, almost anthropological, participant-observer to active participation as required at different stages of the research. Observing as a participant was informative but the power of the insight gained only manifested through reflection. Adopting Schön's professional 'Reflection-in-Action' approach (2016), I was able to consider the implications, impact and lessons learned from each interaction and initiative. This enabled me to approach the research in a flexible and adaptive manner and contributed significantly to the conclusions drawn in chapter 13.

Data Interpretation

Data that was captured through the research was analysed for its insight. The quantitative data captured through the surveys, required basic statistical analysis to search for relationships between difference factors. There was a limited amount of data preparation required, as the format of the downloaded survey responses required some adaptation to allow analysis within Google Sheets. Ultimately, though, there were few statistically significant relationships to be found. The survey responses enabled a visualisation of the task at hand, the effect of a contemporary external event and exploration of the impact of the research. Similarly, the analysis of the qualitative information gathered informed future research cycles. Analysing the data captured in the PCDs enabled a behavioural baseline to be formed, and themes and patterns to be explored. In each cycle, interpreting feedback and contributions from participants, and my own reflective observations as both participant and researcher, enabled me to extract learning points that would inform the approach for future cycles. The cyclical approach that was adopted enabled each cycle of change to adapt based on the lessons of the previous cycle.

With the variety of data sources utilised throughout the research, a fundamental element was the interpretation of what was being received. This interpretation happened through individual and collective professional knowledge. A significant source of the qualitative data came through conversations with other participants meaning traditional academic interpretation approaches were too slow and cumbersome to employ. As both participant and researcher, I was not able to ask other participants and stakeholders to wait for a few days or weeks after each conversation in order to hear what the next steps would be. The research required a contemporary, in the moment, analysis and interpretation to seize opportunities and to resolve challenges that arose. Schön described this approach as "Reflect-In-Action" (Schön, 2016), utilising 'professional knowledge' to shortcut the

decision-making process. I recognised a limitation of this approach in that it increased the risk of introducing my inherent biases into the interpretation, compared to utilising a software package to identify qualitative themes for example. However, the context of this research arguably made this approach more appropriate, with participatory change relying on the contributions of those who are subject to the changes themselves. In addition, the research had a very clear purpose, part of which was achieving positive business outcomes therefore requiring timely interpretation and decision-making, based on the input of the participants. This in turn is supported through the philosophical and colloquial pragmatism underpinning this research. The rapid interpretation of data enabled pragmatic decision-making which allowed progress despite significant challenges. Bacon described this as the "primacy of the practical" (Bacon, 2012, page 199).

All of the methods chosen for this research had their disadvantages and individually could be critiqued. The test of their efficacy though is their combined ability to deliver the research purpose. Argyris and Schön (1996) describe the difference between academic and practitioner inquiry, and that the practitioner's definition of success is the results of inquiry meeting their needs rather than the exhaustion of inquiry as in the academic world. They highlight that this does not mean that the practitioner's outcomes are optimised, but that they provide sufficient effect with no, or acceptable levels of side effects. Against this test, the methods used in this research were successful. Through the rest of this thesis, I explore further the existing literature that underpinned this research and the landscape in which it now sits. I articulate the research methods in greater situational detail and the challenges that were encountered. I discuss the impact of changes that occurred outside of this research. Ultimately, I draw a conclusion as to the success of this research against its purpose, and the contribution that I have made to the field of organisational change.

3. Literature Review: Research tools

Scale of Literature

I am fortunate that the research tools available to me were vast and allowed me to see the scale of the literature that has been published on key topics. To conduct this research, I drew on news articles, press releases and publicly available information to establish and monitor the environmental context. This research was anchored in my professional knowledge as both researcher and practitioner and, as such, I explored texts from both the professional practitioner literature and academic journals. Combined, these gave me a balance between empirically based and peer reviewed knowledge along with ideas and lived experience from the 'real world.'

In Table 3.1 below, as a very simple measure by proxy, I share the search results across two key platforms: Google Scholar, as the largest open access collection for academic works; and Amazon as the largest book seller in the world (the Amazon search was carried out on Amazon.co.uk and under the "books" category only). There was undoubtedly crossover, so these numbers are indicative of scale only. Below are also the key search terms used, and where relevant I have shown search terms that should logically have resulted in a subset of the original term. The numbers were accurate as of 11th April 2021.

Table 3.1: Literature Search Results

	Search Term	Google Scholar	Amazon.co.uk
1	Procurement	2,370,000	60,000
	Sustainable Procurement	660,000	281
2	Sustainability	4,380,000	40,000
3	Change	7,390,000	60,000
	Organisational Change	1,980,000	3,000
	Organizational Change	3,640,000	9,000
	Attitude Change	4,370,000	6,000
	Behavioural Change	4,140,000	2,000
4	Appreciative Inquiry	126,000	276
	Participatory Appreciative Inquiry	28,300	1
5	Action Research	3,500,000	10,000
	Participatory Action Research	1,530,000	257
6	Appreciative Action Research	178,000	10
	Participatory Appreciative Action Research	34,900	0
	This is likely to be a subset of the combined rows 4 and 5 above		

There were several weaknesses to this analysis: the rounding of the search result numbers by the platforms, the lack of validation on my part that the results are accurate, the elasticity of the search algorithms returning results that it should or should not have done, and the overlap in results with Google Scholar searches likely to also include a significant number of books, to name but a few. The efficacy of search systems was its own subject of study, with authors such as Gusenbauer and Haddaway (2019) conducting a systematic review of 28 different academic search platforms and highlighted weaknesses in all, but especially in platforms like Google Scholar. However, this research aimed to have an academic and practice-based impact, and with that dual purpose in mind, I found it interesting to note the difference in the scale of publications.

There are potential contrary reasons for the proliferation of writings on this subject. In the academic world, the potentially greatest factor putting upward pressure on the numbers of articles written is the niche approach taken. An academic journal article, paper or published thesis can focus on extremely specific circumstances. On the other hand, books in the business world often cover multiple topics from a generalised stance meaning that one book in the business press could equate to dozens, scores or even hundreds of academic references.

While the niche-ness of academic writing provides opportunities for proliferation, the process of peer review acted to limit publication. This would have deterred or prevented some articles from publishing because the expected degree of rigour was not applied. Similarly, while there were many academic journals available that articles could be submitted to, there was a finite supply thereby putting a limiting factor on the number of articles that could be published over time. The same constraint would have been a factor historically for business books where the limited number of publishers would have constrained the market. In the past decade, with the proliferation of eBooks and self-publishing, the limiting factor on the number of business books is now those willing to author them.

From that population perspective, there were far more practitioners and consultants as a potential authoring population compared to the number of academics involved in the relevant fields. Applying a human lens to this suggested a likely reason: in academia, publication was life. There was constant pressure to achieve a cadence of publication as otherwise careers and livelihoods could have been at risk. Conversely for practitioners, publishing was often a secondary activity to the primary source of income. There were undoubtedly tenured professors who did not face the same publication pressures, and practitioners who gave up the “day job” to pursue a consulting career based on their writings and publications. In general terms though, personal motivation was likely an important factor.

On balance, and considering the above influencing factors, the indicative numbers pointed to some interesting characteristics of the available literature. First was the proportionality of “sustainable procurement” as a subset of “procurement” literature. One would have expected the general topic of “procurement” to generate a greater body of literature, while in the academic sphere “sustainable procurement” represented almost 28% of the general literature, in the business sphere it represented just 4.7%. Two possible reasons for this were insufficient sustainable procurement practitioners to produce significant volumes of business writing on the topic, and that given the motivation in the business writing world on making money from publication, sustainable procurement works lacked an audience.

Another interesting characteristic of the analysis was the comparatively low proportion of behavioural change publications in the business world. “Behavioural change” represented more than 56% of the academic literature on “change” but only just over 3% of the business literature. Potentially, as with “sustainable procurement” from before, the same explanations could apply. On personal experience and reflection though, I did not believe this would have been the case. The proportion of the academic literature representing “behavioural change” was too high to suggest that there was not an audience, and every organisation had a leadership structure with the explicit responsibility for delivering change. Instead, I believed the most plausible explanation for this disparity was the complexity of achieving behavioural change. I believed that the complexity meant that practitioners fixated on a particular model that they understood and was easy to communicate. It would explain why old models, as imperfect as they may be, still hung around. For example, Lewin’s model of change (Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze) (Lewin, 1947, cited in Bakari et al., 2017) was still taught at business schools and in management training, along with Herzberg’s Two Factor Theory (Herzberg et al., 1959, cited in Nickerson, 2021) or Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943, cited in McLeod, 2018). This explanation resonated with the experience of this research which found a cultural reluctance in the

organisation to engage with an appreciative change approach due to ingrained problem-oriented experiences.

The final characteristic considered from Table 3.1 was the disproportionate writings on participatory change. For "Appreciative Inquiry," "Action Research" and "Appreciative Action Research," the subset of writings for "Participatory" versions of those change methods represented 22.5%, 43.7% and 19.6% respectively. In contrast, for the business writing, "Participatory" publications were negligible. This suggested at least that those publications on "Appreciative Inquiry," "Action Research" and "Appreciative Action Research," totalling 10,286 publications at time of search, were not marketed as proponents, or even covering "Participatory" versions of those change methods. This was a curious characteristic and perhaps reminiscent of historic approaches to executing organisational change where change was 'done to' others through top-down mandate. This could also have been a symptom of nomenclature. In the business literature where the authors are practitioners, there was perhaps an unspoken or ill-defined assumption that the author was writing as a participant having executed change themselves or on behalf of clients.

Having explored the broad literature landscape, I delved deeper into specific topics relevant to this research. Given the sheer scale of the existing literature, I could not cover it all. The articles and authors explored in this chapter have been selected based on two criteria: the accessibility of their published work (I have not reviewed work that is behind an online pay wall), and the applicability of their work to this research based on the research purpose. As this research explored the efficacy of a blended AI / AR approach to change, the section below considers literature on both approaches individually and combined. I also considered how pragmatism manifests in research as this was a direct experience of this research. And with the research purpose also seeking to achieve positive business outcomes, I considered practitioner models of change in comparison to the academic approaches.

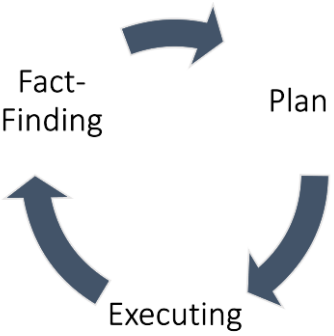
Action Research (AR)

Kurt Lewin first articulated a need for research to have an action or outcome focus (Lewin, 1946). His perspective was that challenges within a social context could only be solved by those living the experiences, and therefore the action part of the proposed research approach was required, aligning with classical pragmatism philosophy (Putnam, 1987, cited in Bacon, 2012). Figure 3.1 below provides a simple visualisation of Lewin's AR. The fundamentals included three stages in a cyclical process. 'Plan' was the diagnostic phase, working with participants to understand the challenge at hand, the context, and potential barriers. During this phase potential change initiatives were developed and assessed for their effectiveness. 'Executing' was the implementation of the selected change initiatives. 'Fact-Finding' (or reconnaissance) was a collaborative process to consider the success or otherwise of each initiative, what made it a success or failure, and what would be different if run again. This reflection then fed into the planning phase of the next cycle of AR thus building a cyclical culture of continuous improvement (Lewin, 1946).

Unfortunately, Lewin passed away before he could flesh out his proposed approach. Some writers, for example Egan and Lancaster (2005), have pointed to this as an explanation for the proliferation of AR. Just a decade after Lewin's initial contemplations, writers were exploring what this new approach really meant for their field. Hodgkinson (1957) considered what in his words was an "explosion" of the use of AR in education. This increased use, in his view, was going unchallenged with his review uncovering only three papers presenting critiques. Hodgkinson offered his own critique in an educational setting. He argued that from a process perspective, there were barriers which could render AR to be unworkable, including: the time required for practitioners to engage in the research effectively on top of full-time roles, or the associated cost of backfilling those roles to ensure day to day delivery continued while the research was undertaken; a lack of experience or confidence to execute rigorous research; and a potential lack of leadership skills to effectively manage the inter-

group dynamics. Hodgkinson also considered what he believed to be a fundamental flaw from an academic perspective – that the creation of knowledge through AR was undermined by transitory participant groups. Despite the age of the observations, Hodgkinson's perceived barriers to AR were all encountered through this research.

Figure 3.1 - Basic Structure of Action Research



Writers such as Susman and Evered (1978) continued to champion AR as a way of utilising research to achieve action. In their view, AR was the vehicle to achieve what traditional organisational science approaches at that time could not, which was real-world action that was needed by organisations. Susman and Evered's argument, while not dissimilar from Hodgkinson's, highlighted a different perspective. With Susman and Evered's focus on organisational development, their paper was much clearer and more articulate on the connection of research to outcomes. This connection was not as prevalent in Hodgkinson's paper that explored AR in the context of education, and though it was not by any means silent on the desire for results to yield implementable change, Hodgkinson still held an appreciation of the intellectual pursuit of knowledge rather than being wholly focused on action.

Lennung and Hult (1980) challenged the accepted definition of AR and believed that "research that results in action" was too crude to understand the complexity and nuance. Instead, they offered the following definition (Ibid, page 242):

> *"Action research simultaneously assists in Practical problem solving and expands scientific knowledge, as well as enhances the competencies of the respective actors, being performed collaboratively in an immediate situation using data feedback in a cyclical process aiming at an increased understanding of a given social situation, primarily applicable for the understanding of change processes in social systems and undertaken within a mutually acceptable ethical framework."*

Lennung and Hult's definition highlighted key attributes of AR that were echoed elsewhere in the literature: problem solving, enhancing knowledge, collaboration, and cyclical process.

Continuing into the early nineties, there was a flurry of publications either extolling the value or offering critiques of AR. McCutcheon and Jung (1990) explored the epistemological paradigms of several AR publications and found three broad approaches: Positivist, Interpretivist and Critical Science. McCutcheon and Jung described the variety as the "family" of AR, connected by core principles but differentiated by core philosophies. Their argument however stopped at the identification and analysis of the different epistemologies displayed without considering that their own chosen epistemology could be providing them with a lens that offered only one of many possible explanations. They argued that the reason for the different approaches was due to the relative life experiences of the researchers. The inference was that they believed in the Critical Science epistemology and an understanding of reality based on personal interpretation within the social construct they were in. McCutcheon and Jung did not pass judgment as to whether a particular

epistemological approach was appropriate for AR, though their field was education, and their chosen epistemology implied a preference.

Calhoun (1993) grouped AR publications in the education field into three groups: Individual (researcher-led), Collaborative (Volunteer group), and Schoolwide (system-wide). In parallel, Elden and Chisholm (1993) described the proliferation of AR models as "emergent variety" and classified them into five categories rather than Calhoun's three. And while Calhoun's classification explored the relative ambition and scale of projects, Elden and Chisholm instead considered the value to the generation of scientific knowledge. With echoes of Hodgkinson (1957), Elden and Chisholm raised the challenge of whether those not trained as social scientists could have effectively conducted research that generated "reliable" (scientific) knowledge. In their view, AR was a methodology for practitioners and not academics. This challenge was paramount for this research for both myself and for the participants to the extent that they were involved in research elements. In chapter 1 I outlined the research purpose, and in chapter 2 considered the degree of 'participation' at key stages in the research. Therefore, the ability to achieve positive change must be balanced with the necessary rigour to develop a new and reliable contribution to the field of organisational change. I considered this through many stages of this research and the relevant and relative contribution that this research made. Eden and Huxham (1996) offered an olive branch in this regard. The core of their argument was that AR was an inappropriate approach to adopt for doctoral research. They argued that the knowledge and experience required to make it effective was lacking in doctoral students who did not have the necessary understanding of the organisational context. Indirectly, they argued therefore that a participatory approach to AR was likely to yield positive results. While I did not adopt AR as my core approach for this research, I conducted this project on my workplace meaning I held an innate understanding the organisational context and cultural dynamics.

More than half a century after Lewin's initial concept, researchers were still publishing papers that purported to define AR. Altrichter et al. (2002) explored several prevailing definitions in their search for a conclusive one. Their search was likely a result of the continuing proliferation of approaches. Even after that, Kemmis (2010) argued for a continued evaluation of AR to place less emphasis on the creation of new knowledge and to make it inextricably linked to achieving change – defined by its outcomes. Zuber-Skerritt and Fletcher (2007) recognised the same tension but approached it with a view to outline the necessary steps that AR should take to ensure the appropriate academic rigour was applied in human and social sciences in order to be an effective approach for higher level theses. Hammersley (2007) also picked up on this tension and referenced back to the Greek hierarchy of inquiry being superior to practice. Hammersley explored this through his paper and recognised that there was a need for either the academic or the practical application to take precedent in any given research project otherwise the inevitable conflict of priorities would result in neither being executed effectively. Having conducted this research within my work environment, my priority was the effective implementation of change with a firm belief that the journey would yield positive contributions to the field of organisational change. This was a tension and source of potential conflict that is reflected on elsewhere in this thesis but was a tension that took an interesting turn in the reflections of other authors. Swann (2002) compared AR to the iterative process of the practice of design. Swann's consideration of the practice with the research was enlightening, as it opened the mind to the possibility of AR without conflict. A further reflection made and explored throughout this research was the familiarity of the participant groups with a problem-oriented approach to change, such as AR. The cultural acceptance of this bodes well for AR, though in the context of this research proved a challenge to implement change using a blended approach.

The nature of this research involved groups of participants and me as both researcher and actively involved in determining and delivering change. One branch of AR that was particularly applicable was

participatory action research (PAR). Keeping with the trend of significant effort going into defining AR, Argyris and Schön (1989, page 613) developed a clear definition:

> *"Form of action research that involves practitioners as both subjects and coresearchers. It is based on the Lewinian proposition that causal inferences about the behavior of human beings are more likely to be valid and enactable when the human beings in question participate in building and testing them."*

The connection and direct involvement of the researcher was the key differentiator compared to other strands of AR. Other authors have sought to improve on that definition. Kidd and Kral (2005) considered it from an applied psychology perspective and put particular emphasis on participation. They considered PAR to be a general, macro-level model, with micro-level activities defined by circumstance locally. Baum et al. (2006) explored PAR in care settings and identified three key attributes that complemented the above definition: a key to success was remaining action or solution focused; there had to be no power imbalance between researcher and participants; and participants needed to be involved throughout the process rather than only at specific stages. Kemmis (2006) considered PAR in education and sought to understand the necessary elements to achieve a high standard of research. His paper argued from an ambitious perspective that PAR should seek to achieve significant change and be harnessed to create an emancipatory education system. The example cited was rather than teachers seeking to make their teaching more effective for the children to attain higher marks, they should instead seek to educate students to prepare them for a better society. This was an interesting position, not least because it offered direct challenge to this research. Where I sought to improve behaviours towards sustainable procurement within the procurement function, extrapolating Kemmis' premise I should have instead sought to influence the organisation to become more sustainable. Indeed, that would be a worthwhile ambition but one beyond the scope of influence of myself as researcher.

Ozanne and Saatcioglu (2008) also explored a definition of Participatory AR. They described three approaches which appeared to have some alignment with Calhoun's three levels of ambition for AR (Calhoun, 1993). First Ozanne and Saatcioglu recognised Lewin's initiation of AR with his focus on organisational change. They then credit Freire with Community AR which looked at community level change (Freire, 1970, cited in Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008). Finally, they considered Participatory Rural Appraisal from Chambers as change that focused on influencing individuals within communities (Chambers, 1994, cited in Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008). These distinctions are interesting in the context of this research, where the stated purpose was to improve behaviours towards sustainable procurement across the procurement function (so potentially aligning to the community level change) but to achieve behavioural change, one needs to influence individuals (so potentially aligning to the individuals within communities' level of change).

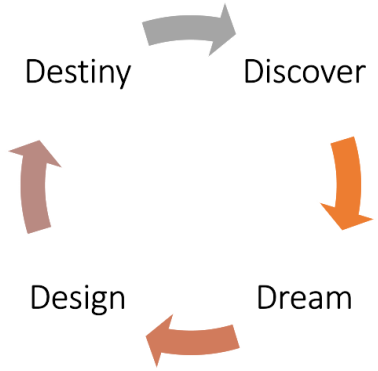
AR evolved significantly over the last 70+ years. However, in all its guises and degrees of participation, there was an emphasis on orientating towards fixing problems and having a bias for action. This had great appeal, particularly in practitioner communities, but it was worth reflecting on the counter argument – fixing problems was, by necessity, a backwards looking activity. AR limited the ability to seek and explore new opportunities. There was less emphasis on cultural change as there was less priority given to the cultural cohesion of the participants than with other research approaches. Argyris and Schön (1989) cited the Rashomon Effect as a significant hurdle for AR – that stories from different observers are often different and incompatible making diagnosis of the issues difficult. Argyris and Schön argued that AR needed to "peel the causal onion" to get to the truth of the matter and adopting double loop learning was an effective tool to support the change efforts. Standing in contrast with AR then, was AI.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

A comparatively recent concept, AI was developed by David Cooperrider as part of his postgraduate work and has since led to his and others establishing dedicated consultancies to its implementation. AI was formed around a four-stage model visualised in Figure 3.2 and was defined by Cooperrider and Whitney (2001, page 3) as:

> *"AI deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from accounts of this "positive change core"—and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized."*

Figure 3.2 - Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Model



The four stages in Figure 3.2, known as the 4-D Model, articulated as 'Discover' the strengths of the organisation (or subject group of the research), 'Dream' of the best possible ideal for the organisation, 'Design' change initiatives to move the organisation towards that ideal, and 'Destiny' or deliver those changes.

For a comparatively young approach to change, AI has had a range of writers proposing enhancements, adaptations, and further clarity on Cooperrider's initial model. Hall and Hammond (1998) outlined the key assumptions that AI was based upon. What was notable was that there were implied epistemological stand points for AI ("there are multiple realities"), there was a connection between focus and reality generation, and that there was an acknowledgement of other previously accepted norms – that the act of inquiry had an influence in some way on the participants. This was echoed by Mohr and Watkins (2002) who observed three other areas of research that supported the underpinning assumptions of AI: 'The Placebo Effect', 'the Pygmalion effect', and 'Internal Dialogues'. Each of these areas of research emphasised the role that held perceptions had and, if individuals held to positive interpretations or mindsets, those could have manifested in positive outcomes.

While Hall and Hammond (1998) explored the underpinning assumptions of AI, other writers considered the structure of the 4-D Model itself. Whitney and Schau (1998) kept to the 4-D Model but articulated a breakdown of it into 10 steps that began with establishing the context of the inquiry. The way that Whitney and Schau positioned the initial step was partly to ensure the researcher and participants were clear on the organisational and environmental context to the inquiry (the why are we here), but also ensured that all parties were familiar and aligned with the principles and commitment required for successful AI. This was a crucial step not always articulated in papers or models of AI and aligned with the experience of this research, that participants were not culturally ready for breaking from traditional problem-oriented change approaches. What Whitney and Schau stated as the first activity within the 4-D model, other writers separated out into a fifth "D": 'Defining' (Priest et al., 2013, Hall and Hammond, 1998). Priest et al. (2013) took this approach and emphasised the need to explain the appreciative process to all participants. They also argued for the Leadership team within an organisation to set the focus of the inquiry rather than opening it up system wide. This

was partly to ensure the AI aligned with the organisational objectives but also to lock-in the commitment from the leadership team to the process as AI required commitment, dedication, and resource to sustain it over time. Priest et al. (2013) also encountered a similar situation to this research that change through an appreciative process was not immediately visible and the impacts of it were only to be seen beyond the time horizon of the research.

Priest et al.'s (2013) conclusion on the need for leadership engagement was an echo of the experience of Reed et al. (2002). In their experience, the lack of senior leadership engagement in their programme was interpreted as a lack of commitment to both the process and change initiatives developed. This manifested as scaled back ambition from the participants which was the experience of this research in cycle 1. Despite their setbacks however, Reed et al. (2002) made some interesting observations. They positioned AI as being a part of the AR framework. This was a view mirrored by other writers, such as Grant and Humphries (2006), and highlighted an interesting phenomenon where AI was attached or compared to different change approaches from different disciplines in a way that AR was not. Grant and Humphries (2006) for example considered what they called the "paradox" of AI and 'Critical Theories' and used their analysis to propose a blended approach they called 'Critical Appreciative Practices' that emphasised the emancipatory potential of both models. Fitzgerald et al. (2010) considered AI in the context of the 'Shadow' - "everything the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself" (Jung, 1968, p.284, cited in Fitzgerald et al., 2010). In their view, AI could create shadow by shining a light on only the positive and ignoring the negative. It could also intervene in the shadow by shining a light on aspects not normally considered, or it could be a "shadow process" itself by generating the courage among participants to explore those more difficult topics. This view of AI having the potential to spark other explorations was shared by Rogers and Fraser (2003) who believed that a strength of AI was that it could generate the courage for participants to tackle issues. These perspectives reinforced the perception that there was an inextricable connection between AI and AR, that they are not mutually exclusive and could lend themselves to blended approaches.

There was a considerable body of literature that explored the virtue and value of AI. Cram (2010) found it to be particularly effective when there was an existing cultural alignment towards exploring the positive as opposed to the negative in their research on Māori families. Whitney and Cooperrider (1998) described AI as being "radically participatory" in its ability to bring together large groups of people all with a future focus. Whitney and Schau (1998) highlighted a key strength in AI in its ability to "design the future".

Curiously though, there appeared to have been a cohort of writers that selected only part of the AI model and others who appear to have contradicted the foundational purpose of it. Coghlan et al. (2003) for example concluded there were significant advantages to using AI and positioned their argument for it being an effective tool to use but described it as being effective at addressing organisational issues. This appears to fly in the face of the premise of AI to be opportunity-oriented (Egan and Lancaster, 2005) but was echoed by others such as Mohr and Watkins (2002) who posited that the starting point for AI for organisations was to honestly acknowledge current issues. Some writers only used AI for very specific parts of their research. Michael (2006) used AI techniques for cross-cultural interviews for her research but did not move beyond the Discovery phase. Similarly, Johnson and Leavitt (2001) ran AI workshops as part of their research but did not have any involvement in the implementation of the change initiatives identified. This lack of connection to the implementation of change highlighted a commonly held opinion as to the weakness of AI – its reliance on the cultural condition of the participants and their predisposition to appreciative change. Liebling et al. (1999) described this as AI being bounded by the imagination of participants. In their exploration of AI in the context of prison officer / prisoner relationships, the 'best' day for prison officers was one without violence. They termed this "Institutional Negativity" and considered it a major barrier for successful appreciative change. Their greatest concern was a potentially demoralising effect of falling

short of the envisioned 'ideal' which again resonated with the disconnect of AI to the implementation of change. Bolstering this argument, Whitney and Schau's (1998) 10 step process was not evenly distributed between the four stages of the 4-D Model. Eight of their 10 steps were to do with the first and second stages, leaving 'Design' and 'Destiny' with one explanatory step each. Busche and Kassam (2005) highlighted an 80% failure rate in change initiatives, demonstrating the symptoms of this lack of focus on implementable change. Busche and Kassam (2005) and Van der Haar and Hoskin (2004) argued that alternative metrics of success should be considered, including whether new knowledge was created or if relationships had improved. In this researcher's opinion, this missed what was likely to be key drivers for organisational investment in change processes which was tangible improvement in outcomes.

The other commonly referenced challenge with AI was that it was overly focused on the positive. In the words of Rogers and Fraser (2003, page 77), this led to "papering over substantive problems" and could be used to "collude with the powerful people who want the unexamined to remain so". Egan and Lancaster (2005) picked up on this theme and referred to AI as being "opportunity-oriented". However, Bushe (2013) challenged this oversimplification as reducing AI to substantively less than it should have been. In his view, AI was, at its core, generative, in that it developed ideas and encouraged participation in a way that continually built on the ideas that have come before in a virtuous cycle. Bushe did not go so far as to say it but did imply advocacy for approaches to change that adopted problem or opportunity orientations so long as they were generative in nature. In his earlier paper, Bushe (2007) articulated some suggested conditions for achieving positive change. In these suggestions, he created a degree of alignment with Agile change approaches adopted widely in the IT and digital industries. These included "creating collective agreement on what you are trying to accomplish," "they don't need permission to act," and "leaders track progress and fan the flames of change" (Ibid, page 6–7). This had strong alignment with Agile change which emphasised minimal governance and enabled and empowered change teams to take necessary steps (Rigby, Elk, Berez and Bain & Company, 2020).

Bushe (2013) was not the only author who articulated the possibility of duel or blended approaches. As noted above, his paper with Kassam (Bushe and Kassam, 2005) contained a nod to the benefits of a blended approach. Raymond and Hall (2008) in their attempt to apply AI in the tourism industry encountered difficulties and, in taking pragmatic steps to continue to make progress, ended up with a form of blended AR and AI. Similarly, Lutgen-Sandvik et al.'s (2016) experience found that both positive and negative behaviours existed in parallel within organisational contexts and therefore an approach to change that recognised and was amenable to both was more likely to be successful. These arguments logically require then a consideration of blended approaches to organisational change.

Blended Approaches

The perspectives discussed above regarding AR and AI articulated advantages and disadvantages to each. A relatively new approach considered since the end of the 1990's was to combine AR and AI. By blending them, researchers had the opportunity to extract the best elements of each to create a model of change that capitalised on the respective benefits while minimising or removing the disadvantages. The two most frequently referenced examples of this are Cady & Caster's DIET model (2000), and Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005).

Cady and Caster (2000) developed the DIET model (Diagnosis, Intervention, Evaluation, Transfer). Their proposal was that this "bi-model" or "balanced" approach blended AR and AI in a way that provided a succinct model for organisational development practitioners and addressed the weaknesses of each of the original approaches. Their paper appeared to be the first, or at least the earliest with multiple citations, that explored the possibility of a blended approach. The DIET model was positioned as a simplification of Lewin's original AR approach (Lewin, 1948, cited in Cady and

Caster, 2000) and subsequent developments by other writers over the decades. The DIET model incorporated AI principles using AR as its core. Cady and Caster expanded on an interview of David Cooperrider cited in Gotches and Ludema (1995) where Cooperrider argued that "Action Research does not emphasise a continuation of the client / practitioner relationship" (Cady and Caster, 2000, page 80). Cady and Caster, and Cooperrider, acknowledged that appreciative approaches created a continuing relationship between client and change practitioner, and that there was an implied dependence on the change practitioner. In an organisational context, this meant that organisations needed to retain change practitioners either as employees or via ongoing contractual relationships. The cost of external change practitioners was prohibitive, and procurement best practice was to ensure change agents with suitable and relevant experience were engaged for each specific project. Creating an internal capability to facilitate change (such as intrapreneurs) could have been feasible but the organisation would have to have been of sufficient size to warrant the dedicated resources and would likely have been a signal of constant large-scale change. The downside would have been change fatigue (Bernerth et al., 2011) materialising sooner and more acutely among participants with the cognitive effort required to operate in a new and positive mindset compared to utilising a familiar problem-oriented approach such as AR, kaizen, or lean six-sigma.

Cady and Caster's (2000) argument for a blended approach was based on the perceived weaknesses of AR and AI expressed either by others or from their own experience – though it was not clear from the article whether their personal experience was first-hand or synthesised from published material. As of the 3rd February 2022, their paper had been cited a total of 55 times. I explored the top 19 citations and noted some interesting trends. Those 19 citations came from 7 different fields (Care; Coaching; Education; Information Systems; Organisational Development; Sustainable Development; Theoretical) and had themselves more than 2,400 citations collectively. Of those 19 citations, 11 had not referenced the intention of Cady and Caster's paper which was to propose the blended approach. Those 11 citations had cited Cady and Caster's work to utilise their arguments either for or against AR or AI (Kulski et al., 2002, Davison et al., 2004, Plunkett et al., 2004, Lind, 2005, Peelle III, 2006, Adams and McNicholas, 2007, Atkinson and Lim, 2013, Daddi et al., 2014, Crick and Crick, 2016, Woodfield et al., 2017, Sisson, 2019). Of the 8 citations that referenced Cady and Caster's intent (Egan and Lancaster, 2005, Doveston and Keenaghan, 2006, Sanson and Schreiber-Abshire, 2006, Dewar, 2011, Freidman, 2011, Sanson and Schreiber-Abshire, 2011, Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2016, Gordon, 2020) only 4 supported the value of a balanced approach. One was a paper in the Organisational Development field (Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2016), two were PhD theses in the Care field (Dewar, 2011, Gordon, 2020), and the final paper was the starting point for this research (Egan and Lancaster, 2005). Of those 4 citations however, only two truly considered a balanced approach for their work (Egan and Lancaster, 2005, Dewar, 2011) and both of those opted for the Egan and Lancaster model.

Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (Egan and Lancaster, 2005) struck a different path to Cady and Caster's DIET Model (2000). Cady and Caster used a refined AR model as the core of their proposed approach and augmented it with AI principles. Egan and Lancaster took the opposite approach and based their model on AI, taking only the evaluative elements of AR to augment their model. Egan and Lancaster rationalised this amalgamation based on feedback from organisational development practitioners. Interestingly, Egan and Lancaster acknowledged that their proposed model was a representation of what some organisational development practitioners were already doing – namely blending AR and AI in practice. They were doing this pragmatically, determining what worked for them in the situations they were in rather than being wedded to a particular model of change. This research echos that experience, with pragmatism being not only the philosophical research paradigm, but underpinning the decision-making process throughout.

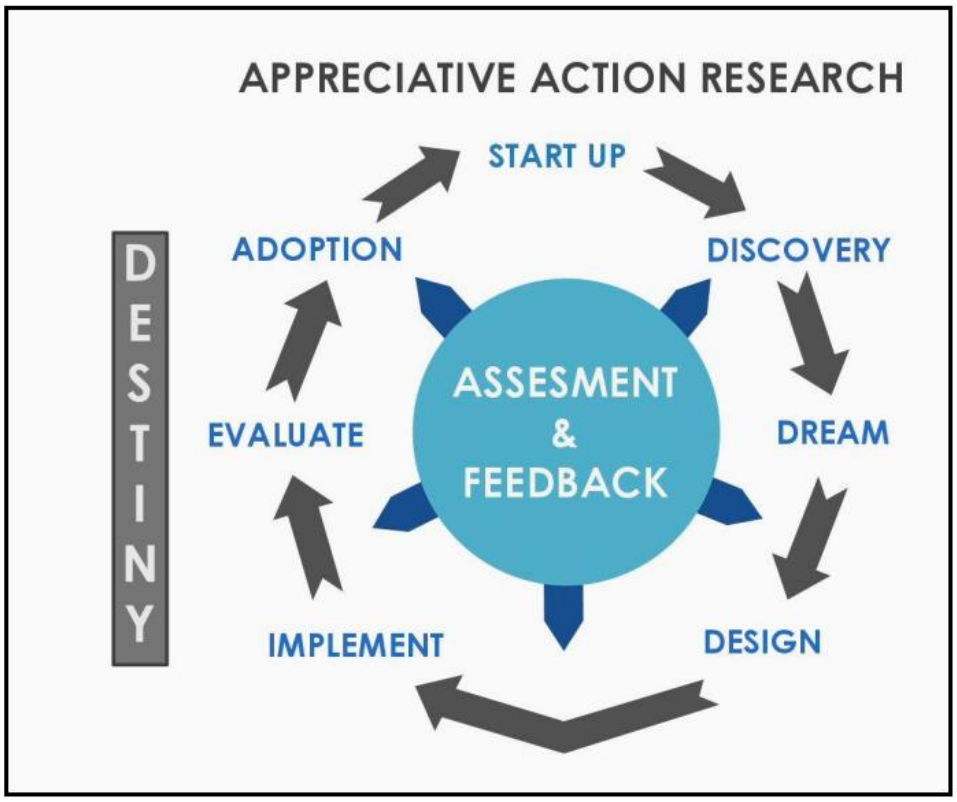
Egan and Lancaster's model was interesting. Beyond the structure and application, which I covered in chapter 2, it appeared to be the most widely cited example of an attempt to blend AR and AI. Despite

its 2005 publication being five years later than Cady and Caster's DIET model, Egan and Lancaster's paper racked up 154 citations as of the 3rd February 2022, almost three times the citations. Due to its wider referencing, I explored the top 25 citations in the same way as I explored for Cady and Caster, representing 3,893 citations between them. While Cady and Caster's paper was referenced across 7 different fields, Egan and Lancaster's top 25 citations were related to just 5 fields (Care; Education; Organisational Development; Theoretical; Tourism). Although not a complete view of all references, it suggested that Egan and Lancaster's model gained greater penetration in those fields of knowledge than Cady and Caster's.

Considering the same analysis as before, of those 25 citations, 19 papers did not reference the intention behind Egan and Lancaster's paper – namely the proposed blended model (Havens et al., 2006, Dick, 2007, Lalonde, 2007, Calabrese et al., 2008, Calabrese et al., 2008, Raymond and Hall, 2008, Vitale et al., 2008, Rhonda et al., 2009, Calabrese et al., 2010, Fouche and Light, 2010, Grandy and Holton, 2010, Helms and Nixon, 2010, Kelly, 2010, San Martin and Calabrese, 2011, Bushe, 2012, Mishra and Bhatnagar, 2012, Nyaupane and Poudel, 2012, Bushe, 2013, Verleysen et al., 2014). As with Cady and Caster's paper, those citing Egan and Lancaster appeared to be piggy backing on their secondary research for definitions of AR or AI rather than taking their arguments to heart and reflecting those appropriately. Of the 6 publications that did reflect Egan and Lancaster's intention (Doveston and Keenaghan, 2006, Dewar and Mackay, 2010, Dewar, 2011, Baur and Abma, 2012, Dewar and Nolan, 2013, Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2016), 4 supported the use of a balanced approach (Dewar and Mackay, 2010, Dewar, 2011, Dewar and Nolan, 2013, Lutgen-Sandvik et al., 2016), although one of those articulated their support for it but ended up utilising an AI approach (Dewar and Mackay, 2010).

Dewar's PhD thesis was an interesting case (Dewar, 2011). It argued the value of Egan and Lancaster's blended approach and noted how it sought to build on the strengths of AR and AI while *"The study foregrounds AI as the principle approach guiding the study but uses elements of AR to enhance the rigour that is less explicit in AI." (*Dewar, 2011, page 79). However, Dewar consciously adapted the model in three distinct ways prior to beginning the research (Figure 3.3). The first was to put Assessment and Feedback at the heart of the model, including it at every stage of proceedings. Egan and Lancaster's model included a defined Assessment and Feedback phase that acted as a gate keeper prior to implementation of initiatives to ensure whatever activities were proposed would be aligned with the ambition for change. Dewar did not offer any rationale for this adaptation of Egan and Lancaster's model however it was one I had sympathy for. This research found a need for regular review and opportunity to exit cycles of change at almost every stage. Dewar's principle of having a form of review at every stage was something that the experience of this research supported. However, removing the designated Assessment and Feedback phase was likely to result in either a scatter gun approach to change (a 'we'll try anything' approach because there was no stage gate review that could have accepted or rejected initiative proposals) or an over reliance on the agent facilitating / leading the change process. They would be required to apply their own discretion of what went ahead or what did not which increased the risk of possible biases distorting the cycle. The structure of Egan and Lancaster's model was a conscious decision by the authors to include an evaluative phase to *"...assess the established goals and what it would take to achieve them"* (Egan and Lancaster, 2005, page 46).

Figure 3.3 - Adaptation of Egan and Lancaster's (2005) Appreciative Action Research Model (Dewar, 2011)



Dewar's second adaptation of Egan and Lancaster's model was to remove the "Separation" option. Dewar chose to retain "Adoption" of change post the Evaluation phase which was a curious representation. Visually, Dewar seemed to be suggesting an assumed adoption of the changes that were implemented. This could have been a reasonable assumption if the core Assessment & Feedback process at each stage of the cycle had been successful. However, the inclusion of just adoption is contrary to the real risks involved in making change successful. Brown et al.'s (2010) 'Wicked Problems' suggest that there was always a pervading risk that change will not be successful and therefore any visualisation of a change process should have considered this risk.

The final adaptation that Dewar makes to Egan and Lancaster's Model was to include a "Destiny" step, off to the side and not connected to the cycle at all. Dewar was utilising language from AI (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) to articulate a stage of considering how to make the change sustainable. It was curious that this stage was not connected to the model. What was more curious however was that having taken the time to explore the benefits of a blended AR and AI approach, and to have presented an adapted version of Egan and Lancaster's model, Dewar chose to utilise a standard AI approach for their research project.

Cady and Caster's DIET model (2000) and Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005) were the most widely referenced blended approaches. Alternatives exist, such as Cook's 'multimethodology' that sought to blend a soft systems methodology of AR with AI and a collective statement of ethics (Cook, 2011). Cook's ambition was to even out the potential power imbalances that could have inhibited open dialogue in any individual methodology. Whichever blended model or approach considered; they had gained limited penetration in the academic literature in any given field. Egan and Lancaster's paper however, being based on the interview feedback provided by organisational development practitioners, suggested that blended approaches had been adopted in professional practice as a pragmatic solution to the inherent drawbacks of each standalone approach to change. This opened interesting doors for this research. There was an opportunity to contribute to the limited academic literature on blended approaches with the specific context of this research. Moreover, it was an

opportunity to put a blended approach into practice and to reflect on the experience to provide first-hand insight into the potential pragmatic adaptations that might be required along the research journey.

Pragmatic Research

A key theme through this research was the role of pragmatism. In chapter 2, I explored pragmatism as a philosophy but its use in this research extended beyond the philosophy and into the practical. Pragmatic research, however, was a relatively unexplored field. Glasgow (2013) reflects the philosophy of pragmatism as he considers 'Pragmatic Approaches' to connect research and practice, arguing that there should be greater focus on translating scientific research into action and decision-making in the real world. This perspective had relevance for my research which sought real world positive impact from academic research.

Pragmatic research was not well defined as a field of study. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) for example, argued pragmatic research was an approach that blends quantitative and qualitative research. Their paper categorised research methodologies into either of those camps and argued that pragmatic research provided a multimethodological solution that avoided the pitfalls of 'purist' approaches. Johnson et al. (2000) took a similar position but termed it 'British Pluralism', the adoption of multiple methodologies to achieve what 'purist' approaches could not. By these definitions, the blended change models proposed by Cady and Caster (2000) and Egan and Lancaster (2005) would be considered pragmatic.

Johnson et al.'s (2000) perspective ran contrary to some opinions. Levin and Greenwood (2001, cited in Reason and Bradbury, 2001) argued that universities should adopt pragmatic action research as their core approach to research as it "*can be deployed to reconnect universities productively with the broader societal processes of knowledge generation and organizational learning*" (page 104). This perspective shunned not only research approaches that were not explicitly underpinned by a pragmatist philosophy, but also any approach to research that was not action research. Interestingly, they did not distinguish between different schools of pragmatist philosophy, which suggested they took a reasonably superficial view of pragmatism before hitching their wagon to it as the saviour of university research – they suggested that without pragmatic action research that university research capabilities would "wither".

Levin and Greenwood's (2001, cited in Reason and Bradbury, 2001) argument was based on the belief that research should aim to achieve real world outcomes and determined that to be pragmatic. However, part of the challenge with pragmatic research has been that the term covers both a philosophy (as explored in chapter 2) and carries a colloquially understood meaning of practicality. Gallagher (2012) highlighted the differences between the two, suggesting that in the colloquial sense, a pragmatist was almost gung-ho in pursuit of outcomes without necessarily stopping to consider the wider ramifications. As the pragmatist hit an impasse, they diverted to the next best alternative. The more effective approach however could have been to step back and consider the broader picture which might have presented an alternative approach that avoided the impasse altogether. This, to Gallagher, was the impact of a focus on outcomes at the expense of consequences and had interesting implications for this research. This research sought to utilise a pragmatic blend of change models to achieve improved sustainable procurement outcomes, underpinned by a pragmatist research paradigm.

Other writers accepted that a balance had to be found. Johansson and Lindhult (2008) also argued for pragmatic AR with a first 'critical choice' that researchers needed to integrate their research practice with taking action in the real world. Johansson and Lindhult go on to describe how pragmatic AR has a 'legitimate responsibility for action' and that the value of such research is in the experience of

experimenting rather than conceptual observation (Ibid, 2008). The push towards action was echoed by Salem and Shields (2010) who described the 'auto-catalytic nature' of pragmatic inquiry as reflection on action informed and steered the next action. Schön's (2016) concept of professional knowledge and "reflection-on-action" looms large in the way that Salem and Shields (2010) articulate the value of pragmatic inquiry. The inference, perhaps, is that pragmatic research approaches are inherently reliant on practice-based professionals to implement them successfully – success in this instance being the value of the knowledge and outcomes produced as a result of the research.

