Drawings of Corporate Social Responsibility: a Picture Draws a Thousand Words

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Abstract

This paper provides a case study that focuses upon the interpretation of freehand drawings produced by a sample of final year degree students of business studies in response to the question: *"What is Corporate Social Responsibility?"* Student generated freehand drawings are used to bypass cognitive verbal processing routes, thereby facilitating students to produce clearer images of their level of understanding. In using freehand drawing, we are trying to create a creative learning environment where students can develop their understanding of complex ideas and narratives at their own individual pace. The drawings themselves provide insights into how soon-to-be-graduates of business perceive their society and the corporations that operate within it, and thus communicate their understanding of corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), drawings, critical pedagogy, case study; interpretation; higher education; business studies

1

Introduction

As educators, we want our students to reflect critically on what company they may wish to work for and whether or not the company is a good fit for them, their beliefs and their values. We hope they will evaluate the qualities of different viewpoints and come to their own reasoned conclusions. This involves them questioning many of their taken-for-granted assumptions to date in order to exercise a more reasoned approach to managing their future career.

Student generated freehand drawings - a visual elicitation technique that permits students to see that there are potentially multiple ways to understand, analyse and challenge any issue (Feeney *et al.*, 2015) - serves as a useful tool to aid understanding of a topic. As a teaching approach which is capable of generating a critically reflective stance (Rose, 2008), freehand drawings can build students' ability to engage in critical thinking as well as providing insights into their perceptions (Dean, 2015; Donnelly & Hogan, 2013). By enabling students draw their own individual interpretation, they have a visual representation of their thoughts and ideas that go well beyond verbal reasoning. Thus, the student is no longer hindered by lack of appropriate discipline specific vocabulary; rather they can bypass the need for any verbal reasoning and draw a picture to depict their level of understanding.

The aim in using this approach with final year business degree students is to ascertain their level of understanding of a complex and multifaceted issue that has real resonance in the business environment. The activity involves the students representing through freehand drawings their personal, non-verbal, interpretation of what they understand corporate social responsibility (CSR) to mean. This paper presents a sample of these student-generated images along with some interpretation of their meaning.

2

In recent years, many Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) have reimagined their missions. HEIs can no longer focus only on teaching and research, but now embrace a third purpose: developing students' civic capacity and preparing them to become active democratic citizens (Feeney & Hogan, 2017a). Part of this purpose requires business students gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and principles of CSR. In recent times, CSR has been attracting increasing attention in academic literature and in business school curriculum. This is hardly surprising given the relatively recent global financial crisis, the increasing numbers of corporate scandals and the consequent increasing pressure from company stakeholders for more responsible corporate behaviour.

The paper begins with a section on using visual representation of concepts in the classroom, followed by a brief consideration of the embedding of CSR in the higher education business degree curriculum. After this is a section on the use of drawings in the context of critical pedagogy and how drawings were created in the classroom. The drawings, and what they tell us about the students' critical understanding of CSR are then discussed. Finally, the pedagogical implications of this approach are presented.

The Utility of Visual Representation

We are surrounded by images in our daily lives (Feeney & Hogan, 2017a). The visual has become a cultural centrality in the modern world (Slutskaya *et al.*, 2012). Today's youths are "inundated with more visual images than any generation in history" (Bennis, 2007, p.4). Consequently, visual representation occupies a 'central role in promoting and facilitating the formation, reflection and inflection of what we "take for granted"' (Slutskaya *et al.*, 2012, p.17). Writers, such as Williams (2003) highlight that, in an increasingly media dominated environment, it is wrong to ignore the importance of visual images. However, despite its

3

obvious strengths, the visual is still largely missing from the university classroom; and the nexus between business, society and visual representation remains insufficiently explored (Feeney & Hogan, 2017a; Sylvest, 2013).

