

Materials for teachers 2.1

How to use the tool for dilemma analysis

(✍ student handout 2.2): a model demonstration

The instruction advises the students to choose a few questions and think about them carefully. Therefore this model demonstration discusses some selected questions, but the reader should feel free to make different choices, or to answer the questions differently. In this demonstration, the method is more important than the line of thinking. That is one reason why no decision is suggested.

Case story No. 4: Which bananas shall I buy? (✍ student handout 2.3)

1. Collect information.

Who is involved?

What do they want? (What are their needs, goals or interests?)

Who is involved?	Goals, interests
Me as a customer	Buy cheap food. Buy good quality food.
Supermarket	Attract customers. Make a profit.
Fair Trade	Support small banana producers.
Banana producers	Make a living to support family. Sell good products. Increase production.

What is the problem/dilemma?

Buy the cheaper bananas?	Buy the more expensive bananas?
Buying the cheaper bananas helps me save money for other purposes. Not helping people in need who, to a certain extent, also depend on my decisions gives me a bad conscience.	Buying the more expensive bananas will help small banana farmers. Buying expensive food has its limits.

What does this case have to do with me?

I am directly involved in the globalised market. My decision what to buy has a direct impact on the lives of others.

What do we not know – what do we not understand?

I am directly involved in the globalised market. My decision what to buy has a direct impact on the lives of others. We do not know each other, but we know a bit about each other, and we are linked by what we do.

I do not know how urgently the farmers depend on my help. Perhaps other customers have already bought kilos of Fair Trade bananas, but the opposite may also be true.

How big would the effort be to find the missing information?

Under conditions of everyday life, I must make up my mind now. I need something to eat, so I must decide without knowing the full picture; this is the rule rather than the exception.

2. Consider the **consequences**.

What are the alternative choices?

What effect would each of these choices have, and for whom ...?

Alternative choices	Alternative 1: Buy cheap bananas	Alternative 2: Buy expensive bananas
Me as a customer	No matter how big or small my income is, I won't notice the difference. If necessary, I can easily compensate by saving on one hamburger or a bar of chocolate. The matter might be different if I am in debt and have to cut expenses wherever possible.	
Banana producer	No support.	Modest support, with considerable effect (Fair Trade information).
Supermarket	We do not have any accurate figures, but we may presume that the supermarket will earn a profit as long as we buy some bananas – be they cheap or Fair Trade.	
Fair Trade	No success for Fair Trade.	Success for Fair Trade.

3. Define your **priorities**.

To what extent do I understand the consequences of my decision?

I do not have the full picture, and cannot undertake the effort to obtain it – unless I make it one of my few top priorities. Therefore I must decide whether to rely on the information given to me by others, in this case Fair Trade. They tell me that even a small donation would mean a lot for the banana farmers in a developing country.

What religious or moral principles are important for me?

This question is clearly of particular importance. We are free to answer it as we think right.

Is my decision irreversible (“point of no return”), or can I correct it later?

This kind of decision can be made many times. I can make one choice today, and the opposite choice tomorrow. I can think over my decision, but I cannot revise a decision made in the past.

4. Make your **decision**.

Must I opt for one goal and violate the other?

Yes. You usually buy cheap or expensive bananas, but not both. A compromise – buying some of each – is not very convincing.

Under the given conditions, what does my intuition tell me? With what decision can I identify most?

Under conditions of daily life, our intuition is probably our most important guideline, and is often more reliable than a big effort of thought. We do what we feel is best. Taking responsibility thus means trying to understand, and sometimes revise, what our intuition tells us.