Also pushing the boundaries of pragmatic research was Metcalfe (2008) who proposed a series of principles for inquiry to be considered pragmatic. In these principles, Metcalfe incorporates the pragmatist philosophy, as well as the experimental and action-bias of colloquial pragmatism. His principles reflect an alignment with AAR as they consider the positive role that the community of participants could have in shaping the opportunity, and the reflective nature of experimentation. His final principle required the researcher to reflect on the "consequences" of the actions they had taken which suggested a move from a pure outcome orientation to one that considers the wider implications. In this way, Metcalfe arguably incorporated a concept like Brown et al.'s 'wicked problems' (2010) into pragmatic research as in consideration of the consequences of actions, researchers would need to reflect on the broader picture of change beyond the boundaries of the research itself. Widening the metaphorical net like this would capture more variables and influences on the research and inform subsequent actions in a way that a pure consideration of the research activities alone would fail to achieve.

Practitioner models of change

Reflecting on the implications of Egan and Lancaster's practitioner interviews (Egan and Lancaster, 2005) as discussed above had some interesting implications. If organisational development practitioners recognised the strengths and weaknesses of both AR and AI, it was a logical assumption that they were developing blended approaches that capitalised on the collective strengths of those two approaches while minimising the perceived weaknesses. This assumption was based on the innate responsibility for practitioners to be successful in delivering the targeted change. For those who were employees, they had an obligation to their employer and the ultimate sanction could have been that they lost their jobs for underperformance. For those who were external change agents (such as consultants) they risked losing business, thus negatively impacted their reputation in the market and caused damage to future business prospects. Those logical arguments were supported by the assertions of Brown et al. (2010) who used the term 'Applicability Gap' to describe the gap created between academic study and the real world. In their view this gap, caused by narrow scopes of inquiry in academic studies, resulted in those studies either not representing or potentially not being applicable to real-world situations. In their view, academic studies often did not account for the various and often unpredictable factors in the real world that can influence outcomes. An experience replicated through this research.

Exploring practitioner models of change provided insights into the various approaches that were developed through pragmatic experimentation. It was worth acknowledging that there were some quirks to analysing practitioner models of change. First was the overlap between practitioner and academic communities. Several academics developed consultancy services to complement their academic work such as Kotter and Rathgeber (2017), Scotton and Scott (2017) or Benn et al. (2018) or have shared through publication their experiences of implementing change, such as Johnson (1999) or Kelman (2005). A second group contributing to the practitioner literature were those academics sharing their experience via a different medium than via journals. In this group would be academics such as Schön (2016), Thaler and Sunstein (2009), and Brown et al. (2010) who used their research and practice experience to argue a perspective rather than as a particular pitch for business. There were likely different motivating factors for academics to publish in the practitioner literature.

Undoubtedly there was a commercial lens. Publishing papers in academic journals yielded no direct financial reward while authors stood to profit from the sale of books. There could also have been indirect benefits if academics could point to the popularity of publications, there could have been connections to future applications for grants and research funding, or as part of pitches to win business for their own or affiliated consultancies. There were fewer barriers to publishing in the practitioner literature. Publishing in academic literature required set submission deadlines, peer review and opened the door to other academics' rebuttals, something that was less likely in the professional literature. Mulligan and Mabe found that the primary motivator for academics to publish was to further their own career, and that the advent of the internet and the explosion in the volume of published research had done little to impact that driving factor (Mulligan and Mabe, 2011).

A third group contributing to the practitioner literature were dedicated consultancies who supported their employees to publish pieces as both an employee engagement opportunity and marketing opportunity. For example, Efficio Consulting enabled three Partners to co-author a book on procurement delivery (Klein, Whatson, and Oliveira, 2021), Steve Gates, the founder, and CEO of the Gap Partnership negotiation consultancy (Gates, 2016), or McChesney, Covey, and Huling from FranklinCovey (2015). Indeed, there were also consultancies that published in their own name rather than of their employees, such as Collinson Grant (Collinson Grant, 2015). The final group were those practitioners who appeared independent of any firm and published for their own interests using their own experience. They did not appear to present with any academic qualifications so based their publications on their own observations and experience. These included authors such as Heath and Heath with their "Switch" approach (Heath and Heath, 2011), Allende who extolled the virtue of being more "Pirate" (Allende, 2018) or Marquet who used his experience of leadership as a retired United States nuclear submarine commander (Marquet, 2020). Some publications were remarkably like academic theories, such as Griffiths and Costi (2019) whose proposed "solution finder" approach to creative thinking had parallels to appreciative research in that it sought system-wide input into 'optioneering' that was unconstrained and positive in nature. There were even personal biographical accounts that contributed to the professional literature in the field of organisational change, such as former UK Special Forces operator Ant Middleton's "First Man In" (Middleton, 2018), or the collaboration between author Harriet Beveridge and Olympic champion rower Ben Hunt-Davis about the journey to Olympic success for British Rowing in "Will It Make The Boat Go Faster?" (Hunt-Davis and Beveridge, 2012).

Proliferation did not necessarily equal quality, and it was fair to say that there were varying views of the associated value of some of the practitioner contributions. By and large, practitioners were seeking action-oriented solutions that broke complex topics such as organisational change down into easily understood and implementable steps. Rigorous statistical analysis into approaches or innovations were lower priority than something that could be communicated clearly and concisely. That clarity enabled adoption and, with an entrepreneurial spirit, the opportunity to test, fail and pivot to an alternative approach (Hoffman, 2017). Where the professional literature had specific relevance to this research was where academics had sought to share their first-hand experience of implementing change. As covered in chapter 2, my research sought to apply academic principles to a real-world change scenario and two publications from the practitioner literature had particularly significant relevance. First was Kelman (2005) who shared his experience of trying to achieve significant process and cultural change in US federal procurement. Despite Kelman being the most senior procurement professional in the US administration at the time, he had no direct positional authority over the procurement functions that sat within Federal departments and therefore a lot of the change he sought to implement had to be achieved through influencing. The second was Brown et al. (2010) who synthesised their collective efforts seeking to implement change that positively improved sustainability issues. They highlighted the need for multidisciplinary approaches as often problems like

sustainability were so complex (so called 'Wicked Problems') that they defied convenient definition, and the true extent of associated variables could not be adequately mapped, let alone controlled.

Sustainability & Behaviours

One of the key aspects to understanding behaviour was the deployment of the affect heuristic in decision making. This was where one's beliefs influenced how one saw the world and made decisions. An example given by Daniel Kahneman (2011) was that a person's political preferences were likely to determine which arguments that individual found compelling. Slovic et al. (2007) explored some of the academic experimental landscape on affect heuristics and reached a curious conclusion. In their view, the implication of the affect heuristic had the potential to render rational arguments "illusory." In their words:

> *"We cannot assume that an intelligent person can understand the meaning of and properly act upon even the simplest of numbers such as amounts of money, not to mention more esoteric measures or statistics, unless these numbers are infused with affect."*

This was an example of what Kahneman called "system 1 thinking" - thinking and decision making that happened automatically with little or no cognitive effort. Contemplating this in the context of my research necessitated two questions. Could change be implemented that tapped into pre-existing beliefs and emotions in a way that capitalised on the participants' individually held views? Could change be implemented in a way that adapted existing beliefs and emotions in a way that did not create cognitive dissonance but generated a newly held view of reality? Finding positive answers to these questions was crucial to achieving behavioural change in the participants.

Kwasnicka et al. (2016) considered this further. In their argument, change literature was successful at articulating methods for implementing change, and in securing behavioural change among participants, but there was little research or evidence of success in achieving maintenance of those changed behaviours over time. They believed that this forgotten aspect of the research was unjustifiably absent and that maintaining changed behaviours over the long term was a better measure of success. There were five themes identified that supported the maintenance of changed behaviours: Maintenance motives, Self-regulation, Resources, Habit, and Environmental and Social Influences (Kwasnicka et al., 2016). While these were developed through the lens of health behaviours, some writers have extolled the virtues of one or more of these themes in achieving desired change. Mischel (2015) for example, provided an overview of his lifetime of research on self-regulation and delayed gratification. Experiments going back several decades demonstrated the correlation between those able to delay gratification and lifetime outcomes. Mischel followed up his experiment with participants to demonstrate this causal relationship and, with various research teams, explored the same behaviours in other participant groups, finding similar correlations.

The Environmental and Social Influences theme was explored by Thaler and Sunstein (2009) in their work on Nudge theory. They explored the implications utilising small, and often unassuming changes to influence behaviour. A high-profile example that they cited was the switching of contributing towards an employer's pension scheme from opt-in to opt-out in the UK which saw a significant increase in the proportion of people who were then saving for their retirement, with the added social value of less reliance on the welfare state in later life. In the context of my research, identifying opportunities to utilise default options and opt-out rather than opt-in as part of change initiatives supported sustained behavioural change. Arguably the best example of exploration on one of Kwasnicka et al.'s themes from the practitioner world was Clear (2018). Clear focused on the Habit theme and explored how individuals could change their habits. Clear posited that while habits were the result of repetitive action, the underlying system was the critical element to achieve sustained behaviours. For example, your goal may have been to lose weight, but that goal in and of itself would not make it happen. There needed to be a system in place that achieved incremental steps that make the outcome inevitable – in the example of losing weight, it could have been that you went to the gym

every day at 6pm, or you had a healthy salad for lunch every day. While Kwasnicka et al.'s themes were, at the time, untested for their interrelation and validity beyond the Health sector, they resonated with other authors and provided guidance for my research.

My research sought behavioural change within the specific context of sustainability behaviours. There was a surprising number of articles published on this topic, perhaps recognition of the zeitgeist nature of sustainability. Although based on a limited pool of discussants, Maiteny (2002) identified the significant personal and emotion experience required to achieve long-term behavioural change. While there were echos between Maiteny's work and other articles discussed previously, there was particular alignment to the practitioner change model from Heath and Heath (2011). Maiteny identified the need for emotional motivation to engage participants in the change, something Heath and Heath likened to an emotional elephant given the size of the challenge but also the impact it could have had if successfully achieved. Similarly, Maiteny, referencing one discussant, highlighted the opportunity to utilise guidance to control behaviours and craft them into the desired ones. Heath and Heath referenced this as "script the change" thereby making it difficult for participants to not comply. This was an extension of Kahneman's System 1 and System 2 thinking (Kahneman, 2011) in that by scripting the change you removed the need for participants to expend cognitive resources to understand what they had to do. This enabled System 1 thinking to take place which was automatic and required low cognitive effort resulting in marked increases in compliance.

Research into sustainability change also identified specific barriers that were applicable through this research. Breunig (2013) identified the role that education had on building pro-environmental behaviours. Gelderman et al. (2017) articulated several barriers specifically to sustainable procurement. Conflicting priorities, lack of senior level support, inappropriate standards, and poor supplier commitment, all combined to prevent effective sustainable procurement initiatives from taking root. Interestingly, three out of the four identified barriers manifested explicitly within my research, the exception being the level of supplier commitment. The barriers identified by Gelderman et al. (2017) aligned with those identified in research by the European Pathway to Zero Waste (2011, cited by Theron and Dowden, 2014) and others. For example, Elkinton (1999) also picked up on the impact of senior leadership, summarising research that found while employees may believe in the "hard" values of an organisation (such as profitability), the proportion that believed their organisation took "soft" values (such as sustainability) seriously was much lower. This finding was replicated in the feedback in the baseline attitudes survey where participants rated the relative importance of sustainable procurement to themselves higher than the importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation. Theron and Dowden (2014) made the case for providing procurement professionals with training and guidance material to break down those barriers, similar conclusions to several writers. Finally, Fudge and Peters (2011) investigated achieving improved sustainability behaviours using a model from the UK Government – Framework for Behavioural Change (Ibid, page 793). Their primary observation from focus group participants was that they individually wanted a more sustainable world but did not want to have to change their lifestyle to achieve it. In the context of my research, this manifested itself as general support for the organisation acting more sustainably in its procurement activities, but a general apathy towards making the necessary changes.

Conclusion

The above discussion represented just a corner of the literature landscape. Recognising the limitation of the discussion, the existing research pulled out some interesting themes. First, while there was significant research in existence, there were gaps, both specific and generic. Specifically, there was little existing research on procurement professionals, changing their attitudes and behaviours about sustainability, and in the organisational context that this research explored. In general, there was little detailed exploration of blended AR and AI, or of pragmatic research. While models did exist, they had not achieved significant penetration into the academic sphere despite both logical and evidenced

arguments. This research would therefore exploit these current gaps in knowledge and explored the potential of these areas of study and practice. Utilising a blended model and pragmatism as the core approach, this research has contributed new knowledge that is applicable both in academia and professional practice. At all times I kept in mind the words of warning from Beer and Nohria (2000, page 88): "*The brutal fact is that about 70 per cent of all change initiatives fail."* The cyclical nature of this research provided reassurance that failure was just a learning opportunity, a chance to explore relevant lessons and to put them into practice immediately.

4. Creating a baseline

To know if change had been achieved, the research had to start by answering the question: how were people currently behaving towards sustainable procurement? In the context of sustainable procurement, there were limited secondary resources available to understand existing behaviours. An available source was published by one of the most widely recognised sustainability organisations within the procurement profession: Ecovadis. Their Sustainable Procurement Barometer 2019 (Ecovadis and NYU STERN Center for Sustainable Business, 2019) provided insight at the organisational level. Some of its findings, such as the proportion of respondents identifying "Delivering on corporate sustainability goals" as a main priority of their procurement organisation falling from 75% in 2017 to 64% in 2019, painted a picture of declining importance of sustainable procurement. Somewhat contradictorily, 81% of respondents said that their organisation's commitment to sustainable procurement has increased over the previous 3 years.

The Sustainable Procurement Barometer (Ecovadis and NYU STERN Center for Sustainable Business, 2019) provided insight into current behaviours towards sustainable procurement but it had weaknesses. The data collection methodology used for the Barometer was via emails to procurement professionals inviting them to anonymously participate. This meant that multiple participants could be responding from the same organisation. As the Barometer reported at an organisational level, this could have skewed the results (for example if of the 210 respondents 21 are from the same sustainably minded company then the results would have been skewed towards showing more organisations were sustainably minded). The primary authors of the Barometer, Ecovadis, were a consultancy who produced a few free resources for practitioners but ultimately were funded by the sustainability advisory services that they sell to organisations. This naturally put a lens on their analysis which may have influenced the interpretation of results, if not the data gathering itself. Finally, in the context of this research, the Barometer being anonymised at an organisational level provided little insight to the current behaviours of the organisation's GNFR procurement function towards sustainable procurement. The challenge for my research was to establish a behavioural baseline specifically for the organisation's procurement department.

Behavioural Baseline

If behaviour is what a person does or says (Collins, 2022), a behavioural baseline was needed to assess either the activity itself or the output of that activity. The procurement team in the organisation ran projects which ranged from full sourcing activity to contract renegotiations to supplier management. Some complex projects could take up to 2 years or more to complete. Assessing behaviours in real time would have been the most accurate method of base lining, if the mere-measurement effect could have been accounted for (the effect that simply monitoring behaviour will affect that behaviour (Morwitz and Fitzsimons, 2004)). However, this was impractical because to gain a substantive baseline would have required a longitudinal study over potentially many years, particularly as a single project may not have been an accurate representation of an individual's behaviour in general. A compromise for this research was to undertake a historical analysis of the outputs.

In February 2019, the department introduced a new governance document, the procurement Project Completion Document (PCD). The PCD was introduced as part of a continuous improvement exercise to streamline the governance process from five stages previously to two, with the PCD at the end of a project and a Project Kick-Off Document at the start. A reference copy of the form is available in Appendix 4.01. The PCD included a specific section, for the first time in any of the organisation's procurement governance, that required the individual to state how CSR had been considered in the project. This then provided a natural reference point to understand existing sustainable procurement behaviours.

To build the behavioural baseline from the PCD submissions, my first step was to establish which projects had PCDs. A report was run weekly from the department's e-procurement system, called the Benefits Tracker, providing a view of the active and complete projects in the system, along with high level data from each project. I ran the Benefits Tracker from 04 November 2019 which gave me nine months of data from all projects completed since February 2019, when the PCD was introduced. In total, this gave me 137 unique completed projects in the 9-month timeframe. Of the 137 projects, not all had PCDs. When the new governance was introduced, there was a grace period for in-flight projects which were allowed to complete under the old governance structure. Unfortunately, there was no systemic way to differentiate so it required manually going through each project on the system and if a PCD was there, downloading it for later analysis. Of the 137 projects, 34.3% had completed PCDs; the others were a mixture of old and no governance paperwork, which was an issue outside the remit of this research.

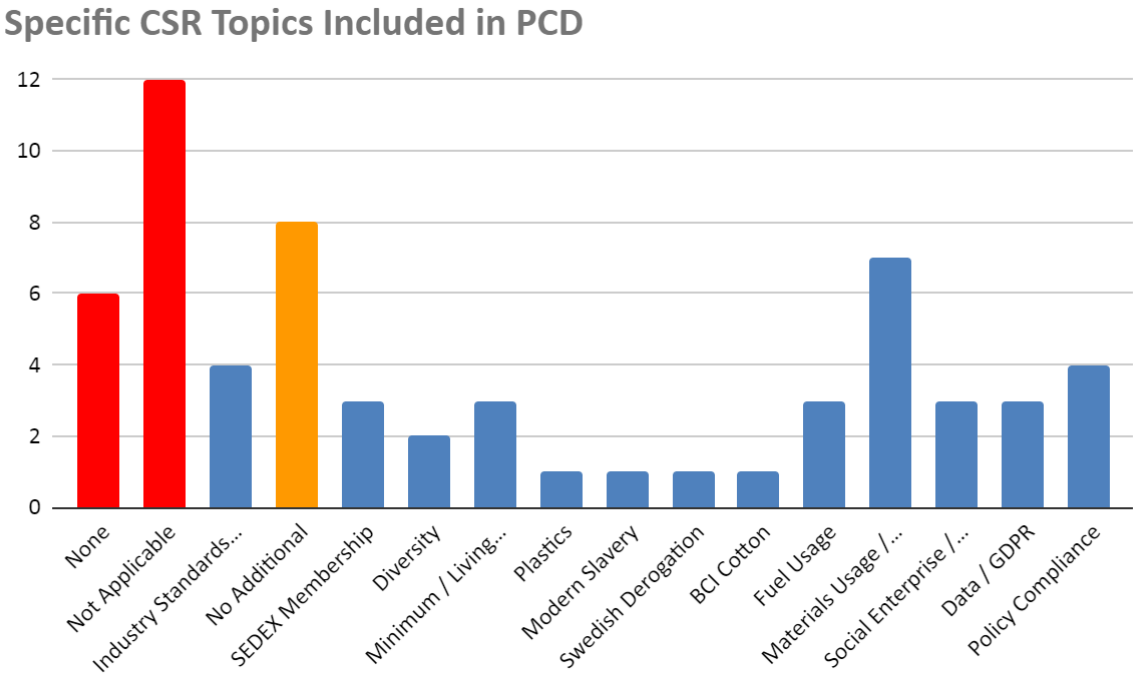
Once the projects with PCDs had been isolated, the contents of the PCDs could be analysed. The review focused specifically on the "CSR Considerations" field in the form so any references to CSR factors elsewhere in the document were not captured. As Figure 4.1 below shows, 70.2% of those projects with a PCD referenced no CSR related commitments achieved in the project. 17.0% had general commitments and only 12.8% of projects had specific commitments.

Figure 4.1 – Proportion of Projects with CSR Commitments

My natural inclination at this point was to rationalise why such a low percentage of projects recorded CSR factors. I had to consciously restrain myself from jumping into solution mode and to simply note the findings rather than attempting to diagnose and treat. One point of note which subsequently featured in discussions with the function's Senior Manager, CSR was that none of the PCDs captured the impact of the commitments secured. For example, where as a result of the project a supplier was committing to reduce their use of plastics, there was no measure of how much plastic would be taken out of the supply chain.

Of those projects that had PCDs, analysing the themes allowed a deeper understanding of how procurement colleagues understood sustainability. As above, most projects recorded no CSR commitments and that was replicated in the theme analysis in Figure 4.2 where the columns in Red and Amber show no commitments. There were several projects where the PCD captured multiple CSR factors that had been delivered against. This suggested that a small group of individuals in the department worked to a broad definition of CSR which was not necessarily shared across all colleagues.

Figure 4.2 – Specific CSR Topics included in PCD



One explanation for the low completion rate was that the projects simply did not have any CSR considerations and regardless of any action taken by the project owner, the CSR impact of the goods or services could not be improved or made worse. This was a possibility that I voiced with the PLT when I briefed them on my analysis. The explanation was quickly dismissed with a unanimous view (myself included) that all projects have the potential to improve or worsen the associated CSR impact of the goods or services. The results therefore pointed to a potential difference in understanding of CSR or sustainable procurement within the function.

As an assessment of the behaviours of the function, the baselining exercise examined the outputs over a 9-month period. The understanding it gave me as a foundation for this research was that procurement colleagues were inconsistent in their completion of documentation, potentially inconsistent in their understanding of CSR and sustainable procurement, and were possibly unwilling or unable to capture the CSR impact of their projects. By critiquing this baseline view, valid challenges included whether the period covered (and the type / nature of projects during that time) were truly representative of the behaviours of the department. Additionally, as the analysis had a narrow focus on just the CSR Considerations field within the PCD, did it fail to take an accurate picture of behaviours towards CSR and sustainable procurement because procurement colleagues captured that information separately? The baseline analysis worked with the only data source available (the PCDs) that specifically captured, or at least specifically requested, information relating to the CSR impact of each project. As such, while it may not have been perfect, it was the best that could be achieved and

was adequate for the purposes of this research because of its repeatability to measure changes in behaviour.

One area in which the behavioural baseline was particularly weak was in providing a contemporary picture of current behaviours. Arguably, a 9-month window that dated back only a year before the first cycle began was a reasonably contemporary review. However, my research was attempting to achieve positive behavioural change and while a historical analysis of behaviours provided a good starting point, it was an incomplete picture. As Iverson (2004) found in her work relating to driving, Rubinson and Baldinger (1996) found relating to brand loyalty, and van Doorn et al. (2007) found in policy research, a significant driver of behaviour was the attitudes the individual held towards the subject. This indicated the need to understand the attitudes of the department towards sustainable procurement.

Attitudinal Baseline

The choice of method to understand the attitudes held towards sustainable procurement was driven by practicalities. Conducting in depth interviews with colleagues would have provided the richest picture of attitudes and offered the opportunity delve into attitudes in a qualitative way. However, in depth interviews with colleagues would have been impractical. There were 80 colleagues and offering all the opportunity to engage through interviews was impossible based on my workload commitments outside of this research. On top of that, I would have overcommitted the time of colleagues to my research and likely strained the trust the PLT had given me in supporting this project. Gathering insight into attitudes held remained important and so the most effective tool available was a survey of the colleagues. The survey was anonymised to encourage honesty and was open for responses for three weeks (Appendix 4.02).

In parallel to the internal survey, I ran an external survey that used the same questions with some additions to see if the size of the procurement function or the industry the respondent was in had any influence on their attitudes towards sustainable procurement (Appendix 4.03). An advantage of running a survey was that it could easily be adapted and deployed externally while getting contacts willing to support in depth interviews would have been exceptionally challenging. Too few respondents replied to the external survey, rendering the analysis indicative only. Detailed analysis of the responses to the external survey has therefore been excluded from this research. Having worked in multiple industries myself, I have seen first-hand the different relative importance given to sustainable procurement by different organisations and this could be explored further by other researchers.

The internal survey was published via email to the department which at the time consisted of 80 people. Email was the most expeditious way to not only share the survey, but also give it the highest chance of engagement as email was the single medium that all colleagues accessed multiple times a day. The external survey was published on LinkedIn in two community groups dedicated to procurement professionals: “Sustainable Procurement Ambassadors” and “Procurement Professionals – Best In Class.” The internal survey elicited 33 respondents (41%) and the external 21. The external survey response rate was very disappointing with 21 responses from the two LinkedIn professional groups, which at the time boasted more than 390,000 members between them. One slight piece of reassurance for myself as a first-time researcher, the Ecovadis Sustainable Procurement Barometer (Ecovadis and NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business, 2019) only had 210 participants for a global survey with all the resources that the two authoring organisations could bring to their research. One further factor to note was that not all participants responded to all questions. The analysis was based on only complete answers for each question.

In an ideal world, for the results of the surveys to carry a 99% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, the internal survey should have sought 75 responses and the external survey 662. Based on the number of responses received, the margins of error for the internal and external surveys were 17% and 28% respectively. These significant margins of error in the surveys meant that the analysis was statistically indicative only. In addition, it was to be noted for this research that the survey method chosen introduced bias into the sampling for both the internal and external surveys. I acknowledged this in the analysis but, as an overall comment, both surveys were susceptible to bias due to the voluntary response samples. This removed the possibility of statistical randomness and therefore further eroded the ability to draw conclusive views of the wider populations. It was therefore possible that a potential explanation of the results was as an artefact of the research methods themselves.

The first question in the survey tested what had become a hypothesis from the behavioural baseline work – that there was not a common understanding of sustainable procurement. The question asked participants to indicate which factors from a list they considered to constitute sustainable procurement – all the factors could arguably constitute sustainable procurement under triple bottom line reporting (Elkington, 1999). The only factor out of the 17 listed to which all participants, internal and external, agreed constituted sustainable procurement was the 'Environmental impact of sourcing decisions.' No other factor found unanimous agreement either for or against its inclusion in sustainable procurement, but interestingly the responses in the two surveys followed broadly the same pattern. It was not possible to say whether individuals had a common understanding or whether that pattern of responses was random. What it could have suggested was that while there was no common understanding of what constituted sustainable procurement, there perhaps was a common misunderstanding. Figure 4.3 displays the response rates for the internal survey, and Figure 4.4 for the external.

Two factors stood out where the similar pattern between internal and external surveys differed. These were 'Managing Supply Chain Risk' and 'Compliance with GDPR.' In both instances more internal participants included these factors within their definition of sustainable procurement than their external peers. This could have been for two reasons. First, that in 2019 the department introduced a new tool for measuring supply chain risk, which was heavily publicised and therefore supply chain risk could have been prevalent in their mind at the time of the survey. Secondly, the colleagues had recently done significant work to be ready to comply with GDPR regulations when they were introduced. However, this second factor would be similar for a procurement professional working anywhere in the European Union so it may not have fully explained the disparity in response rates.

Understanding that there was not a common definition of sustainable procurement in the department then put a different lens on the responses to the other questions. This was not an unexpected outcome. As discussed earlier, there was no common definition of sustainable procurement at either the global, professional, or even organisational level. The responses to the second and third questions in the survey were perhaps the most insightful when it came to the attitudes respondents held towards sustainable procurement, and interesting to compare side by side because of what the comparison implied. Those questions asked respondents to rate how important sustainable procurement was to them and how important they believed sustainable procurement was to their organisation.

Figure 4.3 – Which of the following do you believe constitute "Sustainable Procurement" – Internal Survey

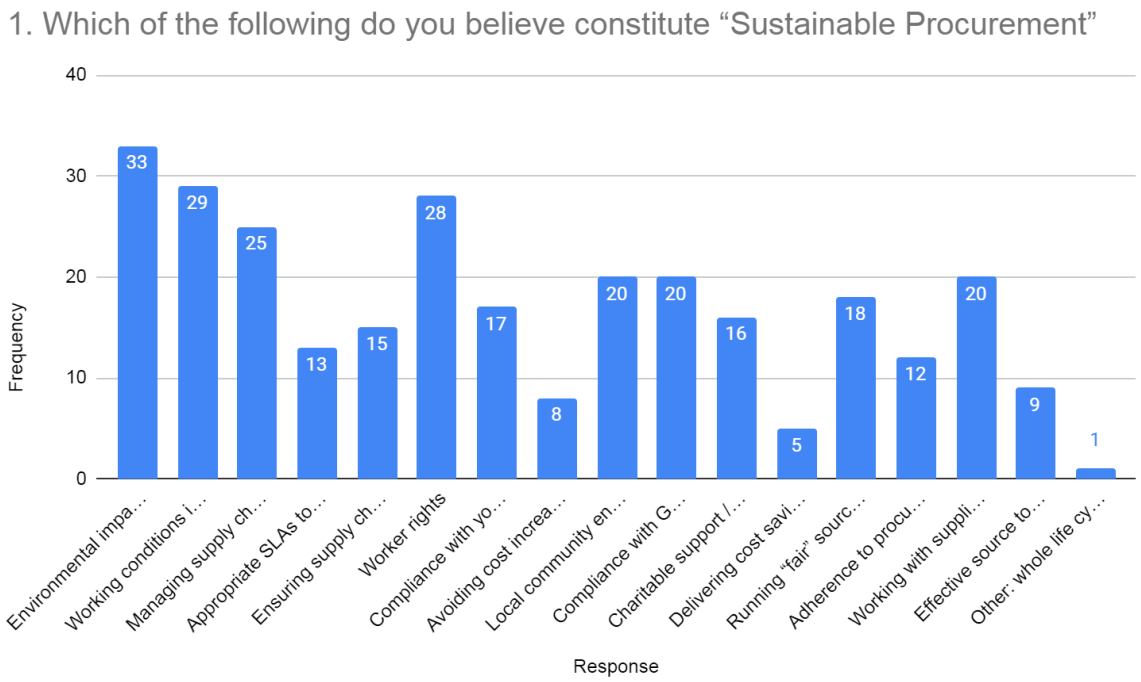
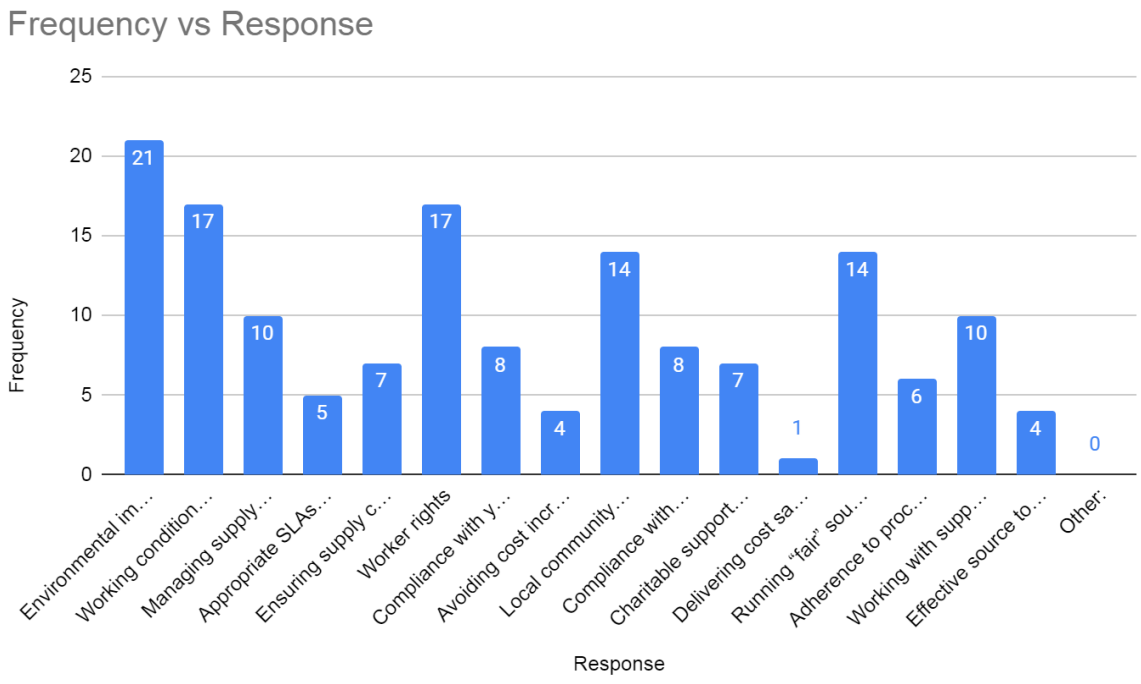


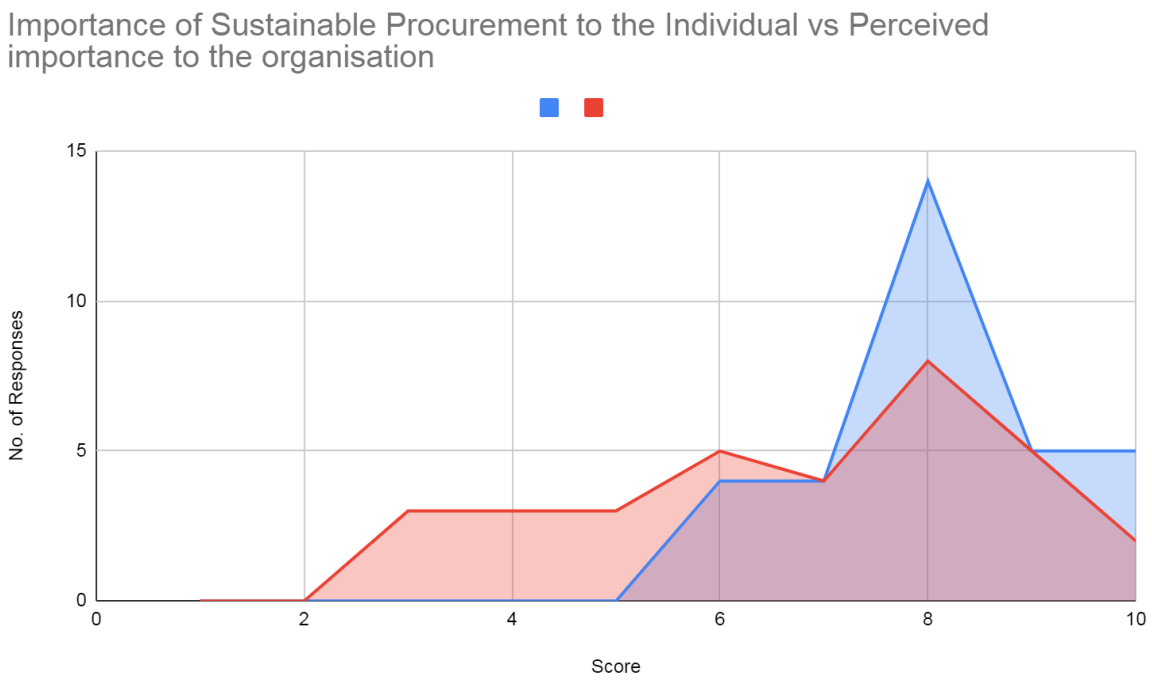
Figure 4.4 – Which of the following do you believe constitute "Sustainable Procurement" – External Survey



As Figure 4.5 shows, the importance of sustainable procurement to the individual was grouped at the higher end of the scale (the blue area). In contrast, the red area shows how those individuals perceived the relative importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation. These responses were much more spread out and suggested two things. First, that in general, respondents believed that they held a greater view of the importance of sustainable procurement than their organisation did. Second, the

spread in responses regarding the organisation's views on sustainable procurement suggests that the experience could have been different in different pockets or teams within the department. This could also have been explained by Self-Other Mergence - for example if sustainable procurement was very important to an individual, they may have been more likely to perceive any commitment less than theirs as a more extreme indicator that sustainable procurement was not important to the organisation. Self-Other Mergence, from Wittman et al. (2016) described how we estimate our abilities compared to others. When things were going well, and we were collaborating we were likely to be positive in our assessment. When things were not going well; we were likely to overestimate ourselves compared to others. Although not statistically significant given the number of responses, there were indicators of this in the data. Those respondents who scored 10 for the importance of sustainable procurement to them on average scored the organisational importance 4.2 scores below them. Those who scored 9 individually only scored the organisation 1.6 scores lower on average.

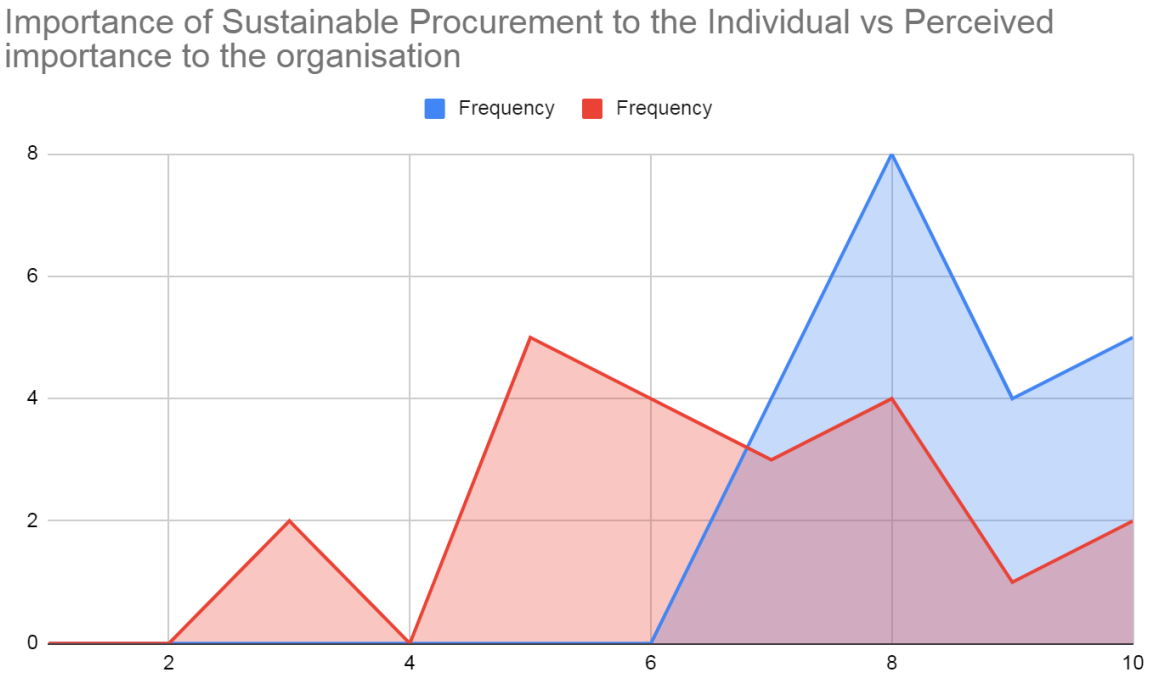
Figure 4.5 – Importance of Sustainable Procurement to the Individual (blue) Vs Perceived importance to the organisation (red) – Internal Survey



In the external survey, the same general pattern was observed with individuals scoring the importance of sustainable procurement to them higher than to their organisations. The trend was not as pronounced as in the internal survey but notably the respondents more frequently scored their organisations around the middle of the scale. There were insufficient respondents from an individual business to draw statistically relevant organisational comparisons. However, in general, it appeared that the internal colleagues seemed to view the importance of sustainable procurement to their organisation higher than the average in the wider procurement profession.

The surveys explored two more factors that related to sustainable procurement: the average weighting given to sustainability factors in projects, and what barriers prevented respondents achieving more in sustainable procurement. Respondents to the internal survey on average gave a higher weighting to sustainability factors in their projects than the external respondents. Similar barriers were reported in both surveys, with both internal and external respondents clearly pointing to their business stakeholders as the biggest barrier to achieving more.

Figure 4.6 – Importance of Sustainable Procurement to the Individual (blue) Vs Perceived importance to the organisation (red) – External Survey



The survey responses were analysed for any relationship in responses between questions. For the internal survey, the only statistically significant covariance relationship was between questions two and three (Importance of sustainable procurement to the Individual vs. Organisation). As discussed earlier, the higher the score for the individual, the lower the score for the organisation and there was a very strong negative relationship between the two factors. This was an interesting baseline for my research and linked with the responses to the final survey question where participants indicated that their stakeholders were the biggest barrier to achieving more.

In the external survey there were two statistically significant covariant relationships between question responses, though in both cases the relationships were only just above the significance threshold. Questions three and four (the importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation and the average weighting given to sustainability factors in projects) had a positive relationship; the higher the perceived importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation, the higher the average weighting given in projects. The other statistically significant covariant relationship was between the importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation and the size of the procurement function within that organisation. Interestingly this was a negative relationship, where the larger the size of the procurement function, the less important sustainable procurement was perceived to be to the organisation. Although this was not a relationship my research sought to explore, the organisation's procurement department did go through a restructure during this research that sought to reduce headcount. Explored further in chapter 12, the survey analysis suggests that a shrinking function could have expected to see an increase in the importance of sustainable procurement, though as correlation and not necessarily causation.

Discussion

As noted above, I found it difficult when analysing the baseline to not jump into solution mode. It was perhaps an inevitability of participatory research that there was a desire to jump to conclusions. Through participating and therefore having a vested interest in the outcome, it removed the

impartiality that I might have had as a researcher if I had approached this as a purely academic activity in another organisation. Observational research, while not preventing me from slipping into solution mode, would have significantly limited my ability to tip the scales and influence the outcomes. The "Hawthorn Effect" was a popularised term referring to the influence that merely studying something could have, along with how the study was performed and by who, and how change was perceived by participants (Merrett, 2006).

Parking for the moment whether it was an inevitable factor in participatory research, I had to consider the impact that it might have had as I recognised it as a factor in my research. If I conducted this research using an alternative model of inquiry, such as proposed by Cunningham (1976), then I suspected the impact of jumping into solution mode would have been comparatively small. The 'Plan,' 'Execute,' 'Fact-Finding' cycle of AR (Lewin, 1946) was problem-orientated (Egan and Lancaster, 2005) and therefore lent itself to solution modes. On the other hand, researching from an AI perspective, or the blended approach used in this project, relied on developing a thorough understanding of the positive core, built through appreciative discovery, that helped inspire and sustain change over time as a consistent reference point. The opportunity-orientated approach (Egan and Lancaster, 2005) therefore would have suffered significantly by jumping to solution mode. With the problem-solving culture embedded in the organisation, and indeed something I recognised in myself with my dual role of researcher and participant, I needed to be cognisant that as I moved through the cycles in this research, I might be challenged not just to achieve behavioural change towards sustainable procurement, but to bring the participants along on a cultural change journey.

The baseline needed to paint an accurate picture of colleagues' contemporary behaviour towards sustainable procurement. Building the baseline by combining past behavioural outputs with in-the-moment attitudes provided a degree of accuracy that one or the other approach could not have achieved alone. That said, accuracy, defined as correctly reflecting the attitudes held and resultant behaviours, was open to interpretation. The respondents' mood, or something that happened to them the day they completed the survey could have skewed their answers. Likewise, the behavioural assessment was historic with some of the projects assessed having taken place up to 9-months prior to the attitudinal survey. That gap potentially allowed for a change in position and belief about sustainable procurement. Used together however, there was sufficient accuracy to provide a starting point for achieving the research purpose.

I have explored the ontological and epistemological considerations that formed the research paradigm for this work in chapter 2. For this discussion, the pragmatist view suggested that each participant in the research would have their own subjective truth (Putnam, 1987, cited in Bacon, 2012). This was potentially seen through participants' responses to the first question in the attitudinal survey. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, only one out of 17 listed factors were consistently considered to form part of the definition of sustainable procurement (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4 above). This view could have formed over an individual's entire life, whether that was what they learnt through their education, with previous employers, or even in their personal life as they reconcile their work / life balance, and there was cross-pollination of ideas and principles. Taking the myriad of responses to that first question as evidence of participants holding subjective truths about sustainable procurement, applying that lens to other question responses raised interesting possibilities. For example, where an individual believed that sustainable procurement was only the environmental impact of sourcing decisions, then based on that definition they would have responded to the rest of the survey. This subjective truth, or personal reality was a manifestation of my research paradigm and was one of the core contributors to my conclusions in chapter 13.

Summary

The baseline for this research was a mixed picture. Some participants were committed to sustainable procurement, some were not. There was no common understanding of sustainable procurement among participants but, however it was defined by the individual, there was generally a perception that the organisation did not value it as highly. More than that, business stakeholders were perceived to be the biggest barriers to achieving better sustainable procurement outcomes. There was the potential for conflict where individuals valued sustainable procurement more highly than their stakeholders although anecdotally, this manifested instead as the procurement colleague accepting their stakeholder's priorities. I had to be mindful when implementing change that increasing the level of importance of sustainable procurement to procurement colleagues potentially widened the gap with their stakeholders' views and therefore increased the risk of unconstructive conflict. This was not explicitly explored through this research however as an organisation-wide sustainability strategy was developed and launched during cycle 2, and it aimed to address stakeholder perspectives and prioritisation of sustainability related activities.

In the spirit of appreciative change however, the important outcomes of the baseline were factors that the participants were able to build on through the first cycle. These included the high scores given for the importance of sustainable procurement to the individual and the higher average weighting given to sustainability factors in projects which both presented opportunities that could have been capitalised upon to deliver greater sustainable procurement outcomes, and to anchor a shift towards more positive sustainable procurement behaviours.

5. The Impact of Covid-19

From office closures (BBC, 2020) to the mental health impact of school closures (Lee, 2020), from PPE shortages (The Guardian, 2020) to the decimating effect on retailers (Business Leader, 2020) the effects of Covid-19 were significant.