The use of visual techniques in the classroom can encourage a more vibrant exploration of a phenomenon and can create a challenge to conventional wisdom (Parker, 2009). Gauntlett (2007) has used visual and creative methods, including video, drawing and Lego, to explore identity creation amongst children and professionals, while Ingram (2011) and Abrahams & Ingram (2013) have used play dough models to explore identities in secondary school and university settings. The production of these drawings, pictures or models serve as an important stepping-stone to in-depth in class discussions. However, as observed by Dean (2015), there is a need for verbal explanation post-drawing to ensure accuracy in understanding the visual representation created in the classroom.

In generating drawings students can express themselves and address what may otherwise be uncomfortable (Slutskaya *et al.*, 2012), and surfaces hidden perspectives (O'Neill, 2008). Freehand drawings therefore, can function as 'a catalyst, helping students to articulate feelings that had been implicit and were hard to define' (Zuboff, 1988, p.141). In addition, drawings can raise participants' voices through enabling them to set the agenda and own the in-class discussion (Warren, 2005), and creates a 'third space' (Parker, 2009) in the room. This use of visual techniques can create agency for the participants through their production of images (Mitchell & de Lange, 2011).

Visual methods, such as freehand drawings, can enable students to access information, and sometimes even identify previously unrecognized insights and tacit knowledge of their

4

relational and situated experiences (Bassett, 2011; Butler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010). Through the use of a 'whole brain approach' this method enhances learners' capacity to make sense of things (Kearney & Hyle, 2004, p.380). Drawings, therefore, can encourage active participation in the learning process, and the integration of visual with verbal data provides a useful form of data triangulation, which gives students a wider context to test their knowledge. Thus, 'in situations where a lecturer would prefer not to impose a cognitive framework on students prematurely, the use of visual instruments can be ideal' (Meyer, 1991, p.232).

Using Drawings as Critical Pedagogy

Freehand drawing helps us move away from concentrating on propositional knowing, which is privileged in the classroom, towards a potentially richer and more hands-on mode of knowing, and presents a means for developing student engagement and learning. Arts based learning presents a more holistic way of comprehending the world, than is offered by 'the traditional tools of logic and rationality' (Page & Gaggiotti, 2012, p.74) or what Heron & Reason (1997) refer to as propositional knowledge.

Drawing has been of interest to psychologists for over a century. Adams (2002, p.22) defines drawings as 'making marks that have meaning'. However, this ignores the potential value that drawings have in communicating complex ideas and meanings from an entirely subjective standpoint. Most studies on the use of drawings see them as a tool for understanding the behaviour patterns of children and as a way of providing for observations and questions (Rubin, 1984; Thomas & Jolley, 1998). In recent years, drawings are being used as a method of data collection (Feeney *et al.*, 2015; Merriman & Guerin, 2006, p.48); and as a pedagogic tool (see Dean, 2015; Donnelly & Hogan, 2013; Feeney *et al.*, 2015).

5

Donnelly & Hogan (2013, p.370) found 'the use of freehand drawing in the classroom to be an immediate, yet non-threatening, way to focus students' attention on critical self-reflection and developing understanding of their own and others' deeply held frames.' Indeed, Page and Gaggiotti (2012, p.74) proffer that visual representation 'offers a relatively new medium for critical inquiry that accesses modalities of knowing that are sensory, aesthetic, affective, embodied and that cannot be reduced to the propositional.' For Dean (2015) visual representation through drawings can play a role in critical pedagogy, encouraging deeply reflexive accounts of participants' behaviour and knowledge.

Therefore, the visual, as freehand drawing, can constitute part of a critical pedagogy and in the process generate critical thinking. Critical pedagogy is context specific and descriptive, 'it critically analyses the world in which we live' (Monchinski, 2008, p.2). For Giroux (1997), critical pedagogy is purposely transformational, as it adopts the position that teaching and learning are dedicated to broadening the possibilities for students. However, introducing critical pedagogy, through use of the visual, necessitates redefining the roles and responsibilities of faculty and students (see Donnelly & Hogan, 2013; Feeney *et al.*, 2015).

Deposing faculty is about positioning faculty and students on the same epistemological ground, where everything is contestable (Fobes & Kaufman, 2008). This is about engaging in a shared journey to attempt to understand the other out of mutual respect (Barnett, 1997, p.55). Critical pedagogy 'challenges students and teachers to be aware of their own position in the larger structure of power and the role they are supposed to play in reproducing it' (Malott, 2011, p.159). Our approach to critical pedagogy is to create a participative learning environment where students develop as critical beings.