From a personal perspective, Covid-19 hit at an interesting time. The research proposal for this work received its formal, academic approval on the 16th January 2020. At that time, Covid-19 was a growing concern but one that the UK largely saw as isolated to China. The Chinese government were acting to contain the spread of the disease in Wuhan and Hubei province and through the latter part of January 2020 travel restrictions started to be introduced in and around China. At that point, UK businesses saw the challenge as essentially an extension to the annual Chinese New Year celebrations that shut down a lot of Chinese businesses for 2 – 4 weeks through February, disrupting international supply chains. The risk was that the shutdown could have been brought forward into January and businesses raced to get orders out of the country before they were cut off from their manufacturers. The widely held belief was that Covid-19 would likely be a challenge to supply chains just like SARS had been a decade before.

For this research, the baselining exercise was complete, and the first cycle had begun. On the 12th February 2020 I briefed the PLT on the baseline results and agreed the Entry and Start Up requirements for cycle 1. This was then followed by the first workshop with the SPCs on the 9th March 2020.

What happened?

Unfortunately, Covid-19 hit the UK. By the end of February, the organisation started to experience difficulties in product supply with Chinese factories staying locked down beyond the end of the normal Chinese New Year celebrations. It became incredibly difficult to move stock even though, in theory, international trade was not affected by the lockdown measures. By early March, the virus was spreading in Europe and shoppers in the UK began panic buying food items, fuelled by rumours of product shortages and pictures in the media of empty supermarket shelves.

Infection numbers in the UK began to rise in early March. On Friday 13th March 2020 the organisation's head office staff conducted a trial to ensure they could work effectively from home if required. It was deemed an immediate success and over the weekend of the 14th and 15th March 2020 all head office colleagues were told not to return to the offices on Monday morning. The following week on the 23rd March 2020, the UK officially went into a nationwide Lockdown.

The impact on the retail industry was devastating. General Merchandise retailers, such as the organisation, were forced to shut their stores for the safety of staff and customers. For some, that meant a complete shutdown, such as Primark who had no online shopping capability (Consultancy UK, 2020). For others, it forced businesses that were set up to balance bricks and clicks to trade solely online, stretching their staff and supply chains in ways previously unimagined. In a move that indicated just what interesting times we were in, home delivery couriers were deemed key workers, critical to the nation's health and wellbeing. For grocery retailers, the panic buying continued unabated causing product shortages that would last for weeks.

For the organisation, closing General Merchandise shops meant suddenly an 11,000 strong workforce had no work. Fortunately, the Grocery branches continued to trade and the surge in customer demand meant that some colleagues could be redeployed. For a month-long period, there were daily requests for head office colleagues to volunteer in branches, such was the strain the organisation was under.

All this activity switched the focus of colleagues from business as usual to business survival. There was a philosophy of sacrifice and doing what it took to support the organisation because of the co-ownership business model. The previous momentum under sustainability slowed as priorities changed to safety and survival in an incredibly uncertain trading environment. The second SPC workshop was pushed back by a month to allow colleagues to find a new routine, get familiar with a completely virtual working environment and ensure the SPCs had sufficient time to support the operation.

Shortly after the national lockdown was announced, the Government launched the job retention scheme, which allowed employers to furlough staff and the Government paid 80% of the employee's salary up to the value of £2,500 per month. The organisation took the decision to furlough almost 15,000 colleagues and to top up the Government contribution so that colleagues would still receive 100% of their pay. In the procurement department approximately 25% of colleagues were furloughed, including half of the SPCs. This further postponed the second SPC workshop and with no clear end in sight it felt as though all momentum had been lost.

April 2020 was a difficult month for this research, and this researcher. The department's priorities shifted, and this research had to stop. On a personal note, in my role as practitioner and team lead, some of my team volunteered to take furlough leaving us operating at one third capacity. This meant that I was stretched further covering more work and finding less opportunity to look for ways to progress this research. During April 2020, seeing no route forwards, I contemplated withdrawing from the research to focus on my work and family.

It was around this time that my LinkedIn newsfeed started to fill with opinion pieces. They were written by other procurement professionals and generally discussed the opportunities of Covid-19 for the profession and how businesses were pivoting away from sustainability in response to the crisis. While the articles were based on the author's experience, importantly they had little or no empirical data and so were based on opinion only. This frustrated me because these opinion pieces were often designed to be a mechanism for the authors to increase their profiles. It was then I realised that there was inspiration to take from these pieces.

The baselining for this research asked 2 important questions that were particularly relevant to these challenging times – how important sustainable procurement was to the respondent, and how important did they believe sustainable procurement was to their organisation. Having only been asked in December 2019 / January 2020, it was just about as contemporary as the research could be without being significantly influenced by Covid-19. Asking the same questions in the middle of the Covid-19 crisis would give a crude but illuminating insight into the direct impact of Covid-19 on attitudes towards sustainable procurement. In May 2020, I sent out the questions with the hope of gaining insight that could contribute to this research and help to rebuild momentum.

The Results

The response rate was significantly lower for both the internal and external surveys compared to the baseline, despite using the same dissemination routes. Internally, the two primary reasons for the low response rate were the impact of furloughing colleagues and high workloads as a result of Covid-19. The reasons for the low response rate in the external survey were potentially similar as the same challenges existed for the wider procurement profession as they did for the department, but I did not have an effective way of finding out with any degree of certainty. Despite the low response rates, the results provided some insight into the impact of Covid-19.

Table 5.1 shows the different values of the mean, median, and mode in the surveys conducted less than 6 months apart among largely the same individuals. This table shows only the results of the two

surveys conducted internally due to the higher response rate. The table also shows the standard deviation for each data set and the calculated Person's Skewness Index, together demonstrating the shape and level of skew within the responses.

Table 5.1 – Mean and Standard Deviations for the Importance of Sustainable Procurement Pre- and During Covid-19

Importance of Sustainable Procurement to…	Individual		Organisation	
Survey Timing	**Pre-Covid**	**During Covid**	**Pre-Covid**	**During Covid**
Mean	7.85	7.00	6.76	5.89
Median	8.00	7.50	5.50	7.00
Mode	8.00	9.00	9.00	8.00
Standard Deviation	1.84	2.06	2.06	2.49
Pearson's Skewness Index	-0.25	-0.73	-0.35	0.47

The analysis shown in Table 5.1 showed a marked skewing of the responses in the "During Covid" survey. Although in no instance does the data show a perfectly normal distribution, pre-Covid, responses from participants showed only a weak negative skew when asked how important sustainable procurement was to them as individuals and their perception of its importance to the organisation. When the questions were asked again during Covid, responses to the importance of sustainable procurement to the individual showed an increased negative skew. This distribution appears to have been driven by an increased polarisation of attitudes held by respondents, demonstrated by the increase in standard deviation, and the simultaneous drop in the mean and median values while the modal value increased.

On the other hand, perceptions of the importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation flipped their skew and turned into a weak positive skew. This suggests that a more commonly held view among respondents was that sustainable procurement had become less important to the organisation between the two surveys.

These observations were important when I explored the opportunities to restart the first cycle of change as they presented a real test of the ability for this research to achieve its stated purpose. Embracing the partiality principle from Brown et al. (2010), it was not possible for me to fully understand or appreciate all the potential influences driving either the individual or collective responses of the participants. It seemed likely though that the global Covid-19 pandemic was a considerable influence on participants and acted as a catalyst that resulted in some respondents reprioritising sustainable procurement. I could only speculate on the impact that Covid-19 may have had in other industries or organisations however it seemed plausible that the degree to which the pandemic impacted an organisation would have a correlated impact on procurement professionals within those organisations and on their perspectives of the importance of sustainable procurement. This assumption was based on anecdotal feedback from participants in this research and the observed trend in the responses. If Covid-19 was a uniformly negative catalyst for sustainable procurement prioritisation, all respondents participating in the survey would have shown a negative impact. The actual observations were a polarisation with some respondents rating sustainable procurement as less important, but others rating it more highly.

Layering on anecdotal richness after the survey, I could understand from conversations with colleagues that their perceptions seemed linked to the direct impact Covid-19 had had on their work. Some colleagues who were working 18-hour days to support the organisation's Covid-19 response were clear that all other considerations were secondary while they worked tirelessly to secure supplies of PPE, cleaning materials and signage to enable the Grocery business to continue trading safely.

Others who were not on the front line of the organisation's response maintained a more 'normal' attitude to the various sourcing considerations that procurement professionals regularly juggled, of which sustainable procurement was one. Still others saw an opportunity in Covid-19 for factors linked to sustainable procurement to become more prevalent and were vocal in sharing topical stories from the news that showed the impact of national lockdowns on factors such as air quality (Open Access Government, 2022).

For the purposes of this research, my conundrum was that my community of participants had fractured into three seemingly distinct camps. Those who saw the opportunity in the situation could be considered my 'change vanguard' (Kelman, 2005). They represented enthusiasm that needed to be capitalised upon. Those who maintained a stable outlook and perspective on the priority of sustainable procurement would be a consistent cohort of 'early adopters.' The final group, those whose perspectives on the importance of sustainable procurement were most negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, would require particular attention. There was the potential that their views on sustainable procurement were only temporarily adjusted in response to Covid-19, and that when the pandemic passed their perspectives would normalise again. Equally, there was the possibility that events would prove to have a lasting impact giving those participants a more permanently negative attitude. At the time of the survey and initial analysis I had hoped the former was true. However, little did I know at that point that the pandemic would still have significant impacts throughout the whole timeline of my research.

Covid-19 continued to require local and national lockdowns to keep in check, with final Covid-related restrictions in England being lifted in late February 2022 (later in other parts of the UK). Even after those restrictions were lifted, Covid-19 variants were prevalent among the population for many months to come. This impact shifted behaviours, with many workers adopting flexible working practices having become accustomed to working from home during the pandemic. It was a major external change, and one of many that this research had to accommodate, several of which are explored further in chapter 12. Curiously contrary to the experience of this research, many external sources were championing the opportunities that Covid-19 presented for sustainable procurement (Heine, 2020, Wrest, 2020). These pieces contributed one possible explanation for the rest of the experience of this research, that while Covid-19 had a negative impact in the early phases, attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable procurement recovered over time, potentially capitalising on the opportunities identified.

Summary

Respondents to the external survey could have worked for any organisation in the world and therefore I was not able to draw definitive conclusions about the impact of Covid-19 on procurement professionals. However, the external survey provided interesting context when analysing the internal survey. Indicatively, Covid-19 had minimal impact on the perceived importance of sustainable procurement to the wider profession despite commentators speculating its reprioritisation (Retail Gazette, 2020). This could have related to industry specific experiences and retail being underrepresented in the external surveys.

Conversely, there appeared to have been a tangible negative impact of Covid-19 on the participants' perceptions of the importance of sustainable procurement. The negative step in the mean scores between the internal surveys suggested that not only did Covid-19 have a direct impact, the baseline for attitudes towards sustainable procurement was lower than previously established. The increased spread of the scores in the internal survey also suggested that some individuals had their perceptions of the importance of sustainable procurement impacted to a much greater extent than others. Those pockets of perception proved to be a challenge which impacted engagement throughout this research.

6. Cycle 1

Ambition of the Cycle

As the first cycle, there were no other cycle outcomes that could be incorporated into the ambition of this cycle. It did however draw from two significant sources. First was the baselining work which provided indications of potential challenges that would be encountered and, importantly, highlighted potential opportunities to be explored. Secondly, cycle 1 drew on my experience as a practising procurement professional. Together, these acted as reference points as I began to utilise the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005) through this pragmatic research.

Entry

The focus when entering a new change initiative was on securing buy-in from senior sponsors (Graetz, 2000, Crawford et al., 2008). I had envisaged a clear, concise meeting with the PLT where I would get an unequivocal "yes," even if it meant some influencing on my part to convince them of the merit of the research approach. This confidence was, at least in part, built on the positive feedback that I received from the PLT when they approved my research proposal (see Appendix 1.01 for the PLT structure at the time). What transpired was that the session focussed on the results of the baseline. There was limited challenge or critique to the methods used to establish the baseline, nor any dismissal of the output as could have been the case given the less than positive picture that the results painted. There were a lot of comments and I found myself having to be careful to not move into solution mode. Similarly, when the PLT members started suggesting causes and solutions I had to consciously refer to my methodology to reinforce that the intent of the research was for the team to work out options and establish next steps.

The outcome of the PLT session was not ringing endorsement of my approach and it exposed to me some naivety in my thinking. Although frustrating in the moment, reflecting on it I understood why the PLT were unwilling to fully commit to implementing change initiatives. At the time of the meeting, I could not say what the changes would be, how resource hungry they would be (in terms of time commitment and / or funding) or if the initiatives would address any specific opportunity. With no detail, of course the PLT could not fully commit, though they supported the research approach, and expressed their willingness to consider any proposals that were developed. This approach from the PLT made sense in the context of the wider organisational requirements for balancing resource needs and focusing them on opportunities with greatest value potential.

Start Up

Moving from Entry into the Start Up phase meant establishing the focus of the first cycle. It was a one-to-one meeting with the Senior Manager, CSR in the procurement department to understand current priorities. I did not go into the meeting with any preconceptions and was willing to work with any topic. During the session, I tried to probe why his chosen topic was Modern Slavery. Although the selection was rationalised, having never facilitated change in this way, I was worried that focussing on Modern Slavery would be difficult and potentially lacking in value as work was already underway in the organisation to address this topic. It had been on the organisation's Ethics Committee agenda, several discussions and workshops on the topic were already underway across the organisation, and the organisation was already taking specific action on the subject, including the organisation hosting a dedicated event for retailers and businesses in the supply chain. My worry was, how effective would the work of the participants be if the business was already trying to move at pace? Could we keep up? Would we still be relevant by the time we wanted to implement change? I was in two minds as to whether I should stick to this topic as the theme for cycle 1, but two factors convinced me. First, I asked the Senior Manager, CSR if he felt there was still the opportunity for the team to contribute, to

which he answered “absolutely,” because he did not feel the business had the full answer to such a large and complex issue. Second, I could internally acknowledge that regardless of whether cycle 1 was effective in delivering for the organisation, it would still be informative for the academic requirements of my research and for my personal development as a change facilitator. This was my first experience of the tension between the academic and business lenses for the research. In hindsight I do not believe there was much more I could do to reassure myself that the outputs of cycle 1 would have organisational value because there was uncertainty in terms of approach, timelines, and potential outputs. The reassurance from the Senior Manage, CSR acted as my assurance in this instance, and I relied on his greater experience and expertise.

Dream and Discover

Following the Start Up phase, I scheduled a workshop for the participants to meet and to start exploring the Dream and Discovery phase. For cycle 1, the participant group consisted of volunteers from across the department, the SPCs. Although my intent had been to run separate sessions for each phase of the cycle, I grouped Dream and Discover together. This was a pragmatic decision which considered the challenging availability of the participants versus their other commitments (their day jobs) and my belief that the Discover phase would work well if it followed the Dream phase immediately. The intent was to build on the positive momentum and enthusiasm of the participants who have just defined their collective change vision. A personal reflection as well was that I lacked the confidence that I could facilitate a session that would ‘feel’ a good use of peoples’ time. An hour was in the diary which was cultural practice and because of availability of meeting space it was in another building a 10-minute walk away for the SPCs. I felt a pressure to use that hour rather than have the SPCs feel they had wasted time going between buildings for what could have been a 15- or 30-minute conversation.

Having not facilitated change in this way previously I went into the Dream and Discover session with the SPCs unsure of how I would run it. I reread the paper from Egan and Lancaster (2005) to keep their AAR approach fresh in my mind. I also sought practical advice and watched several YouTube videos on workshop facilitation, action research, appreciative inquiry, and an interview with David Cooperrider (TheDruckerSchool, 2011), the founder of the Appreciative Inquiry school of thought.

As a pre-read I shared the baseline information with the volunteers and invited comments. There were limited comments coming back from the team, a different dynamic when compared to the engaged, solution orientated, discussion with the PLT. It is possible that the reason for the lack of discussion was due to a general recognition and lack of surprise at the baseline. Other possible explanations included a collective willingness among the SPCs to accept the baseline at face value (“it is what it is”), a collective dismissal of the baseline either through misunderstanding or laissez-faire attitude (“I don’t agree but it isn’t worth discussing”), or possibly a belief that by raising the topic I was breaching an inherent confidentiality in either the survey responses or the submitted governance paperwork. It was this latter possibility that had the biggest potential ramifications for this research as the trust and support of the SPCs was important.

Given my level of nervousness going in to the first workshop, the session was remarkably productive. The group dynamic was positive. There was constructive discussion and contribution from all attendees. The Senior Manager, CSR was in attendance which provided an expertise that acted as an escalation point following discussion as well as a connection to the ongoing work in the wider organisation. This particularly came to the fore with the appreciative approach adopted by the SPCs. For all, this was their first experience of an approach to change that consciously sought to balance their usual experience of problem-orientated action research with appreciative, opportunity-orientated styles (Egan and Lancaster, 2005). This made it a surprising session for me seeing the SPCs adopt this approach with little effort on my part and certainly not the reception I had anticipated. As

we worked through the Dream phase of the cycle, the SPCs explored several different sub-topics of Modern Slavery, as well as bringing themselves up to a higher level and going beyond Modern Slavery to eventually set a broader vision:

For JLP GNFR Procurement to be recognised as a leader, along with GFR, in the delivery of the Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) base code.

The SPCs were clear that this was a vision for this first cycle of change, and confident that it aligned with the wider organisation's objectives thanks to the input from the Senior Manager, CSR. The vision was one that focused on an important topic (human rights), used an outside benchmark to provide structure and direction, and acted as an independent measure of success: the ETI base code (The Ethical Trade Initiative, 2022). Above all, it was an ambitious and motivating vision. We were able to build on that positive energy and motivation from that vision as we moved into the Discover phase. In this, the SPCs sought to identify a long list of strengths and opportunities that we had available to us that could be capitalised upon to deliver the vision.

On reflection, the SPCs struggled with the Discover phase. I believe that if it had been phrased as a negative, such as "what is stopping us from achieving the vision?" the SPCs would have been more comfortable as it would have played to their previous experience with problem-orientated approaches. As it was, the SPCs struggled to identify strengths and opportunities and I was consciously aware that I was over contributing to compensate for a lack of ideas from the SPCs. On reflection, I would estimate my share of voice ("the proportion of words attributed to each person in a conversation", Marquet, 2020, page 46) to have been approximately 60% which was not a balanced conversation and showed a potential over contribution on my part. I recognised the argument of Marquet (2020) that an unbalanced conversation could have impacted on the willingness of the team to share and contribute, however in my view this was not innately negative. I had a dual role of facilitating the conversation as well as providing my own thoughts and contributions on possible options as a participant myself. On reflection, there could have been other factors contributing to the unbalanced share of voice. Having prepared the slide deck and it being my research, I had a clearer perspective of what sort of contribution was expected for the session and had more time to contemplate ideas that could be put forward. I was also aware the share of voice imbalance could have reflected a wider issue with sustainability in society that while most people agree something should be done; most have limited ideas as to what they could contribute individually to support. This lack of knowledge and understanding was something that all of the SPCs were aware of and was a subject of discussion during the workshop. We collectively placed ourselves in the conscious incompetence stage of the competency learning model (Cannon et al., 2010) – we knew that we did not know – which meant we were aware that we were approaching the change from a base of limited understanding. Viewed optimistically however, it kept the SPCs on a par with other colleagues who could then share the educational journey.

Several of the strengths that were identified through the Discover phase highlighted information sources that were available, and the support from senior leaders and from colleagues in the department for sustainability. In total, 11 strengths and opportunities were identified, shown in Table 6.1. that could potentially be capitalised upon. The Discover phase drew parallels to Metcalfe's (2008) second principle of pragmatic inquiry - "Identify a dialectic of useful concepts". By collectively identifying strengths, the SPCs could then use these strengths (or "concepts" to use Metcalfe's term (ibid, 2008) as the foundation of the next phase of the cycle: designing initiatives that could help to achieve the vision. Another workshop was scheduled into diaries, but Covid-19 overtook us.

Table 6.1 - Strengths and Opportunities identified through Cycle 1

Strengths and Opportunities

GFR's materials (link to some sustainability talks on PDW)
Sharon's enthusiasm for ethical sourcing
JLP's sustainability agenda
GNFR's existing processes & governance, inc. RSQS
Chris' role in approvals [Director of Property & Procurement – See Appendix 1.02]
PESO / Legal Front Door new system investment
80+ Partners in the department with a high turnover of projects
IFCO / XPO case studies
Central funding available
Supplier learning opportunities
Partners have shown in the survey that sustainable procurement is important to them

Covid-19

In the previous chapter, I explored the impact of Covid-19 on this research. The overwhelming impact of Covid-19 on the first cycle was delay. The second session with the SPCs was first rescheduled after the UK went into lockdown and we could no longer meet in person. Within two weeks of that lockdown, the organisation began to furlough colleagues. In procurement, approximately 25% of the department were furloughed between the start of April and the end of July 2020. Of the SPCs, five of the eight volunteers were furloughed. This brought to a halt the work and one of those five would end up not returning to the organisation. Losing momentum in any change project was likely to be terminal (Hall, 1997), and this was my experience in the first cycle.

Dream and Discovery – Revisited

When colleagues were returning from furlough, I scheduled a new session with the SPCs. This was on the 6th August 2020, almost exactly 5 months after the first session. I felt it was important to acknowledge everything that had happened and then reaffirm the vision with the SPCs. I had thought this would re-galvanise the positive energy behind the co-created vision we shared. Instead, the review of the previous few months served to highlight the scale of changes going on in the business and macro-environment which undermined confidence in the vision. I was caught completely off guard by the sentiment from the SPCs and had not anticipated that the collective view was to step back completely from the previous vision. I very much struggled to find a balance between being the facilitator and a participant and on reflection spent too much time in as the former. The net result was effectively calling the first cycle to a close.

Evaluation

In the moment, and for several days after the second session with the SPCs, I was extremely disappointed. I had grandiose visions of the volunteers defining and delivering powerful change straight off the bat through the first cycle. I had not anticipated the hurdles that I would encounter or the shared reticence to act in the face of uncertainty.

Table 6.1 offers a subjective assessment of the initiatives undertaken through cycle 1 and the intended impact of each. The table highlights the perceived actual contribution of each initiative against the ambition of the cycle and the overall research purpose. The content of Table 6.1 was based solely on my perceptions as both researcher and participant. Feedback was not explicitly gathered at the end of the cycle as no participant defined initiatives were initiated. Informal feedback was gathered from the participants and is contained in the Reflections section below.

Table 6.2 – Cycle 1 Initiatives Intention Vs Outcome

Initiative / Activity	Intended Impact	Contribution towards Cycle Ambition	Contribution towards Research Purpose
Recruit Sustainable Procurement Champions	Create a cohort of volunteers who would collectively own the decision making and implementation of change initiatives Using volunteers to capitalise on enthusiasm for sustainable procurement Using cohort of colleagues to create greater engagement and acceptability / buy-in	Set the basis for participatory change Demonstrated some of the challenges of participatory appreciative change	Highlighted the challenge of achieving whole system engagement in appreciative change
Formal PLT "Entry" stage	Create early buy-in, and support for change initiatives	Limited contribution other than acceptance of the general research approach	Generated significant senior level support for the overall research purpose
Reversing Dream and Discovery phases	Unconscious decision – intent had been unconstrained optioneering to enable richer conversations and consideration of opportunities	Potentially counter-productive as failed to provide an accurate test of the Egan & Lancaster (2005) AAR model	Highlighted the limitations of unrestrained 'blue-sky thinking' in achieving change
Sustainable Procurement Champion Workshops	Facilitate discussion and consideration of options at each stage of the cycle	Provided the opportunity for participatory change Demonstrated some of the challenges of change by committee	Provided insight into the challenge of perceptions of empowerment versus role / hierarchy

Expanding on the content of Table 6.1, cycle 1 provided significant insight and made notable contributions to this research. The first initiative, recruiting the SPCs, was designed to capitalise on latent enthusiasm for change and to constructively direct it into positive change. It built on Kelman's concept of a 'change vanguard' (2005) - those individuals that were keen to challenge the status quo. The intent also had been to recruit colleagues so that by having a voice in determining the change initiatives they would be more bought-in to delivering them (Nurick, 1982; Weber et al., 2020; Stouten et al., 2018). While these ambitions were achieved, the activity highlighted a challenge. In Cooperrider and Whitney's Appreciative Inquiry (2005), they highlighted the ambition of AI as seeking "whole system engagement" in the change. The case studies they refer to highlight the successes of bringing entire teams, divisions, or companies together to determine the changes they wanted to see and how they were to be implemented. Cycle 1 in this research highlighted the scale of the challenge as less than 12% of the department volunteered.

The second initiative of early engagement with the PLT contributed more to the overall research than it potentially contributed towards cycle 1. As discussed above, the approach and feedback from the PLT during the Entry phase was understandable in the business context, but the limited endorsement of the overall research approach only could have negatively impacted the chances of success for cycle 1. By not pre-endorsing the outcomes of the SPCs, one interpretation that the SPCs could have latched on to was "we don't have the support of PLT for anything we come up with." This could have contributed to the group losing its way during the cycle. The SPCs questioned the purpose of the group convened to create change without having senior support in place.

As I reflect on at the end of this chapter, in executing cycle 1 I reversed the Dream and Discovery phases from the original proposal from Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005). Even though it was not a conscious decision I thought it important to evaluate its impact alongside the other initiatives from the cycle. Reversing the stages negatively impacted the academic rigour of the research in cycle 1. That said, the lesson it taught carried value for the broader research objectives as it highlighted the limitations of unrestrained 'blue-sky thinking.' The SPCs felt a lack of empowerment to make determinations on a potential vision for sustainable procurement and / or specifically towards Modern Slavery, and to translate the vision which they eventually produced into definitive actions.

The final activity assessed was the two facilitated workshops with the SPCs. The intent had been to create an environment that encouraged discussion, challenge, and consideration and in that respect, the workshops achieved their intent. They provided an opportunity for pragmatic change, highlighted through Metcalfe's (2008) first and second principles for pragmatic inquiry which emphasised the different interpretations each individual holds of events, and the need for a dialectic to arrive at common ground. Equally though, the experience demonstrated the challenge of creating change by committee. This was a challenge also highlighted by Kelman (2005) as he saw his 'change vanguard' being a collective of individuals passionate about challenging the status quo but each with their own interpretation of what could or should be instead. If they felt that the changes being suggested or implemented were not going to achieve what they wanted, it increased the likelihood that those individuals disengaged from the change process. This, he recognised, led to a splintering of the 'change vanguard' and caused change to grind to a halt. The debate of ideas in cycle 1 covered a range of topics with some members contributing more and taking a more significant share of voice (Marquet, 2020). This could have caused some members either to be naturally quieter, or artificially quieter seeing the direction of the conversation, who then disengaged with the process early on. For the overall research however, these workshops provided insight into the challenge of the power dynamics within the department.

In the context of the research purpose, from a business perspective there was little, or no value delivered through the first cycle. Collectively, 14 people-hours were invested (2 x 1-hour meetings on

average with seven attendees at each) with no change initiatives implemented. Although several events occurred beyond our control, the net result as shown by the Covid-19 survey (see chapter 5) was that perceptions of how important sustainable procurement was to colleagues in GNFR procurement stepped backwards. In simple terms, for 14 people-hours invested there was a negative result.

From an academic perspective, the first cycle's contribution was largely in sharing an unsuccessful experience. My experience and reflections through the first cycle were that the AAR model itself did not necessarily reflect the dynamic environment that businesses operate within. The experience from the start suggested that senior leaders cannot provide commitment with any degree of certainty to change that yet to be defined. Factors inside the business (such as changes in staff, strategic reviews or business performance) and outside the business (such as Covid-19, competitor activity or changes in customer behaviour) undermined attempts at change. Although not the experience of the first cycle, those internal and external factors could also have been boosts for the change, demanding faster or bigger change than initially planned. The impact as I saw it at the end of the first cycle, was to consider whether Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005) would be more representative of reality if it reflected micro-cycles, or inflection points, after each stage. This would represent an opportunity to explore whether the intended change at any stage needed to take account of any other factors that had not been considered up to that point. The alternative was to explore the pace of change, accelerating the cycle akin to agile working popularised in the IT project world (Rigby et al., 2020) and thereby minimising the potential for change to happen around the project.

A last point worth mentioning here, which is described in greater detail (chapter 12), the procurement department went through a significant restructure after cycle 1 closed. There were some positive outcomes of this along with some additional challenges. One of the significant challenges was the removal of one of the key stakeholders for this research. After cycle 1, the role of Senior Manager, CSR no longer existed. This meant the research losing one of its strongest advocates within the department, along with the individual that I had intended to work with to scope the focus of each cycle. From this point forward, the responsibility fell to me both in my role as researcher, and in my new role following the department restructure.

Reflections

Here I distinguish between the necessary evaluation that should follow at the end of a cycle, and my personal reflections as both researcher and participant. As identified in the evaluation above, there were lessons to be learnt from reflection as a softer and potentially intangible approach, as opposed to a harder evaluation of the explicit, tangible, or observable outcomes.

The first aspect that merited comment was the reversal of the Dream and Discover phases of the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005). Both the standard AI approach, and the AAR model had the Discover phase first. Participants use the Discover phase to uncover and share in the stories that build the positive core around which the change can be facilitated and sustained over time. Following this, the Dream phase takes the positive core and establishes the ambition, or vision, for the intended change that utilises those strengths and opportunities that have been identified previously (Egan and Lancaster, 2005). I am not aware of making a conscious decision to reverse these stages. I do not believe there was a single point where I dismissed the base models with a belief that I knew better. I am aware that from previous training and experience, blue sky thinking (the business cliché for unrestrained creativity) that was required to set bold and ambitious visions was done prior to the application of real-world constraints (Schwarz and Vakola, 2021). Reflecting back on this experience no doubt influenced my approach to the change process. Rather than sticking to the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005), I flipped the Dream and Discover phases to try and achieve unconstrained ambition in the Dream phase. To a degree, this was successful. The idea generation

during the Dream phase was positive and the SPCs took the ambition for change beyond the pre-conceived boundary of Modern Slavery. Arguably this could be construed as a negative, going off mission, setting our sights too high, but in practice and as a participant in the research, the Dream that was established was a reflection of collective ambition. From the debate in the room, there was a real desire to achieve the stated ambition and a belief that we could. There was also positive momentum to build on as the SPCs worked through the Discover phase.

All that said, this reversal of the process could have potentially contributed to the cycle fizzling out without any significant delivery. Despite identifying 11 strengths and opportunities (Table 6.1), they were not sufficient to overcome the existing organisational inertia and to sustain the change efforts. This raised several questions: Was the lack of success in the Discover phase down to the facilitation of that phase?; Did the reversal of the Dream and Discover phases create this situation?; Could stronger positioning and facilitation of the Discover phase have compensated for any impact of reversing the process? The short answer to all those questions was that we simply do not know as I did not have the opportunity to explore each of the possibilities. There were certainly a few opportunities to improve the running of the Discover phase. Referencing back to earlier materials on Appreciative Inquiry from Cooperrider and Whitney (2001, 2005), upon which the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005) was based, gave me several ideas for improvements, including: running sessions more akin to group interviews rather than collaborative workshops, and utilising the organisation's annual reporting cycle to look for sustainable procurement success stories from across the department that could have been woven into the change narrative.

As already mentioned, I noted that from a business perspective there was an investment of 14 person-hours, and the relative importance of sustainable procurement went backwards. This was the tangible outcome but on reflection it appeared worth considering intangible outcomes as well. For the SPCs, they took time out to specifically consider sustainable procurement, and outside of the formal sessions, a chat group was set up and shared resources and links to relevant online material (such as webinars, reports, and news articles). Although the measured importance of sustainable procurement stepped backwards, there was an argument that some of that negative movement could have been mitigated because of the efforts of this cycle. In other words, it could have been worse if it had not have been for the collective conversations and sharing of material between the SPCs keeping sustainable procurement as prevalent in their mind as it was. It was something to consider for future cycles because the act of asking the question could create change in and of itself as a form of effective influencing (Musselwhite and Plouffe, 2012, Ames et al., 2012). This had implications for the communication plans or frequency of cycles to try and establish an effective equilibrium that kept sustainable procurement front and centre without over saturating colleagues and it becoming inconvenient noise.

Lessons for Cycle 2

While there were several learning opportunities presented through the first cycle, there were specific lessons that I carried into cycle 2, to explore whether an adapted approach would yield more positive results.

The first adaption for cycle 2 was the selection of the participants. In cycle 2, the participants needed to feel empowered to set the strategic vision for change. The second adaptation was to reset the sequence of the first two phases of the cycle to adhere to the proposed Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005). Those were the only two lessons from cycle 1 that I actively attempted to implement through cycle 2, though there were likely to be further decisions in cycle 2 that were influenced by my experiences in cycle 1.

7. Cycle 2

Ambition of the Cycle

Following cycle 1 there were two specific lessons to implement: Selecting a set of participants who would feel empowered to develop a vision that supported sustainable procurement, and to reset the cycle to align with the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005).

Building on those lessons from cycle 1, cycle 2's ambition was to set a new functional strategy for procurement over a long time-horizon (up to 5 years) that encapsulated a broad value proposition, specifically including sustainable procurement.

Entry

Cycle 2 took place following significant changes. A number of these and their influence on the research are discussed in chapter 12. One change of note that had a direct impact on the research was the procurement restructure. This was a department wide restructure and head count reduction that began in September 2020 and went live in early November 2020, one outcome of the which was a new role for myself. While I had been leading the supply chain procurement category and had a seat at the Category Leadership Team meetings through cycle 1, the restructure meant a new role for me where I was responsible for procurement development. The restructure also created a new PLT, on which I sat, giving me direct access to the functional leadership team comprised of Heads of procurement and senior managers (see Appendix 1.03 for details of the senior leadership structure at the time). This access afforded me the opportunity to influence meeting agendas, and to schedule time with the PLT where I could progress elements of my research more easily than in my previous role. As part of my new remit, I was responsible for the development of the functional strategy. The opportunity was to develop the strategy using a pragmatic approach based on the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005).

Despite the changes, I still had to contend with the challenge of securing time with the PLT amongst all the operational issues. The intent had been to have a discussion with the PLT to establish their view of the strengths and opportunities of the department. Instead, this agenda topic was bumped from six consecutive PLT meetings and replaced by immediate operational topics. Clearly in the context of business need, this was the right decision at the time though a frustration for this research.

Discover

Prior to the scheduled meeting with the PLT, I sent them two questions. The intent was to try and avoid the anchoring effect produced in group meetings where the person who speaks first or most assertively dominates the discussion causing other participants to choose the path of least resistance and adjust their views (Kahneman, 2011). The questions asked were:

1. *Ahead of the discussion at PLT, could you give me 1 word / 1 line on Procurement's biggest strength as you see it, or when we are at our best?*
2. *Another question in prep for the PLT strategy session coming up, could you give me 1 line on why you think Procurement is important to the organisation or what difference we make?*

Of 11 PLT members, all answered the first question and 8 answered the second. I took the verbatim responses and facilitated a 25-minute discussion on both questions with the PLT. To stimulate the discussion, I had extracted what had appeared to me as common themes. From the 10 responses to question 1, the word or concept of "team" appeared in 4, and "responsive" in 3. From the 8 responses to question 2, the word or concept of "impartiality" appeared in 4, and "perspective" in 5. During the

discussion on the identified strengths, the PLT members challenged almost every aspect of the exercise. A number even said that the question had confused them and that they had answered based on the broader procurement profession rather than the organisation's procurement department.

For the first question, the discussion challenged "team" as being a strength. Comments included a perception that while there may have been pockets of good teamwork in the department, we were not operating as a good team across the whole function. It was also suggested that even if this were a skill that the function had, it was not something that should be considered a strength as it should be a basic behaviour for all colleagues working in the organisation. Instead, the discussion redefined the response and felt that the strength was in the breadth of the collective experience of all colleagues rather that their potential ability to work together. This was particularly interesting to me as a researcher as 6 months' prior, the department recognised and openly admitted to all colleagues in the function that we were not a particularly diverse group of individuals when considering the protected characteristics that are reflected in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion discussions. In the same vein as the discussion of 'team' was the discussion of 'responsive.' The core of the challenge was whether responsiveness could be considered a good thing. It certainly did not align with the stated ambition of the procurement restructure which was to proactively influence. This dichotomy of wanting to be proactive when a key perceived strength was being reactive caused some debate. In the end there was a general agreement on it as a strength as there were recent examples where the function's ability to respond to an immediate challenge was crucial for the organisation.

A similar discussion happened on the second question. The first theme of "impartiality" was debated on principle. Some participants felt that as we were colleagues in the same business, we were not truly impartial. We would be influenced by the same objectives, internal communications, etc. as our stakeholders so while we may be a step removed, we could not consider ourselves as truly impartial. Others felt that as procurement colleagues, we were all tasked with building closer and more trusting relationships, giving us greater influence over budget allocation and planning. As we were targeted on building these positive relationships, it would be hard to argue that we could have retained true impartiality. In the end, the discussion rested on a familiar theme for a procurement professional – value generation. Participants felt this represented the role that the function played for the organisation. Discussion on the second theme was far more muted and there was general acceptance of "perspective." The outputs in terms of the agreed strengths set up an interesting experience when the focus shifted to building on them to set our collective vision of the future.

Dream

In preparation for my second session with the PLT, I constructed a slide deck to act as a discussion prompt. The deck included a slide that recapped the agreed strengths from the Discover phase. This was important to keep in mind as the appreciative approach required a strong positive core to maintain momentum throughout the change process (Cooperrider and Srivastra, 1987). The slides went on to show visuals of how workload was changing over time across the value chain for the department. The initial view was akin to a normal distribution bell curve with most activity centred in the middle of the value chain. The procurement restructure aimed to redistribute the department's activity to become more evenly spread across the value chain. In other slides, I described the impact of the investment in the PESO programme which introduced significant process automation. This was presented as a demonstration of the current value chain, showing how many of the activities had some degree of self-service or automation. The stark image was that every single section of the value chain had self-service or automation at some level, and almost half was highly automated or self-serve. The final slide then applied that insight to the activity view and showed an overall reduction in effort required.

The manner of this presentation was to use a situation as a way of framing the Dream stage of the cycle. Using the terminology of Heath and Heath (2011), this process appealed to both the Rider and the Elephant as part of the change process. That is, the slides used a combination of analysis as a logical appeal, and visuals and language as an emotional appeal, to create a compelling reason to engage. The importance of priming participants to respond to a particular stimulus in a desired way has been covered extensively in psychology studies (Kahneman, 2011; Mischel, 2014). I used similar techniques to encourage the PLT to see the opportunity that this situation presented.

A recognised strength from the Discover phase was colleagues' responsiveness – the ability to rise to a challenge that was put in front of them. Rather than the vision development being an ethereal concept, which had been my approach in the first cycle, the framing set it as a challenge to be overcome. Due to time constraints, the session had to be split over two meetings and there was limited opportunity in the first to get into discussions on potential visions. I did however take away two actions. The PLT wanted insight from external consultants on the future of the profession, and they wanted an overlay of the corporate sustainability strategy. It was my belief, based on the nature of the conversation and how the requests were positioned, that the PLT members felt unable to determine any potential futures without having external guidance as a starting point. This was a significant frustration for me as both a practitioner and researcher.

Despite these specific requests being made, unfortunately I was not able to pursue them as planned. Following a meeting between myself and the two Heads of procurement it was agreed that the functional strategy development would be de-prioritised. This would allow the department to focus on key short-term objectives while I and my small team could work in the background to build the insight and start optioneering.

Discovery and Dream Revisited

It was approximately four months later that I was able to restart the cycle. To progress cycle 2, I held meetings with an external advisory group to gain insight into what best practice looked like across the wider profession. This insight showed key developments for functions in areas of digitalisation, risk management, cost savings and stakeholder alignment.

The second barrier to progress was to establish the internal drivers for change captured in the organisation's strategy. I held meetings with two representatives of the organisation's E&S team which provided an overview of the short-term priorities, as well as longer-term ambitions. During those meetings, it was expressed that when E&S strategies were developed, GNFR procurement was rarely considered, if at all. This was not a conscious exclusion of the GNFR supply chain but merely that the focus was always on the GFR supply chains, only stepping into the GNFR world for specific activities.

In addition to the insight from the E&S team, the procurement department received further clarity on the perceived and preferred role of the function in delivering the organisation's strategy. This came from the Finance Leadership Team, and specifically the Executive Director of Finance, into whom the procurement department reported. The role of procurement was articulated as working closely in a new combined function with Commercial Finance colleagues to drive a more cost-efficient organisation. It was clear that the vision for the function centred on a narrow definition of value and one that would prioritise cost over other factors such as sustainable procurement.

As noted previously, this research did not happen in a controlled environment. In true 'wicked problem' style (Brown et al., 2010), the rest of the world continued around it. So, although these next two activities were not conducted through this research, it is worth reflecting on their influence on the intended outcomes of cycle 2. The first was a piece of statistical work looking at the make-up of

the GNFR supply base. This analysis explored the relationship between the number of suppliers within a particular category of spend and their level of spend, splitting that spend into appropriate bandings. The analysis also overlaid the volume of projects within category teams, the declared addressable spend and forecast commercial benefits as defined by the function at that time. In short, this analysis concluded that the engagement threshold of procurement was incorrectly set. Instead, the analysis recommended raising the threshold with an objective of refocusing the available resources on higher value projects that carried greater opportunity for delivering commercial benefits. The analysis provided additional weight to the arguments I had presented 4 – 5 months prior and had been undertaken by an individual without any knowledge of my work as they sat outside of the PLT.

The second activity was sparked by an organisation-wide effort to reassess the business' purpose statement. Initiated by the Board, this activity sought the input of colleagues from across the business into the current purpose statement through facilitated feedback sessions at a departmental level. In procurement, a democratically elected representative facilitated the conversation among colleagues using two dedicated meetings. All colleagues in the department knew this was happening and by coincidence, both meetings were scheduled during PLT meetings meaning PLT members could not attend. This was not seen as an issue as the PLT was keen to encourage colleagues to share ideas and opinions openly, and they recognised that their presence in these kinds of feedback sessions was not always conducive to creating that environment. What the PLT members, myself included, had not realised was that these purpose sessions would extend from the organisation's purpose statement to discussing what our local, departmental purpose should be. This meant that an activity happening without the PLT's input that captured colleague sentiment and feedback that could have a significant impact on the future functional strategy. The feedback itself was insightful and demonstrated a clear willingness from colleagues to engage in the strategy of the department. The themes that came out of the feedback included being more strategic, fair, ethical and trusted, and pushed the definition of value to broader than commercial benefits. That desire, coming directly from colleagues, ran contrary to the vision from the top of Finance.

As it was, a combination of factors showed that the PLT were not able to construct a new functional strategy. Limited resources, impending deadlines, and growing operational and commercial risks to inflight plans meant long-term thinking was not a priority. This was brought to sharp focus through the additional activities described above. The statistical analysis was seen by those who read it as interesting insight but something to be addressed after the successful launch of the PESO programme, rather than distracting the teams now with a change in policy and process. Similarly, the feedback from colleagues on the potential new procurement purpose statement was interesting. However, the PLT agreed that it was not the right time to reconsider the functional purpose, instead believing that the opportune moment was once an organisation-wide purpose had been reset. procurement would then be able to ensure that our purpose flowed consistently with the overarching purpose of the business, rather than being counterproductive. Given that the ambition of cycle 2 had been to establish a new functional strategy that included sustainable procurement, it felt appropriate to close the cycle at this point.

Evaluation

Cycle 2 had a clear ambition at the outset, which was to be achieved by working with the PLT. Cycle 2 was also an opportunity to experiment with the lessons learnt through cycle 1. Specifically, the lessons I sought to include through cycle 2 were:

- Participants in cycle 1 felt a lack of empowerment to collectively determine a vision for sustainable procurement.
- Reversing the Dream and Discovery phases had not contributed to success in cycle 1.

The participant group was chosen specifically because they, collectively, had the responsibility to determine the strategy for the procurement department. As part of their leadership remit, they needed to define the ambition, purpose, and path towards their collective vision. Secondly, cycle 2 reset the approach back towards the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005). The intent had been to find a shared definition and understanding of existing strengths upon which the vision could be built.

As in cycle 1, Table 7.1 subjectively considers the intended impact of each initiative undertaken through cycle 2. It also captures the impact the activity had towards both the individual ambition of this cycle as well as the overall research purpose. As cycle 2 did not make it beyond the Dream phase, Table 7.1 considers the initiatives and activities performed as part of the cycle but not implemented initiatives. To support this evaluation, feedback was sought from participants through short one-to-one meetings.

Each feedback meeting was between 15 and 30 minutes and structured around three questions:

1. Did the participant believe that a functional strategy was necessary (a strategy specifically for the procurement department to articulate purpose, objectives, and intended activities to achieve a defined level of success)?
2. If so, what did they feel would enable the PLT to build such a strategy?
3. How did they feel about each of the initiatives listed in Table 7.1?

Not all participants in the cycle were available to attend a feedback session due to either work commitments or holidays, however 8 out of the 11 PLT members were able to contribute, including myself in my role as participant.