6

The flipped classroom creates a learning environment that encourages students to engage in critical commentary (Dehler *et al.,* 2004), which can produce a more open and creative intellectual environment (Allison *et al*., 2012). Students move from conveying an understanding of extant theories to theorising their own experience within the context of the broad array of understandings to which they are exposed. When they problematise, students exhibit 'intentional learning, i.e., they activate prior knowledge, relate old to new in reflective ways, reach conclusions, and assess those conclusions before settling upon them' (Dehler *et al.,* 2004, p.177), in the process developing as 'emancipated' learners. We feel that in a democracy faculty should be encouraged to include critical thinking as an outcome of the learning process.

Informed by Barnett (1997, p.111) we wish to offer students, through the use of freehand drawing, an educational experience that challenges them to develop their own critical stances. The use of freehand drawings, in affording students the space to develop a critical disposition, provides an opportunity to consider what social functions their disciplines serve (Freire, 1971; Reynolds, 1999). Crucially, 'visual political knowledge is different from verbal political knowledge and represents a previously unmeasured element of political involvement' (Prior, 2014, p.54).

Corporate Social Responsibility in Irish Higher Education

The curriculum model used in business schools has been criticised in the past for concentrating on shareholder-value orientated governance of capitalist organisations (Hosmer, 1985; Matten & Moon, 2004). This led to socially irresponsible and ethically dubious behaviour being accepted as a norm for corporate engagement. However, following many corporate scandals over the past 25 years, there has been increasing scrutiny on ethical

7

management practice and corporate social responsibility. Company success is now starting to go beyond profit and shareholder value, to include wider stakeholder needs and the ideal of benefitting society at large (Adámek, 2013; Natale & Sora, 2009).

Ireland is an interesting case when considering CSR in higher education. The 1997 Universities Act set out a range of objects, including the promotion of the cultural and social life of society, supporting economic and social development and disseminating the outcomes of research to the public (McInerney & Carney, 2012). In addition, the potential of HEIs to promote and advance ideals around social cohesion and European citizenship has also been prioritised (see Biesta, 2009; Commission of the European Communities, 2003, 2005, 2006; Feeney, 2014; Feeney & Hogan, 2017b; Feeney & Horan, 2015; London Communique, 2007; Van Dyke, 2013; Zgaga, 2007). This has been reinforced by representatives from HEIs who recognise that their role goes beyond the creation of workers, and includes a wider responsibility for cultural, social and civic development at both European and national levels (Biesta, 2009; European University Association, 2002, 2003, 2005; Simons *et al.*, 2007).

In higher education, corporate and social responsibility encompasses a range of approaches to developing the civic skills, interests and participation of students, staff and institutional management (Gonzalez-Perez *et al*., 2007, p.187). This is evident in the increasing inclusion of social learning, volunteering, and community learning in the curriculum. It must be recognised that CSR, particularly the elements regarding social responsibility 'presents a challenge to universities to be of and not just in the community; not simply to engage in 'knowledge-transfer' but to establish a dialogue across the boundary between the university and its community which is open-ended, fluid and experimental' (Watson, 2007, p.3). Part of this challenge is the lack of consensus as to what CSR actually means (Carroll, 1999;

<div style="text-align:center">8</div>

Panapanaan *et al.*, 2003). While CSR is now well understood in the business discipline, an agreed definition remains elusive. Dahlsrud (2007) reported that there were 37 agreed definitions, whilst other authors have described CSR as being ambiguous (Fisher, 2004); intangible (Cramer *et al.*, 2004); amorphous (Margolis & Walsh, 2001); unclear (McWilliams, 2001) and subjective (Frederic, 1986).

CSR can be understood to encapsulate procedures in a corporate context that comply with the letter of the law. This is considered to be a low bar in terms of both definition and application of CSR principles. Companies have now seen the market advantage in taking charge of the CSR agenda for their own sector. The marketing and strategic utility in being seen to have high measures of CSR activities in the corporate culture of an organisation have led to increasing focus being given to it. Corporations now use their CSR activities as important market differentiators and stakeholders, including communities and society at large, are rewarding such initiatives by supporting those businesses that show evidence of clear CSR policies and procedures.

Creating the Drawings

The drawings were collected from students in the final year of their honours degree in business studies. The group comprised of 75 students, all were Irish citizens, and aged between 21 and 24 years. The class had a slight majority of females.

No prior readings on this topic had been assigned. At the commencement of the class, we provided each student with an A4 sheet of paper, with instructions on one side stating: 'Through a drawing answer the following question: What is Corporate Social Responsibility?' the other said: 'Now, in your own words, describe/explain what you have

9

drawn.' Students could use whatever drawing instruments they had available and there were no prescriptions as to what they should draw.

A time of 20 minutes was set to create the drawings. A few participants expressed concern that they could not draw well, but were reassured that such an ability was irrelevant. This put their concerns at rest and they also took part. The students were then asked to turn the sheet over and address the instruction on the reverse for 10 minutes. Following this, students returned their drawings and these formed part of the class discussion regarding CSR.

Each drawing was shared on a board and the class discussed their collective interpretation of what its creator was saying. A flipchart was used to capture their insights, prompting them to elaborate any assumptions they saw. Approximately two minutes per drawing was allocated, to keep momentum going and the room energized, and the flipchart sheets were affixed to the classroom walls after the discussion of each drawing. The class concluded with a session 'opening the floor' to reflection/discussion, asking what the exercise told us about perspectives and assumptions relating to CSR, about what we notice and pay attention to, and what we ignore, and what we take for granted and fail to question.

As interpretation plays a part in gaining meaning from images, the reporting of that interpretation involves thick description (Polgar & Thomas, 2008, p.248). Thus, we ended with short paragraphs on each drawing, along with what was captured on the flipchart sheets, all of which were broadly similar in their interpretations, with some occasional nuances. As the students who authored each drawing had provided their own interpretations of their drawings, this process allows us to compare/contrast, and reflect on, the individual and collective interpretations.

10

There are many approaches to analysing learner-generated drawings, including those used by Hall (2008) which revolve around themes of self and identity, storytelling, pattern and decoration, and special interests. Hall's (2008) focused on how young children communicate through drawing. *Self and identity* refers to drawings being seen as an expression of an individual's perception of their self-image (Hall, 2008; Hawkins, 2002; Malchiodi, 1998). *Storytelling* refers to drawings where there is a narrative element. These drawings can depict stories from the external environment (Duff & Sawdon, 2008; Gardner, 1980; Hall, 2008). *Pattern and decoration* refers to a 'tendency by some children to give additional detail, shape and order to their drawings' (Hall, 2008, p.6; Burkitt, 2008). *Special interests* refer to a drawing that includes details incorporated by a subject expert. We have chosen to consider just one of Hall's (2008) themes; 'storytelling' as the learners were asked to provide an answer to a specific question at the outset of the study.

What the drawings tell us about Corporate Social Responsibility

Drawings provide a challenging set of data for consideration in that they can mean different things to different people. They reflect the students' personal understanding and experiences in their answer to the question *'What is Corporate Social Responsibility?'* The students, in this instance, are active learners in a classroom environment, and were seeking to provide a visual representation to illustrate their interpretation. In addition, the students provided some written words and/or explanations as to what their drawings represent. This went some way towards bridging the gap between the students' intended message being understood by anyone looking at their drawing. This was deemed an important addition to the data as we are aware that it is possible to misinterpret/over-interpret drawings as highlighted by Lewis & Lindsay (2000). The drawings show elements of the students' attempt to answer the question 'what is corporate social responsibility in what we consider to be primarily a '*storytelling*

11

approach'; although some drawings exhibit significant detailing and might incorporate some elements of the *'pattern and decoration'* approach.