The feedback from the participants was varied. Seeking feedback in individual sessions allowed for this variety to be uncovered, with each participant having the opportunity to share their frank views without peer pressure or the potential of being pushed to silence for holding a minority view. This proved very informative as some members of the PLT shared their view that having a strategy for the procurement function was unnecessary. This was eye opening for me as a researcher and as a PLT member, as I had taken it for granted that the Leadership team would unanimously consider a functional strategy essential.

Aside from those participants who did not feel a strategy was needed, the rest of the participants in the cycle had a different interpretation of what a strategy was, what it would include, and what creating one would entail. From the feedback sessions, it was clear that these different perspectives had both a positive and negative impact on the outcomes of cycle 2. On the positive side, those participants that felt a strategy was a substantial piece of work engaged more with this cycle. In the feedback sessions, participants in this camp used phrases such as they were “learning the whole time” and how other factors such as talent and development plans “hang off it.” More than half of the participants noted the current absence of a strategy as a negative and a third went as far as to suggest that without a strategy, they could not see a future for the function within the organisation as we were not able to effectively communicate our purpose or the value that we added.

Table 7.1 – Cycle 2 Initiatives Intention vs Outcome

Initiative / Activity	Intended Impact	Contribution towards Cycle Ambition	Contribution towards Research Purpose
Utilise the Discover phase to establish the positive core for the cycle	Create a commonly understood positive core that would sustain the energy and appreciative approach throughout the cycle.	Mixed impact Some participants saw the value, enjoyed the activity, and learnt something Others questioned the timing of the exercise compared to other priorities One participant did not make the connection between the activity and developing a strategy	Established a set of positive strengths for the function which could be utilised in further cycles.
Present drivers for change	Appeal to the logical and emotive centres of participants to inspire and create an agreed need for change	Low impact Most participants felt this did not contribute to their understanding or create a sense of need for change It resonated with two participants who saw the value of the system being implemented and potential consequences for the department.	Limited tangible contribution though for the two participants who found it valuable it did help to articulate a need for a broader value proposition beyond commercial benefits.
Engage external advisory group	Seek external insight that would give the PLT confidence in selecting the right strategy	High impact The insight provided a clear indication of what similar functions in other businesses were doing and achieving which proved useful context for participants	Highlighted the investment being made by other procurement functions in specialist roles, including in sustainability and sustainable procurement. Provided context for participants and researcher on what is happening in the wider profession
Feedback from the Ethics & Sustainability Team	Obtain guidance and input on potential ambitions and a broader organisation E&S strategy that would have to be built into the procurement strategy	Medium impact The guidance set out the major public commitments the organisation had made towards E&S and the role that procurement may have to play Some participants did not understand exactly what would be asked of procurement.	Highlighted the significant demands likely to hit procurement over a 6 month – 3-year timespan. This emphasised the need for improved behaviour towards sustainable procurement but did not in and of itself provide a route to improving those behaviours
Top-down guidance from the Finance Leadership Team	External direction from senior leadership to inform PLT strategy setting	Significant negative impact	Perceived negative contribution as the focus on just achieving commercial benefits made colleagues question why we would divert

		The direction sent a clear message that encouraged procurement to focus solely on achieving commercial benefits	resources from achieving savings to other activities such as sustainable procurement
Statistical Analysis of Procurement Engagement thresholds	No intended impact – not an activity that was intentionally part of this cycle	Low impact Most participants in the cycle did not engage with the analysis. Those that did expressed their knowledge of it intuitively.	Limited direct impact on achieving changed behaviours towards sustainable procurement
Purpose workshops	No intended impact – not an activity that was intentionally part of this cycle	Significant negative impact Purpose work brought the conversation with the PLT to a head and resulted in the PLT determining that it was not the right time to set a long-term ambition for the function	Highlighted the desire from colleagues to extend the value proposition of the department and include ethics and sustainability.

Interestingly in the feedback session, while few felt that the department needed a 'full blown strategy,' terminology such as 'ambition,' 'purpose,' 'goal,' and 'plan' were used interchangeably. There was almost unanimous agreement that the department needed a long-term commitment towards which the whole team would work. Unfortunately, that agreement did not extend to the way that commitment was defined. Some participants felt it should be a collaborative effort like the process that this cycle tried to implement, however the appreciative approach from the cycle was unfamiliar and that triggered disengagement. Other participants felt it should come from the top and that they expected the Head of procurement to set out his vision. When put to the Head of procurement, he found this perspective interesting and at odds with his own – he instead feeling it was the collective responsibility of the whole leadership team to establish the long-term commitment that would guide the function.

Considering the collection of initiatives undertaken in the cycle, the participants were unanimous in their view that we had not achieved anything that would materially affect behaviours towards sustainable procurement. The two most well received activities (the external insight from the advisory agency, and the guidance from the E&S team) had a positive and informative effect, however none of the participants that provided feedback had proactively used that information in any of their or their team's work.

Reflections

The procurement restructure and the resulting change in my job role allowed me to action a key reflection from cycle 1, that the participant group did not feel empowered to determine a vision or strategy for change. Following the restructure, my role on the PLT allowed me to shift my participant group to the decision makers for the function. From a strictly academic interpretation, changing the participant group in anticipation of a better outcome was not the best of ideas to present a robust and scientific contribution of knowledge. However, this was the necessary pragmatic step to take to try and deliver positive outcomes for the organisation while also remaining true to the research purpose. This is very much in the spirit of bricolage: working with what I had available to me at the time to produce the desired outcome (Rogers, 2012).

I found the strengths session with the PLT to be very challenging. I was cognisant that the PLT members seemed uncomfortable with a focus on strengths. On the one hand, some seemed perturbed by having stuck their necks out in giving a response to a question without knowing how their peers had responded. It was these participants that generally commented that they had misunderstood the nature of the question. I had tried to pre-empt this eventuality by ensuring that the verbatim comments provided were not ascribed to any individual. On the other hand, other participants, perhaps from seeing their response compared to others, appeared to dig in ready to defend their contribution. The atmosphere of the discussion was one of negativity; the questions were wrong, others were wrong for their suggestions, I was wrong in the themes I had identified. There seemed little intent from the participants to build a collaborative discussion. While there was no direct calling out of individuals, the language and tone of voice used by some participants had an impact. I do not know if the outcome was as a result of peer pressure or positional authority but one of the more assertive voices in the discussion was a Head of procurement and therefore outranked 9 of the other participants. As the researcher I took some responsibility as I had facilitated the session. Equally, as a participant I felt the compelling force of peer pressure and I did not respond with equal assertiveness.

There was another factor that caused me consternation from the Discover session. I struggled trying to reconcile the agreed strengths of the department and an appreciative approach. The agreed strength of "Responsive" had some debate but was quickly accepted. With my participant perspective I completely agreed. It was a definite strength with many recognisable examples. With my researcher

perspective, I had difficulty coming to terms with a problem-orientated capability being recognised a strength in what should have been an opportunity-orientated change process. It was a chance comment from my wife that put it into perspective. Whilst doing a crossword one evening, she remarked that she was "really good at solving problems" ...and the penny dropped. If one of the function's core strengths was an ability to respond to a challenge, then I needed to frame the change as just that. This changed my approach to cycle 2 though I recognised in moving from a blank page approach to one that is framed, it potentially introduced my own biases into the process and outputs. This recognition perhaps highlights the cultural difficulty with adopting appreciative approaches, even for the researcher. Pragmatically seizing the opportunities in front of me not only aligned with the tenets of the AI elements of the AAR model, but with the adoption of bricolage (Rogers, 2012) and the overarching pragmatic approach of this research.

Between the first and second sessions with the PLT, an interesting development occurred. As discussed above, I had prepared for the second session by visually expressing the value chain for the procurement department, and with representations of how workload was shifting over time at different stages within that value chain. The essential message was that procurement as we defined it could have been obsolete within 5 years. Before I raised the topic with the PLT members, there was a drop-in session for colleagues of all levels in the department to join a virtual get together and share their feedback or thoughts on recent developments. During that meeting, colleagues voiced a concern that a potential outcome of the intended changes being brought in through the Head Office Transformation (HOT) restructure would be the business areas setting up their own shadow capabilities. In this context, shadow capabilities would be, for example, a marketing function hiring a procurement person to take on the activities that the restructured procurement function no longer supported. In this way, rather than activities stopping due to being deemed to not add sufficient value, those activities continue outside of the centralised capabilities. This, colleagues felt, was because the strategy for head office support functions like procurement was to establish greater self-service tools and resources allowing stakeholders to take on routine, low value / low risk activity themselves. Colleagues were playing out a logical scenario that the arbitrary rules that defined what was self-service versus centre-led activity could of course shift in the future. This would reduce workload and other responsibilities for centralised functions, and lead to a transfer of work out to the business stakeholders.

This epiphany was illuminating for two reasons. Firstly, colleagues had reached the same conclusion as I had. The second was that colleagues seemed to have reached the conclusion before the PLT. Often this would be explained by colleagues jumping to conclusions based on limited information. Interestingly in this situation, as described above, the PLT members reacted largely with ambivalence. In the first session with PLT there was little or no engagement on this possible future. What I found disheartening was that instead of showing engagement and ownership of the functional vision as you might expect the PLT to do, there was a standoff attitude and the only points raised, except for one person, asked for more information from different sources. I found this vexing that a team of leaders were effectively deferring responsibility for defining their future.

The de-prioritisation that I mentioned earlier reinforced this perception that the PLT were unable to work towards building an effective vision, contextualising the problem as one of capacity. I found it curious though to reflect on the similarities and differences experienced through cycles 1 and 2 to this point. In cycle 1, the volunteers represented almost all possible levels within the procurement hierarchy at the time. These individuals had little difficulty thinking creatively and finding the motivation to produce a bold vision. The participants in cycle 1, although potentially impacted by circumstances beyond their control, then felt they were not empowered to pursue their vision. On the other hand, the participants in cycle 2 represented the top levels in the procurement hierarchy but appeared reticent to contribute ideas regarding the future of the function that could have been

shaped into a compelling vision. However, across both cycle 1 and cycle 2, there was strong desire to understand what other areas of the business or external market were expecting of procurement. This perhaps was another example of the cultural desire among the two participant groups to solve a problem, supportive of the recognised strength in their ability to respond to challenges.

It left me with a situation to ponder in how to move cycle 2 forward and required a significant pivot from the original plan. Reflecting on the combined experiences of cycle 1 and cycle 2 gave me an idea for cycle 3. If my participant groups struggled in either the development of, or commitment to, their own vision, I needed to simplify the experience by taking a vision that was already established and reframing it as a challenge.

Reflecting after the decision to close cycle 2, two potential conflict zones uncovered were intriguing. The first was a potential conflict between colleagues in the department, including some PLT members, who expressed their desire for a compelling vision for the function. Colleagues expressed their views on this through the purpose workshops. The PLT members provided feedback through the one-to-one conversations as part of the feedback on this cycle, with some of those participants sharing that they felt "rudderless," or that it was the first time in their career where procurement did not have a "3 to 5-year plan that was approved by the board". This perspective conflicted with the PLT collectively not setting a strategy for the function. Through observation, the net impact was several frustrated colleagues who felt like their work was short-term with no clear ambition for the future. However, as a recognised strength of the function was its ability to respond to a challenge, the impact of this frustration and conflict was likely to mitigated in part by a focus on short-term goals.

The second potential conflict was between that bottom-up desire for a broad definition of value articulated earlier in this chapter, and the top-down requirements that focused procurement purely on cost savings. At the time of writing, this was an ongoing conflict that had been a contributary factor in some colleagues choosing to leave. In some regards, embracing this kind of conflict made sense. Creating clarity of mission would have acted as an enabler for the team as they no longer had to spread themselves thinly across multiple objectives. Equally, it could have facilitated more effective teamwork across the business where there were multi-directorate project teams established. For example, a marketeer who wanted to create the most elaborate advertising campaign balanced it off against the procurement professional who had an eye on return on investment. This could have created a healthy tension within project teams who worked to find solutions that met everyone's objectives. There was extensive research available on team dynamics, from classics such as Belbin's Team Roles (1993, cited in Fisher et al., 1998), Tuckman's team developmental sequence (1965, cited in Johnson et al., 2002) to modern writing on managing and leading. This research did not explore the team dynamic environment, but it was worthy of reflection.

Lessons for Cycle 3

From the above experiences, there were some notable lessons learnt. Cycle 3 began while cycle 2 was still active, so it took early observations from cycle 2 and cycle 1 as its core experiment. This was the difficulty experienced, in both cycles, for the participant groups to define and commit to a vision for change. The lesson for cycle 3 being, if colleagues in procurement are not willing or able to achieve this step, then I would need to find a way of providing that for them. It needed to be done in a way that did not appear to be an arbitrary extension of my own desires but a genuine strategy or vision from the organisation that had implications for the procurement function.

The second lesson taken from this cycle was the impact of group size and fluctuating membership on their ability to coalesce as a team for the purposes of change. More by coincidence than design, cycle 3 worked with a smaller group of Participants who were more used to collaborating than either of the cycle 1 or cycle 2 participant groups. I reflect on this experience in chapter 8, though the hypothesis

was that it was likely to yield a more productive outcome compared to the experiences so far through this research.

8. Cycle 3

Ambition of the Cycle

Cycles 1 and 2 both raised the question over participants' empowerment to engage in setting a strategy. Although each a unique experience, the reflections on cycles 1 and 2 posed the challenge of whether a participant group within the context of this research would be able to effectively complete the first two stages of the Egan and Lancaster AAR model of change (2005). The Discover phase, although a challenging conversation, was ultimately successful for cycle 2. The Dream phase for cycle 1 saw some initial success but then melted away.

Cycle 3 therefore sought to take those lessons and experiment, utilising an existing strategy, and established strengths. I explored through cycle 3 whether a different sized participant group would encourage a different team dynamic.

Entry & Dream

As discussed at length in previous chapters, my experience from both cycle 1 and cycle 2 was one of difficulty getting participants to agree and commit to a vision. From this experience, I developed the hypothesis that change could be more effective in this context by using a vision that already existed. I could then reframe it to play to the procurement function's strength explored in cycle 2, being able to positively respond to a challenge. I made the decision to use elements of this as the change vision for cycle 3. The approach was based on pragmatism. The targeted outcome was known (improving sustainable procurement outcomes) but efforts in cycles 1 and 2 had failed and therefore a different approach was needed. I embraced what Bacon called the "primacy of the practical" (Bacon 2012, page 199) and adopted the concept of 'bricolage' (Rogers, 2012) which, combined, naturally pointed me towards using the resources that I had available which would enable progress. In this instance, the organisation-wide E&S strategy, although not formally published at the time via the organisation's internal intranet, was available to me in draft form due to my role in procurement.

As cycle 1 had shown, procurement colleagues struggled with complexity and the unknown. To try and prevent that from being the case for cycle 3, I made the decision to focus on a very specific area of the E&S strategy, the commitment to a net zero carbon supply chain by 2045. A net zero carbon supply chain was an ambitious commitment to make as at the time of making it, the organisation did not have a way of measuring Scope 3 emissions as defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocols (WRI and WBCSD, 2011). The reason for selecting this specific part of a much wider strategy for cycle 3 was driven by another factor. As the organisation-wide E&S strategy was, at the time, unapproved and unpublished, I was not able to widely share the information that I had access to. For confidentiality reasons I was limited to sharing it only with my direct team which consisted of two data and insight analysts. Their speciality was developing systemic solutions for capturing data and then working with that data to build actionable insight. Keeping in mind the philosophy of framing the cycle as a challenge that they could rise to, selecting a commitment that required the team to develop a data capture, measurement and reporting methodology seemed a recipe for success.

Dream

By selecting the pre-existing strategy, I was rendering the Dream stage mute. Participants were not involved in considering the vision for change, or in determining the future state. I reflect on this decision later in this chapter, acknowledging the potential implications and assessing the actual impact.

Discovery

Rather than explore this again in cycle 3, the experiment for this cycle was to utilise the strengths established in cycle 2. These strengths were still timely, having only been agreed less than three months before cycle 3 began. They were easy reference points that participants in cycle 3 could also recognise even though they had not been involved in the debate. This decision ultimately rendered the Discovery phase mute as well, and retained the previous strengths which were:

- Breadth of collective experience
- Responsiveness to a challenge
- Value generation
- Perspective within the organisation

Design

The design phase started with investigating and sharing resources that the participant group felt would be helpful as background knowledge. This included attending a virtual round table discussion with other procurement organisations facilitated by an insights body, The Hackett Group, where experiences of measuring carbon emissions were shared freely. At the same time, the participants reviewed open-source materials to gain a greater understanding of the options available and so we could take an informed approach to defining a Scope 3 measurement process for the organisation's GNFR function. Specifically, the team reviewed material from the Greenhouse Gas Protocol website that provided details regarding Scope 3 emissions from defining them, through to calculation methodologies and how to set reduction targets (Greenhouse Gas Protocols, 2021). This then came together in a workshop where we each discussed what we had learned and began creating options that could be adopted.

Assessment & Feedback

Interestingly, through the discussion at the workshop, the participants began expanding the ambition of the plan. There was definite enthusiasm to apply what had been learnt through individual research, which went beyond net carbon zero initiatives. It covered other sustainable procurement activities and considered the potential to apply what had been learnt in other scenarios that would provide richer insight for decision making within the organisation.

Not only did the conversation discuss expanding the scope, but also covered the potential to establish a longer-term activity plan. This plan would cover the introduction of multiple changes that could have a significant impact on the sustainable procurement capabilities of the department. The whole conversation though maintained the focus on what could be done within the sphere of influence of the participants involved. Each potential action related back to data capture capabilities and techniques, and the collective understanding from the participants as to how the systemic landscape would evolve over time.

Of all the potential activities that were discussed by the participants, the litmus tests to filter ideas down to the ones we would pursue were:

- Is it aligned to the Ethics & Sustainability Strategy?
- Is it aligned to the goal of a net zero carbon organisation supply chain by 2045?
- Is it within our control as a participant group to investigate and / or implement?

Although not explicitly agreed criteria, the participant group also sought to filter ideas and allocate actions based on relative skill sets and experience. This was one of the benefits of working with a small group of participants who worked together closely. Unlike the participant group in cycle 2 who were mostly a collective of peers, the cycle 3 participant group were an established team used to working together. The familiarity of strengths and capabilities played not only to a more efficient allocation of activities but bore a similarity to an appreciative approach.

Action Planning

The outcome of the Assessment & Feedback phase was agreement to pursue three specific actions. The first was for one of the participants to utilise publicly available resources to build a model to calculate scope 3 carbon emissions for a section of the GNFR supply chain. This involved gathering spend data for a given period, utilising free resources from the internet, building an Excel spreadsheet model that would calculate a crude carbon footprint based on emission conversion factors, and then creating an intensity metric to align with the organisation's Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions publication methodology. As this research was not assessing carbon footprinting techniques, I do not go into any further detail here as to the calculation methodology or outputs.

The second activity was to validate the output of the first activity. This was taken up by the analytics and insight colleague in the team, someone with extensive experience in data and reporting, who could ensure the model worked, the formulae were correct, and all assumptions were reasonable. The output of this activity was a validated model as a proof-of-concept that could then be shared more widely with interested stakeholders.

The final agreed activity was to explore with the procurement system provider what adaptations could be made to the processes and solutions being implemented through the PESO programme that would enable an automation of the proof-of-concept. This was an "art of the possible" activity, to understand the theoretical constraints or capabilities of the system and how the proof of concept could be deployed. The participant who took on this activity had the most detailed knowledge of the system and the raw data landscape. The output for this activity was purely knowledge; knowledge of how the system was set up; knowledge of the limitations of the configuration and core programming; and the appropriate governance route to follow if in future we wanted to implement the change.

Intervention

The first activity, building a Scope 3 carbon emissions calculation model, was surprisingly quick. This speed was thanks to two specific factors; availability of data, and the familiarity that colleague had with the work from implementing something similar with a previous employer. This meant that to create a crude model took just one working day from start to finish.

The second activity was designed to be a relatively quick action to assess the validity and accuracy of the output of the first activity. This was completed within a few hours. The participant group took this second activity further than originally designed and socialised the model with the E&S team to assess its utility with experts in the field. They were impressed and adopted the model internally within their team to consider how they would want to expand it to cover the full supply chain and what actions would be taken off the back of such an endeavour.

The third activity had the greatest potential beyond the scope of this cycle. The activity started as an exploration of system capabilities and, once those were established along with the intended system development roadmap, the colleague leading this work facilitated a conversation with the rest of the participants to discuss the opportunities that could be explored beyond sustainable procurement. The conversation was an enthusiastic enterprise though after the brainstorming which was valuable in the context of our business-as-usual responsibilities, I circled the conversation back around to the purpose of this research. With that lens on the discussion, the participants mapped out what would be required to implement an automated carbon footprint calculation methodology into the requisition process. That was as far as this activity could go as the system was under development through the PESO programme and there was no appetite in the organisation for further system work while that programme was still ongoing.

Evaluation

As in the previous two chapters, Table 8.1 below offers a subjective assessment of the impact that each initiative undertaken through cycle 3 had both on the ambition of this cycle, and on the overall research purpose. The feedback in the table reflects a group feedback session held with the cycle participants. This was a different approach to the individual one-to-ones held with cycle 2 participants. With the participant group in cycle 3 being considerably smaller, I hypothesised that a group feedback environment would enable greater discussion and richness of conversation.

I acknowledge that cycles 1 and 2, and cycle 3 are not directly comparable. The nature, focus, duration, and participants in each are completely different. The dynamic among the cycle 3 participants was very different both inside, and outside of the cycle. Along with myself, the cycle 3 participants were a single team within the procurement department, used to working together daily as part of their roles. This was in contrast with the cycle 2 participants whose normal roles were, for much of the time, segregated from other members of the PLT. Their focus was usually on leading their team, with only a proportion of their time each week dedicated to collective thought and action as a single unit. Equally, the cycle 1 participants were drawn from across the department, with multiple teams and levels within the hierarchy represented. The group feedback environment used with cycle 3 participants therefore built on their existing team dynamic.

The questions used in the cycle 3 feedback session necessarily differed in content from the feedback questions asked in cycle 2 but were framed in the same way. The questions asked were:

1. Was it right or important for us to explore carbon foot printing?
2. Was reading / watching the Greenhouse Gas Protocol information useful? Did it prompt any independent research?
3. Was exploring the system capabilities useful?

Using these questions, the feedback session was more of a facilitated discussion environment compared to cycle 2's structured interviews. The discussion was distinctly positive, with participants building on the comments and feedback of each other. This positivity was a marked difference to cycle 2 which was overall a relatively neutral atmosphere.

The framing of the cycle as a challenge to be addressed and utilising the existing E&S strategy, enabled the participants to begin the cycle from a relative comfort zone. Their first experiences of cycle 3 were therefore more familiar and understandable rather than asking them to engage in activities they felt unempowered to participate in. The selection of the participant group to be a small existing team had the potential to be contrary to the ambition of playing to the previously defined strengths – if the strength was the breadth of collective experience, then selecting a small team artificially limits it. However, with the framing of cycle 3 focusing on system and data solutions, the participant group were the recognised experts in these subjects within the function, so it was a reasonable compromise.

Of the initiatives that were undertaken, all were successful at achieving their intended aims. The participants created a proof-of-concept Scope 3 emissions calculation model for the GNFR supply chain and developed their understanding of the system landscape to the extent that they were able to plan what would be required and how it would work if we were to implement an automated solution. These outcomes were then shared with internal and external stakeholders to highlight the opportunities for future change.

Table 8.1 – Cycle 3 Initiatives Intention vs Outcome

Initiative / Activity	Intended Impact	Contribution towards Cycle Ambition	Contribution towards Research Purpose
Utilising cycle 2 strengths as Positive Core	Use the output to frame the approach to cycle 3, ensuring the whole cycle played to the identified strengths	Worked in conjunction with utilising the existing Ethics & Sustainability strategy as that provided context against which the participants could respond	Negligible tangible impact however it is likely that utilising the strengths to inform and frame the approach to cycle 3 made it significantly more effective compared to the approaches of cycles 1 and 2.
Utilise existing Ethics & Sustainability strategy	Remove ambiguity and address a learning point from cycle 1 that Participants generally felt unable to define the strategy or vision for change	Provided succinct and unambiguous strategy which left no need for interpretation or additional discussion / definition	Raised awareness of ethical and sustainability topics among participant group Did not explicitly link to sustainable procurement
Reading / watching Greenhouse Gas Protocol information	Provide a base level of knowledge for the major change subject / goal of the cycle	Provided some knowledge of the subject however participants found the material out of date and questioned its usefulness for our purposes	Raised awareness of a specific element of sustainability. Did not explicitly link to sustainable procurement however there was an inherent link through the focus on Scope 3 emissions which are specifically supply chain
Exploring System Capabilities	Understand feasibility and constraint of in system Scope 3 carbon footprint calculations	Established the parameters and potential for system changes that would enable transaction-based Scope 3 carbon footprint reporting	Raised awareness of potential systemic solutions that support sustainable procurement initiatives Provided actual experience for one participant of investigating options and finding solutions to a sustainable procurement related opportunity
Creation & validation of Scope 3 carbon footprint proof of concept	Build proof of concept for future work. Develop understanding for potential level of effort and complexity to build Scope 3 carbon footprint across the whole GNFR supply chain. Ensure proof of concept had sufficient rigour to meet reporting standards / requirements and wider business need	Demonstrated proof of concept. Established rough order of magnitude effort required to build a Scope 3 carbon footprint calculation for the GNFR supply chain. Did not demonstrate sufficient rigour to be utilised as more than a proof of concept	Raised awareness of the methodology for a specific element of sustainability Demonstrated a connection between non-traditional procurement roles (non-buying / category management roles) and their ability to contribute towards sustainable procurement deliverables.

Reflections

My decision process meant that for cycle 3, I would be essentially skipping the Dream and Discovery phase of the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005) by utilising pre-existing artefacts. I recognised that this was a risk. It meant that the participants were not involved in confirming their commitment to exploring change through a start-up phase, they were not involved in considering their relative strengths, and they were not involved in establishing a compelling vision for change. This lack of involvement in what would normally be advocated as important steps to initiate appreciative change could have negatively impacted engagement (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). Pragmatically, this was a risk I felt worth taking in the interests of achieving the established research purpose.

Another factor I was conscious of was that through each cycle, my participants changed. For cycle 3, the participant pool shrank to be just my procurement development team. This meant the research stepped away from a key principle of appreciative change which is the system-wide involvement of those the change would impact. it could be semantics however as the colleagues who would be necessary to explore the focus topic of cycle 3 were involved and while this meant the group did not benefit from additional insight or perspective, the participants were the right colleagues for the narrow scope of cycle 3.

The revision to the participant group also introduced the possibility that my positional hierarchy would overly influence the change process and skew the outputs towards my either real or perceived agenda. Marquet (2020) highlights the potential significant consequences that power imbalances can have between a leader and their team, particularly in environments where sharing opinion and facts relied on openness. Reflecting on observations from this cycle, other influences balanced out that positional risk. These included the age and relative experience of participants compared to me and their functional expertise compared to mine. With the focus of the cycle on data capture and analysis, the other participants far outweighed the technical contribution I could make given their backgrounds and experience. My role in the group was to bring my specific experience of having implemented an accredited Scope 3 emissions calculation methodology at a previous organisation, and my relationship with the E&S team to enable our collective efforts to go somewhere after the cycle. This meant that collectively we had several attributes that should have made implementation of the chosen change activities more successful.

Reflecting after the Design workshop, I found the nature of the session interesting. The participants brought significant academic experience (all held at least an undergraduate degree) and career experience (all had worked for at least 10 years and collectively for almost 50 years). The nature of the procurement development team required those with an analytical predisposition as most of the work was data driven. This meant that the participants in cycle 3 all had a similar personality type. Beyond the widely accepted perspectives on successful team dynamics, I wondered what degree of influence the personality mix of participants has on successful change implementation. This is not a topic I explore through this research, but other researchers have provided insight in this area. González-González et al. (2021) found that personality traits of frontline staff in hospitality had a direct impact on employee-led change. This had parallels to my research and the ambition to utilise participatory change approaches with front-line procurement colleagues. For cycle 3, it was this predominant analytical personality type that caused the conversation during the Design workshop to shift towards a longer-term plan of action and a desire to map out the successive change initiatives.

One of the ambitions of this cycle was to test the team dynamic with a different and smaller participant group. Reflecting on the experience at different stages, working with an existing team that was used to working together appeared to enable faster decision making and more progress to be made. Potentially, this could be achieved by spending some time at the start of a cycle dedicated to developing an effective team dynamic. This may have bridged some of the performance gap

experienced in cycles 1 and 2, though the type of team engaged as participants in cycle 3 also brought with them established routine and culture of teamwork from months of having been working at a team since the procurement restructure.

In the Design and Assessment & Feedback stages, the participants were quick to volunteer or to allocate activities based on acknowledged strengths and capabilities. The participants had pre-existing knowledge of their relative strengths, and this seemed to shortcut discussions. Potentially this could have reduced the richness of debate. In the context of achieving the research purpose and the ambitions of this cycle however, this appeared to be a reasonable compromise and one I would do again in future. The decision-making was pragmatic in nature, holding an action bias and prioritising progress.

Through the Intervention phase, the team dynamic changed from efficient allocation to supportive as the participants shared information quickly between themselves, requested support when they needed it and built on the ideas of others through discussion and debate. The contrast to the previous cycles continued in the evaluation session where cycle 3 was a group feedback workshop compared to one-to-one meetings. This built an enhanced emotional connection to the work and the team as they actively sought to build positively on their experiences and those shared by other participants. This connection is perhaps best exemplified by the participants asking what comes next or that they sought new opportunities to engage in carbon measuring even after the cycle had closed, reflecting the generative nature of appreciative change (Bushe, 2013).

My final reflection was reserved for considering the approach taken overall and its alignment, or otherwise, with pragmatic change approaches. Reflecting on the experience for the participants, their perception of the change process would align with the principles of AR. They experienced a phase that framed a challenge that needed to be scoped, explored, and resolved effectively. They went through a planning phase, implemented an agreed set of actions, and then reflected on the success and future opportunities. This very much aligns with an experience of traditional AR articulated by Lewin, Cunningham, and others over the years (Cunningham, 1976). What the participants did not experience directly was the earlier activity of determining the core strengths or establishing the change vision. These activities had greater alignment with AI. The combination of factors, and the success of the cycle, add weight to the argument that a blend that combines the opportunity-orientated AI with the problem-orientated AR yields positive results. The interesting lens here is the individual experiences of the participants which raises the question as to whether all participants need to know the approach to be taken. In this instance, there does not appear to have been a negative impact. In comparison to previous cycles, cycle 3's approach was the only one to have been able to complete what it set out to do and make it through the entire cycle. The pragmatic choices throughout cycle 3 appeared to have been successful and not only achieved the ambitions of the cycle, but also provided a positive demonstration for pragmatic change.

Lessons for Cycle 4

The first lesson that I took forward into cycle 4 was to rerun the blind appreciative approach used in cycle 3. Utilising the same strengths and existing E&S strategy, cycle 4 was another opportunity to test that approach with a different participant group to establish if the success of cycle 3 was a manifestation of the participants or whether that approach in general was more successful in this context.

Linked to that first lesson, by utilising pre-existing strengths and strategies, I accelerated the cycle from inception to action. This action-bias in the cycle worked for some colleagues but for others could have been uncomfortable territory. Those that were seeking change in the status quo were already

likely to engage with an action biased process faster than those who were either neutral to the need for change or held a contrary position. cycle 4 was another opportunity to test this action-bias.

The third reflection was that cycle 3 focused on a single topic within sustainable procurement, a much more limited scope than the overall research purpose. Cycle 4 was an opportunity to experiment with ways that encouraged Participants and colleagues in the procurement function to engage with a broader understanding of sustainable procurement.

9. Cycle 4

Ambition for the Cycle

Cycle 3 utilised existing strengths, and an existing strategy, rather than develop them specifically for that cycle. With them, cycle 3 saw some success and so cycle 4 was to repeat this test with a new participant group to see if the success could be replicated. Linked to this, cycle 4 would maintain a pragmatic action-bias, again to replicate the positive engagement that cycle 3 saw as a result of its own speed to implementation. Finally, cycle 4 would break from cycle 3's experience and look to influence a broad range of sustainable procurement topics, rather than focus in on a single area.

Entry & Start-up

Unlike cycles 1 and 2, cycle 4 had no defined step where appetite for change was established, and commitment was agreed. Instead, it was a result of frustration felt by myself and others in the department at the topic of sustainable procurement being de-prioritised in favour of traditional procurement activities. In conversations with colleagues, it was clear that they felt passionately about still trying to achieve something towards sustainable procurement. For some, they believed it a must because sustainable procurement deliverables were specific targets for their stakeholders. It was clear then that there was some appetite for change and there was a subset of the procurement department willing to participate. Kelman described this kind of group as the 'change vanguard' (2005). They may not all share the same vision of the future but are united by a desire to challenge the status quo. These colleagues formed an informal group of participants for this cycle.

Discovery & Dream

As described above, an ambition of this cycle was to continue the experiment from cycle 3 and utilise the pre-existing vision and strengths. The vision for change was the established E&S strategy for the whole organisation. At the outset of this cycle, this vision still had not been published (via the intranet) in full to the whole organisation but all the commitments and outcomes that the strategy sought to achieve had been made public. This cycle also utilised the strengths established in cycle 2 to guide the framing of the cycle for the Participants and how initiatives were developed and deployed with colleagues.

Design

Cycle 4 amalgamated two distinct Design routes. Both routes came about because of a single colleague in each case shared their frustration that more was not being done by the department to contribute towards sustainability. The first was a member of the PLT who hoped that the rest of the leadership team would engage in the subject of sustainable procurement and see how important it was to the organisation and our wider ethical obligations. The second was a colleague who felt that the work which they and their team were already doing to encourage their stakeholders through their projects to implement more sustainable solutions was going unrecognised. This, they felt, was due to the lack of priority the department had for sustainable procurement. Each of these change routes meant capitalising on enthusiastic, albeit frustrated, colleagues who wanted to encourage the department to expand its contribution towards sustainable procurement. To me, this epitomised Kelman's 'change vanguard' concept (2005) as colleagues with different perspectives and different ambitions were both seeking change. It was my opportunity to work with them in the context of this research to collate this fourth cycle.

With both change routes being explored through cycle 4, it was discussed and agreed with the key participant of each route to not seek to implement any specific change relating to sustainable procurement. This contrasted with cycle 3 where we sought to achieve specific deliverables relating

to Scope 3 Carbon Emissions. Instead, the focus of the cycle was on raising awareness of what was already going on, under the broad definition of sustainable procurement explored, to demonstrate what could be achieved and to hopefully encourage other colleagues to seek sustainability improvements in their own work. This meant that both Design routes had the same ambition albeit for different audiences and would work towards different solutions.

As with cycle 3, the Design routes drew on the existing E&S strategy that the organisation had developed. The first Design route sought to utilise this strategy in combination with the recognised strength of the perspective that the procurement department had compared to other functions within the organisation. The second Design route combined it with the strength that was the breadth of collective experience held by procurement colleagues. Both Design routes had to focus on what was already going on within procurement or the wider organisation due to the de-prioritisation that sustainable procurement had received from the PLT.

Assessment & Feedback

After the initial discussions with the participants that coalesced into this cycle, we had a follow up discussion to determine what action would be taken. Two of the criteria used to determine if an idea was suitable, were the same as those used in cycle 3:

- Is it aligned to the E&S strategy?
- Is it within our control as participants to influence or implement?

The second criterion above is a slight variation on the criteria used in cycle 3 due to the nature of the ambition of the cycle. In cycle 3, the participant group was seeking to explore possibilities as enablers of change, rather than implementing any specific initiatives. Cycle 4 however, being born out of the frustrations of the participants, sought to implement or at the very least to use our positions to influence those who could implement change.

In addition to the above was a criterion that focused on the initiative's ability to raise awareness among the target audience. Applying this lens enabled the decision-making to consider utilising the other two established strengths from cycle 2. Namely, whether activities could be positioned in a way that either set a challenge that the audience could respond to, or whether it could connect sustainable procurement to the generation of value for the business.

Action Planning

The outcome from the Assessment & Feedback phase were decisions to progress a single action via each Design route. The first action was to collate a summary of all commitments that the organisation had made public that related to sustainability. This summary was specifically for the PLT and aimed to clearly articulate the role that the procurement function would have in enabling the delivery of those commitments. To achieve that intent, the summary needed to be more than just a bullet point list. It needed to have the lens of procurement applied so that the PLT members could easily see the connection between the public commitment and the consequential impact on the department. The participant and I agreed that there would need to be validity behind the summary and that it could not appear as just myself presenting something to the rest of the PLT when it had not been requested. Instead, she would raise the topic during a PLT meeting and depending on how the conversation progressed, we would offer a proposed solution that I work with E&S team to produce the summary.

The action that came through the other design route was to utilise the regularly scheduled fortnightly procurement-wide meetings to highlight what colleagues were already able to achieve in their existing work, providing those individuals with recognition and, we hoped, inspiring other colleagues to achieve more in their own work. Key to implementing this action though, it needed to be part of a normal activity rather than diverting time away from the stated priorities of the department. Therefore, using the fortnightly team meetings worked well as there was no additional time

commitment on colleagues. For the same reason, it was also important that we highlighted sustainable procurement achievements in the context of colleagues' normal work.

Intervention

The first action occurred during the next PLT meeting. The discussion was connected to a recent new commitment that the organisation had made, becoming one of the founding signatories of the Textiles 2030 project (WRAP, 2021). This commitment pledged the organisation to reduce its carbon and water footprints for textiles by significant proportions within a decade. It was also a pledge that was made without the GNFR team who were responsible for the sourcing of some of the organisation's major textile purchases – namely staff uniforms for 70,000+ colleagues, as well as furniture for offices and branches. The PLT, having seen this public commitment, were interested in learning more about how it would be implemented and the expected implications for procurement.

This provided a catalyst to have the PLT talking about all of the sustainability commitments that the organisation was making and the broader implications for our work. It enabled the designed initiative to be requested with ease and without forcing the issue onto PLT members. In fact, it was a different PLT member who requested the summary of the commitments, not the participant who had contributed through the cycle to this point.

It took just over two weeks to collate the various sustainability commitments made by the organisation, and to elaborate on the potential implications for procurement. These were compiled into a presentation which was shared with the PLT as a pre-read, one week prior to the scheduled discussion at a PLT meeting. Two members of the PLT replied to the email sharing the deck, copying in the rest of the PLT. Their emails were broadly the same, thanking me for the summary and one colleague sharing additional resources to help the PLT further their knowledge on some specific sustainable procurement topics. At the PLT meeting to discuss the commitments and agree actions, the agenda topic took around five minutes, and no associated actions were agreed as a result of the initiative.

The second initiative was implemented at the next available opportunity which was just over one week after the plan was agreed with the participant. To implement this initiative, I took the first slot to present and ensured there was a slide dedicated to the ethical and sustainability improvements of a project that I had recently completed. The design of this second activity recognised that it was unlikely that a single presentation on the subject would be effective by itself. Instead, the intent had been to carve out a recurring agenda point to enable several colleagues to highlight their work with a specific lens on sustainable procurement. Over the following weeks, a different colleague took the 'Project Spotlight' section of the fortnightly team meeting. In most cases, they were able to share at least one contribution that they had achieved towards sustainable procurement. In some instances, the colleagues required a degree of coaching to help them understand what would or would not constitute sustainable procurement. In one case, a colleague admitted that they had not even asked the questions during the supplier selection process that would have enabled them to assess the ethical and sustainability impacts of their project. As a direct result of this coaching approach however, that colleague did commit at the end of the conversation to build appropriate questions and considerations into future projects.

Table 9.1 – Cycle 4 Initiatives Intention vs Outcome

Initiative / Activity	Intended Impact	Contribution towards Cycle Ambition	Contribution towards Research Purpose
Utilising cycle 2 strengths as Positive Core	Use the output to frame the approach to cycle 4, ensuring the whole cycle played to the identified strengths. Provide a second test of this intention in comparison to cycle 3	Indirect contribution through enabling the framing of the Cycle and initiatives in ways that encouraged engagement that played to the strengths of the department	Positive contribution as a second test of this approach
Utilise existing Ethics & Sustainability strategy	Remove ambiguity and address a learning point from cycle 1 that Participants generally felt unable to define the strategy or vision for change Provide a second test of this intention in comparison to cycle 3	Positive contribution as the Ethics & Sustainability strategy covered many different areas and subjects within the sustainable procurement umbrella	Positive contribution as a second test of this approach
Produce a summary of all public Ethics & Sustainability commitments made by the organisation that could have an impact on GNFR procurement and share with the PLT	Engage the PLT in Ethics & Sustainability by demonstrating the role of procurement in delivery of the commitments. Through this engagement, highlighting the need for action and achieving greater priority for sustainable procurement through the PLT activities and those they take with their teams.	Neutral contribution as the initiative itself highlighted the assumption the rest of the business was making about the contribution of procurement across Ethics & Sustainability, however this was then not progressed or reprioritised by the PLT for near term activity.	Neutral contribution as awareness was raised but little definitive action or behavioural change resulted.
Establish "Project Spotlight" section of bi-weekly team meeting with a specific callout for Ethics & Sustainability achievements	Highlight existing good practice and achievements by engaged colleagues to encourage other colleagues to consider sustainable procurement in their projects	Positive contribution as colleagues could see different sustainable procurement considerations in different projects, highlighting the breadth of the subject and the opportunities to contribute themselves.	Positive contribution highlighting positive behaviours as desired outcomes

Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of this cycle is best done considering the three core elements separately. Table 9.1 provides a brief summary of the major initiatives explored through this cycle and commentary on their contribution towards both the ambition of this cycle and towards the overall research purpose.

Firstly, the decision to retest the pre-established strengths and E&S strategy. While using these as a basis to launch into the cycle was first tested in cycle 3, cycle 4 provided a second opportunity to test the hypothesis that this would be an effective enabler. Utilising these pre-existing artefacts accelerated the cycle towards the initiatives and avoided the pitfalls experienced in cycles 1 and 2. In the context of this cycle, this was important as the participants were keen for action and it is unlikely that they would have tolerated the delays experienced previously. In this context, the pragmatic decision to utilise those pre-existing artefacts was successful.

The second element to be evaluated was the conversations with the PLT to consider the implications of the organisation's public commitments on the GNFR procurement function. These conversations went better than expected, with other PLT members engaging and requesting further information. However, the outcome of the initiative was, on balance, neutral. A second conversation, having been sent the summary of the organisation's commitments as a pre-read, demonstrated that few of the PLT members had read the content. The feedback from the PLT members saw three dominant views emerge.

In one group, PLT members struggled to see the connection between the public commitments and GNFR. These views seemed to stem from a naivety among those PLT members as to the full breadth and responsibility of GNFR, and they could not draw the implications from the commitments to their specific remit. This, for example, manifested where commitments referenced textiles and the PLT members were responsible for categories that only procured services or non-textile related products. There was a lack of imagination or understanding of the responsibility to consider beyond the first tier of the supply chain.

Second came the group of PLT members who were resigned to a reactive stance. Arguably demonstrating the downside of the strength identified through cycle 2, this group of PLT members believed that there was little reason for discussion or debate on the subject as the commitments had already been made, and as the E&S team had not engaged GNFR before making those commitments, this meant that they did not apply to us. This view was challenged in the meeting by pointing out the impact that GNFR's poor contribution towards any of the commitments could negatively impact the organisation's brand reputation with consequential negative impacts on customer loyalty and revenues. As this argument received little acceptance, an alternative approach was taken to try and articulate the immediate impact it could have on the department's reputation and of the individual PLT members. It was suggested that all it would take to resolve the impasse would be a question from the organisation's Executive Director, Finance, asking what we were doing to contribute towards the public commitments for the lack of engagement to be uncovered. In such a circumstance, it would be an untenable argument that PLT thought the commitments did not apply to them, or that they were unaware of them. They were commitments made publicly, published on the internal intranet, and as leaders in the organisation it would have been expected that PLT were actively engaging and supporting their delivery. Even this second argument however failed to move the PLT collectively.

The third group of PLT members were those whose enthusiasm for sustainable procurement was already well established and had been vocal supporters of producing the commitment summary during the first PLT discussion on the subject. This group however was the smallest of the three, so their voices carried comparatively little sway. Ultimately this group were outvoiced by the remaining

members of PLT who felt that no active steps were required to ensure GNFR contributed appropriately. From the perspective of this cycle, this initiative did support the ambition to increase awareness of relevant sustainable procurement topics. The impact however in the context of the research project was muted in that it appeared not to galvanise any activity that could improve sustainable procurement behaviours among PLT members or the broader department.