While 75 drawings were gathered using this approach in the classroom, this paper presents just a sample, for illustrative purposes. This sample is representative of the clusters of ideas we found. That said, we recognise that, as Dean (2015) points out, using only a sample of drawings and considering them as being representative of all drawings raises questions about the wider generalisability and validity of findings. Consequently, we make no such claim. We believe the drawings demonstrate a unique insight into each learner's understanding of CSR. Each figure presented below is followed by our description of the drawing, and subsequently the written narrative provided by the learner as an explanation of their illustration and the collective interpretation of the drawing.
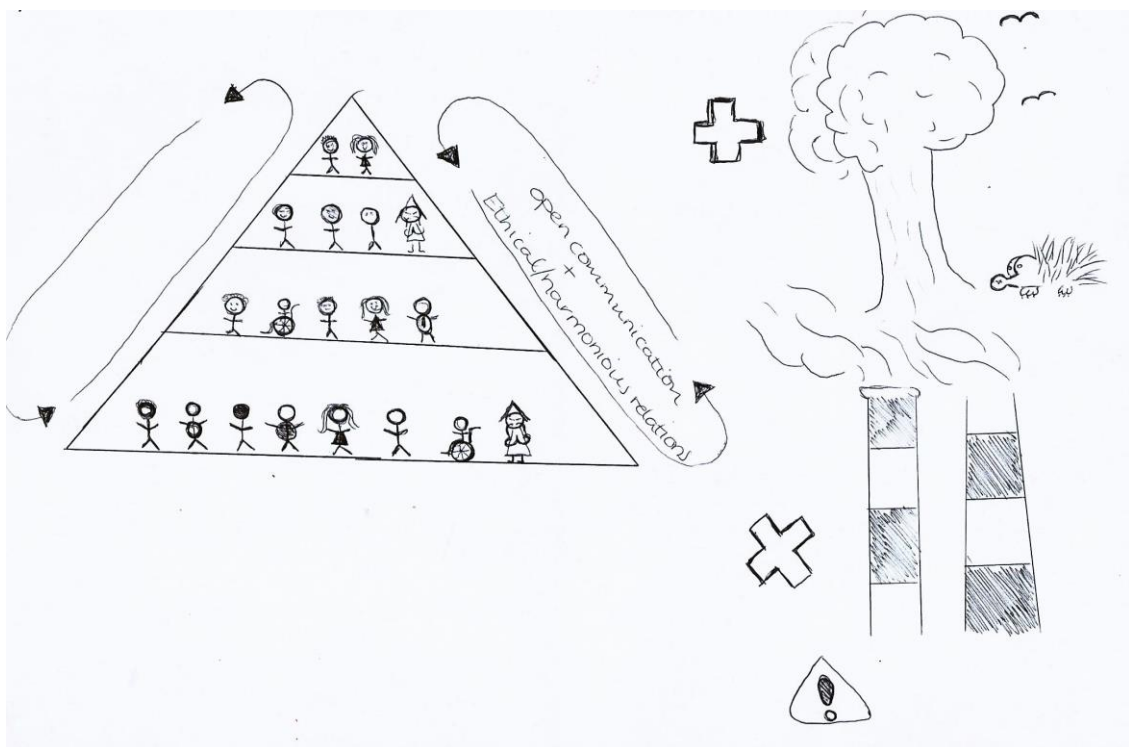
Sample of Student Drawings

Figure 1: Output of Student #1 depicting his/her understanding of CSR

12

Our description: Figure 1 incorporates significant detail and depicts three separate contexts for the learner's understanding of CSR. This drawing fits with the storytelling approach, with a narrative element as proposed by Hall (2008). The drawing shows happy citizens in a hierarchical organisation with two 360-degree communication loops on each side. In the loop on the right hand side of the organisation (represented as a triangle), the learner has written the words: *"open communication + ethical/ harmonious relations"*. The picture then shows a tree with wild life as an addition to the harmonious organisation. Below that is a depiction of two industrial chimneys with smoke being expelled along with a danger sign. It is interesting to note that the learner sees trees and wild life as positive elements of CSR strategies in an organisation, whilst at the same time depicting a negative correlation with the smoking chimney-stacks and the danger sign.