The final element to evaluate was the introduction of a project spotlight session at the scheduled fortnightly department-wide meetings. When planning this initiative, the participant and myself did so in the knowledge that we not only had the influence to implement it, but track records to lead by example and encourage others to follow. While not directly considering ourselves as role models, we were aware of the power and influence that positive role models can have at encouraging behavioural change (Southwick and Charney, 2018). The first difficulty encountered was the participant going on parental leave. This meant that a team of two became a team of one and removed one of the potential role models from the equation. The knock-on impact of this was that other volunteers needed to be sought quicker than originally intended to keep the meetings going. It required a pragmatic pivot to finding anyone willing to share their work with others, and then providing them with coaching to help pull out sustainable procurement achievements. As noted earlier in this chapter, this did not always succeed, and some projects simply did not address any relevant sustainable procurement issues. This was a setback as one of the intended impacts of this was to capitalise on a snowball effect. Meetings where the project spotlight section did not contain any sustainable procurement references made it difficult to maintain momentum, but this was countered by setting a template for the slide deck at this meeting. The template had a default section for sustainable procurement and a prompt to speak to someone if the individual completing it was not sure what to say. This encouraged presenters to think carefully about sustainable procurement in the context of their work, and to seek support and coaching which would enhance their awareness further. This is otherwise known as ‘manipulating the choice architecture’ or ‘providing a nudge towards desired outcomes’ (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009). On a regular basis, colleagues across the department were presented with real projects and had the sustainable procurement impacts explained to them, helping to raise awareness and develop understanding of applicability. The impact not only made this initiative a success in the context of this cycle, but also a positive contributor towards the overarching research purpose.

Reflections

As covered above, cycle 4 did not have a definitive beginning in the way that previous cycles had, or that established change models would suggest is necessary (Egan & Lancaster, 2005, Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). It was not until sometime into the changes that I appreciated that this was indeed its own, distinct cycle. On reflection, this was the pragmatic action-bias I have as a practitioner overriding the analytical-bias of my role as researcher.

Cycle 4 was an example of an emergent, bottom-up change process, born out of the frustration experienced by the participants who felt the pace and focus of change was insufficient. This could be argued as having a parallel to the problem-orientated AR. Equally, this could be seen as having the hallmarks of an appreciative approach in that the participants were striving for an improved future. This might be a more philosophical argument as the driver of this cycle could be phrased to better align with either camp. It is clear though that, at least for the early stages of the cycle, there was little alignment with true AI as there were no detailed appreciative interviews or questions asked, and no attempt at system-wide involvement.

Cycle 4 lacked any detailed analysis or formulation of a problem statement that could articulate the issue that we sought to address. These would be indicators of an alignment with AR. Instead, the cycle focused on two elements: bright spots of current achievement that could be celebrated, and an existing channel for communication. Utilising what already exists in a way that enables change is

indicative of the generative nature of AI (Bushe, 2013). There was a perspective that given the lack of coherent plan and clear intent, that any resemblance of alignment to either AI or AR was by coincidence only. Equally, a blended approach demands the same preparation, intent, and commitment to structure as the pure AI and AR approaches. Even considering Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005), cycle 4 did not wholly align with any of the academic models of change considered in this research though did embrace the underpinning research paradigm of pragmatism, and pragmatic decision-making throughout.

Without that alignment to AI, AR, or AAR, I was forced to reflect on other considerations. Perhaps referring to it as a cycle was inappropriate? Taking it back to the fundamentals, there was a beginning, and there was definitive action taken with the intent of creating a change. From one of the initiatives, that change in activity persisted beyond the participants originally involved in the initiative. It continued beyond the end of this research as a new way of working adopted by the department. On balance, and it is my belief as both researcher and participant, cycle 4 was indeed a cycle. The question then shifts to how best to describe said change when the established academic models underpinning this research did not apply, at least not cleanly.

Ultimately, I concluded that cycle 4 was a cycle of change that utilised a blended approach. By this, I mean that it took a positive, opportunistic bias to addressing a perceived challenge. There was nothing revolutionary about the concept of a blended approach. Where cycle 3 stretched the established models by utilising existing resources rather than building cycle-specific, cycle 4 brought more informality through parallel design routes and independent initiatives. There was a small group of participants with aligned passions and who saw an opportunity. Those participants used the tools at their disposal to leverage change on a scale that they could achieve and could be effectively sustained.

Reflecting deeper on that point, could not all change be argued on such terms? Change is a manifestation of those who seek it using the tools at their disposal to influence a situation. Obviously, the tools available to you change depending on who the participants and change agents are. For example, a CEO has the full scale of the organisation at their disposal. This could include discretionary funding, reprioritisation of resource and people throughout the organisation. It could also include significant political influence or positional authority that causes others to take the desired action through an imbalance of power or implied directives – *"this task came from the Board, so we have to implement it."* Equally a sales assistant on the shop floor, who has a particular passion for a subject that they feel should be focused on can use the tools at their disposal. They could have a passion for driving sales and taking pride in their work, so they could lead by example and make sure the shelves on the shop floor are always neat and tidy, and full of the right stock. Perhaps if the fundamentals of organisational change are the same at all levels of the organisation, it comes down to a positional perspective – the view looks very different depending on where you sit in the business and the realities of your situation. Reflecting on the experience of cycle 4 demonstrated for me, perhaps more so than the prior cycles, the role and significant of pragmatism within the change process and its ability, not just in sporadic decision-making, but as a core and guiding philosophy throughout.

Having considered cycle 4 from a macro perspective and its alignment, or otherwise, with established models of change, I now bring my attention to the micro realities that manifested. First the use of the pre-existing strengths and vision. As captured above, by not exploring these for this cycle, I broke away from tenets of appreciative change. However, the experiences of this research to date overwhelmingly suggested to me that this was the best approach to achieve change in this context. The approach taken through cycle 3 and again in this cycle demonstrated that deferring appropriately to other authorities (PLT for departmental strengths and the E&S team for an E&S strategy) was an effective platform for change.

Compared to the prior cycles, cycle 4 left me feeling very positive. Working with engaged and proactive colleagues who shared a desire for positive change towards sustainable procurement echoed the mentality at the beginning of cycle 1 and working with the SPCs. In contrast to cycle 1, there was no issue of empowerment. Instead, the decision was taken to keep the two planned initiatives separate enabled them to progress at their own pace, led by the colleagues that were passionate about them. There was considerably greater bias towards action through this cycle while at the same time setting more manageable ambition. These factors combined to achieve delivery of the change initiatives.

On reflection, one of the most effective steps taken through cycle 4, was setting the target of raising awareness of sustainable procurement. This was basic compared to the ambition discussed by the SPCs through cycle 1, and ethereal compared to the espoused theories on organisational change and setting visions or objectives which emphasise the need for descriptive outcomes. There were two supporting arguments for prioritising awareness over specific deliverables. First, the baseline attitudinal survey demonstrated a mixed understanding of what sustainable procurement was, therefore there were likely benefits to be had by raising overall awareness rather than trying to create a bespoke definition for the context of this research which likely would have led to a degree of cognitive dissonance among those colleagues who held different definitions. Instead of creating a definition, cycle 4 adopted a broad-church approach that embraced any colleague's definition as a positive contribution to the overall topic of sustainable procurement. This reflected the pragmatist epistemology that is adopted as core to this research, and accepts the truths held by those practitioners as equally valid (Putnam, 1987, cited in Bacon, 2012). The second supporting argument was a collective impression among the participants, myself included, that our colleagues on the PLT and in the department at large did not necessarily know how to access sustainable procurement. As a topic, no doubt due in part to its scale, complexity and importance, sustainable procurement was often seen by procurement traditionalists as something of a scary beast that is best left alone lest you wake it and bring about a world of pain (read 'extra work'). Finding ways to make the topic more accessible therefore was a logical and pragmatic step determined through the Design phase.

Lessons for Cycle 5

Cycle 4 replicated the successful experiment of cycle 3 in utilising pre-established strengths and vision for change. Cycle 5 sought to replicate this again. It needed to build on the evaluation of colleagues' roles in defining their core strengths that could contribute to achieve change. This was an important consideration as I continued to explore the pragmatic blended approach to change.

Cycle 4 also demonstrated the effectiveness of multiple Design routes delivering change initiatives. Cycle 5 explored this further and sought to assess whether the aggregation of change initiatives was effective for organisational behavioural change. Finally, I continued to consider the reflections made through cycle 4 and the role of pragmatism in change.

10. Cycle 5

Ambition for the Cycle

The aggregated experience gained through the first four cycles was applied in cycle 5. I was conscious of the need to deliver against the research purpose, and that most of the other cycles had not achieved tangible outcomes. This meant that cycle 5's ambition was to deliver a series of tangible initiatives that had a positive impact on sustainable procurement behaviours. Recognising the challenges encountered in cycles 1 and 2, cycle 5's ambition was to achieve better sustainable procurement outcomes rather than perfect ones. This tempered approach meant a more accessible change for procurement colleagues.

This ambition built on the positive outcomes from cycle 4. Where that cycle achieved some success at raising awareness of sustainable procurement, cycle 5 had to continue that journey and turn that awareness into positive behavioural change. It sought to replicate and extend the process that enabled multiple distinct design routes unique to each initiative.

Entry & Start-up

Similarly, to cycle 4, cycle 5 did not have a defined commitment from the collective participants or sponsors. Instead, it capitalised on the momentum from cycle 4 and sought to encapsulate work with multiple participants. The participants were a combination of volunteers keen to support change, and those who had to implement specific activities as part of their normal roles, but who were recruited to be participants to benefit from the structure and resources that this research could facilitate. Each had the motivation and commitment to achieve positive change in sustainable procurement, though each had a particular preferred element of sustainable procurement against which they wanted to contribute. Corralling these passions was the essence of cycle 5.

The lack of sponsorship or directive from senior leaders democratised the change process. The individual participants involved took on the responsibility to introduce change that was appropriate and achievable. There was tacit acceptance from participants linking back to the guidance that PLT provided in cycle 1 – that they could not endorse any changes until they saw exactly what was involved and understood the intended benefits. All participants understood that this was the nature of their efforts and where any proposed changes extended beyond their own remit, they would need support, endorsement, or approval from relevant parties to implement them. This addressed one of the key challenges of cycle 1, where participants felt a lack of empowerment. For cycle 5, the power they held was set out clearly for them and all understood the extent of their influence.

Discovery & Dream

Cycle 5 benefited from the lessons of the preceding cycles and continued to capitalise on the benefits of having a vision already defined. Cycle 5 utilised the strengths established through cycle 2. It also utilised the existing E&S strategy for the organisation, rather than seeking to establish its own vision. These inclusions had two key benefits. Firstly, utilising these aspects, as had been done previously in cycles 3 and 4, provided further testing of the effectiveness and associated implications from this pragmatic decision. Given that this approach is contrary to espoused appreciative approaches to change, it was important to test this deviation as thoroughly as possible. The second benefit of this approach was enabling accelerated change. This meant that individuals or small groups could collaborate under the commonly understood vision and have the challenges framed to play to recognised strengths.

Design

Cycle 4 explored two distinct Design routes based on the separate desires of the participants. This proved successful in that it capitalised on the enthusiasm of the participants and allowed them to pursue the change initiatives that they believed were appropriate, necessary and within their ability to influence. The activities were coordinated through myself in my role as Procurement Development Manager as it fell within my remit to coordinate such activities and their respective impact on the procurement function.

Cycle 5 also took this approach, though with more participants introducing more change. The initiatives were generally ones that were solely within the remit of the procurement function to scope and implement. Other initiatives arose during cycle 5 from outside of the function and, because they could have had a positive impact, they became coordinated through the cycle. Cycle 5 therefore required flexibility in its design, to accommodate new, emergent initiatives, to ensure they aligned with the overarching E&S strategy, and that either the initiative or intended outcomes were framed to exploit the identified strengths of the department.

As more individuals saw more changes, such as changes in the RFP template and draft procurement policy, in the form of stories regarding sustainable procurement, changes in procurement templates, and communications containing or dedicated to sustainable procurement, it encouraged more individuals to come forward with their own initiatives. The feedback gained from interviews with key participants in cycle 5, as explored later in this chapter, reinforced that as they saw more change happening, they gained greater confidence that they too could influence outcomes and contribute. Their confidence then moved them to lead or to participate in initiatives and ultimately led to the outcomes articulated later in this chapter. In total, there were 6 core participants but to implement some initiatives, participant groups extended to include more than 20 participants across the 8 new initiatives introduced through this cycle.

With the design phase being more initiative based than a singular process for the whole cycle, it meant utilising a blended approach with each participant. This resulted in multiple Design processes being run in parallel. The primary benefit meant all participants understood what the organisation was trying to achieve and had the opportunity to question, challenge and contribute their thoughts. This thorough understanding acted as an enabler for the empowered change process as each participant was clear on the E&S strategy, along with knowledge of where and how they might be able to contribute. This was where an appreciative Design phase had its advantages as it enabled a positive conversation with each participant interested in creating positive change. Utilising an appreciative interview style for each of these conversations meant that we explored the relative strengths of the individual as they related to the change they wanted to see, and how those ambitions connected and could support the overarching E&S strategy. Beyond the appreciative style, the conversations were held virtually and sought to explore what the individual was passionate about and why. The conversations were based on the same initial premise but with flexibility to probe into the participant's response. This meant the conversations were comparable to an extent, but this was not a particular objective as the purpose of the conversation was at an individual level, ensuring alignment with other initiatives and giving confidence and guidance to both myself and to the participant for how their contribution could progress. This set up an effective Assessment & Feedback phase for each participant and their contributions.

Assessment & Feedback

The approach taken for cycle 5 meant that there could not be a single Assessment & Feedback session or that it could be used as a stage gate prior to embarking upon change initiatives. Instead, each individual initiative that was proposed by participants went through its own Assessment & Feedback process at a time and pace that met its requirements. Staying true to the purpose of this phase, as

each initiative was assessed, it was considered against the E&S strategy. This was an assurance check carried out by the initiative owner and me to make sure each initiative aligned with the overarching vision. Assessments were qualitative by nature and based on a principle of incremental improvement towards both the research purpose and the desired outcomes stated in the strategy. Dave Brailsford was famous for his strategy to turn around the British Cycling team from one of mediocrity to the most successful in the sport's history using his principles of the "aggregation of marginal gains" (Clear, 2018). Taking a similar approach through this cycle 5, the Assessment & Feedback phase sought to enable a better outcome rather than striving for a perfect outcome. This was a lesson from the experiences with cycles 1 and 2 where ambition had been significantly higher, and those cycles stalled.

Like the framing activities that took place in previous cycles, this phase sought to align each proposed initiative with the recognised strengths of the procurement function. In some instances, this meant ensuring that the activity itself and the way that the procurement team were asked to engage with it, aligned to those strengths. For other initiatives, this meant that the outputs of the change needed to capitalise on those strengths. In some instances, the connections between the initiative and strengths were not obvious and for those, the participants created communications plans that would support the implementation. For example, "Update the E&S questions in the RFP template" was not obviously connected to any of the recognised strengths. The result for this specific initiative was to launch the updated question set with procurement colleagues with a communications plan that highlighted the additional information that they would get back from their suppliers participating in tenders. This additional information would then support them in ensuring the organisation was working with suppliers that aligned to appropriate ethical and sustainability standards thus reducing the risk of reputational damage which would erode the value generated by procurement. In addition, the communications plan connected increased information from suppliers about their capabilities with the perspective strength of the function.

Action Planning

As described above, each individual initiative was following its own route through cycle 5 and therefore each had its own Action Planning phase. For the most part, this was a straightforward process as initiatives were discrete pieces of work and individually had an incremental impact. For example, updating the Project Completion Document template with greater clarity for how the "CSR Considerations" section should be filled in, added no extra time to the procurement process. Other initiatives though required considerably more effort in their execution. Trialling the Better Jobs programme in the GNFR supply chain was an extension of an existing programme that operated successfully for many years in the GFR supply chain. While there were certainly synergies with the GFR programme, trialling it in GNFR required liaising with stakeholders and suppliers, negotiating access to supplier operational sites at a busy time of year, and in effect selling the benefits of the programme.

Each participant debated the activities required to implement each initiative. Some were very simple, and it was agreeing the appropriate route and timing of the initiative, such as submitting the letter to the Gazette (the organisation's internal magazine for colleagues) challenging the specification owner on their use of plastic windowed envelopes for marketing and personnel related activities. Other initiatives had multiple stages that needed to be mapped out and several stakeholders to be engaged. Here it was a case of agreeing roles and responsibilities among the participants involved. For example, the initiative to trial the Better Jobs Programme in GNFR required participants to map impacted stakeholders, develop communications material, develop a negotiation plan for each targeted GNFR supplier, and to develop an initial implementation plan knowing that it would likely need to be adapted to reach agreement with the suppliers. As stated above however, complexity was kept to a minimum in support of the cycle's ambition of smaller, incremental, and sustainable change.

Intervention

Enacting each initiative's plan went smoothly, with two notable exceptions. First was to challenge thinking on the company car policy as part of an ongoing review of the total staff reward package. Initially, this initiative went smoothly, and the participant involved had a very positive conversation with the lead for the total reward review. The essence of the initiative was to challenge their thinking and have them set environmental standards for any cars that staff could claim for under the scheme (for example, all company cars had to be electric vehicles). The senior manager leading the review was very positive about the idea and requested additional guidance from the E&S department. On the face of it, this was a reasonable request and something that should have been easy to provide. However, this request required conversations with several different stakeholders which sparked significant debate and protectionist behaviours. Different areas of the business appeared to take offense at the question, inferring that by asking a question relating to efforts on sustainability, that they were somehow derelict in their responsibility. There was also the perception from those stakeholders that we should not have been asking the question as, in their view, we had no connection with their work and therefore no authority to question or challenge. This was demonstrated via email in which the stakeholder in question specifically asked "why are you asking? What is your role in this as we have never worked with you, and this is not something that procurement needs to be involved with." In having those conversations, it emerged that there were other efforts ongoing in another part of the business looking at the specification requirements for company cars and that team felt aggrieved that someone was challenging their work. After a flurry of emails back and forth, it was uncovered that the organisation's own nomenclature, developed as a result of a siloed work culture, was at the core of the issue. The conflict had been that the term "company car" was used to mean different things in different areas of the business. To the Personnel function, it meant a vehicle that could be claimed as part of a reward package for applicable employees. In another area of the organisation, it meant the fleet of vehicles owned or leased by the organisation to support colleagues who needed to travel for business. This clash of definitions was uncovered by this initiative, but it was beyond the scope or capability of the participants to resolve the matter as it would have meant significant rewrites of policy and process documents in other areas of the business.

The second initiative that ran into difficulties was trialling the Better Jobs Programme in the GNFR supply chain. This programme was an employee survey for suppliers to implement, but where the organisation would have full visibility of the results. It went further than traditional employee surveys as it encompassed contingent labour rather than just permanent employees. The Better Jobs Programme had been developed in the GFR supply chain and successfully implemented across a range of organisations around the globe. Its goal was to assure the organisation that the suppliers in question were working with their staff in an ethical manner, that health & safety and welfare standards were maintained, and that risks of non-compliance and modern slavery were minimised. This change initiative sought to bring that same standard into the GNFR supply chain. On the face of it, this should have been a reasonably simple process. There would not be the same language or cultural barriers as the majority of the GNFR supplier base were UK based and picking UK suppliers was part of the action plan for the initiative for that reason. As a trial, two suppliers were selected based on their combined spend (almost 10% of the GNFR supply base by value of spend with them) and the number of employees and contingent labour used at their sites (approximately 3,000 people). While the importance of the suppliers to the supply chain was clear from those numbers, selecting them also meant working with just two suppliers at five distinct sites so from the Better Jobs Programme's perspective, this was a relatively simple implementation with significant potential for positive impact.

The initiative however ran into difficulties. Both suppliers were operationally critical to the organisation and collectively were a significant proportion of the organisation's logistics service. Interestingly this was used by the internal stakeholders as a reason to support the trial, while the suppliers used this as a reason to postpone. The trial was planned to take place in November 2021, in

the run up to the organisation's peak Christmas trading period. The internal stakeholders felt it was very important to get a sense of working conditions on the ground at a critical time and supported the trial. The suppliers however felt that the trial would be a distraction and questioned whether it would provide value in time to have an impact. Another cause for concern was the macro-environment. At the time, the UK logistics industry was being severely challenged by a combination of factors including a lack of resource (particularly HGV drivers – The Guardian, 2021, and warehouse operatives – The Institute of Export & International Trade, 2021), fuel shortages (CNN, 2021) and significant inflation in natural gas prices (BBC, 2021). Together, these impacted the organisation's supply chain because of a previous environmental initiative to transition the fleet to compressed natural gas fuel rather than diesel to reduce emissions. These challenges were a further demonstration of a theme throughout this research, that it was not taking place inside a bubble and was inextricably linked to innumerable factors, both known and unknown. Brown et al.'s (2010) description of these kinds of challenges as 'wicked problems' is apt. One supplier used these challenges as part of their rationale for postponing the trial, alongside wanting further information to justify the need for the Better Jobs Programme when they ran an annual internal staff survey. The other supplier however embraced the Programme and worked with the team to implement it. The actual implementation ran beyond the end of this research project due to timing of the research and the longitudinal process the Programme. For this initiative though, the objective to trial the Better Jobs Programme in the GNFR supply chain was secured.

Evaluation

On the face of it, this cycle 5 was more successful than any of the preceding cycles, because it built on learning from previous cycles, reaffirmed the approach taken and provided greater clarity and insight into the conclusions of this research.

Starting with the carry over initiatives from cycles 3 and 4, cycle 5 provided a further demonstration of the potential effectiveness of pragmatically using established artefacts to support change programmes. Cycle 2 established a core set of strengths for the procurement function and cycles 3 and 4 utilised those established strengths to frame their activities. Cycle 5 continued that test and successfully utilised those strengths to support the Design, Assessment & Feedback and Action Planning phases. They enabled participants to frame their initiatives in a way that connected with at least one of the recognised strengths in the department, enabling a smoothly implementation. Similarly, the use of the existing E&S strategy empowered participants to connect their contributions to an organisation-wide strategy. This appeared to provide empowerment that enabled greater confidence among cycle 5's participants to bring forward their ideas and to follow them through to implementation.

Beyond those carry over initiatives, cycle 5 implemented 8 initiatives, summarised in Table 10.1. Taking them in turn, the first initiative was "Updating Project Completion Document template with better clarity on expectations for the CSR considerations." The baselining for this research uncovered that this document was inconsistently used across the department and, when it was used, the quality of the responses provided for the "CSR Considerations" section was mixed. There was relatively little guidance provided on what was expected from procurement colleagues as they completed that section and that led to that field being dismissed or misunderstood by a significant proportion of colleagues. The initiative planned to improve that guidance to help procurement colleagues understand exactly what was expected, with examples of best practice. The guidance was framed positively, in support of the overarching appreciative approach of this research, to both elicit quantitative and qualitative responses that aligned with the public commitments and targets contained in the E&S strategy (see Appendix 10.01). The assumption acknowledged by the participants in this initiative was that in the short term, it would only benefit where projects have achieved positive sustainable procurement outcomes, but where there was a barrier to how they should be captured. If

colleagues were not addressing sustainable procurement through their projects, it did not matter how clear the guidance was on how to record outcomes, no positives would be forthcoming. Into the longer term though, the intent was that clarity on expectations for governance documentation would feed into future projects. Early results indicated that there was some positive improvement as a result of this initiative, but it was unclear at the time of closing out this research whether the long-term benefits were achieved.

The second initiative was complementary to the first, "Update the E&S questions in the RFP Template" then provided a tool to support that activity through the sourcing cycle. The RFP Template was a bank of standard questions for procurement colleagues to utilise when they took a requirement to market. These questions helped procurement colleagues by capturing core information important to the organisation and allowing them to focus on creating specific questions related to their project. While creating this efficiency for the procurement colleague, it also standardised the organisation's approach to market and supplier responses. To complete this initiative, the participants extracted the existing set of sustainability related questions, reworded those to align with the E&S strategy and developed additional questions to fill gaps. Alongside the question set, the participants also developed guidance for procurement colleagues that covered when questions may or may not be relevant, what a good response from a supplier would look like, any minimum standards the organisation insisted upon, and a sign-posted escalation route should it be necessary to refer a supplier or project for further investigation. The refreshed question set was then published via the e-procurement system used by the department. This meant the questions were automatically built into RFP templates in the system and set as the default position for all new projects. The decision to include them as default in all new projects was a conscious pragmatic decision to influence the choice architecture and nudge procurement colleagues towards using them as the easiest option available, supported by clear and concise guidance (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009, Heath & Heath, 2011, Kahneman, 2011, Kahneman et al., 2021). While this initiative highlighted the importance of sustainable procurement to the function by including new questions and standards into the procurement process, it was not possible to draw a direct connection between this initiative and improved sustainable procurement behaviours and outcomes. At the time of completing this research, no project had completed its procurement processes using the new question bank, however anecdotal feedback was positive from the few procurement colleagues who had started to use them in their projects.

In a similar vein, the third initiative sought to enshrine sustainable procurement standards in the organisation's procurement policy. By including it in the policy, the whole organisation would be obliged to address sustainable procurement in any external spend. The introduction of this section within the policy met with some minor conflict. While the central E&S team fully endorsed the concept, there were stakeholders opposed to its inclusion. The most vocal of the opponents was the Head of procurement. His objection was not one of disagreement regarding the importance of sustainable procurement, but centred on his desire to have a simple, concise policy that could be easily communicated and understood across the organisation. In his view, including sustainable procurement in the new policy would make it longer than necessary thereby creating unhelpful complexity in its communication and enforcement. To assuage concerns, the participants redrafted the proposed policy and provided new options that addressed his concerns while still embedding sustainable procurement. This change of tack also included working up communications plans, how the policy would be positioned and formatted on the organisation's intranet and how compliance would be measured. This was additional unplanned work that had not been foreseen during the earlier stages of the cycle but were ultimately necessary. As with the previously described initiatives, there was no available quantitative evidence of the impact of this initiative but feedback from participants unanimously agreed that it was important.

The fourth initiative, “review acceptable derogations from the standard positions of the Responsible Sourcing Code of Practice” (RSCOP) was contentious. RSCOP was the core ethical standard that all suppliers would confirm their acceptance and compliance with as a contractual condition of supply. In practice however, there were several clear weaknesses with that standard, not least that the organisation itself did not meet all the criteria. The participant who wanted to pursue this initiative believed that by providing guidance on what was acceptable or not and under what circumstances, it would result in fewer outright rejections of RSCOP and that there would be greater coverage of suppliers signed up to it, even if it contained reduced provisions. The actual process of implementing this initiative was relatively straight forward. The participant group grew from one individual to four to encompass category specific experience to test certain language or provisions to understand what would be most likely to gain supplier support.

Post implementation, there was no significant uptick in acceptance and coverage of derogated RSCOP among the GNFR supply base however this is likely due to timing of sourcing projects not aligning with the research window and therefore insufficient opportunity to gather the necessary evidence. At the same time however, ethical standards across the supply base had been improving and there was a notable improvement in coverage of the standard RSCOP positions due to improved processes to ensure supplier compliance. The contentious element of this initiative was that there were some philosophical differences that caused minor conflict. In one camp were those who believed that if we had a standard, we should be applying it and not agreeing circumstances where we would accept derogation. In the other camp were those who believed it was better to get broad commitment to some of the ethical standards contained in RSCOP rather than a narrower commitment to all of them. Given the scope of RSCOP aligned to international labour standards covered in the Ethical Trade Institute’s Base Code (Ethical Trade Initiative, 2016), it was too resource intensive to produce a detailed quantitative or qualitative analysis of the relative impact of either position compared to the other. Instead, the decision was deferred to the E&S team to utilise their expertise in this area. It was agreed that the default position would be to require suppliers to sign up to the standard RSCOP positions, however in specific circumstances were no alternatives were available, procurement colleagues could escalate a decision to the E&S team who would determine what, if any, derogated positions would be acceptable. In this way, this initiative was successful at raising this issue, exploring options and applicability, and supporting the organisation to find a pragmatic route forward that would raise the level of sustainable procurement compliance.

The fifth initiative, “Submit Gazette Letter regarding plastic envelope windows,” was described earlier in this chapter. It was a relatively simple initiative that utilised a public medium to challenge the organisational specification owners to find a more sustainable alternative. The specification owner welcomed the challenge and shared that it had not been raised previously as a potential issue. Now that it had, they could understand the concern and made two commitments. Firstly, the next time relevant contracts came around for review, windowless envelopes would be part of the specification requirements. Secondly, in the interim they would discuss options with their suppliers to phase out plastic envelope windows. Although the quantifiable benefits were relatively small, in terms of the plastic material taken out of the supply chain, the larger benefits were the public display of the benefits of challenging specifications in the organisation and the willingness of stakeholders to consider alternatives, making public commitments along the way.

Table 10.1 – Cycle 5 Initiatives Intention vs Outcome

Initiative / Activity	Intended Impact	Contribution towards Cycle Ambition	Contribution towards Research Purpose
Utilising cycle 2 strengths as Positive Core	Use the output to frame the approach to cycle 5, ensuring the whole cycle played to the identified strengths. Provide a second test of this intention in comparison to cycle 3	Indirect contribution through enabling the framing of the cycle and initiatives in ways that encouraged engagement that played to the strengths of the department	Positive contribution as a third test of this approach
Utilise existing Ethics & Sustainability strategy	Remove ambiguity and address a learning point from cycle 1 that Participants generally felt unable to define the strategy or vision for change Provide a second test of this intention in comparison to cycle 3	Positive contribution as the Ethics & Sustainability strategy covered many different areas and subjects within the sustainable procurement umbrella	Positive contribution as a third test of this approach
Update Project Completion Document template with better clarity on expectations for the CSR considerations	A reminder to procurement professionals that they would be required to complete this section of the governance document and therefore should seek to achieve something through their work A final prompt to capture CSR / sustainability achievements from projects.	Small positive contribution as a tangible improvement supporting better sustainable procurement deliverables	Inconclusive during this cycle what impact this initiative had in relation to the overall objectives
Update the Ethics & Sustainability questions in the RFP Template	Ensuring that procurement professionals had question sets to hand that aligned with the Ethics & Sustainability strategy, and had clear guidance on how to evaluate supplier responses to support selecting the most ethical and sustainable suppliers	Positive contribution as it built sustainable procurement into the sourcing cycle in a way that aligns to the change vision for the cycle	Positive contribution as set up all future sourcing activities to include evaluation of supplier proposals aligning to the Ethics & Sustainability strategy
Update the Draft procurement policy with an Ethics & Sustainability section	Enshrine Ethics & Sustainability in policy to ensure it is a compliance requirement rather than positioned as an optional extra or left to individual procurement professionals to implement at their discretion.	Small positive contribution as it enshrined sustainable procurement in the policy as a mandatory requirement however negligible impact within the timescales of the cycle	Positive contribution as defining and embedding sustainable procurement as part of the mandatory compliance
Review acceptable derogations from the standard positions of the	Address an existing applicability issue with the standard RSCOP positions that led to some suppliers rejecting the Code in full by setting out situations where sections / provisions	Neutral overall contribution Positive in that more suppliers are likely to agree to the RSCOP policy	Positive contribution as derogations allows more suppliers to sign up to more of the standard rather than not being able to agree to it because of a single provision

Responsible Sourcing Code of Practice	could be waived, with clear guidance for practitioners	Negative as it reflects a watering down of the acceptable ethical standard	
Submit Gazette Letter regarding plastic envelope windows	Challenge the specification owners over their use of less sustainable solutions that sets an example for other procurement professionals	Small positive contribution as a tangible to challenge to an existing specification to consider a more sustainable alternative	Positive contribution as a public challenge to existing specifications championing a more sustainable standard
Challenge thinking on company car policy as part of overall reward review	Challenge the specification owners over their use of less sustainable solutions that sets an example for other procurement professionals	Small positive contribution as a tangible to challenge to an existing specification to consider a more sustainable alternative	Positive contribution as a public challenge to existing specifications championing a more sustainable standard
Conduct a trial of Better Jobs programme in GNFR	Proof of concept that GNFR suppliers can have the same labour standards applied as in the GFR supply chain	Positive contribution as a demonstration of auditing to the organisation's ethical standard in the GNFR supply chain	Positive contribution as demonstrated ability to apply existing ethical standards regime in the GNFR supply chain
Add to the procurement process to capture outcomes of SMETA audits on GNFR product manufacturing sites	Increase the labour standards and transparency in the GNFR supply chain through minor changes in the process that add no additional effort for procurement professionals.	Small positive contribution but no projects were completed through the new process during this cycle	Positive contribution as requiring ethical standards to be set within the sourcing process and giving the risk domain owner the ability to veto potential suppliers who do not meet the standards

The sixth initiative, “Challenge thinking on company car policy as part of overall reward review” has also been discussed above. This initiative, although causing conflict and unearthing an issue that could not be resolved within the scope of this research, was positive. It brought two areas of the business together whose work had previously been done in isolation so that they could share insight and best practice. The initiative also kept sustainability at the forefront of the conversation and gave the E&S team a greater opportunity to contribute to the policy definitions that would then influence the applied standards. From a procurement perspective there was minimal impact in the short-term however when those projects finalised their requirements, procurement would be required to source and contract with suppliers who could meet the new standards which would deliver tangible improvements in the sustainable procurement outcomes for that category.

Unfortunately, due to timings, the results of the Better Jobs Programme trial in the GNFR supply base were not available during this research. However, the initiative taken to get that trial up and running was certainly successful in achieving the targeted deliverable. It also created an appetite within the E&S team, the Supply Chain team, and among procurement colleagues to trial the programme in more areas of the GNFR supply base which was the desired outcome of the initiative.

The eighth and final initiative in cycle 5 was: “New addition to the procurement process to capture outcomes of SMETA audits on GNFR manufacturing sites.” SMETA (standing for SEDEX Members Ethical Trade Audit: SEDEX, 2022) was a globally recognised standard for conducting ethical audits. The organisation had a policy of “no audit, no order” in its GFR supply chain however had never applied the same standard to GNFR. This initiative sought to work with the E&S team, and procurement colleagues to correct that in a way that was sympathetic to the investment made in new systems and processes through the PESO Programme. The participants hosted a few workshops with procurement colleagues, representatives from E&S, from the Tech & Change directorate, as well as with external suppliers to understand what would be required, how it could work systemically and what the implications were for procurement colleagues running future sourcing processes. These workshops created alignment of purpose and ambition and identified the options available. Through liaising with procurement colleagues, it was obvious that they were struggling with workload, and they candidly shared their concerns that they did not have the necessary skills or experience to assess ethical audit findings. This meant the balance of additional activity that this change created needed to sit with the E&S team. This in turn made it clear where in the process the additional activity would best be situated, and it capitalised on an existing stage gate check that the E&S team conducted. Implementing the activity at this stage minimised systemic changes, minimised additional procurement activity and consolidated activity with the team that held the necessary expertise. To support that team though, the participants helped to articulate a business case that the E&S team needed to submit to get additional resource. They also facilitated a trial of this process by downloading a report of suppliers who had submitted their audit details voluntarily so that the E&S team could develop their understanding of the level of resource required based on expected numbers of suppliers. This initiative, like others in this cycle, positioned the procurement function for better sustainable procurement outcomes in the future. It would drive behavioural change by embedding sustainable procurement activity in the standard procurement process, making it the default. Again, no tangible benefits were achieved directly from the initiative, but all participants agreed that it was a cornerstone for improvements in the long-term.

Reflections

Comparatively speaking, cycle 5 was a liberating experience. It was a broad church of initiatives that sought to improve sustainable procurement outcomes. Compared to previous cycles, the action-bias of the cycle proved effective in delivering tangible initiatives that would drive the desired change. Conflicts that arose during the cycle were focused on the ability to implement the change initiatives, rather than on the change process itself.

Cycle 5 demonstrated the power of cyclical change espoused by AI, AR, and AAR. Where cycle 4 prioritised raising awareness of sustainable procurement, cycle 5 capitalised on that increased awareness. More participants came forward with their ideas to deliver positive change. The approach adopted for cycle 5 was a conglomeration of change initiatives from individuals rather than a centralised change programme.

Key to this success was building on the iteratively developed knowledge from previous cycles. The difficulties experienced through cycles 1 and 2 in developing a vision of change and the core strengths directly informed the pragmatic decision to utilise the pre-existing artefacts. This concept was initially tested through cycle 3, again in cycle 4 and finally cycle 5 harnessed those lessons to inform its approach – an approach I believe was successful. Cycle 5 also continued the approach of cycle 4 of working with the 'change vanguard' (Kelman, 2005), those participants eager for change. Cycle 5 was a demonstration of how this enthusiasm could be harnessed for change even when the participants do not all envision the same outcome or share the same concerns with the status quo, echoing Kelman's experience. Cycle 5 also embraced bricolage, working with the resources available rather than trying to manufacture an ideal environment (Rogers, 2012). The bricolage concept, along with pragmatism, was a theme throughout this research as none of the cycles operated in an ideal environment with issues of resources, funding, senior sponsorship, participation, not to mention the ongoing changes within the organisation and macro-environmental pressures such as Covid-19.

A key reflection for me was the dichotomy between the successful cycle 5 versus the stalled experiences of cycles 1 and 2. It could have been specific to the context of this research but there appears to have been a cultural acceptance of change among the participants. At all stages, although arguably not the PLT participants in cycle 2, participants engaged and accepted the arguments and need for change. They also demonstrated a flexibility and adaptability to change initiatives. This would suggest there was a positive cultural attitude towards change in general which may have been a direct relationship to the procurement profession. Procurement professionals are responsible for regularly inducing change within an organisation. They run processes to secure the best possible suppliers, and often must encourage stakeholders to switch suppliers, or change how they manage a supply relationship to maximise value. This potentially makes them more receptive to change that directly impacts them, though this is conjecture and not something explored through this research. Having observed that open culture for change, it was surprising that the observations coming out of previous cycles, and reinforced through cycle 5, was that participants seemed to lack the imagination, ambition, enthusiasm or potentially confidence to be a driving force for that change. Pragmatically utilising the pre-established artefacts of the perceived strengths, and the E&S strategy, gave participants in cycle 5 a clear sense of direction and empowerment.

Lessons for Future Cycles

Cycle 5 was the final cycle of this research project. It sought to build on the lessons from previous cycles and while the formal research element ceased, change continued with cycle 5's initiatives continuing to bear fruit and further changes happening organically within the procurement department. In chapter 13, I will consider what other avenues of research may be prudent based on the lessons from this research.

11. Research Results

Revisit the baseline techniques

Chapter 4 set out the need for baselining the existing landscape of behaviours and attitudes towards sustainable procurement. The inescapable connection between attitudes and behaviours was equalled only by the temporal difficulties in accurately measuring that connection. These difficulties were complicated further by circumstance.

To create the behavioural baseline, I used the benefits reporting tracker to identify completed projects. With the implementation of the PESO Programme, this report no longer existed. At the time of taking the cut of data for this chapter, the original report had been replaced by two reports, one that tracked benefits achieved from projects, and another that tracked the project itself. In order to accurately assess the sustainable procurement content of Project Completion Documents (PCD), I used the Projects Tracker, and considered projects that had completed between the start of the organisation's Financial Year 21/22 (beginning at the end of January 2021) and Monday 25th October 2021.

There were two downsides to this approach. Firstly, this report provided the relevant details of the projects though the additional richness of data on achieved benefits was not available. The two reports could also not be directly linked as necessary fields to connect a project to a benefits record were not reportable. The second downside was that the reference period for behavioural assessment was not completely aligned with the period used in the baseline. However, there was only a one-week difference between the two approaches, with this results report being one week shorter, and as the analysis predominantly considered proportionality of responses, I deemed this was an acceptable position and necessary in the circumstances.

Before delving into the analysis, it was worth noting also that one of the initiatives highlighted in cycle 5 involved amending the PCD template. This initiative was specifically designed to positively influence the quality of the submission and give colleagues cause to consider sustainability in their projects. The results of this analysis were still directly comparable to the original baseline given the overarching purpose was to positively impact sustainable procurement behaviours and therefore I expected the data to show greater specificity of commitments recorded after the introduction of the new template.

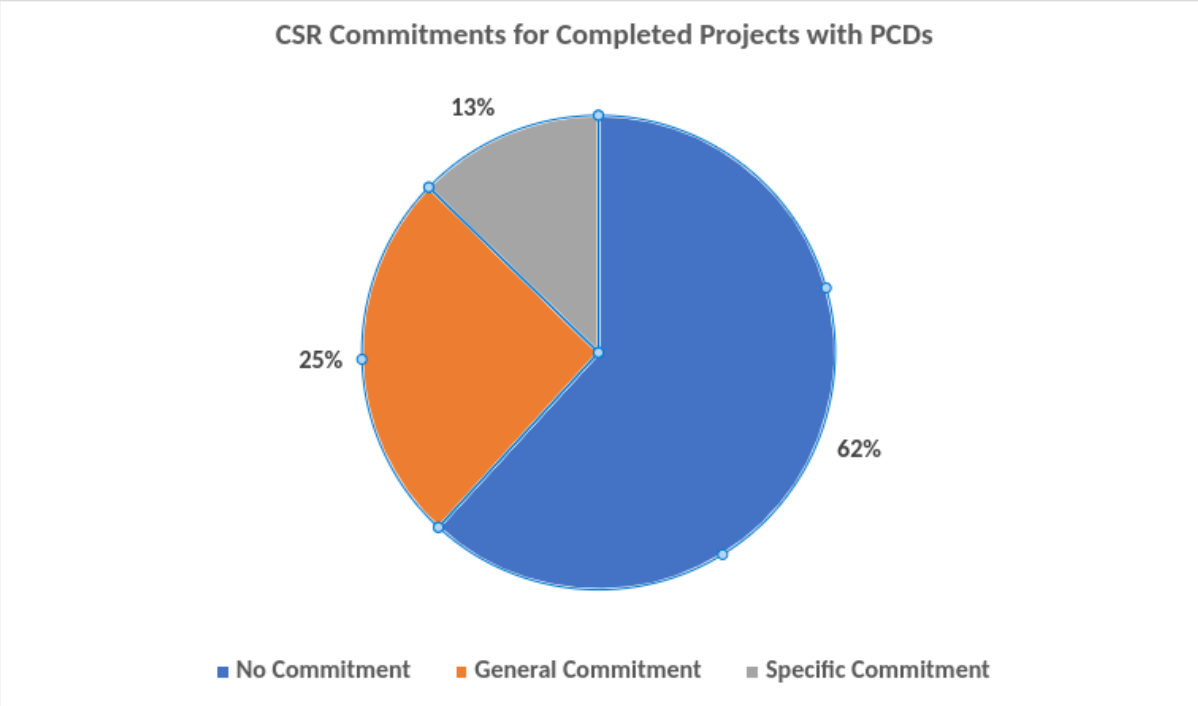
For the attitudinal analysis, I was able to utilise the same format and process for gathering feedback. I used the same core set of questions for both an internal and external survey, with only additional questions added to capture feedback on noticed changes over the research period. This enabled me to draw direct comparisons back to the general attitudes illuminated by the baselining work. The only caveat was that there had been significant turnover of colleagues over the research period which meant it was unlikely that the respondents were the same for both sets of surveys. It was impossible to know this for sure however, as both the internal and external surveys were anonymous. As such I only drew high level conclusions from the data as an overall indicator.

Behavioural Changes

Following the same filtration process as in the baseline, 159 projects completed in the reference period, of which 55 (34.6%) had PCDs. Putting aside the continued poor compliance with this mandatory governance step, of these 55 projects, 21 (38%) had some form of sustainable procurement commitment, an 8% improvement on the baseline, see Figure 11.1. 13% of the projects with PCDs captured specific commitments, no improvement against the original baseline, showing the improvement came from projects capturing general commitments. While potentially this meant that tangible sustainability benefits may not have been measurable, it did suggest that there was a greater

degree of consideration given to sustainability topics by the procurement professionals as they completed their work, and it was likely that this greater awareness / consideration would yield positive results in the long-term. One possible explanation was that those who captured generic commitments at the time of the baseline improved to capturing specific commitments, and some of those who had not captured any commitments previously began to capture generic commitments. This would have represented an overall improvement in the level of understanding and engagement with sustainable procurement however it was not possible to verify this while retaining anonymity.

Figure 11.1 - CSR Commitments for Completed Projects with PCDs



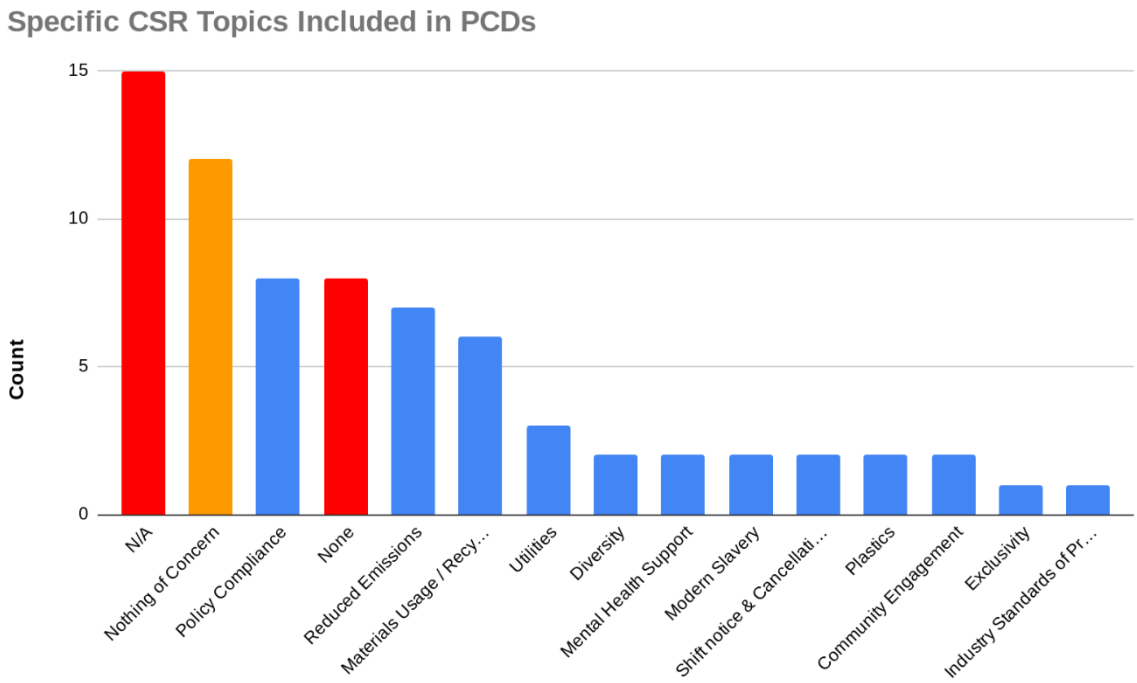
As with the baselining, for all completed projects with PCDs, I manually reviewed the nature of the sustainable procurement benefits recorded. For the purpose of analysis, I normalised these submissions which involved my interpretation of the key themes or messages of the relevant section of each PCD. Figure 11.2 visualises the normalised dataset. Mirroring the approach in chapter 4, I highlighted the "N/A" and "None" responses in red, reflecting the PCDs that had no commitments recorded.

In the baselining work, there was a common response that "No Additional..." CSR considerations were required or accounted for in the project. This response could have been positively interpreted as a full assessment of CSR topics was conducted for a previous iteration of that project, however that was highly unlikely given the overall quality of the responses and general level of compliance. Interestingly in the results analysis, that response did not appear at all in any of the in-scope PCDs. Instead, a new phrase appeared, highlighted as the amber column in Figure 11.2, "Nothing of Concern to be raised." This suggested a shift in interpretation by some participants to consider sustainable procurement as a risk factor, although this missed the purpose of this section of the PCD.

Considering the PCDs that contained references to specific CSR topics (represented by the blue bars in Figure 11.2), there were some positive messages. Compared to the baseline analysis, the number of PCDs specifically referencing 'Policy Compliance' had doubled suggesting an increased awareness of the need to ensure suppliers committed to adhering to the organisation's policies. There were a similar number of specific topics referenced in the results analysis compared to the baseline, although there were a couple of variations. Two topics from the baseline, SEDEX membership and Swedish

Derogation, dropped out. It was likely that those references were 'of their time' in that around the time of completing the projects that contributed to the baseline, those were both topics that impacted specific areas of the procurement department and had required concerted and coordinated effort. Swedish Derogation was prohibited by a change in UK legislation early in the Research timeframe and therefore I would expect it to have dropped out of priority areas for any procurement colleague going forward. SEDEX membership had also been a focus of the Senior Manager, CSR at the time of completing projects that contributed to the baseline analysis and following their departure it had not been a priority.

Figure 11.2 - Specific CSR Topics Included in PCDs



Other notable differences between the baseline and results analysis included variations of language that likely represented a shift in the lingua franca (such as Fuel Use in the baseline now being represented by Reduced Emissions in the results), and the introduction of Exclusivity as a CSR topic of note. This was likely to be a contentious inclusion but one I support for two reasons. First, the epistemology of this research being pragmatist meaning that it is perfectly acceptable for respondents to create their own interpretation and definition of sustainable procurement and for it to include Exclusivity, embracing Putman's perspective that the agent's point of view is correct (1987, cited in Bacon, 2012). The second reason was that I could see a logical argument for its inclusion. Exclusivity had an ethical implication as it prevented one party from working with other parties and, in the case of the organisation securing exclusivity from a supplier, prevents that supplier from selling their solution to other customers or clients. Inappropriate exclusivity rights could have stifled economic growth and prosperity, negatively impacting job creation and / or wage growth with the impacted supplier and potentially their lost clients.

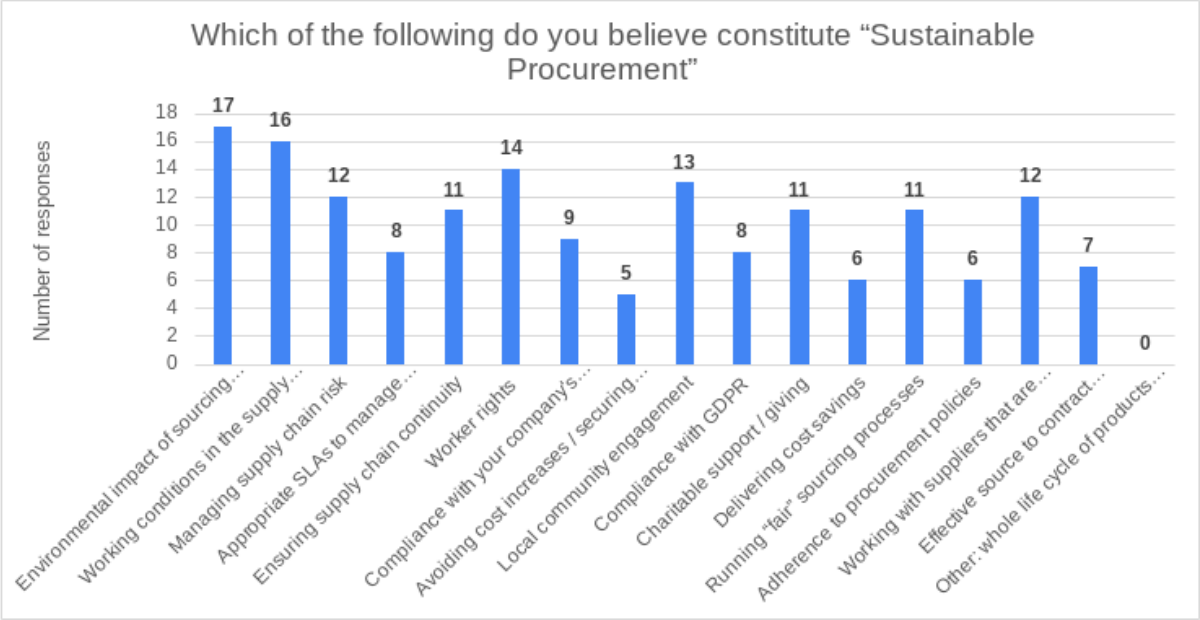
Attitudinal Changes

Similarly to the behavioural changes outlined above, the baselining activity for attitudes towards sustainable procurement was rerun to establish if those attitudes had shifted over the course of the research. There were two significant considerations in the analysis. First, the survey technique for assessing those attitudes was also an 'in the moment' snapshot and therefore more likely skewed by events concurrent with the respondent's participation. The second consideration was that as attitudes

were specific to the individual holding them, the comparison was likely affected by the changes in staff over the two-year research period. For the purpose of this analysis, it was worth being cognisant that between the baseline and the results survey, the department saw significant change in personnel, including a reduction in headcount through a restructuring programme. In total there were 17 respondents to the results survey which equated to approximately 26% of the department participating. This compared to a 41% response rate for the baseline survey. The difference in response rate to the external survey was not easily calculable given the open-ended opportunity for anyone from the profession to participate. However, the overall number of participants was almost a quarter less with only 16 external respondents compared to 21 in the baseline survey.

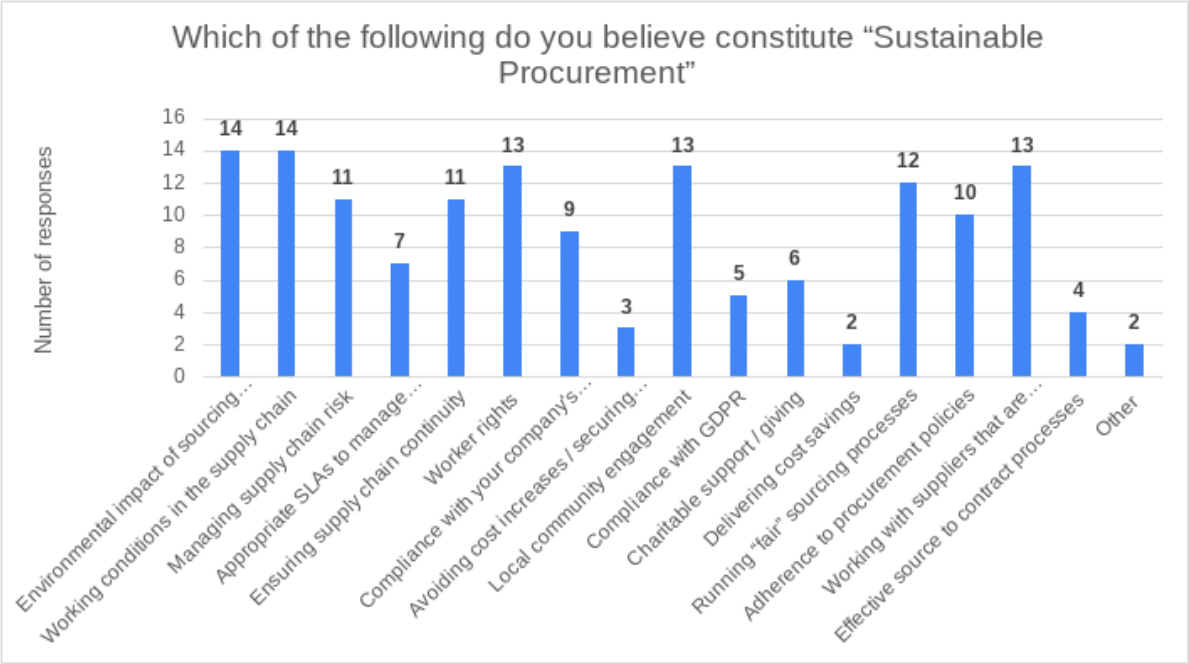
When looking at how attitudes changed over the research period, whether the held definition of sustainable procurement had shifted was important to consider. Changes in this personally held definition could have been indicative of either a coalescing or dissipating understanding. Figure 11.3 shows the response profile from the internal results survey. As with the baseline, the only factor that was unanimously considered to form part of the definition of sustainable procurement was the environmental impact of sourcing decisions. There was only a marginal difference in the external survey where in the baseline was unanimous, there was one respondent in the results survey who did not believe that the environmental impact of sourcing decisions was a constituent part of sustainable procurement, see Figure 11.4. Although this was not a statistically significant variance, it was intuitively curious that in three out of four surveys all participants held a common belief.

Figure 11.3 - Which of the following do you believe constitute "Sustainable Procurement" - Internal Survey



Considering the results of this first question illuminated the trends over the research period. Taking the response frequency proportionally to the number of respondents, it suggested an intriguing point. For the internal survey, the positive mean of the variances suggested that each respondent, on average, was factoring in additional elements into their definition of sustainable procurement. The top two factors seeing the greatest proportional growth: (1) 'Delivering Cost Savings', and (2) 'Ensuring Supply Chain Continuity'. Compliance with GDPR was the factor that saw the biggest negative shift over the research period, with proportionally fewer respondents considering that as a constituent part of sustainable procurement.

Figure 11.4 - Which of the following do you believe constitute "Sustainable Procurement" - External Survey



A similar, although more pronounced, trend was seen comparing the external surveys. Here, the top factors showing considerably greater inclusion in the results survey were (1) 'Working with suppliers that are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)', (2) 'Ensuring Supply Chain Continuity', and (3) 'Adherence to Procurement Policies'. Seeing supply chain continuity take a more prominent role in both the internal and external surveys was more than likely a result of Covid-19 and the impacts that the pandemic had on supply chain risk and performance.

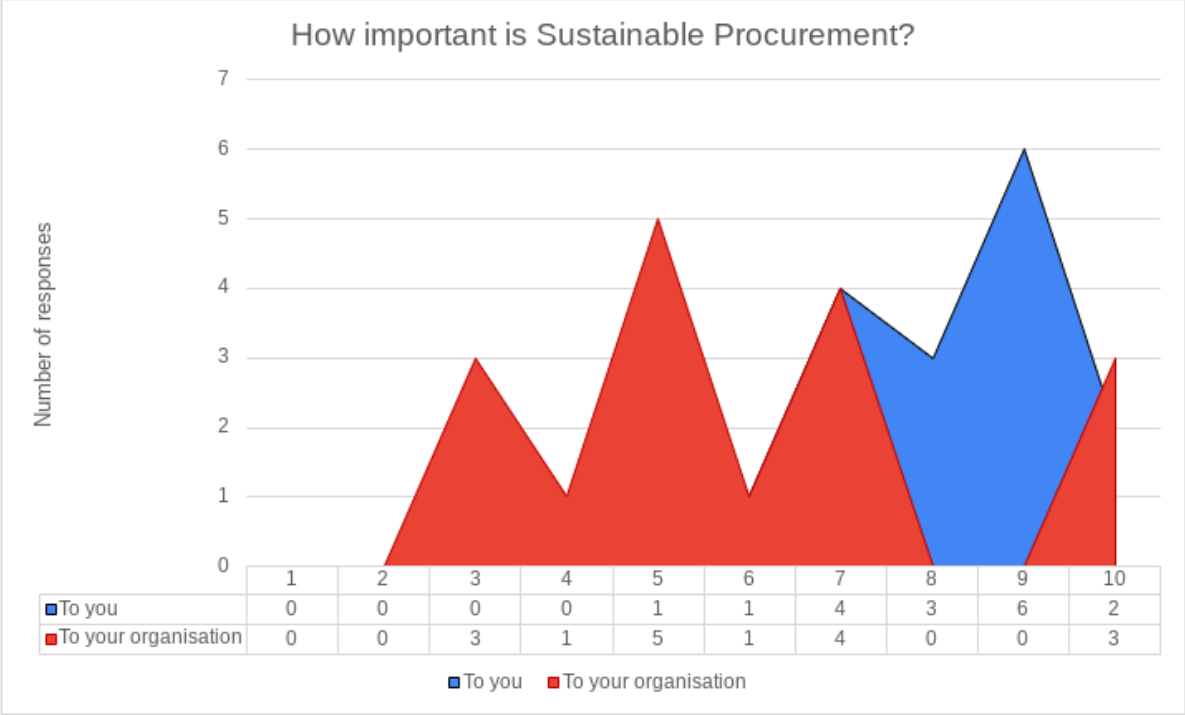
This significant shift in proportional response frequencies in the external surveys meant that there was almost no gap between average response rates between the internal and external professionals in the results surveys. In other words, among both groups, the average number of factors considered to constitute part of sustainable procurement was almost identical with each respondent in both the internal and external surveys including approximately the same number of factors. This was a shift compared to the baseline where internal respondents, on average, included more factors than external respondents. This averaging though hid some significant individual variations – or significantly different definitions of sustainable procurement – between the internal and external respondents. The two most different factors were 'Charitable Support / Giving' (where internal respondents on average included this factor more frequently than external respondents), and 'Adherence to Procurement Policies' (where the opposite relationship is true).

An expanding definition of sustainable procurement now provides a different lens in assessing other results from the surveys. Figure 11.5 shows the reported importance of sustainable procurement to the individual respondent and their perception of how important it is to the organisation. Figure 11.6 shows this same dynamic but for the external survey. In both graphs, the area in blue represents the scores of how important sustainable procurement was to the individual respondent, and the area in red the perceived importance to the organisation. A data table has been added for both images for clarity where the graphs overlap.

In both the internal and external surveys, the general trend was that procurement professionals believed that sustainable procurement (by their own definition of the concept, as discussed above), was of greater importance to themselves than it was to their organisation. Only one respondent in

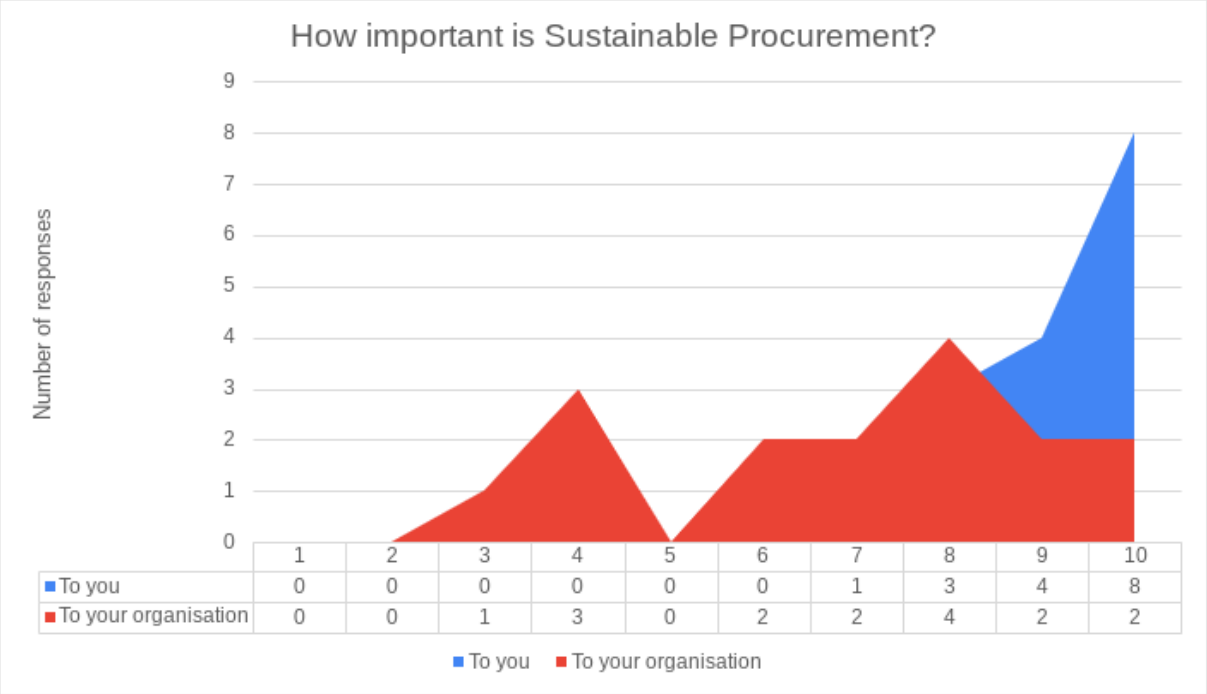
each survey rated the importance of sustainable procurement to their organisation higher than its importance to themselves. Also, in both surveys, the average rating of importance for the individual was two points higher than the rating for the organisation (2.06 in the internal survey, and 2.25 in the external survey). The overall trend mirrors the pattern seen in the baseline, with respondents consistently scoring the importance of sustainable procurement to themselves as greater than the importance to their organisation.

Figure 11.5 - How important is Sustainable Procurement? - Internal Survey



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
To you	0	0	0	0	1	1	4	3	6	2
To your organisation	0	0	3	1	5	1	4	0	0	3

Figure 11.6 - How important is Sustainable Procurement – External Survey



The scores given in the internal survey showed a strong, statistically significant relationship between the importance of sustainable procurement to the individual and the importance to the organisation, visualised in Figure 11.7. While this correlation did not by itself confirm causation, there was a logical argument that if sustainable procurement were important to an organisation, it would by necessity mean that it would be important for the procurement professionals responsible for its implementation. Equally, it was unlikely that a procurement professional who themselves believed strongly in the importance of sustainable procurement would work for an organisation that did not share their commitment at least to some degree. This relationship was borne out through the external survey as well, though the strength of the relationship was weaker. The weaker relationship may have been caused by several factors. One was that the research method was inappropriate to assess this relationship given it was likely there was only one respondent per organisation. Another was that it was due to differences between industries.

Compared to the baseline survey, the internal results survey showed a small shift in the average scores for the level of importance of sustainable procurement. There was a marginal positive shift in the level of importance to the individual, moving from 7.85 in the baseline survey to 8.06 in the results survey. At the same time, there was a negative shift in the level of importance to the organisation, moving from 6.76 in the baseline to 6.00 in the results survey. On the face of it, these were relatively minor movements, However, overlaying the Covid-19 survey provided additional insight. Figure 11.9 visualises the changes in average scores across the three surveys. Echoing the discussion in chapter 5, Covid had a marked impact on the importance of sustainable procurement, deprioritising it among procurement professionals and the organisation. As the pandemic progressed, along with other factors, including the efforts of this research, the level of importance has more than recovered for the individual. However, there was negligible recovery in the perceived importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation.

Figure 11.7 - Correlation between Importance of Sustainable Procurement to the Individual and to their Organisation – Internal Survey

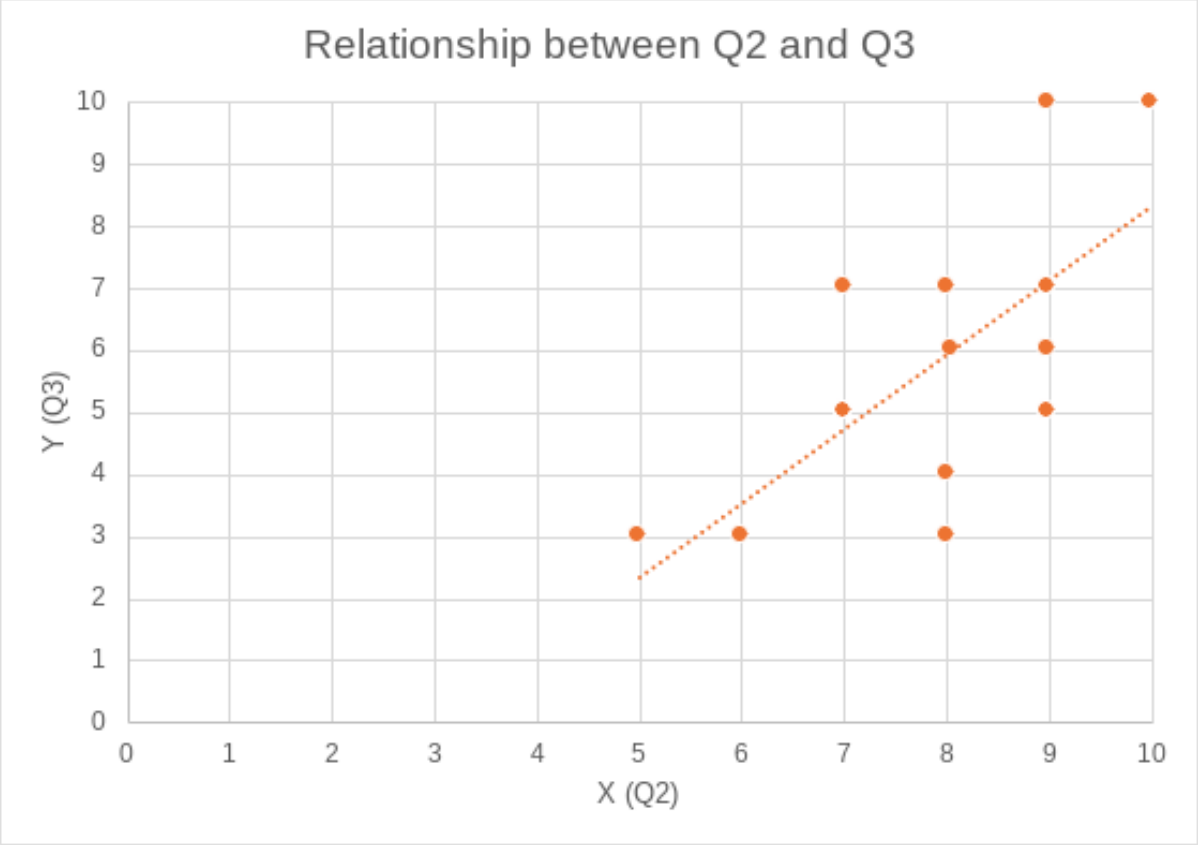
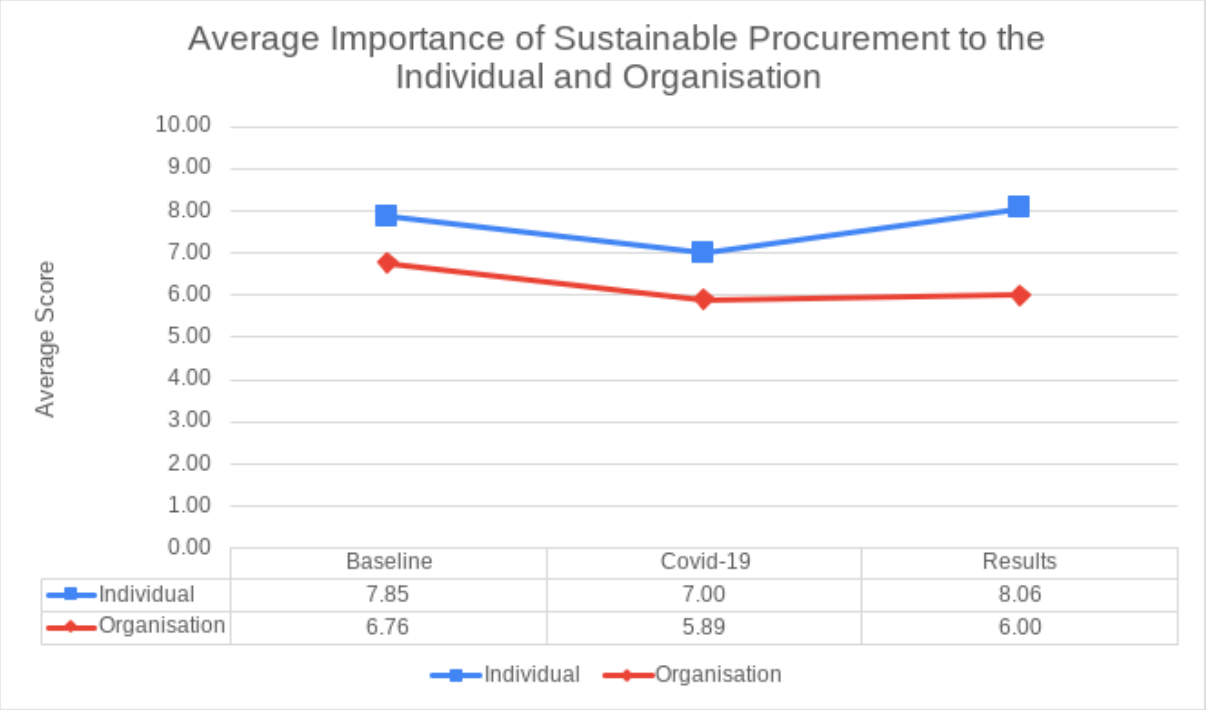


Figure 11.8 - Average level of Importance for Sustainable Procurement to the Individual and to the Organisation – Internal Survey



In the surveys, one question tried to connect the attitudes held by respondents with their actions. The question across both the baseline and results surveys was "In your experience, what is the average weighting that sustainability factors get in evaluation criteria?" When completing a sourcing project, supplier submissions are evaluated against pre-agreed criteria. The criteria are normally weighted to ensure critical factors are prioritised, differentiating to an extent between the must have and the nice to have factors. Exploring this through the question in each survey provided a proxy assessment of the level of priority given to sustainability factors compared to other evaluation criteria. Again, this analysis needed to be seen in the context of the individual respondent's held definition of sustainable procurement (explored above). The higher the weighting given to sustainability factors, the more likely that sustainability was a core requirement of the procurement exercise, and that decision making was influenced by the supplier's contribution.

Figure 11.9 shows the distribution of weightings declared by the respondents to the internal survey. 86% of respondents declared that sustainability factors received less than 10% of the overall evaluation criteria weighting. This suggested that for most of the organisation's sourcing activities, sustainability was unlikely to be a deciding factor between suppliers. Compared to the baseline survey where 72% of respondents declared a less than 10% weighting, this was a noticeable decrease in the average weighting given to sustainability factors. The decrease in the weighting given to sustainability factors reinforced the picture painted through the discussion above where the perceived importance of sustainable procurement to the organisation had fallen over the research period.

Figure 11.10 shows the responses to the same question in the external survey. In the results survey, 64% of respondents shared that sustainability factors received less than 10% weighting on average, compared to 90% of respondents in the baseline survey. This is a significant shift and while the demographics of the external respondents are highly likely to have shifted (so different organisations, industries and individuals are represented), it suggested the broader procurement profession significantly upweighting sustainability factors in procurement activities over the research period, standing in contrast to the experience of the organisation.

Figure 11.9 - Average weighting given to Sustainability factors in evaluation criteria – Internal Survey

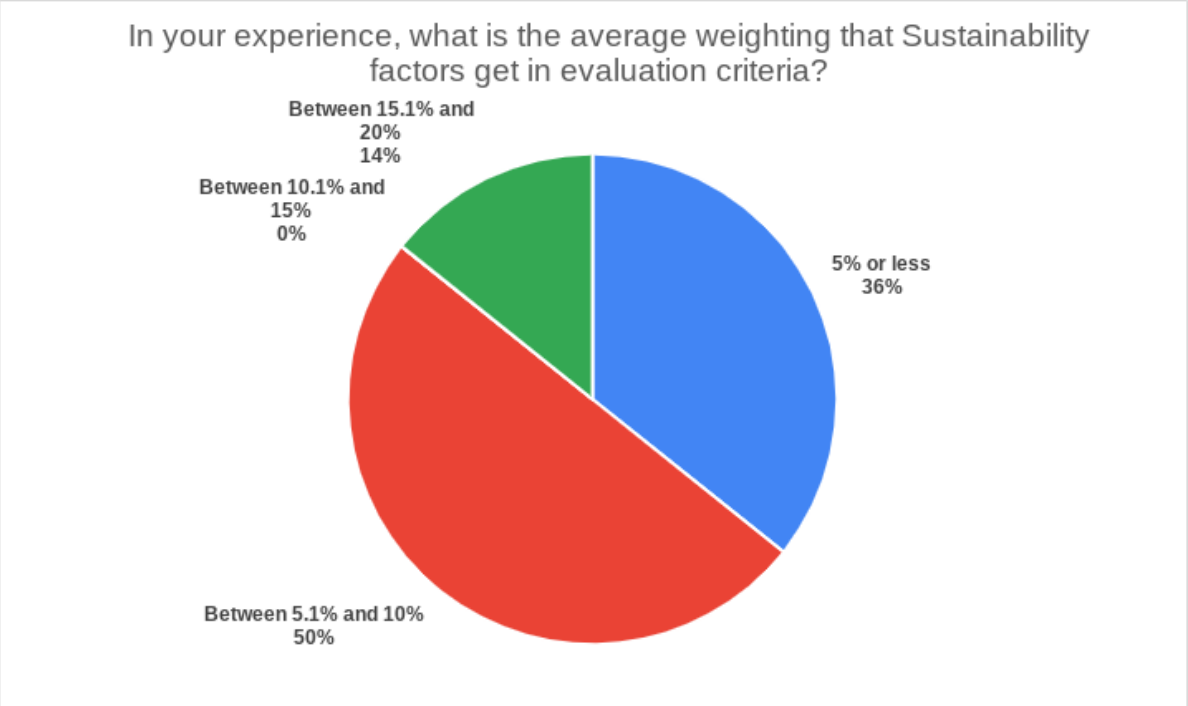
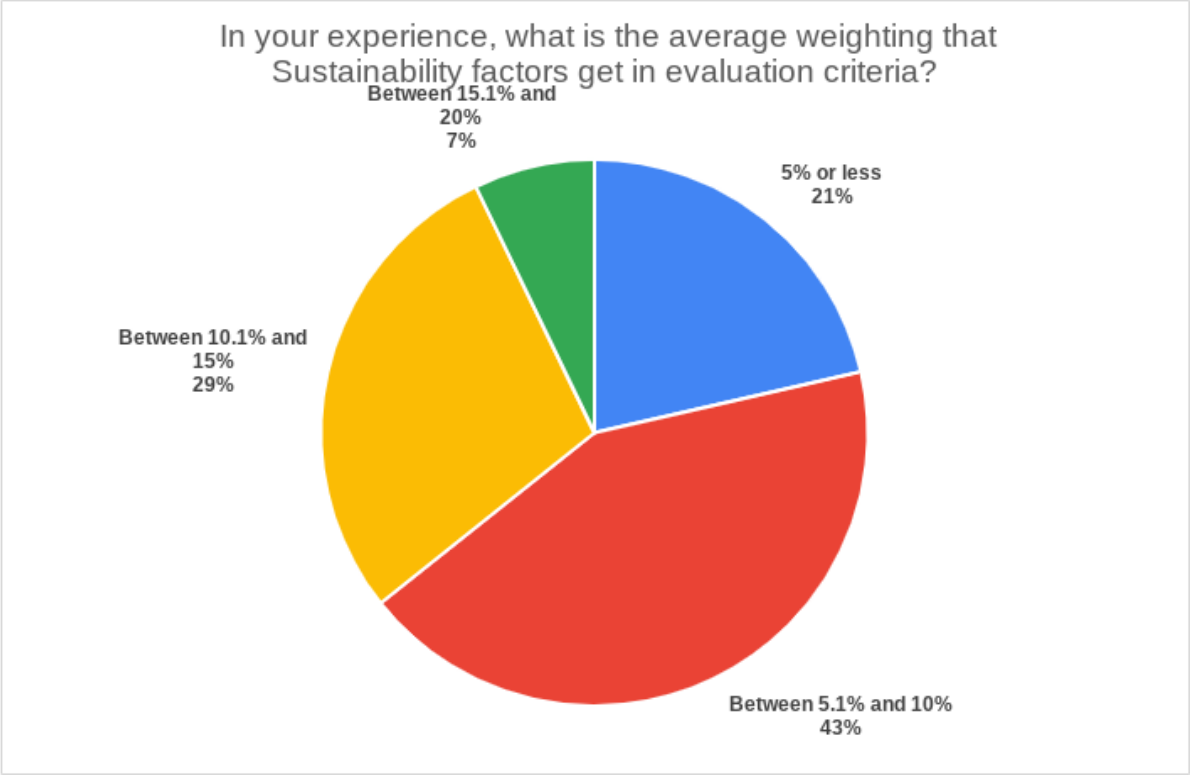


Figure 11.10 - Average weighting given to Sustainability factors in evaluation criteria – External Survey

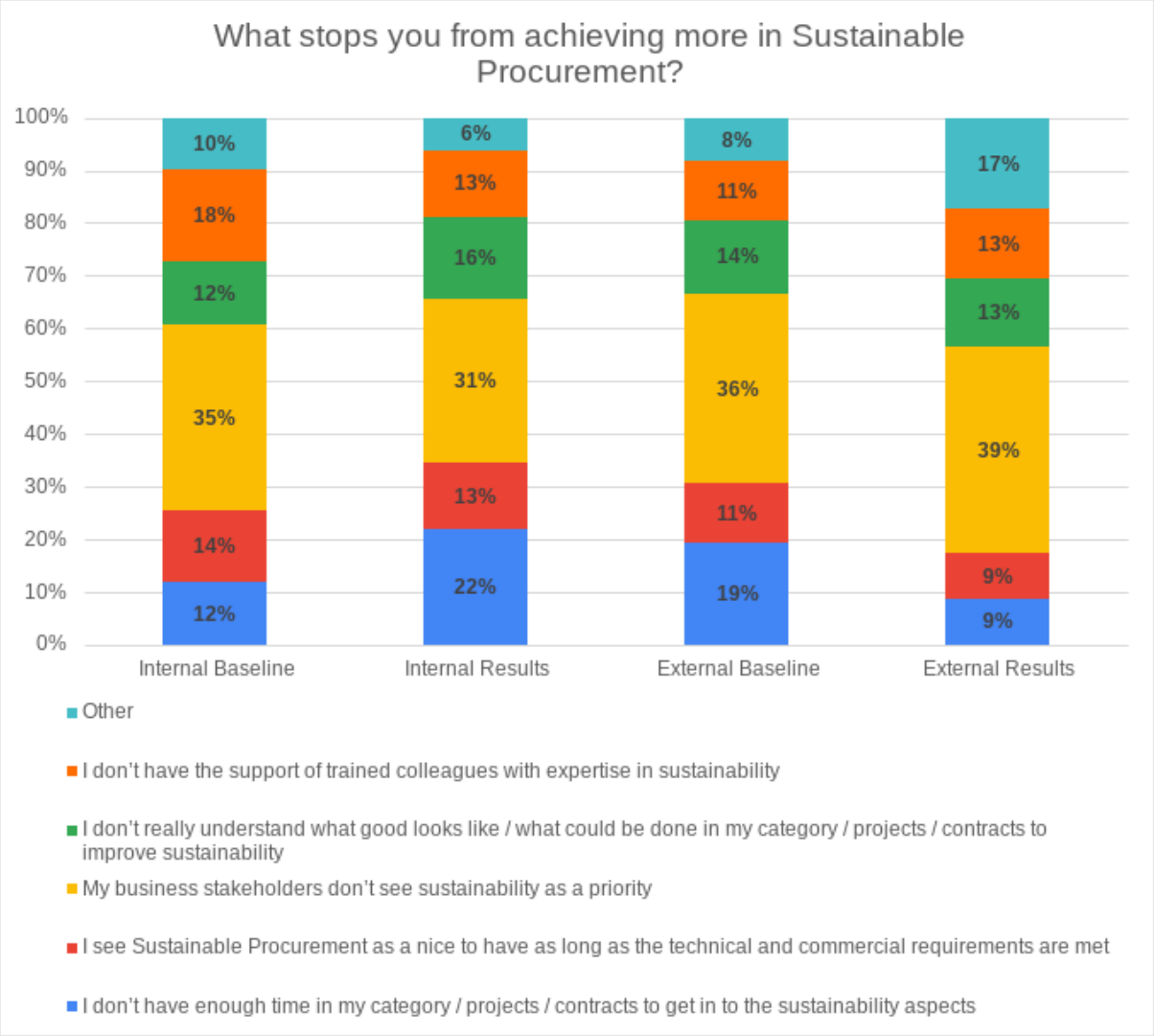


The other aspect that the surveys sought to explore was the perceived barriers to achieving more positive sustainable procurement outcomes. Figure 11.11 shows a comparison of the factors explored as stacked charts. The first two columns show the responses from the internal baseline and internal results surveys. The second two columns show the same for the external surveys.

The biggest change was that between the baseline and results surveys, internal respondents saw a marked shift with a greater proportion of the respondents sharing that one of their barriers was the lack of time available to get into sustainability aspects of their categories, projects and / or contracts. In and of itself this was interesting, particularly in the context of this research and the other change events that occurred, including the restructuring of the procurement function and the headcount reduction. This shift was also intriguing because the opposite was true from the external survey which saw a reduction in the proportion of respondents that saw time as a barrier.

Considering the implications of Figure 11.11 at a professional level, the biggest single perceived barrier to sustainable procurement achievement was a lack of priority given to sustainability by business stakeholders. This message echoed the sentiments from questions earlier in the surveys and explored in greater detail previously. Other factors remained reasonably consistent across the research period except for the “Other” category. While this shrank for internal respondents, it grew as a category for external respondents. Growth in this category suggested a more individualistic barrier to greater achievement that could be unique to the individual, or their business. If that were the case, it could pose challenges for professional bodies, consultants and leaders seeking to improve sustainability outcomes as standardised approaches may become less impactful.

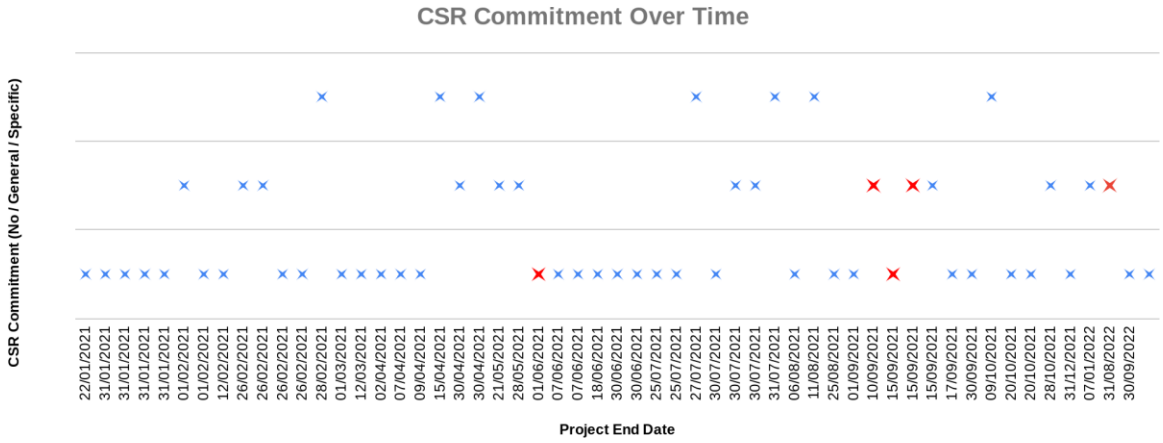
Figure 11.11 - Barriers to greater Sustainable Procurement achievement – All Surveys



Reflections

One aspect that I had anticipated the results analysis would show was the impact of the initiative milestones over time. This may have been naive as in-flight projects would likely be too far along in the process for significant impact to be achieved, and most of the initiatives as part of this research happened towards the latter cycles. However, I was curious to see if there was any clear indication of their impact. Figure 11.12 maps the 55 submitted PCDs over time against the project end date as recorded in the system. The Figure splits the CSR commitments into three blocks. The top section of the graph captures PCDs that contained specific CSR commitments. The middle section captures PCDs that contained general CSR commitments, and the bottom section PCDs with no CSR commitments.

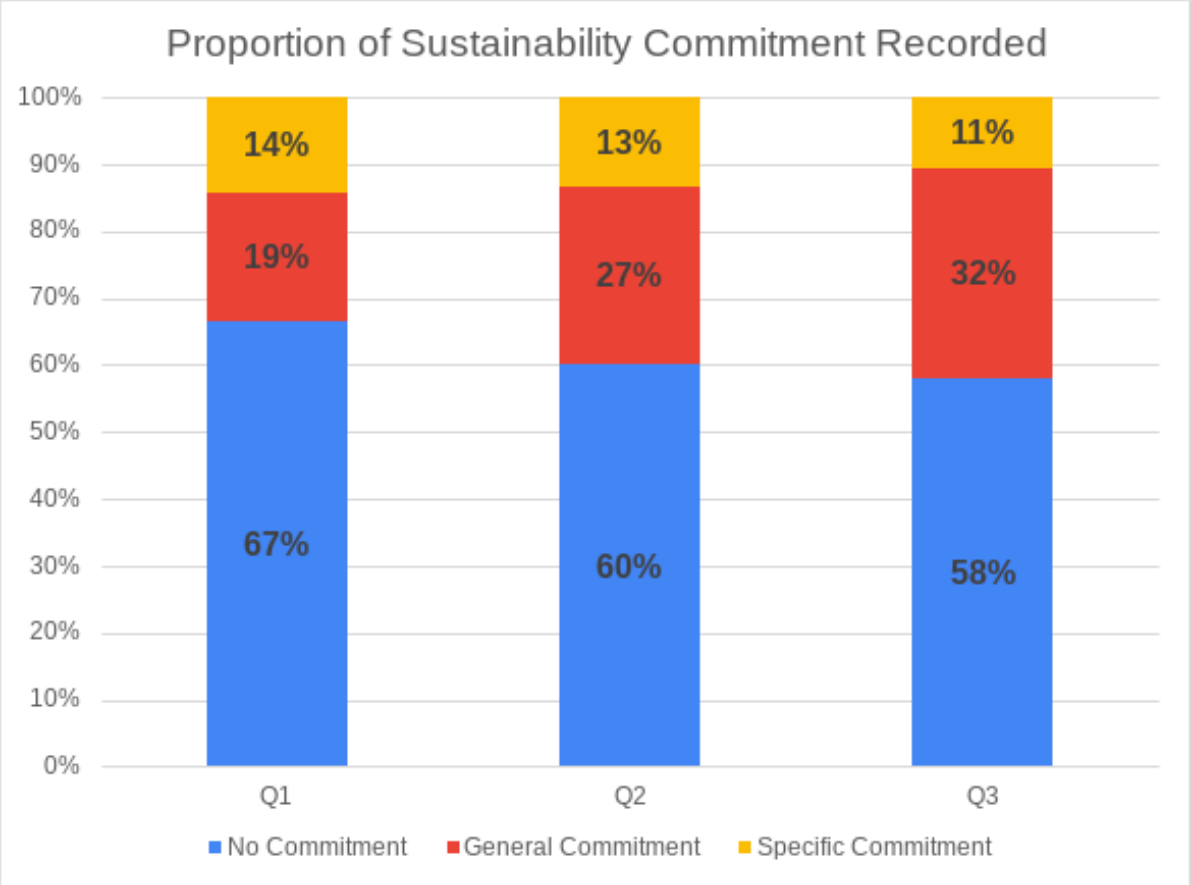
Figure 11.12 - CSR Commitments Over Time



In Figure 11.12, I have highlighted PCDs submitted on the new PCD template with a bold red "X" (compared to the standard blue "X" for PCDs submitted on the old template). The differences between the templates are explained in chapter 10 as a specific change initiative from cycle 5. The template was implemented in the middle of August 2021 which meant that 16 projects should have been submitted with the new version (excluding non-compliant projects that had no PCD submitted). However, only 4 plus an outlier were submitted on the new template (a project submitted in June 2021 which suggested the relevant procurement colleague revisited that project after it completed to submit the governance documentation). This poor adoption rate (25%) suggested that procurement colleagues had saved templates locally and did not regularly revert to the central template repository. This had broader implications for other implementations in the department and a concerted effort was required to ensure the latest versions of any documentation / template were used appropriately and old versions were decommissioned.