Learner's narrative: *"CSR is the co-operation and open communication throughout each tier of the organisation working as 1 business unit towards an overall organisational goal. In doing so, the organisation plays a critical focus on relations outside as well as inside of the organisation paying attending to factors like ethics, environmental issues & public relations i.e. giving back to communities"*.

Collective interpretation: This drawing generated significant discussion in class. The discussion revolved around whether or not CSR activities inside organisations necessarily impact on the external environment. This highlights the value of images in the meaning making process, critical thinking and idea generation in the university classroom (Zull, 2011).
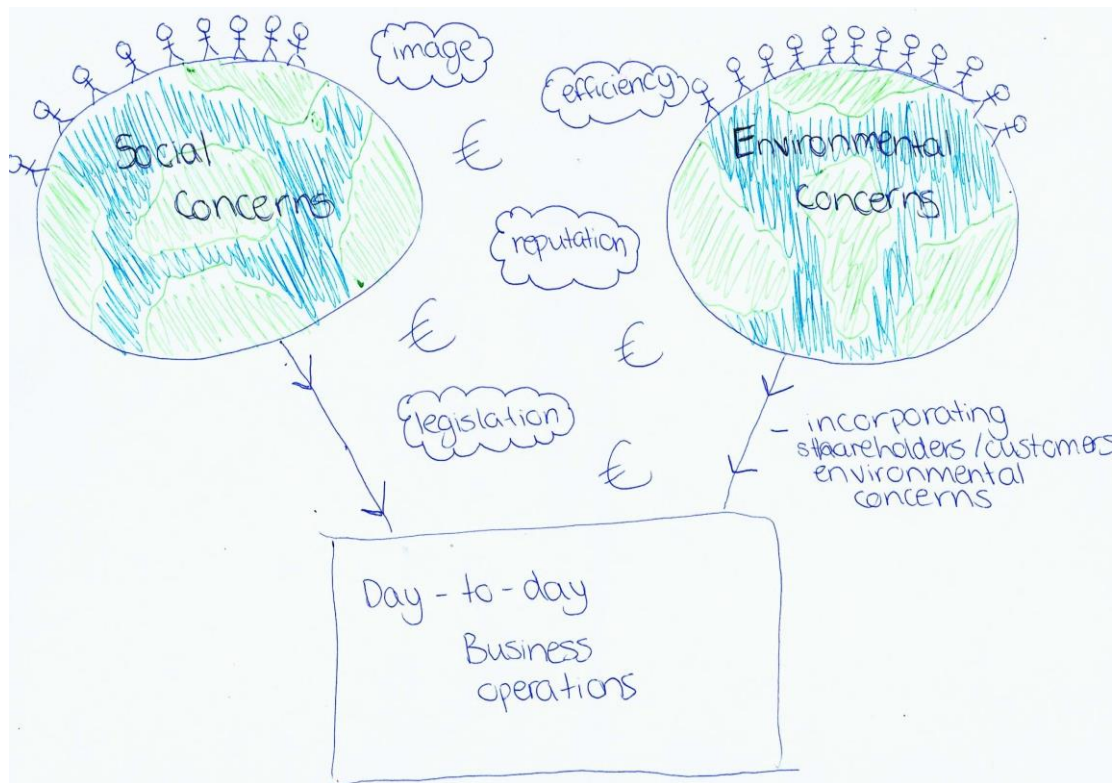
13

Figure 2: Output of Student #2 depicting his/her understanding of CSR

Our description: Figure 2 incorporates good detail and fits with the storytelling approach proposed by Hall (2008). The drawing depicts two globes, one representing social concerns and the other representing environmental concerns. Each of the globes have people depicted on them, and there are clouds of thought and euro symbols floating around them. Both globes have links to day-to-day business operations. The drawing depicts joint responsibility at the business operational level for social and environmental concerns. Thus, there is an indication of the integration of theory and practice in the drawing (McDrury & Alterio, 2004).