Due to the small sample size, it was difficult to say for certain that the refreshed PCD had a definitive positive impact on sustainable procurement behaviours. Of the five projects to have used it, 60% captured at least some generic commitments towards sustainability secured through the projects. None of the new PCD template projects demonstrated that they had secured specific commitments. This was part of a broader trend exploring the specific nature of commitments recorded in PCDs over time. Splitting the data into Financial Quarters (aligned to the organisation's Financial Year which ran approximately February – January) gave an indication of how the PCD content had changed over time. Most change initiatives that individual colleagues experienced / exposed to landed through Q2 and early Q3. Over the course of the three quarters, the proportion of PCDs submitted with no sustainability commitment recorded dropped which was a positive indicator for the research purpose. A worrying sign though was that the proportion of the PCDs which captured specific commitments dropped over the period, though at a slower rate than the fall in no commitment PCDs. Figure 11.13 visualises these changes.

Figure 11.13 - Proportion of Sustainability Commitment Recorded

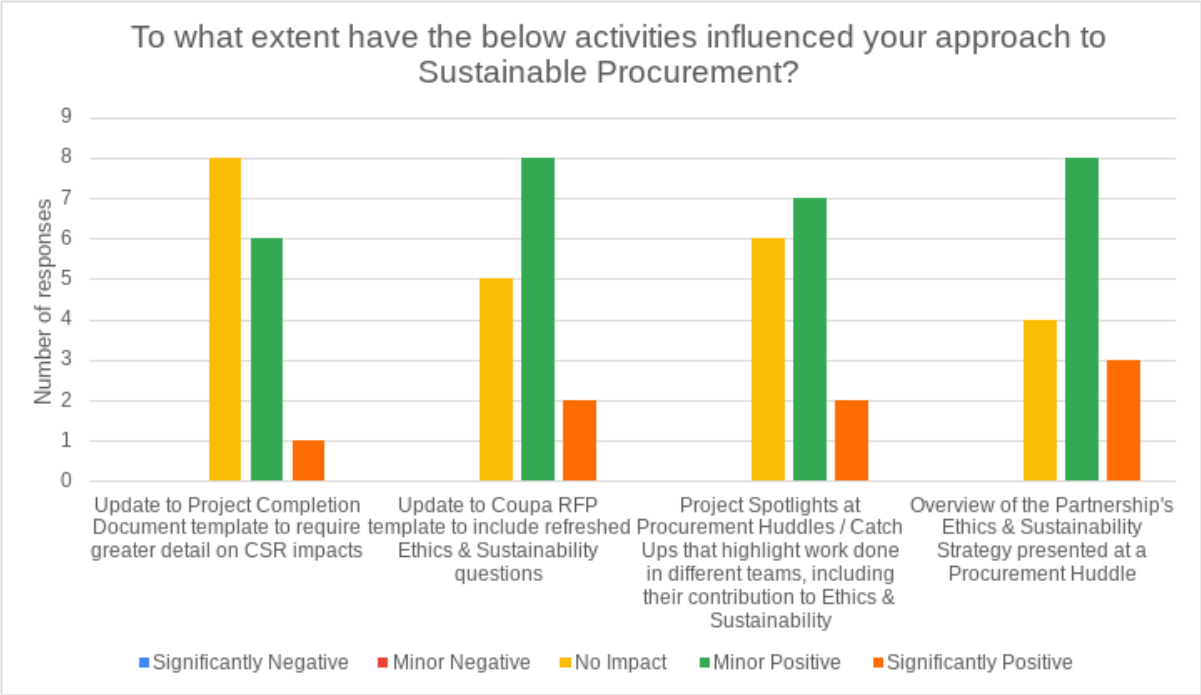


As blunt a tool as they were, unfortunately the PCDs were the only way to assess behaviours of participants towards sustainable procurement. As the forms had been available and in use since the start of this research, for their short comings they at least provided a degree of consistency to the assessment of behaviours in the department. However, exploring each PCD alone showed few obvious signs of progress towards the research purpose and that the approach failed to identify any impact of specific initiatives that had been implemented through the cycles. At a top line though, with the proportion of PCDs capturing some level of sustainability commitments increasing over the course of this research, this finding aligned with the analysis of the attitudinal surveys suggesting an increasing level of importance for sustainable procurement among participants.

As the PCDs did not capture information that allowed independent assessment of the impact of the implemented change initiatives, an additional question was added to the attitudinal survey. It asked respondents to rate four of the key change initiatives based on how influential those changes were to their approach to sustainable procurement. Obviously, this was only asked through the internal survey as external respondents would not recognise the changes. Participants were asked to rate the impact of each change initiative on a 5-point scale where the options were: Significantly Negative, Minor Negative, No Impact, Minor Positive, and Significantly Positive. Figure 11.14 shows the results of this question.

None of the four changes were rated as having a negative impact of any degree. The least effectual initiative according to the survey responses was the change to the PCD template. Although some respondents did feel it had a positive impact on their approach to sustainable procurement, it perhaps echoed the results discussed above, that those who used the new template captured only generic commitments. There was an interesting parallel to be drawn here however, in that the initiative found least influential was also one with poor uptake. The impact of this change may be felt more over time as participants switched to the new template.

Figure 11.14 - Extent to which change initiatives influenced approaches to Sustainable Procurement – Internal Survey



Interestingly, the results visualised in Figure 11.14 showed the most influential initiative as having been the overview of the organisation's E&S strategy that was presented by a member of the E&S team at one of procurement's departmental team meetings. The interesting point here was that this result supported my hypothesis tested through cycles 3, 4 and 5 – that procurement colleagues valued and worked more effectively with an established vision and strategy as opposed to being asked to develop one themselves. This was a remarkable finding that ran contrary to most established models of change, particularly appreciative approaches, which emphasised the importance of whole-system engagement at the start of a change programme to secure buy-in and commitment in the development of a new vision for change (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

Summary

Considering both behavioural and attitudinal analysis, several questions were naturally raised. The first was that as the attitudinal survey happened at the end of the period where PCDs were assessed, it may have indicated that changes in attitudes demonstrated through the survey responses were progressive. Attitudes were improving, with sustainable procurement becoming a greater priority with a broader definition. It was possible that the trends that began to be highlighted in the PCD analysis, visualised in Figure 11.13, were just the beginning and that over the following months fewer and fewer PCDs would be submitted without recording some form of commitment to sustainability.

Consequentially, this raised a second question on the pace of change. In the responses to the attitudinal survey, there appeared to be positive impact from the change initiatives that happened over the preceding months. The initiatives specifically explored in Figure 11.14 were implemented between two and six months prior to the survey going out to participants. The behavioural assessment through analysis of the PCD submissions included projects that completed in a similar timeframe after the change initiative, however the behavioural analysis did not find the same strength of impact as the attitudinal results. Assuming the connection between attitude and behaviour was still relevant, there were two potential inferences. First was a dilution between attitude and behaviour – a significant positive impact on attitudes only carried a minor positive impact on behaviours. The second

inference was that the timeframe for affecting attitudes was significantly shorter compared to impacting behaviours. Each of these inferences had consequences for the anticipated pace of change and efficacy of future appreciative processes beyond this research.

The final question raised through this analysis was the unquantifiable impact of other factors on attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable procurement outside of the concerted efforts of this research. Through the attitudinal surveys I sought feedback from respondents on what they felt had the most impact on their approach to sustainable procurement. A specific question was added to both the internal and external surveys, with a primer to make respondents consider the specific research timeframe ("Thinking back over the last two years…"). In order to avoid anchoring responses, this was a free-text response which was positioned prior to the question in the internal survey exploring the impact of the changes implemented in the cycles to avoid anchoring responses. The verbatims across both internal and external surveys had no consistent themes on positive influencers, only a small number of respondents either directly or indirectly (through reference to operational pressures / supply chain continuity) referenced the impact of Covid-19 as a negative influencer. The impact of Covid-19 was explored specifically through chapter 5, though its continued reference in these final analyses indicates the longevity of the impact and consequence of the pandemic. We know that Covid-19 had a dampening effect on sustainable procurement, something that evidently continued throughout the research. It was likely other factors external to the research had similar effects, some positive and some negative. It was this reality of delivering change not in a vacuum, as most if not all established change theories espouse, but in a complex world with known and unknown, controllable and uncontrollable, factors to manage that I reflect on in significant detail in the final chapter.

Research Purpose

Chapter 1 introduced the purpose of this research which was to contribute to the field of organisational change, achieved in its unique context. Appendix 11.1 provides a quick summary of each initiative introduced through the research, and its respective contribution towards this purpose. Each initiative provided insights that helped to contribute to the knowledge generated by this research, however, some initiatives provided greater contribution towards one or more of the objectives outlined in chapter 1.

To help to paint this picture, I conducted four interviews with key stakeholders to seek their feedback on the change process. These interviewees were either involved in contributing to some of the change initiatives or who had some level of responsibility for sustainable procurement outcomes as part of their job roles. These interviews were between 15 and 30 minutes long and held on a 1-2-1 basis, structured around three questions:

1. Think back 2 – 3 years ago, did they think anything needed to change regarding the organisation's approach to sustainable procurement?
2. Do they think anything has changed between then and now? If so, what?
3. In their opinion, what has driven that change? If that change is an overall positive, what has worked best at driving it?

The questions were contingent on each other and, if the interviewees answered in the negative on question one or two, then the following question(s) would not be asked. As it transpired, all 4 interviewees answered in the positive for both questions one and two which enabled greater probing and insight to be gained through question 3. The feedback from these stakeholders has informed the summary provided in Appendix 11.1.

Considering first the research objectives related to delivering value for the organisation, the feedback from the stakeholder interviews, and the results explored through this chapter, demonstrated that value was achieved. The results from the attitudinal analysis showed improvement in attitudes held towards sustainable procurement, despite the continued impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The

behavioural analysis also showed early signs of improvement suggesting that the attitude changes were beginning to flow through into action with improved sustainable procurement outcomes emerging, albeit in general rather than specific commitments. These quantitative analyses were complemented by the stakeholder interviews who also identified initiatives introduced through this research as having a positive contribution.

The academic objectives sought to understand the efficacy of a blended AAR approach to organisational change, and of utilising iterative cycles of change. As described above, I believe that the objectives relating to delivering organisational value were met through this research which implied that the research methods were effective. Bricolage was adopted throughout the research which meant that the actual approach varied from the core Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005), utilising the tools available to continue to make progress (Rogers, 2012). This ultimately meant that the academic objectives were successfully met, in that this research assessed the efficacy of a blended approach to change, and iterative cycles of change. Chapter 13 sets out the conclusions drawn from this research, and the contribution made academically and organisationally.

12. Reflections on Other Change

Macro-environment Changes

Starting outside the organisation's span of control, the organisation and project had to accommodate some significant change. Chapter 5 provides an overview of the immediate impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. Beyond that short term impact, Covid continued to drive a new paradigm. It was the spark for a cultural shift towards flexible working for office-based employees like those in the procurement department. Beyond the work-from-home guidelines enforced by the Government, more colleagues took the opportunity to work semi-permanently or permanently away from their previous office location. The trend was amplified as new rounds of recruitment expanded the horizons and welcomed candidates from across the country, recognising that it involved permanent multi-location teams finding new ways of working that enabled virtual collaboration. This forced an evolution in social connectivity and employee engagement to consider the virtual environment initially, and then a blended world where some attendees would be in the office and others working remotely. For this research, only the very first session with the SPCs during cycle 1 would be conducted with all attendees in the same room. After that, the sessions were virtual to accommodate these new ways of working.

Over the course of this research, the external landscape changed. As discussed in chapter 2, the progression of political agendas at both national and global scales likely had an impact. Starting with the American presidential elections, the success of President Joe Biden was hailed as a turning point in the United States of America's role and contribution towards tackling climate change. Within weeks of his election victory, then President-elect Biden announced the establishment of a new role of Climate Envoy, a new top team to lead development and enforcement of environmental standards and policies and, most notably, committed the US to re-join the Paris Climate Agreement (BBC, 2020). This stark change in direction from one of the world's leading polluter nations was seen as a huge step in the right direction ahead of the UK presidency of the UN Climate Change Conference held in Glasgow in 2021. In the run up to that event, governments from around the world made new commitments to climate change targets, including revised and more stretching announcements from the UK government. Broadly welcomed by all stakeholders, albeit with warnings about the need for policy changes and investment to back up the commitments, the UK committed to cut carbon emissions by 68% by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050 (Crown Copyright, 2022).

These environmental targets on gases, accompanied commitments on other forms of pollution and resource extraction, formed a new legislative landscape. For the organisation and this research, it meant a new external pressure to comply, as well as sparking what could be described as a version of the space race among retailers who sought new opportunities to compete against rivals rather than through the traditional avenue of price and assortment. As the US and Soviets had built bigger and bigger rockets 60 years earlier, retailers launched initiative after initiative to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability to attract ethical shoppers. For the organisation, these included bringing forward plans to become net-zero on carbon emissions by 15 years, halving food waste in organisation operations and in the supply chain, and having buy back or take back options across all product categories within John Lewis. As with a lot of these changes, it was impossible to measure precisely the impact on the research. On the balance of probability, these changes probably flattered the results and positively contributed towards achieving improved behaviours towards sustainable procurement. Instead of it being a voluntary option for each individual procurement colleague on whether to engage with sustainable procurement, a new public commitment from the organisation as part of the changing regulatory and political landscape designed to protect the environment made it compulsory. As discussed in the chapters for cycles 2, 3, 4 and 5, as both researcher and participant I attempted to capitalise on these external changes to drive change within the procurement department.

The final significant change in the Macro-environment was Brexit. Coming into effect on the 1st January 2021, the Brexit agreement, or to give it its full name the EU (Future Relationship) Bill, ensured tariff-free and quota-free trade between the UK and EU and a so-called level-playing field agreement when it came to standards and regulations. There were many other aspects to the Brexit agreement for which there have been, and will no doubt continue to be, a plethora of academic and opinion pieces written over the coming years. I am focusing on the specific attributes of the agreement that directly related to this research.

Despite the zero-tariff trading agreement, non-tariff barriers to trade did come into force. These included new customs processes, import and export checks, and revised rules around safety recognition standards. Together, these non-tariff barriers essentially put goods sourced from the EU on the same level as those coming from the rest of the world, making EU products coming to the UK less competitive commercially than they were pre-Brexit. For some products the organisation sourced, such as Burgundy wines, this was not an issue. If you want to drink a nice Burgundy, it could only come from France and the pricing dynamic was relatively inelastic therefore the impact of Brexit comparably muted. For other products, particularly those bought by the GNFR procurement team which tended to be Business to Business products (carrying almost no consideration of brand loyalty or recognition in the same way a consumer may be loyal to a particular product brand), the world was back onto a level playing field with Europe in terms of trade barriers. This opened sourcing options but at the same time sustainability risk factors. New considerations such as transportation and associated emissions, longer supply chains, and more remote manufacturing locations with potentially higher risk of labour abuses needed extra consideration. The initial work towards Brexit by the procurement department focused on risks to continuity of supply and cost risk because the terms the UK would be trading on with the EU were not known until five days before they came into effect. As the new relationship with the EU established itself, the considerations were rebranded as business-as-usual sourcing activity by the organisation. Of all the noise that Brexit created for the best part of five years, in the end it was a short-term supply chain issue before a new normal was established. The impact that Brexit had on this research was short lived; on reflection, it was an initial distraction from the topic of sustainability while the teams supported the resolution of operational supply chain issues, and then back to normality. I have no doubt other professions within the organisation felt the pain for longer however, the nature of procurement's work was project based and each project was baselined at a point in time. Once the initial pain of Brexit passed, new baselines were established, new expectations set, and work continued.

Micro-environment Changes

As highlighted in chapter 2, at the start of the research there were 80 colleagues in the GNFR procurement department. Excluding the impact of a departmental restructure (which I will discuss later in this chapter), there were 18 colleagues who left and 15 colleagues who joined over the almost two years of data gathering. There were also two colleagues who took extended parental leave during the research. All this change meant the culture of the department could not be described as stable. As new starters joined the department, they brought with them renewed enthusiasm, different ways of working and their own principles which then contributed and meshed with the existing culture to evolve it in a new direction. The impact on this research was an interesting intangible to contemplate. The process of bringing in new employees nearly always meant that the recruit had a desire to impress and show willingness that potentially was not there or as prevalent in longer serving colleagues. This then meant they were open to adopting new processes, volunteering to support change initiatives and more could be achieved on the back of their enthusiasm. Arguably, this was borne out by only one of the SPC volunteers in the first cycle having been a "lifer" at the organisation and the other volunteers having had varied careers, often for multiple companies, before joining. It raised the question: if the colleague population were to remain stable, would implementation of change initiatives be as successful as it was? Even more pressing, could this research claim to have achieved

any behavioural change regarding sustainable procurement, or could the results be explained by changes in personnel with the new joiners bringing with them the desired behaviours? I will discuss these questions in the concluding chapter.

Shortly after completing the baselining for this research, the organisation brought in a new Chairman, Dame Sharon White. As with any top-level appointment, Sharon spent considerable time and effort engaging with the business across all functions, levels, and locations. She brought with her a specific mantra and following her appointment, a mandate for change to revitalise the brands. One of her early changes was to arrest planned restructures and to shuffle her senior Executive team. The intent was to create clear accountabilities at the most senior level to lead change and deliver on Sharon's priorities. It was interesting to note that the previous senior leadership team actively celebrated that most of those roles were filled with colleagues who had spent their entire careers in the organisation. Within 12 months of Sharon's arrival, only two of the newly formed group of eight were pre-existing colleagues with long careers in the organisation, and none who were "lifers". This was a big cultural shift that met with mixed feelings from colleagues. Some considered the changes good; the organisation had been losing margin for many years, so they welcomed a shakeup at the top, agreeing with Sharon's assessment that the organisation had developed an inward-looking culture at the expense of marketing knowledge and customer insight. Other colleagues viewed the change as disheartening, perceiving the decision as a slight on the talent and capabilities that existed within the business.

As part of Sharon's ambition to revitalise the brands, she brought in Nina Bhatia as the new Executive Director for Strategy & Commercial Development. Bringing with her a wealth of experience, Nina launched a strategic review of the entire organisation. Interestingly, there were aspects of AI in that review. The opportunity was opened to the entire organisation, all c.85,000 colleagues at the time, to contribute to the development of the new strategy. Quoting from the organisation's internal communications:

"Over the course of 6 months over 12,000 colleagues provided input into the Strategic Review, submitting over 650 ideas. We've also heard from more than 10,000 customers, along with more than 100 suppliers and local community groups."

This whole system approach aligned with the principles of AI, engaging the maximum number of people in the change initiative. What was not entirely transparent from the review was how the input from colleagues was able to shape the new strategy but there were encouraging signs. Some of the most popular ideas submitted by colleagues for new business opportunities were part of the plan and received investment. There were also signs that the team running the programme adopted a blended approach that not only explored strengths and how to build on them, but also sought out barriers and issues to be resolved. The organisation's strategy was split into four distinct areas, all of which were a blend of building on strengths and opportunities while also trying to resolve recognised weaknesses. Specific to this research, the organisation's 'Plan' was underpinned by several commitments to sustainability and ethics. This organisation-wide focus on sustainability came about almost a year after the initial baselining for this thesis. At the time it was published, though, there were no plans, only ambitions and commitments. These took much longer to be published at the corporate level, with the specific E&S Strategy being published in the Spring of 2021 as discussed in previous chapters.

In early November 2020, the organisation announced a major restructuring of its head office functions (Retail Gazette, 2020). This programme, called "Head Office Transformation" (HOT) would involve reducing headcount by approximately 30% and the senior leadership team were clear at the time that the motivation for this reduction was not a belief that there were too many colleagues, but a realisation that the head office functions were proportionally too costly and making the organisation

uncompetitive in the dynamic and tight-margin retail environment. The transformation therefore was to be undertaken, not on a solid scientific basis following workload analysis that demonstrated what could be done with fewer resources, but as a reaction to lower the cost base and new workload priorities and processes would need to be established to account for the fact that there was reduced capacity. The procurement department was in the vanguard for these changes because in November 2020 the function launched a new source to settle the system as part of a programme called PESO. Implementation of this system reduced the impact of HOT as it required new teams and skillsets to enable the return on the investment. This reduced procurement's potential 30% headcount reduction down to approximately 10%. However, due to the process that was followed and the skill requirements of those new positions, 10 colleagues were still made redundant (four voluntarily). This was the biggest single event that impacted the community of participants for this research and had the potential to derail it completely. With the ethos of change first, then figure out how to adapt the workload priorities for a reduced workforce, this research could easily have been deprioritised by the PLT and participants. This was certainly the case between September 2020 (when the procurement restructure was announced) and early January 2021 while colleagues established themselves in their new role.

The Procurement Restructure

The reason for reflecting specifically on the procurement restructure was that there were parallels to this research. The restructure not only looked to reduce cost but to establish a new departmental culture and way of working, which was very similar to the research purpose, which was to achieve behavioural change. However, it must be noted that I was not involved in the restructure process from the start. Several activities involved in the restructure were done behind closed doors. These reflections are my personal thoughts as a researcher into change implementation and as a participant in later stages of the process. I was elected as a representative of a constituency for the group consultation process, I maintained my role as an elected colleague representative of all colleagues in the department, I volunteered as part of the colleague-centric change activities, and as a member of the department, I was a participant in the restructure itself and subsequent transformation activities.

The first stage of the procurement restructure was the consolidation of the department with the organisation's property function. This moved the department from having its own Director who reported directly into the Executive Director Finance (the equivalent of the CFO role), to sharing a Director with the property team. This shared focus at a senior level meant more responsibility falling to the two Heads of procurement. In and of itself this was a significant change, just twelve months prior there had been four Heads of procurement and a dedicated procurement Director, so now additional responsibilities for leadership of the function were being handed to an already reduced pool of resource. This consolidation of Directorship officially took effect at the start of the organisation's 2020 / 2021 Financial Year in February 2020 (see Appendix 1.02). Around the same time, the two Heads of procurement began what the organisation called the design phase. This is not to be confused with the definition of the Design phase required by AI or AAR. The design work continued for many months. Although colleagues in the department were aware that a restructure of some description was coming, as this had been announced when the change in Directorships were announced, many were still surprised in July 2020 when the Heads of procurement provided an update. The update essentially said that design work was ongoing and that they were targeting a full announcement in early September. Subsequent communications over the summer in team meetings or emails continued the message from July that the announcement was coming in September and that the reason for procurement restructuring prior to the rest of the business was because of the implementation of the PESO programme.

On the 8th September 2020 the full announcement was made to the department. Due to the nature and scale of the changes, the announcement triggered a formal consultation process which included

nominated or elected representatives of relevant constituencies within the department being appointed, trained, and then engaged to challenge, refine, or change elements of the proposal in a way that represented colleague's interests. Group consultation closed on the 6th October 2020 and individual consultations ran in parallel to recruitment and selection activity. All outcomes were announced in the week commencing 2nd November, redundancy notices were served to impacted colleagues by the 6th November and the new structure went live on Monday 9th November 2020. The go live of the new structure was itself a trigger for further activity. Despite a few colleagues being made redundant there were multiple vacancies in two of the four new teams. The recruitment activity began to fill these roles. Transition activity began with a goal of helping the colleagues within the department define and implement the changes they wanted to see in order to achieve the overall objectives of the restructure. Where relevant, colleagues also began preparing their handovers. Although the new structure was formally live from the 9th November, for most colleagues that were changing roles there was still a two- or three-month transition as they closed out old projects and handed work over. This process broadly took until the end of the Financial Year in January 2021 to complete and for nearly all colleagues to be working solely in their new roles from that point on.

From my roles and vantage points during the restructure, it was difficult to say with certainty whether the restructure process followed the principles of any espoused change models. The design phase of the restructure happened behind closed doors. This was understandable as the leadership would not wish to unduly worry any colleagues who might be impacted as they worked through various structural options and associated implications. This phase was led by the two Heads of procurement, along with the Director of property and procurement, and was supported by teams from across the organisation who supplemented with knowledge, experience, and process. In total, more than 15 teams were engaged in supporting the development of the initial proposal that was announced on the 8th September 2020. Key though, those who would be impacted, meaning the colleagues in procurement, were not part of those discussions which did not align with the whole-system approach of AI or AAR. That participation aspect aside, there were some clues in the outputs of the design phase which allude to whether the general approach taken was action or opportunity orientated.

A tenet of the new strategy to accompany the restructure announcement was a desire for procurement to influence further up the cost cycle. This appeared to come from a strengths-based assessment of when and where procurement could add the most value on behalf of the organisation. This certainly would have aligned to a core principle of appreciative change, with a focus on current strengths as a driver of change by identifying the opportunities that should be explored.

Conversely, a significant driver of the restructure was the implementation of the PESO programme. This programme of investment in digital transformation was established in response to a particularly negative internal audit report. The report found that the organisation at the time had poor contract and supplier management capabilities across the business, with inconsistent approaches taken leading to significant lost value, as well as an unacceptably low level of understanding of supply chain risks across multiple risk factors. Following this chain of events, the PESO programme was established to address that problem, and the procurement restructure was driven in part by the need to commit the necessary resources to ensure the success of PESO. Similarly, the other significant driving factor of the restructure was the need across the organisation head office functions to reduce costs. Coupled together, these drivers indicated that the restructure was a problem-oriented response suggesting closer affinity with traditional AR.

The group consultation process was an interesting period to consider as to whether it closer affiliated with AR, AI, or AAR. We will never know what options were discussed, considered but ultimately rejected by the Heads of procurement. We do not know if they considered proposals that had a smaller headcount reduction, or larger, or whether they mused over completely redefining what procurement

within the organisation meant as this stage of the process happened behind closed doors. This means that it was difficult to say with certainty whether the approach taken was one based on positive strength building or with a view to resolve a perceived problem. What we do know from the group consultation process was that there were no time and motion studies or similar that demonstrated how the proposed restructure would impact the work of the department. There was one slide presented during the group consultation process which showed a visual of the types of activities that would 'stop,' and the types that would 'continue' or be 'started' (introduced to the department as new). The Heads of procurement were open and clear that there had been no detailed analysis conducted that demonstrated there would be the capacity in the restructured department, with its reduced headcount, to be able to complete the 'continue' and 'start' activities to the expected quality. As a side note, that approach was also taken through HOT described earlier. That approach broadly followed the entrepreneurial spirit of try > fail > pivot > try again described by Hoffman (2017).

The group consultation process also threw up an additional consideration which was a contemplation over the potential actual or perceived influence that the group consultation representatives could have over the change. Having gone through the training myself as a representative of a constituency within the function, and participated throughout the group consultation process, there was a juxtaposition between the intent and real-world practice. The organisation published what are known as "Standards" on its internal intranet. These were effectively policies by which the business committed to operate and therefore required all colleagues to adhere to them. One of these standards covered the group consultation process and made clear that the organisation, where a trigger threshold of number of impacted colleagues was reached, would enter into an honest consultation where the representatives of colleagues would have a real opportunity to influence decision-making and the final proposal that was implemented. At the same time, the standard also emphasised that there was no requirement for agreement to be reached and that the decision of the change leads, in this case the Heads of procurement, was final. From a business perspective, this was eminently practical. A necessary change cannot be held up by employee NIMBY-ism (Not In My Back Yard) where there was a recognised need for change but employees in one area felt the axe should fall elsewhere in the business and vice versa. Equally though, it struck an interesting tone for the open and honest consultation. It raised the question of whether there was true consultation or whether it was pseudo and used only to placate. With all that being said, there were signs that the group consultation representatives achieved some success. Voluntary redundancy was added to the proposal allowing those colleagues in impacted roles with an option to leave the business with a generous package rather than go through a selection process. This, and other small changes to the proposal, helped to reduce the overall number of compulsory redundancies. Potentially thanks to the efforts of the procurement group consultation representatives, voluntary redundancy and voluntary severance were added to the initial change proposals for the rest of the HOT activity. Despite this, though, there was a pervading view among all colleagues that the group consultation representatives had limited opportunity or ability to influence the changes. This could be summed up best by a quick comparison of timeframes. The Heads of procurement worked on the new structure design for between 6 – 9 months. The group consultation representatives had just over three weeks in which to try and influence the changes, while a lot of the background information that drove the initial proposal was not shared.

Another interesting experience coming during the transition phase after the restructure was implemented, harked back to the perception of influence that the group consultation representatives had on the changes. A few times through January 2021, members of the department and its leadership used phrases along the lines of "if they didn't like it, it should have been raised during group consultation." Often these were used in private though having personally experienced it more than half a dozen times within that single month, I did not think it unreasonable to conclude others had expressed a similar sentiment elsewhere. If one's perception was that group consultation was

successful, it would be hard to then construe that important topics were left out of the conversation. Any omission would be down to the apathy of colleagues choosing not to engage and not sharing topics of importance. If, however, one felt that the process was a pseudo consultation then it could feasibly mean that important topics were not discussed, or perhaps not even raised through a lack of transparency or faith in the process. Apathy here could also be a contributing factor, though the cause of the apathy would have been the change process itself rather than the individual. Either way, the outcome was that the frequency of this attitude within the department 2 – 3 months after the new structure was implemented suggested that the whole-system approach was still missing through the group consultation process.

There was no hard-and-fast judgement I could make as to whether the procurement restructure best aligned with any espoused change approach. At different times there were facets of the restructure which showed affinity to each of the different change approaches considered in my research project. That fact by itself might have suggested a blended change approach would be the best comparison. It may then have been a matter of perception as to what are the best attributes of AI and AR and should therefore be adopted. In my experience of the change, I do not believe that it followed the blended AAR approach proposed by Egan and Lancaster (2005) explored through this research. The organisation however, in applying the same approach it did with procurement across the rest of HOT, clearly believed that they had built an effective change model that blended what it perceived to be the best attributes into a cohesive change process.

General Reflections

Readers of this chapter may be wondering why I have gone into such detail regarding a change process that was not even a part of this research. It is a reasonable question. The intent behind this chapter was twofold. As I have already highlighted, my research has not existed in isolation. While I attempted to change the world (specifically the micro-world of sustainable procurement behaviours within the organisation's procurement function), the world continued to change around me. Some of those key changes are highlighted in this chapter with a consideration for each as to how it may have impacted the results of this research.

A second intent for this chapter was to reflect on the most significant and localised of changes to have impacted the research environment. On reflection I saw similar themes emerging from the procurement restructure as I saw through my cycles of change. I could offer no empirical evidence to support these themes, only my own experiences and observation. I was also conscious that as both researcher and participant, I may have suffered what Kahneman (2012) called the 'illusion of validity.' I acknowledged that I may have created a narrative fallacy that sought to find comparable meaning between the change events outlined in this chapter and my own research. However, I intended that through acknowledging this potential and by sharing my thought process, readers will be able to make their own judgements as to the applicability of my reflections.

It was hard to argue in the circumstances of the procurement restructure that there was not a top-down mandate for change. The organisation, through both its published approach to change and its discretionary adoption of custom and practice, set clear parameters for the restructure activity. These defined the timing and level of engagement with colleagues but despite the clarity, left significant flexibility over the specific actions and activities to be taken to implement the desired changes. The organisation recognised the importance of colleague support for changes in order to create success. This was underscored for the business in previous change initiatives that attracted negative press coverage, colleague dissatisfaction and, in one internally famous case where a restructure in a department of hundreds wanted to introduce greater contractual flexibility on location and only reduce headcount by four roles, ended up creating a brain drain as many times that number left the business unwilling to accept the proposed changes.

Based on that history and the experience through the procurement restructure, it begged the question: Was the organisation trying to strike the leanest balance of engagement to create buy-in while maintaining centralised control at leadership levels? I did not offer a judgement on whether this was right or wrong as an approach. From a business perspective it seemed eminently practical as discussed previously, minimising potential barriers to change, and potentially preventing paralysis by analysis of endless permutations as each colleague contributed their ideas. On the other hand, was it the right or best approach to take for a business that ostensibly prioritises the happiness and engagement of its employees? At the time, Principle 1 of the organisation, enshrined in its founding constitution, stated:

"The organisation's ultimate purpose is the happiness of all its members, through their worthwhile and satisfying employment in a successful business. Because the organisation is owned in trust for its members, they share the responsibilities of ownership as well as its rewards – profit, knowledge and power."

This research was unable to pass judgement or reach a definitive conclusion on those difficult questions, so they were parked for the organisation's internal consideration. What this research could say was, that through the change processes witnessed and experienced that have run in parallel, there was evidence suggesting the organisation did adopt an approach to implementing change that borrowed from both AR and AI. Recognition of this realisation, that there was broadly a cultural acceptance of a blended approach within the business, provided insight and a new lease of life to this research. Beyond the academic world, this was a demonstration of organisational pragmatism, to craft an approach to change that selectively curated activities from different models in a way that worked for it. I consider the importance of this pragmatic approach in the final chapter of this thesis.

13. Conclusions

The title of this thesis positioned the research as a case study in pragmatic inquiry. As I reflected on the conclusions that could be drawn from the experience, undoubtedly, I would do things differently if I were to do them again. It was also likely that another researcher in the same position would have conducted the research in a different way, drawing on their experience to use different tools and techniques to achieve its purpose. This recognised three fundamental aspects of this research that have been a golden thread throughout.

First was the philosophy of pragmatism that provided a paradigmatic umbrella for the research. Putnam's perspective that the agent's point of view was correct regardless of outside arguments (1987, cited in Bacon, 2012) anchored the research in the attitudes and expressed behaviours of the participants. Second was, as Bacon described, the "primacy of the practical" (Bacon 2012, page 199) and the colloquial understanding of being pragmatic throughout the research. Adopting concepts such as 'bricolage' (Rogers, 2012) enabled progress in the face of barriers. Being pragmatic meant adopting a flexible and adaptive approach to inquiry that fit the context of practitioner-led research that carried an objective to achieve real world impact.

Third was Schön's 'professional knowledge' (2016) which counted the participants' own experience as the primary way of understanding the landscape in which the change occurred. Professional knowledge enabled rapid interpretation of results and complemented the philosophical and practical application of pragmatism. Combined, these three elements improved responsiveness to a complex and ever-changing environment. Chapters 5 and 12 covered a range of significant changes that happened in parallel to this research, each with their own impact on the participants and the research purpose. Brown et al.'s 'wicked problems' (2010) suggest these were an inevitable fact of life when attempting real world change, and therefore adopting a pragmatic inquiry approach appeared a logical solution, and one that demonstrated its effectiveness in the context of this research.

Below I summaries how these aspects of the research contributed to a robust inquiry, achieving the research purpose, and ultimately manifesting a significant contribution to the field of organisational change. There were lessons applicable on a broad basis to anyone pursuing inquiry with a practical application, and lessons that were more specific to those considering a similar methodology, or a similar contextual application.

Lessons of this Research

Throughout this research, there were many examples of pragmatic decision making in pursuit of the business outcomes. This was in conjunction with using the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005) as a vehicle to conduct this research with a blended approach to change. The sections below explore some of the key reflections that came out of those decision points, the use of the model, and the implications for future researchers.

Cultural Acceptance of Appreciative Change

I have discussed a few times in this thesis that there was a 'change vanguard' (Kelmen 2005) who wanted to challenge the status quo. It was the 'change vanguard' who volunteered in cycle 1 to become SPCs, and it was a different 'change vanguard' that inspired and drove the initiatives through cycles 4 and 5. This demonstrated from the beginning of the research that there was support for improvements in sustainable procurement and was an indicator of the natural barriers to change that

regularly occur in most change programmes. In the case of this research, the most significant of these cultural barriers was participants' lack of receptiveness to opportunity-orientated change, echoing findings from Dhingra and Punia (2016).

Procurement colleagues were used to traditional change approaches that identified an issue and sought to fix it, rather than identifying strengths and opportunities and then seeking to capitalise upon them. The Culture Web (Johnson et al., 2005) provides a framework to describe the barriers faced. In their model, the cultural paradigm of the participant group was formed by the coalescence of 6 elements almost all of which were acting against this research in the early cycles:

Power structures – The PLT played little active role in the change process, with none volunteering to be SPCs or participants in later cycles. The evidence from cycle 2 demonstrated that some members of the PLT did not agree with or understand the need for change.
Organisational structures – The participants came from across the department and represented many, though not all, of the teams within the function. However, on a day-to-day basis they were not used to working together as there was rarely a need for direct collaboration within the function (procurement was an outward facing function that supports stakeholders in the business). The functional restructure during the research also added confusion and competing priorities for the participants.
Control systems – In a chicken or egg situation, the PLT wanted to see business cases for change before committing, while the participants wanted to know there was commitment from the PLT otherwise the perception was that their work would be abortive. Later cycles, adopting pragmatic decision-making, enabled activities that did not have a budgetary impact and therefore comparatively minimal control system oversight before implementation.
Rituals & routines – Early in the research, there were no indicators from PLT that sustainable procurement was a priority. This was reinforced by the directive from the Executive Director, Finance that savings were the priority. The publication of the E&S strategy then provided a competing narrative.
Stories – Many of the participants could share stories about previous extra-curricular change activities that had been started at the request of PLT but had fallen on deaf ears. The most common root causes referenced were that PLT had only sanctioned working groups on topics because they felt it was expected of them, with no intention of implementing any change, or alternatively that the PLT had already determined what actions they were going to take and therefore the work of any volunteers was superfluous.
Symbols – Externally, the espoused values of the organisation would seem to align with sustainable procurement being a priority. However, colleagues in the procurement function were consistently aware of sustainability initiatives and announcements that only looked at GFR and not the GNFR requirements. The feeling of being constantly forgotten and excluded from published commitments was a weight on GNFR.

This experience highlighted a need for future change programmes to carefully assess the suitability of such an approach. The initial phase of the change process could be used to assess the readiness of the participants to work appreciatively, and if participants are not culturally ready, then some form of briefing or training can be provided so that they are able to maximise its utility. In support of a blended approach such as Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005), if communicated effectively it may support building an understanding of appreciative change as it embraces elements that participants may find familiar rather than a purist AI where the participants may be faced with an unfamiliar change process. Emphasising the action planning and evaluative elements while articulating the cyclical opportunities

to continually build on previous change work draws parallels with widely recognised continuous improvement approaches such as six sigma (Dedhia, 2005). Alternatively, one could capitalise on behavioural psychology research and consider utilising the initial phase of change to condition participants. Through conditioning, participants would become more accustomed to appreciative approaches, enabling smoother adoption of, or active engagement with, appreciative change. Thaler and Sunstein (2009) call such an approach 'priming', Gates (2016) refers to it in the context of a negotiation as 'sow the seed early' and, Cialdini (2007) explains the power of 'conditioning and association' in getting people ready to accept positions or concepts. In the case of instigating appreciative change, this could manifest as the change agent running an individual strengths-based exercise with known or potential participants. This could use any one of many psychological tests or self-assessments (such as Strengthsfinder, 16personalities, Myers Briggs, DISC, etc.) to put participants into a strengths-based mindset. By conducting an exercise which explores a familiar subject (themselves), participants have an opportunity to practice opportunity-orientated thinking in a relative comfort zone before being asked to determine strengths in the context of intended change (a department, business unit, organisation, community, etc.). This should result in faster adoption and deeper insight which would have been of benefit to the change conducted through this research. There is a slow but growing movement towards strengths-based change at an individual level in organisations (Burkus, 2011, Aguinis et al., 2012, and Kosine et al., 2012). This may suggest that future researchers find cultural acceptance of opportunity-oriented change an easier 'sell' as participants become more familiar with positive development processes.

Professional Reflection

In the proposed Appreciative Action Research Model from Egan and Lancaster (2005), at the end of each cycle there is an Evaluation phase where participants consider whether the initiative should be continued (Adoption) or abandoned (Separation). The evaluation was a key inclusion from traditional AR change approaches (Cunningham, 1976) into the blended model, and it also fed into subsequent cycles of change. Schön (2016) argued that professionals make decisions based on their professional judgment. These decisions may appear to be someone 'following their gut' but in practice these are the combined experiences of that professional being accessed to inform action. This can be done in a reflective manner, considering what has happened to aid personal development and inform future decisions. Schön argues that professionals, with sufficient experience, can decrease the timespan between activity and reflection to such an extent that they can "reflect-in-action" – that is, consider their actions in the heat of the moment and draw on their cumulative experience to inform their decisions in the present. Accepting this principle, that professionals have an ability to dynamically apply their knowledge and experience, an appreciative approach to change would need to consider reflection throughout the cycle, rather than just at the end. Creating a visualisation of this would be tricky without drawing feedback loops along with every phase of the cycle. As an alternative, any model of change should be positioned as a flexible model, with professional reflection underpinning the entire process, enabling practitioners to adapt their approach based on their lived experience, echoing a pragmatist paradigm. This access to, and utilisation of, professional knowledge was one of the key threads throughout the research.

Pre-existing Artefacts

The basis of Egan and Lancaster's model (2005) is to establish the purpose for change as part of the cycle, done through the early phases (see Figure 13.1). The experience of this research was that even with different participant groups, it was not easy to agree a vision of change that could be committed to. What did work, however, was utilising existing artefacts that had been created outside of that cycle

of change. The strengths of the procurement function established through cycle 2, and the E&S strategy published separately from this research, provided the basis of change through the later cycles. The strategy established a compelling vision that held positional power for the participants with it being organisation-wide rather than a locally derived plan. This provided clarity of ownership and responsibility for participants, necessary to unblock decision making processes (Rogers and Blenko, 2006) and to circumvent the impediments presented in cycle 1 with a lack of empowerment of the participants to develop their own vision. The strengths established through debate in cycle 2 were recognisable by participants in all cycles and provided a framework against which change initiatives could be crafted for success. These represented pragmatic decision points in the research, where the future activity was defined by necessary activity to maintain progress towards the objectives.

There are benefits to taking this pragmatic approach. Besides unblocking barriers to progress, by utilising pre-existing artefacts participants and researchers can accelerate subsequent cycles. Accelerating to the Design phase would help to maintain engagement, and potentially increase it as experienced through this research. Cycle 4 had only a small number of initiatives from a small participant group, but the impact of those initiatives encouraged more engagement in cycle 5 who saw the opportunity to get involved. In addition to the benefits, accelerating the subsequent cycles would help to avoid significant negative side effects of longer change cycles. The longer the change programme continues, particularly without indication of achievement, the more susceptible participants and stakeholders will be to change fatigue (Bernerth et al., 2011). Change fatigue carries negative impacts, including excessive presenteeism (Simpson, 1998) which can manifest disadvantages for different stakeholder groups.

The implications of this experience for AAR may be to extract these steps from the cycle visualisation to represent them as one-off or periodic rather than something to be reviewed and reconstructed with every cycle. There would need to be the adoption of the professional reflection principle for these stages as well to ensure their continued relevance however if the pace of change is like this research, then it is unlikely that they will need to alter during the change process.

Context of Change

Brown et al. (2010) argued that 'wicked problems' such as tackling sustainability are difficult because of the inherent challenges in defining all the forces and variables that could impact the activity. This can lead to unintended consequences that can either enhance or erode the value of the change initiatives. The central tenet, and one that is a lived experience of this research, is that change does not happen in a vacuum. Lewin's simple model of change – Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze (Lewin, 1947, cited in Bakari et al., 2017) – is widely known in professional practice and management studies. However, it is an example of the oversimplification of organisational change. It does not capture the evolving landscape and it epitomises the challenge of articulating an effective model of change in an environment that is in constant flux.

In chapters 1 and 2, I covered the many unique contextual aspects of this research, and in chapters 5 and 12, the unique challenges it faced. Reflecting on the lessons learned necessitates consideration of those factors and whether those lessons might be applicable in other situations. Starting with the micro-level factors, this research was conducted in a GNFR procurement function, a common function in many organisations with an objective either skewed towards bottom-line savings or taking a broad view of the value that the function can add which wraps in risk mitigation and even driving top-line growth. One of the experiences during this research was the clear message coming from the CFO to

prioritise savings. Given the impact that taking this position had on this research, it is reasonable to believe that change in other procurement functions will need to consider the prioritisation of that function and its definition of value (narrow or broad). This may be influenced by the organisational context, such as the financial stability of the company, the relative degree of competition that the organisation faces, and other external factors. It is also worth noting that change efforts over time can have greater exposure to varying priorities. The prioritisation of cost-out savings came part way through this research. Similarly, Kelman (2005) found that a considerable proportion of the change initiatives that he had initiated in US Government procurement were stopped or reversed over time because of changes in political leadership and priorities.