Learner's narrative: "*Corporate Social Responsibility is when business or organisations incorporate the publics concerns e.g. social & environmental. The[y] incorporate these concerns into their business operations to better their image/ reputation, become more*

14

efficient say environmentally and also to comply with legislation. CSR can be expensive for organisations."

Collective interpretation: Many students found this picture to be useful in depicting what they feel is representative of what CSR is. The global environmental and social contexts were important features in the class discussion, as were the people joined together in a united pose on top of each globe. Student discussion included the importance of business level activity building towards having global impact. This is a case where an efficient image is making a detailed and complex argument (Chaffee, 2008)
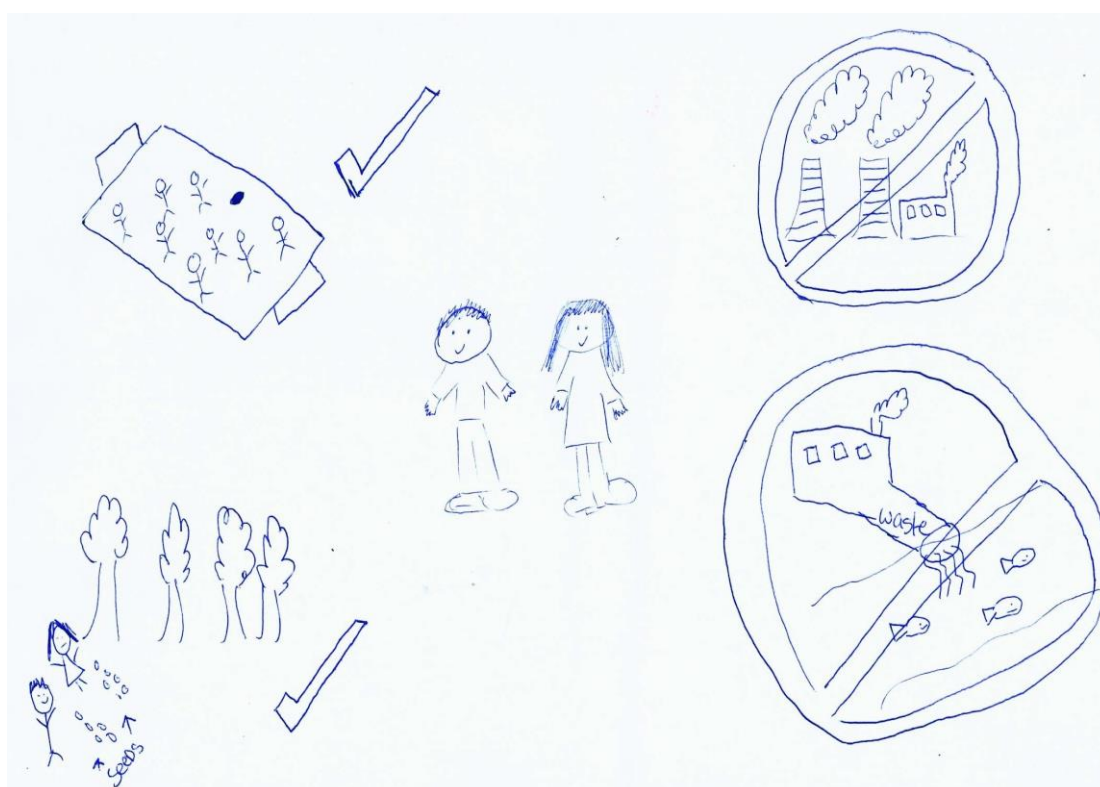

Figure 3: Output of Student #3 depicting his/her understanding of CSR

Our description: This drawing shows two people at the centre. To the left there is a football game being played, as well as two children walking among some trees and planting seeds.

15

To the right there is an anti-factory sign, and an anti-pollution sign. The drawing has a narrative element and falls into the storytelling approach (Gardner, 1980; Hall, 2008).