Zooming out a little takes us to the organisation as an employee-owned company. This means that there are no external shareholders and no listed shares. In theory, being employee-owned should enable the organisation to take a longer-term perspective into its decision-making (The Employee Ownership Association 2018) rather than having to prioritise short-term returns to investors. There is evidence of that being the case in this organisation as prudent financial decisions over many years meant that they entered the Covid-19 pandemic with significant cash reserves compared to many of their competitors, and that supported the organisation in weathering the impact of the pandemic when many rivals failed (John Lewis Partnership, 2021a). At the same time, the organisation's employee-ownership model was complemented by an embedded democratic structure. Cemented within the organisation's constitution (John Lewis Partnership, 2021b), democracy holds all senior managers to account, and the Council (the top democratic authority) has the power to remove the Chairman if they wish. With this structure and culture of empowerment, and ability to take long-term decisions, one would assume that the organisation which also maintained a brand reputation for high ethical standards, would be able to keep sustainable procurement within its top priorities. However, this proved not to be the case. This may have been for valid reasons: a hyper competitive retail industry; the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; and the impact of Brexit and other challenges on supply chains, to name but a few potentially noteworthy events that occurred in parallel to this research. The implication though is that espoused values may not be present or may have a different interpretation or prioritisation which can impact a change programme.

Scaling out further to the macro-environment, there was a significant amount of activity happening around the organisation that influenced this research. Embracing Brown et al.'s concept of 'wicked problems' (2010), in the current research, there were positive changes happening, such as the E&S team being formed by the organisation-wide restructure and then developing their strategy, enabling rapid change initiatives to be developed and deployed through later cycles. Equally negative impacts came from events like Covid-19 which had a demonstrably negative effect on perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable procurement.

The implications of these contextual challenges were similar to previous points and reinforce the need for a pragmatic approach to inquiry. Dealing with a rapidly changing landscape, and maintaining an appreciative approach to change, emphasises the case for adopting bricolage into the change model. Seizing the opportunities in front of you rather than being wed to initiatives or a particular process facilitates delivery of business outcomes. The ability to adapt the change process with greater agility and flexibility than a dogmatic approach, enables researchers and practitioners to more effectively deal with the reality of the world in which they are attempting change.

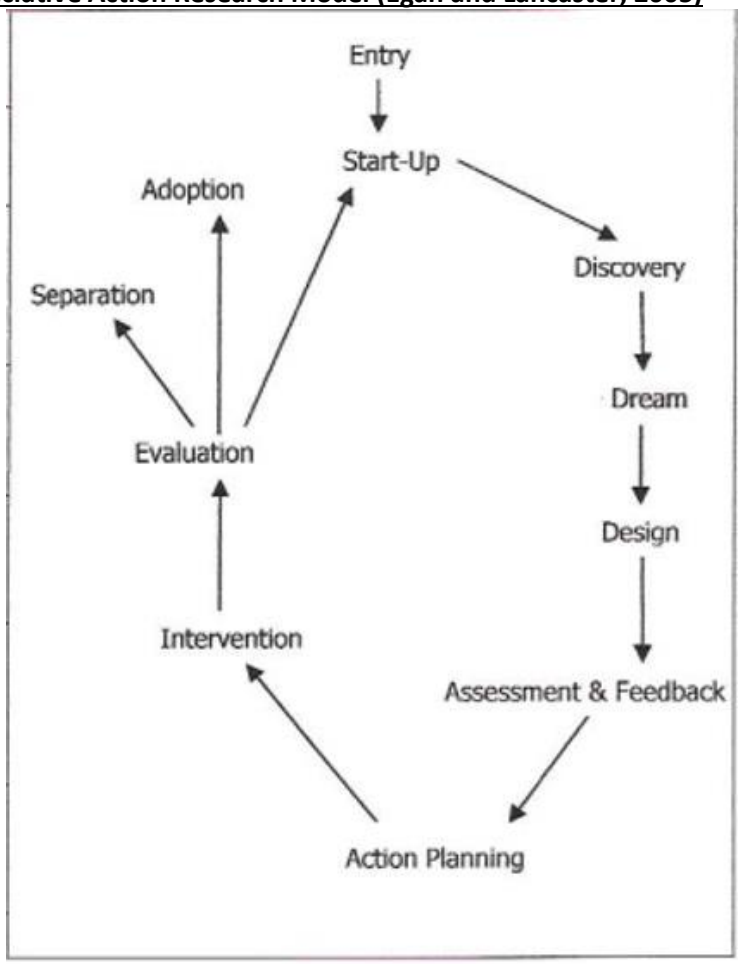
Considering Argyris and Schön's 'reflective transfer' (1996), the critical learning and reapplication of knowledge in new settings, suggested a critique of the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005) was in

order. Based on the experience of this research, there was an opportunity to suggest adaptations that would better visualise the model as a tool for pragmatic inquiry.

How Could a Blended Model Look?

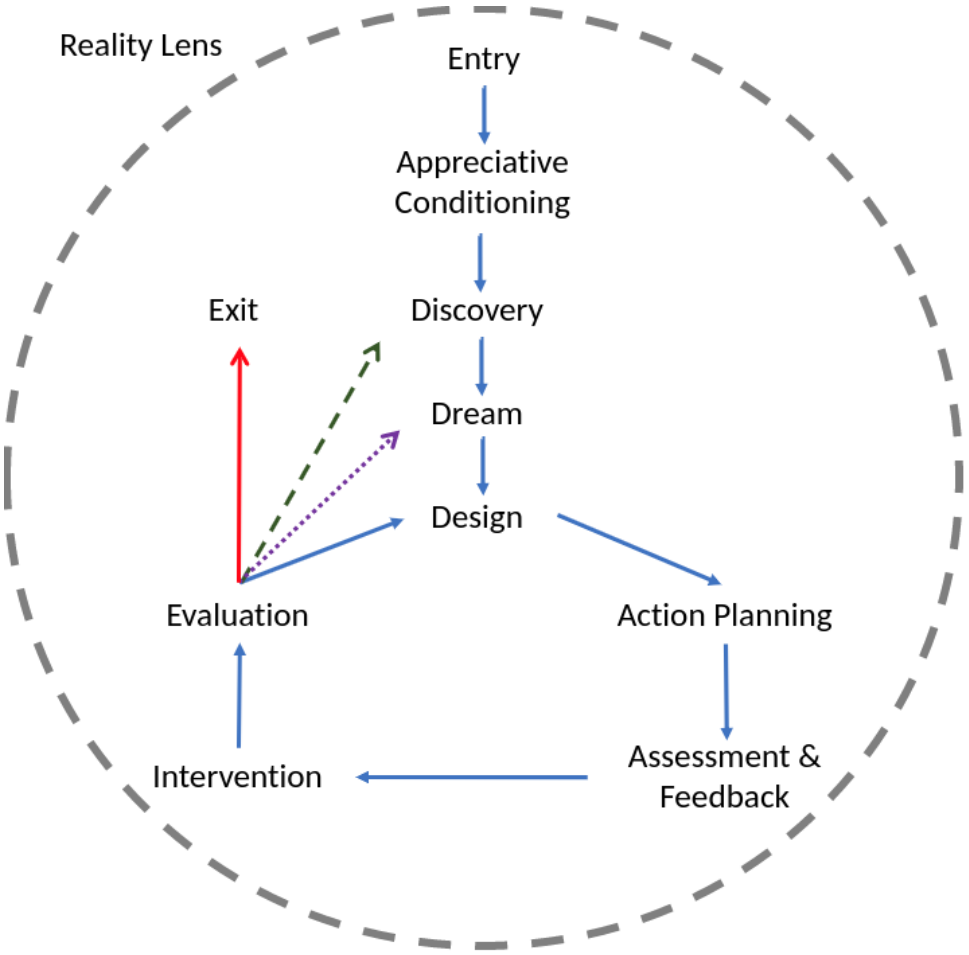
No model can be perfect. They are built at a point in time and tested in specific scenarios. I have discussed previously that models, such as Lewin's Unfreeze > Change > Refreeze (Lewin, 1947, cited in Bakari et al., 2017), are an oversimplification of what Brown et al. (2010) describe as the "distillation of interdependencies" that is a complex problem. This relationship with time not only raises challenges for the applicability of any learning elsewhere, but on measures of success. Kelman (2005) acknowledged that a lot of the reforms and changes that he implemented in US Government procurement were reversed or superseded over time, not least because of changes in political leadership. That said, the experience of this research suggests some adaptations of Egan and Lancaster's AAR model could make it more effective at delivering organisational change. Figure 13.1 provides Egan and Lancaster's (2005) model as a reference point for the reader and was the starting point for this research.

Figure 13.1 - Appreciative Action Research Model (Egan and Lancaster, 2005)



Overlaying the three aspects of this research described earlier in this chapter (pragmatism research paradigm, application of pragmatic decision-making, and respecting the professional knowledge of the researcher and participants) produces a visually different model. Figure 13.2 visualises Egan and Lancaster's (2005) model, adapted for pragmatic research.

Figure 13.2 - Appreciative Action Research model (Egan and Lancaster, 2005) adapted for Pragmatic Research



As Figure 13.2 shows, most of the major steps in the model remain the same and carry the same intent and meaning as proposed by Egan and Lancaster (2005). The 'Start-Up' phase has been replaced with an 'Appreciative Conditioning' phase to better reflect the need to assess the cultural readiness of participants to engage in appreciative change as discussed previously. There is a clear exit from the cycle of change which is likely only to be used if the change programme no longer has relevance and a completely new programme is needed to engage stakeholders in the next priority. The adapted model also removes the evaluation options of 'Adoption' and 'Separation,' instead believing them to be inherent outcomes from the Evaluation phase and therefore unnecessary to display, particularly as Egan and Lancaster's original visualisation (Figure 13.1) suggests that while the cycle starts again, only the experience contributes to subsequent cycles rather than the change intervention itself. Having 'Adoption' and 'Separation' disconnected from subsequent cycles presents those stages either as outcomes (a different meaning to other stages of the model) or that the changes themselves do not contribute to, or form the foundation of, future change. The contrary was demonstrated multiple times in this research that the outputs of one cycle fed into or influenced following cycles, such as the strengths developed in cycle 2, or the increased awareness of sustainable procurement achieved through cycle 4 which led to increased engagement and participation in cycle 5.

Those changes above are not specifically linked to pragmatic research but based on the experience of this research are beneficial adaptations to the model. To better reflect pragmatic research using this blended approach, there are two visual changes. First, the structure of the cycle has been adjusted to reflect the potential to continue to utilise artefacts conceived in previous Discovery and Dream stages, rather than renewing them with every cycle. This represents a pragmatic decision-making requirement based on relevance and fit-for-purpose of the existing artefacts. In the case of this research, the E&S strategy and the functional strengths identified through cycle 2, maintained their relevance through the remainder of the research and therefore it would have likely been counterproductive to refresh those for each subsequent cycle. However, if this research had been conducted over a longer period, for example an additional 3 years, the identified strengths likely would need reviewing to ensure their continued relevance given the staff turnover the department would have seen. In that instance, the visualisation in Figure 13.2 shows the option of returning to the Discovery phase.

The second change to the model is the dotted circle around the model to represent the 'Reality Lens' that must be applied. This incorporates the pragmatism philosophy into the model itself. I appreciate other researchers may prefer to keep the model paradigmatically agnostic. However, in the application of the model to the real world of organisational change, where practical outcome is primary over development of theory, the experience of this research is that the pragmatism philosophy is appropriate for the AAR model. The model itself includes a 'Discovery' phase that utilises the core concept from AI of appreciative interviews with system-wide participant groups to get their input and feedback on the existing strengths and opportunities. The model is cyclical, suggesting a regular review of this discovery to ensure it has not shifted to the detriment of subsequent change cycles. The 'Discovery' phase therefore imposes a research paradigm on the use of the model, with the 'Reality Lens' clearly articulating that perspective, incorporating the interpretation of reality from the researcher, participants, and other stakeholder groups as all have an impact on the change process. The 'Reality Lens' is shown as a dotted line to represent the inevitable flux that will be experienced throughout the change process. In an organisational setting, as experienced in this research, other factors potentially outside of the control of the research will influence the context in which the change must be delivered. This could be competitor activity, macro-economic shifts, or other changes like staff turnover. Organisational change does not happen in a vacuum and therefore should be reflected in any visualisation of the change process to ensure participants are aware.

The proposed adaptations in Figure 13.2 were developed in separate ways. In chapters 6 and 7, I shared the frustration that progress was difficult to achieve with the participants being unfamiliar with working in an appreciative, opportunity-oriented way. These experiences crafted the idea of utilising the 'start-up' phase from Egan and Lancaster's original AAR model (2005) as an opportunity to conduct appreciative conditioning, to prepare participants for working in a way that aligned with the ambition of the change programme. Similarly, the adaptation to utilise pre-existing artefacts and to not revisit the 'Discovery' or 'Dream' phases was born out of pragmatic decision-making. In chapters 6 and 7, participants struggled to define and stick to a vision for the change. During cycle 2 (chapter 7), the E&S strategy was developed, and this provided a solution to the problem. Being a long-term strategy, there was no longer the need to reconsider it with each change cycle, and it provided the guidance necessary for the remaining cycles as tested through chapters 8, 9, and 10. In contrast, the representation of the research paradigm in the model was only developed through reflection during writing up this thesis. As I was exploring the research paradigm that I used (chapter 2), I realised the connection between the AAR model and a pragmatist philosophy. Not only did a blended AI / AR model represent pragmatic decision-making (utilising the best of both approaches), but the model was also anchored in the

interpretations of the participants making it inextricably linked, resulting in the 'Reality Lens' visualised in Figure 13.2 to demonstrate the experience of this research.

Reflections on a blended cyclical approach to pragmatic inquiry

A pragmatic approach to inquiry is not new. Salem and Shields (2010) considered pragmatic inquiry as a potential solution to address challenges in public administration. They particularly noted the 'autocatalytic' nature of reflection as it steers researchers and practitioners towards the next action. This perspective would seem to endorse pragmatic inquiry utilising a cyclical model of change such as the adapted AAR model suggested in Figure 13.2. The cycles of change provide that opportunity for the 'autocatalytic' feedback to inform and guide iterative activity, and further supports removing the 'Adoption' and 'Separation' stages of the original Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005).

Metcalfe (2008) had a curious definition of pragmatic inquiry, putting it as "beyond the boundaries of scientific inquiry, but before the irrational, the astrologers, the manipulative, and the insane" (Ibid, page 1091). Rather than leave the notion of pragmatic inquiry holding such lowly company, Metcalfe proposed five principles by which inquiry should be informed by pragmatism. In these, Metcalfe referred to the core challenge or subject of the inquiry as the 'conundrum.'

Table 13.1 - Metcalfe's Principles of Pragmatic Inquiry (2008)

Ref	Principle
1	Assume each community of stakeholders use different prior experiences to interpret physical events
2	Identify a dialectic of useful concepts
3	Operationalise concepts into conjectured ideas or solutions
4	Trial conjectured ideas, use these to act on the conundrum, then carefully note what happens
5	Reflect on the consequences of the acting on the conundrum

Principle 1 in Table 13.1 is the pragmatist philosophy put into practice. With participants and stakeholders in the change process constantly renegotiating their perspectives based on an ever-changing world, the necessity of principle 1 is supported by the experience of this research and represented in Figure 13.2 with the 'Reality Lens'. On the other hand, principle 2 is less certain. In the case of this research, the Discovery phase led to the discussion and agreement on key strengths held by the procurement department. At a superficial level, this would appear to support Metcalfe's second principle, however it does not necessarily present the full picture. There is alignment with the approach taken through this research which maintained the same strengths through cycles 3, 4, and 5. Using Metcalfe's language, the concepts developed in cycle 2 maintained their usefulness through the rest of the cycles. Contrarily, Metcalfe did not recognise a cyclical style of inquiry and therefore determining principle 2 could potentially be split into two separate activities. First determining concepts through discussion, and second to determine the utility of those concepts. The evaluation phase pictured in Figure 13.2 would consider the ongoing utility of those concepts after each cycle, without forcing participants through the full phase again. The experience of this research demonstrated that pragmatic use of pre-existing artefacts was an enabler of change, therefore adjusting Metcalfe's principles to accommodate such considerations would be reasonable. Principles 3 and 4 move into the Action Planning and Intervention phases of the blended model though

seemingly Egan and Lancaster's model is articulated with more certainty than simply trialling ideas. The essence though of the steps are the same. Finally, Metcalfe's principle 5, like principles 3 and 4, is directly reflected in the blended model through the Evaluation phase.

The alignment between Metcalfe's principles of pragmatic inquiry and the adapted model of Egan and Lancaster's AAR is significant. Arguably, the adapted model in Figure 13.2 provides a more pragmatic approach to pragmatic inquiry than Metcalfe's principles, in that it provides a clearer guide for researchers and participants to follow to achieve change. While I could not find writers who had considered pragmatic inquiry from a blended AR / AI perspective, writers such as Johansson and Lindhult (2008) have considered pragmatic AR compared to traditional methods. In their view pragmatic AR makes four critical choices that inform the methodology and methods of inquiry.

First is that pragmatic AR seeks an integration between the research and the action in practice. This maintains a degree of rigour in the inquiry that stops it veering into the 'irrational' realm as Metcalfe put it (Metcalfe, 2008) while still having appropriate focus on the ability to implement the outputs of the inquiry. This research is bias in this respect as, from the beginning, it has had a clear objective to have tangible impact for the organisation and to improve sustainable procurement behaviours and outcomes. That intention aside, Johansson and Lindhult's (2008) observation would suggest that pragmatic inquiry is the appropriate approach where a real-world outcome is desired, and that is supported by the experience of this research which, without pragmatism, would not have achieved what it did.

Second for Johansson and Lindhult (2008) was that pragmatic AR has experimentation as a core activity. This aligns with Metcalfe's principle 4 (2008) to trial ideas and with the experience of this research which sought change initiatives of different scale and focus, with cycle 5 implementing a raft of disparate activities in pursuit of the research purpose. None of the initiatives in cycle 5 could be definitively targeted as the one initiative that would achieve the sought-after change, but all were believed to be able to contribute towards it and all were implemented in the experiment to find out if indeed they would.

The third critical choice for Johansson and Lindhult (2008) was that pragmatic AR holds a legitimate responsibility for action, meaning that it is necessary for action to be taken towards to goals of the inquiry, otherwise it could not be considered pragmatic AR. This also juxtaposes with the traditional inquiry methods where theory and conjecture based on observation can be sufficient. It was an obvious choice for this research to hold an action-bias, as it actively set out to implement initiatives that would deliver change. The methodology chosen for the research was less related to this specific critical choice of Johansson and Lindhult (2008), suggesting that while it may be necessary for inquiry to be defined as pragmatic AR, it certainly does not mean that all inquiry looking to take tangible actions would be considered pragmatic AR.

Johansson and Lindhult's (2008) final critical choice was that pragmatic AR seeks to develop experiential and practical tools as a contribution to knowledge. They suggest that conceptual tools could also be an outcome but that they are based on real-world experiences through the inquiry rather than traditional conceptual models developed through observation alone. In the academic sense, a structured approach to change such as the adapted model in Figure 13.2 enables the rigour to develop reliable and transferrable knowledge. In a practical sense, the structure is potentially less important, however the rigour it brings could support Argyris and Schön's 'reflective transfer' (1996) and the enablement of learning at the organisational level.

In the experience of this research, where both Metcalfe's, and Johansson and Lindhult's ideas for the application of pragmatic research fall short is that their views of pragmatism are centred on the research itself rather than the context of the research. When this research encountered unassailable barriers, operationalising and trialling concepts (Metcalfe, 2008) or holding an action-bias (Johansson and Lindhult, 2008) did not, or would not have, yielded progress. In cycle 1, where Covid-19 disrupted the normal operation of business, not to mention this research, experimenting with other activities simply was not an option. Instead, pausing the research was the most pragmatic decision to take as half of the SPCs were furloughed and it enabled the remainder to focus on their day-to-day responsibilities. Similarly in cycle 2 when the PLT were unable or unwilling to determine a vision for the change, Metcalfe, and Johansson and Lindhult would have positioned pivoting or carrying on regardless. How they position their work focuses on a narrow perspective of pragmatism centred on the research itself. Instead, in cycle 2, and for future cycles, the most pragmatic approach was to utilise an alternative strategy developed by the E&S team. The limitations therefore of Metcalfe (2008) and Johansson and Lindhult (2008), as they articulate their ideas, is that the application of pragmatism is constrained to the inquiry itself. Instead, as was the experience throughout this research, pragmatic research needs to consider the broader context at both micro and macro levels, and to accommodate as much of that shifting landscape as possible in its decision-making.

The vehicle for structuring the change can also be debated. This research began with Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005) and, through pragmatic decision-making, adapted it to suit the needs of the research. Other models of change seem to adapt over time as well. Kotter's 8-step model of change (Kotter, 1996) is a prime example. Despite arguably not being based on much empirical evidence or independent testing (Guimaraes and Armstrong, 1998, Appelbaum et al., 2012), it is an internationally recognised model for organisational change. Todnem By (2005) and Kotter himself (Kotter et al., 2021) adapt the original model in recognition of the rapid pace of change in the external environment and the need to evolve to stay effective. The original model shares several hallmarks with AR, but the developments from Todnem By (2005) and Kotter et al. (2021) introduce AI elements. This adds weight to the pragmatic approach being one that blends AR and AI.

Considering the perspectives on pragmatism applied to the change process, as Johansson and Lindhult, Salem and Shields, and Metcalfe have all proposed, and Todnem By's (2005) and Kotter et al.'s (2021) adaptation of practical models, the experience of this research supports the argument for utilising a blended AR / AI approach to change to deliver real world outcomes. Egan and Lancaster's AAR model (2005) provides a useful vehicle for this, however the adaptations visualised in Figure 13.2 improve the efficacy of the blended approach for pragmatic inquiry, improving both the utility of the approach and the impact of the outcomes.

My Contribution to Organisational Change

I set out on this research journey with a clear purpose, to contribute to the field of organisational change (see chapter 1). That purpose, and the associated objectives, envisioned a tangible output and, to an extent, that is achieved through the above proposed adaptation to the Egan and Lancaster AAR model (2005). However, the adapted model is only a visualisation of the core contribution that this research makes. The journey of this research, in exploring pragmatic inquiry in the unique contextual setting, is the true contribution.

This thesis articulates an evolving process of adaptation and determination to achieve positive change on behalf of the organisation. Utilising the adapted AAR model as a flexible structure for cyclical change, this research had to contend with variables beyond its control as discussed throughout. The efficacy of the pragmatic research paradigm, coupled with a pragmatic approach to execution, enabled sustainable procurement to remain relevant despite many events that could have risked it becoming obsolete or simply forgotten. This research, therefore, is a testament to practitioner-based inquiry that seeks to achieve change in the real world, as blighted by unpredictability as it is. While the adapted model may provide a structure for future researchers, it is the pragmatic approach that is the valuable contribution, and below I set that against key tests of the validity of research to understand its applicability and limitations for future researchers and practitioners.

Applicability & Limitations

Brown et al. (2010) articulated three factors that could serve to limit the applicability of this research for others. First, there is 'plurality;' that I as the researcher bring my own history and culture to the research. This influences my interpretation of situations, interactions, processes, and outcomes. In chapter 1 and 2, I set out the pragmatism research paradigm that this inquiry has situated itself within. This embraces plurality as a defining characteristic, accepting that the truth of the inquiry is constantly being renegotiated by the participants as they experience both the inquiry itself and the world around them. I have brought my own interpretations to this research, in the methodology and methods chosen, in the techniques employed to conduct it, and in the interpretation of the results. Building on Schön's 'professional knowledge' (2016), a different researcher would utilise their experiences and may 'reflect-in-action' as I did but reached a different conclusion. Rather than manage or minimise plurality, the pragmatic nature of this approach to inquiry welcomes different interpretations as a route to identifying the most effective opportunities to make progress.

Secondly, there is 'partiality;' that I as the researcher can only appreciate part of the reality of the situation that I am in and therefore can only have a partial view of the problem or opportunity. This is a direct reflection of Brown et al.'s 'wicked problems' (2010) where they recognise that it is impossible to comprehend, let alone control, all of the variables that could impact research in a social setting. Using a pragmatic approach to inquiry does not solve this conundrum but offers a mitigation in so far as the researcher may not be able to control any given variable, but if or when it has an implication for their research, they can adapt and continue to make progress. I experienced this first hand during this research, with chapters 5 and 12 setting out a range of challenges that threatened to derail me. However, in utilising a pragmatic inquiry approach that blended AR and AI, I was able to find the opportunities in the problems that were faced and was able to continue to make progress. The analysis in chapter 11 demonstrates the success achieved on behalf of the business in improving sustainable procurement attitudes and behaviours, and through this chapter I have articulated the contribution this experience has created for the field of organisational change.

Brown et al.'s (2010) third factor was 'provisionality'; that the validity of the lessons learnt through this research may have an expiration date. The experience of this research was time bound by the environment at both micro and macro level, and therefore running the same research again, using the same approach, could yield different conclusions. This is because time has moved on, participants have changed, the contextual landscape has shifted. My conclusions could be superseded by myself or other researchers seeking insight into pragmatic inquiry or blended AR and AI approaches to change. This suggests that the change experience, working with the participants in this research, the interpretation of available data, and the change initiatives themselves are all likely to have limited

validity for future researchers though could still stand as examples for consideration. In contrast, the core academic and practical elements of pragmatic inquiry utilising a blend of AR and AI could remain valid. The conditions required for these elements to be successful are not specifically linked to the organisational and environmental contexts of this research. If the situation in which future researchers wish to implement change is dynamic, where not all variables can be controlled, and is intended to be achieved over an extended period, pragmatic inquiry is likely to be beneficial. Where the social context of the change relies on participates collaborating to deliver
change, and where the existing culture already embraces, or at least is open to, opportunity-orientated approaches, a blended AR / AI model could be successful.

Considering Brown et al.'s factors (2010), this thesis has the potential to apply in a broad range of contexts. The contribution is robust and enlightening, based on hard fought practical experience of delivering change in a complex and shifting landscape. This experience is reflective of the realities of modern organisations, noted by Kotter et al. (2021), that the macro environment is shifting faster than ever, and organisations are struggling to keep up. Pragmatic inquiry provides one possible solution.

My Personal Experience

Throughout my career, I have been involved with departmental and business wide restructures, mergers and acquisitions, large scale investment programmes and small-scale incremental improvement initiatives. I have been involved in both proactive and reactive changes. I have been part of designated change programmes and change on the side as an extracurricular activity on top of the day job. This research process has given me a new language with which to reflect on the changes I have been part of previously. Across different organisations, in very different sectors of the UK economy, I have seen change be successful and change that has failed. Reflecting back, the change that has been successful, that has achieved its stated objectives, has adopted a pragmatic approach that enabled it to achieve despite challenges. In contrast, the change that has been unsuccessful largely adopted dogmatic approaches, ones that would carry on regardless because that was what the project plan said, or that was the action that had been agreed upon by a steering group some months prior. These dogmatic change programmes faltered as the context in which their change was happening shifted to a new and unfamiliar landscape, and they failed to keep up. This manifested as changes in personnel, changes in leadership priorities, changes in competitor and market behaviour, or changes in the macro-economic environment.

Dave Brailsford was famous for his strategy to turn around the British Cycling team from one of mediocrity to the most successful in the sport's history using his principles of the "aggregation of marginal gains" (Clear, 2018). A pragmatic inquiry in a practical setting would benefit from adopting Brailsford's perspective. It sets a realistically low expectation of the scale of change, in that change does not have to be on a grand, transformative scale to have validity. Arguably, there may be no such thing as transformational change, only micro-changes that aggregate to large scale shifts that can only be anticipated beforehand or noticed in hindsight.

Since completing the data gathering phase of this research, I have changed organisations. In the few short months that I have been working in the UK Public Sector, I have successfully applied a pragmatic approach to change utilising a blend of appreciative and problem-orientated methods. It continues to demonstrate applicability and success, where more traditional, dogmatic, approaches to change may find difficulty.

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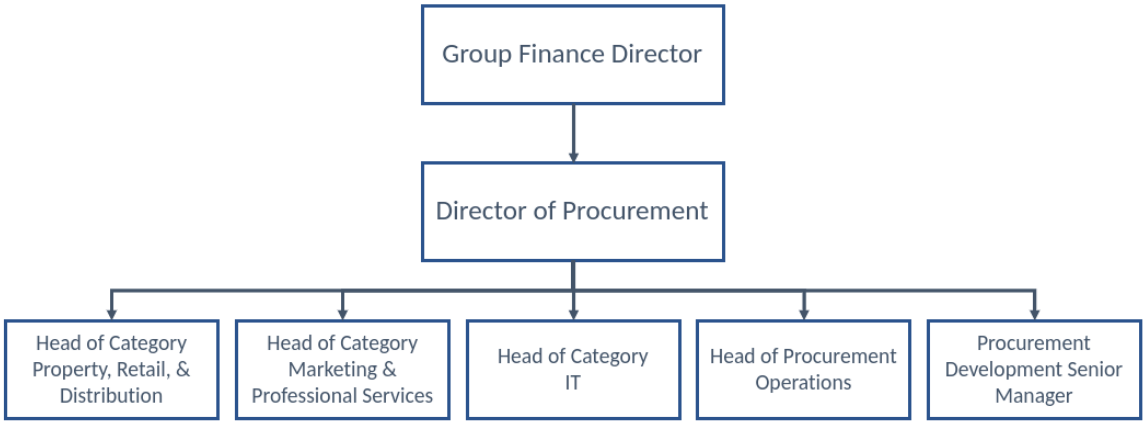
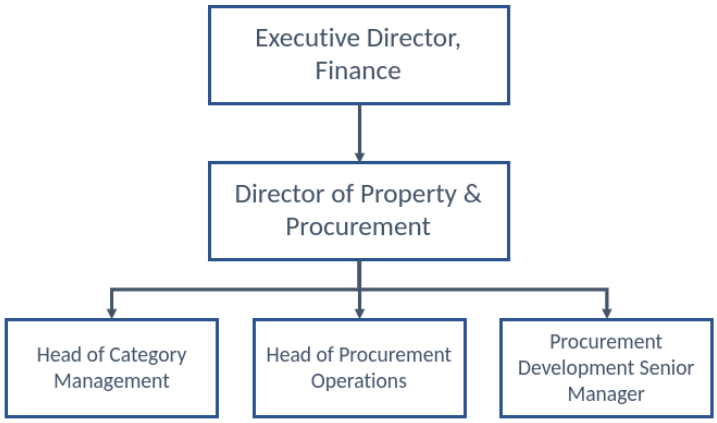
Appendix 1.01 - Procurement Function's Organisational Chart at the start of this research (senior levels only)



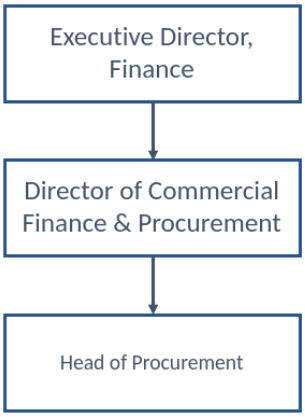
At this stage of the research, the PLT consisted of the Director of Procurement, four Heads of, and a Senior Manager. The Director of Procurement reported directly into the Group Finance Director (CFO equivalent).

Appendix 1.02 - Procurement Function's Organisational Chart at the mid-point of this research (senior levels only)



At this stage of the research, the PLT consisted of the Director of Property & Procurement, two Heads of, and a Senior Manager. The role of Director of Procurement had been made redundant and the responsibilities merged with the existing Director of Property. The newly combined role continued to report directly into the Executive Director, Finance (CFO equivalent – renamed following the organisation-wide restructure discussed in Chapter 12.

Appendix 1.03 - Procurement Function's Organisational Chart at the end of this research (senior levels only)



At this stage of the research, the PLT consisted of the Head of Procurement and a team of Senior Managers below them. The role of Director of Property & Procurement was separated back out and the Procurement responsibilities were merged with the existing Director of Commercial Finance. The newly combined role continued to report directly into the Executive Director, Finance (CFO equivalent).

Appendix 4.01 - Template Project Completion Document from the start of this research

Procurement - Project Completion

Project name:		**Project number**	CF project ID
Category		**Stakeholder/s**	
Sub Category		**Procurement lead**	
Estimated Spend Baseline of Requirement		**SCM/Head of**	
Benefit target (£)			

Project Summary (including key project drivers):

Summarise the project objectives and how this recommendation will deliver them

Supplier selection approach

Describe the supplier selection process and the approach taken to get to the recommendation.

Summarise any formal scores from the process including a commercial overview.

Which supplier is being recommended? Which suppliers were invited to take part and were unsuccessful / why?

Benefits of recommendation

What benefits will this recommendation bring to JLP - both high level financial, operational and technical

What were the findings from the RSQS review? (or insight questions prior to RSQS)

Were any risks identified as part of the Helios review that need to be managed.

List all risks, mitigations and the business owner for each.

CSR considerations:

Describe any steps taken to improve the CSR impact of this project. Use CSR risk assessment document as a reference.

Lease contracts (IFRS 16 change to accounting practise):

Do you think the contract/service contains a lease or implicit lease whereby we are committing to regular payments to a third party over a period of greater than 12 months (or likely to be renewed beyond 12 months)?'

If 'yes', please contact External Financial Reporting and Policy in order to analyse the accounting impacts. For more information regarding the definition of a lease, please refer to the Accounting Policy Manual available on the intranet.

Please confirm that you have considered the above and the outcome.

Financial benefits of choosing this supplier by Division

Division	Benefit (£k)	Non-financial benefit/s	Comments
John Lewis			
Waitrose			
Group			
Total			

Contract overview

Curtis Fitch contract number: _____

Contract summary

Summarise the length of the agreement, any minimum commitments, (or include contract summary sheet as appendix)

Implementation plan (key milestones)

Milestone	Owner	Date

Endorsed by:

Role	Signature	Date
SCM/ Head of/ Director (Delete as applicable)		
Procurement director Sole sourcing >£250k Or spend >£1m		

Appendix 4.02 - Attitudinal Baseline Survey (Internal)

1. Which of the following do you believe constitute “Sustainable Procurement” (tick all that apply)
    a. Environmental impact of sourcing decisions
    b. Working conditions in the supply chain
    c. Managing supply chain risk
    d. Appropriate SLAs to manage operational performance
    e. Ensuring supply chain continuity
    f. Worker rights
    g. Compliance with your company’s policies
    h. Avoiding cost increases / securing budget certainty
    i. Local community engagement
    j. Compliance with GDPR
    k. Charitable support / giving
    l. Delivering cost savings
    m. Running “fair” sourcing processes
    n. Adherence to procurement policies
    o. Working with suppliers that are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
    p. Effective source to contract processes
    q. Other (please specify)

2. How important is Sustainable Procurement to you as a Procurement professional?

3. How much of a priority is Sustainable Procurement to your organisation in your sourcing decisions?

4. In your experience, what is the average weighting that Sustainability factors get in evaluation criteria?
    a. 5% or less
    b. Between 5.1% and 10%
    c. Between 10.1% and 15%
    d. Between 15.1% and 20%
    e. Other (please specify)

5. Without sharing commercial information, can you give any examples of what you would define as a win or an improvement in Sustainable Procurement benefits?

6. What stops you from achieving more in Sustainable Procurement terms in your category / projects / contracts? (Tick all that apply)

a. I don’t have enough time in my category / projects / contracts to get into the sustainability aspects
b. I see Sustainable Procurement as a nice to have as long as the technical and commercial requirements are met
c. My business stakeholders don’t see sustainability as a priority
d. I don’t really understand what good looks like / what could be done in my category / projects / contracts to improve sustainability
e. I don’t have the support of trained colleagues with expertise in sustainability
f. Other (please specify)

7. How many years’ experience do you have in Procurement (your total experience for all organisations you’ve worked for in Procurement roles)?

Appendix 4.03 - Attitudinal Baseline Survey (External)

1. Which of the following do you believe constitute “Sustainable Procurement” (tick all that apply)
    a. Environmental impact of sourcing decisions
    b. Working conditions in the supply chain
    c. Managing supply chain risk
    d. Appropriate SLAs to manage operational performance
    e. Ensuring supply chain continuity
    f. Worker rights
    g. Compliance with your company’s policies
    h. Avoiding cost increases / securing budget certainty
    i. Local community engagement
    j. Compliance with GDPR
    k. Charitable support / giving
    l. Delivering cost savings
    m. Running “fair” sourcing processes
    n. Adherence to procurement policies
    o. Working with suppliers that are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
    p. Effective source to contract processes
    q. Other (please specify)

2. How important is Sustainable Procurement to you as a Procurement professional?

3. How much of a priority is Sustainable Procurement to your organisation in your sourcing decisions?

4. In your experience, what is the average weighting that Sustainability factors get in evaluation criteria?
    a. 5% or less
    b. Between 5.1% and 10%
    c. Between 10.1% and 15%
    d. Between 15.1% and 20%
    e. Other (please specify)

5. Without sharing commercial information, can you give any examples of what you would define as a win or an improvement in Sustainable Procurement benefits?

6. What stops you from achieving more in Sustainable Procurement terms in your category / projects / contracts? (Tick all that apply)

a. I don’t have enough time in my category / projects / contracts to get into the sustainability aspects
b. I see Sustainable Procurement as a nice to have as long as the technical and commercial requirements are met
c. My business stakeholders don’t see sustainability as a priority
d. I don’t really understand what good looks like / what could be done in my category / projects / contracts to improve sustainability
e. I don’t have the support of trained colleagues with expertise in sustainability
f. Other (please specify)

7. How many years’ experience do you have in Procurement (your total experience for all organisations you’ve worked for in Procurement roles)?

8. What industry is your organisation in?

9. How big is the Procurement team / department / function in your organisation?

Appendix 10.01 - Template Project Completion Document from the end of this research

Procurement - Project Completion

Project name:		**Project number**	CF project ID
Category		**Stakeholder/s**	
Sub Category		**Procurement lead**	
Estimated Spend Baseline of Requirement		**SCM/Head of**	
Benefit target (£)			

Project Summary (including key project drivers):

Summarise the project objectives and how this recommendation will deliver them

Supplier selection approach

Describe the supplier selection process and the approach taken to get to the recommendation.

Summarise any formal scores from the process including a commercial overview.

Which supplier is being recommended? Which suppliers were invited to take part and were unsuccessful / why?

Benefits of recommendation

What benefits will this recommendation bring to JLP - both high level financial, operational and technical

What were the findings from the RSQS review? (or insight questions prior to RSQS)

Were any risks identified as part of the Helios review that need to be managed.

List all risks, mitigations and the business owner for each.

Sustainable Procurement:

What sustainability benefits have been achieved as a result of this project? Use this section to capture both quantitative benefits (e.g., reduction in plastic used, reduction in emissions, etc.) and qualitative benefits (e.g., improved modern slavery mitigations, improved health & safety training)

Lease contracts (IFRS 16 change to accounting practise):

Do you think the contract/service contains a lease or implicit lease whereby we are committing to regular payments to a third party over a period of greater than 12 months (or likely to be renewed beyond 12 months)?'

If 'yes', please contact External Financial Reporting and Policy in order to analyse the accounting impacts. For more information regarding the definition of a lease, please refer to the Accounting Policy Manual available on the intranet.

Please confirm that you have considered the above and the outcome.

Financial benefits of choosing this supplier by Division

Division	Benefit (£k)	Non-financial benefit/s	Comments
John Lewis			
Waitrose			
Group			
Total			

Contract overview

Curtis Fitch contract number: _____

Contract summary

Summarise the length of the agreement, any minimum commitments, (or include contract summary sheet as appendix)

Implementation plan (key milestones)

Milestone	Owner	Date

Endorsed by:

Role	Signature	Date
SCM/ Head of/ Director (Delete as applicable)		
Procurement director Sole sourcing >£250k Or spend >£1m		

Appendix 11.1 - Summary of Initiatives & their contribution towards the research Purpose

Cycle 1	
Initiative / Activity	**Contribution towards Research Purpose**
Recruit Sustainable Procurement Champions	Highlighted the challenge of achieving whole system engagement in appreciative change
Formal PLT "Entry" stage	Generated significant senior level support for the overall Research Objectives
Reversing Dream and Discovery phases	Highlighted the limitations of unrestrained 'blue-sky thinking' in achieving change
Sustainable Procurement Champion Workshops	Provided insight into the challenge of perceptions of empowerment versus role / hierarchy
Cycle 2	
Initiative / Activity	**Contribution towards Research Purpose**
Utilise the Discover phase to establish the positive core for the Cycle	Established a set of positive strengths for the function which could be utilised in further Cycles.
Present drivers for change	Limited tangible contribution though for the two participants who found it valuable it did help to articulate a need for a broader value proposition beyond commercial benefits.
Engage external advisory group	Highlighted the investment being made by other Procurement functions in specialist roles, including in Sustainability and Sustainable Procurement. Provided context for participants and researcher on what is happening in the wider profession
Feedback from the Ethics & Sustainability Team	Highlighted the significant demands likely to hit Procurement over a 6 month to 3-year timespan. This emphasised the need for improved behaviour towards Sustainable Procurement but did not in and of itself provide a route to improving those behaviours
Top-down guidance from the Finance Leadership Team	Perceived negative contribution as the focus on just achieving commercial benefits made colleagues question why we would divert resources from achieving savings to other activities such as Sustainable Procurement

Statistical Analysis of Procurement Engagement thresholds	Limited direct impact on achieving changed behaviours towards Sustainable Procurement
Purpose workshops	Highlighted the desire from colleagues to extend the value proposition of the department and include ethics and sustainability.
Cycle 3	
Initiative / Activity	**Contribution towards Research Purpose**
Utilising Cycle 2 strengths as Positive Core	Negligible tangible impact however it is likely that utilising the strengths to inform and frame the approach to Cycle 3 made it significantly more effective compared to the approaches of Cycles 1 and 2.
Utilise existing Ethics & Sustainability strategy	Raised awareness of Ethical and Sustainability topics among participant group Did not explicitly link to Sustainable Procurement
Reading / watching Greenhouse Gas Protocol information	Raised awareness of a specific element of Sustainability. Did not explicitly link to Sustainable Procurement however there was an inherent link through the focus on Scope 3 emissions which are specifically supply chain
Exploring System Capabilities	Raised awareness of potential systemic solutions that support Sustainable Procurement initiatives Provided actual experience for one participant of investigating options and finding solutions to a Sustainable Procurement related opportunity
Creation & validation of Scope 3 carbon footprint proof of concept	Raised awareness of the methodology for a specific element of Sustainability Demonstrated a connection between non-traditional Procurement roles (non-buying / category management roles) and their ability to contribute towards Sustainable Procurement deliverables.
Cycle 4	
Initiative / Activity	**Contribution towards Research Purpose**
Utilising Cycle 2 strengths as Positive Core	Positive contribution as a second test of this approach
Utilise existing Ethics & Sustainability strategy	Positive contribution as a second test of this approach

Establish “Project Spotlight” section of bi-weekly team meeting with a specific callout for Ethics & Sustainability achievements	Positive contribution highlighting positive behaviours as desired outcomes
Produce a summary of all public Ethics & Sustainability commitments made by the Organisation that could have an impact on GNFR Procurement and share with the PLT	Neutral contribution as awareness was raised but little definitive action or behavioural change resulted.
Cycle 5	
Initiative / Activity	**Contribution towards Research Purpose**
Utilising Cycle 2 strengths as Positive Core	Positive contribution as a third test of this approach
Utilise existing Ethics & Sustainability strategy	Positive contribution as a third test of this approach
Update Project Completion Document template with better clarity on expectations for the CSR considerations	Inconclusive during this Cycle what impact this initiative had in relation to the overall objectives
Update the Ethics & Sustainability questions in the RFP Template	Positive contribution as set up all future sourcing activities to include evaluation of supplier proposals aligning to the Ethics & Sustainability strategy
Updated Draft Procurement Policy with an Ethics & Sustainability section	Positive contribution as defining and embedding Sustainable Procurement as part of the mandatory compliance
Reviewed acceptable derogations from the standard positions of the Responsible Sourcing Code of Practise	Positive contribution as derogations allow more suppliers to sign up to more of the standard rather than not being able to agree to it because of a single provision
Submit Gazette Letter regarding plastic envelope windows	Positive contribution as a public challenge to existing specifications championing a more sustainable standard
Challenge thinking on company car policy as part of overall reward review	Positive contribution as a public challenge to existing specifications championing a more sustainable standard
Trial of Better Jobs programme in GNFR	Positive contribution as demonstrated ability to apply existing ethical standards regime in the GNFR supply chain
New addition to the Procurement process to capture outcomes of SMETA audits on GNFR product manufacturing sites	Positive contribution as requiring ethical standards to be set within the sourcing process and giving the risk domain owner the ability to veto potential suppliers who do not meet the standards