Learner's narrative: *"CSR in my eyes is companies looking after the people around them, looking after the community".*

Collective interpretation: The class viewed this drawing as representing a typical dichotomy in the debate about corporations and their CSR policies. The social element of people living their lives through play (the football match) and through nature (walking through a forest planting seeds) was of particular interest to the students during the discussion.
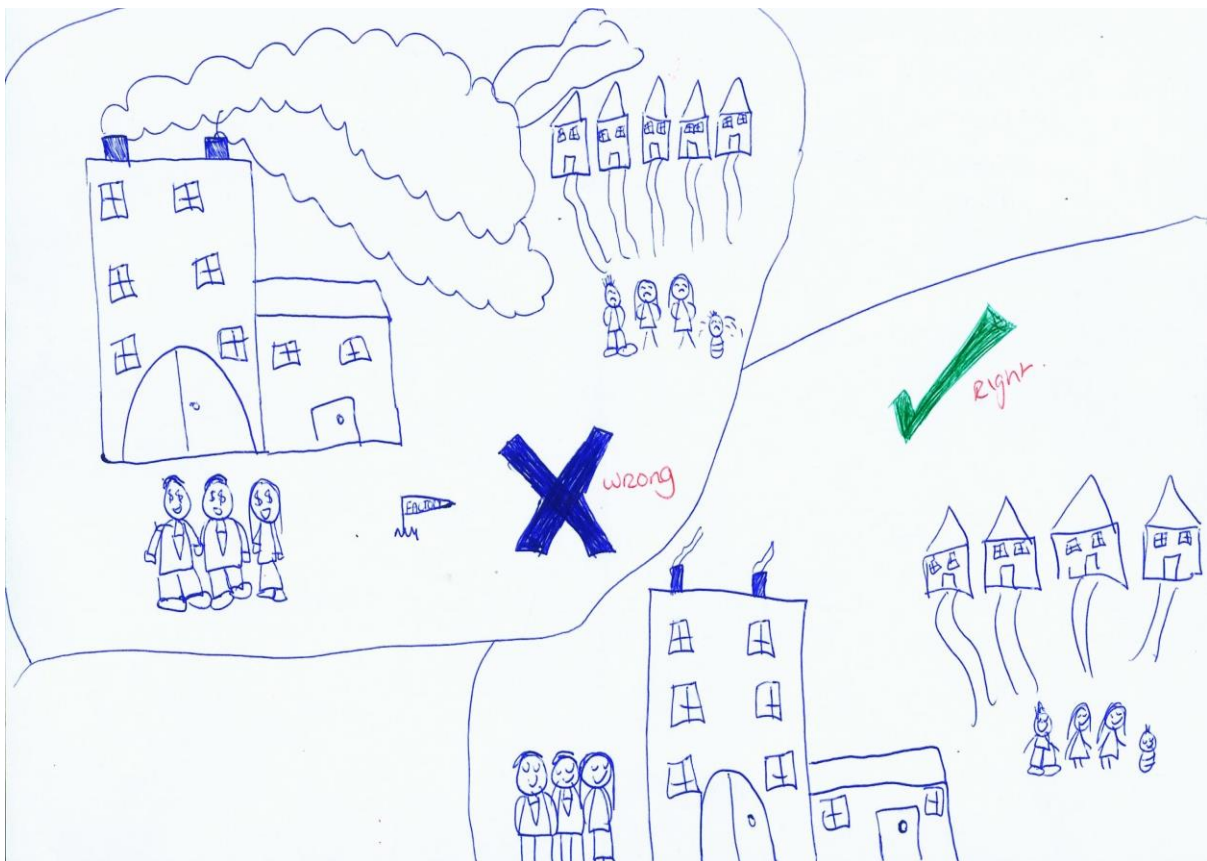

Figure 4: Output of Student #4 depicting his/her understanding of CSR

16

Our description: This drawing shows two different scenarios of corporate life. In one scenario there is a factory with significant pollution. The factory owners are represented as having dollar signs in their eyes, and the broader community is seen to be unhappy, with a baby crying. The second scenario shows the factory with much fewer emissions, the three owners are happy and the community is depicted as being happy also. This drawing demonstrates the storytelling approach with a narrative element as proposed by Hall (2008).

Learner's narrative: *"A company has a corporate social responsibility to act responsibly when it comes to communities + the environment. It's important to recognise the need to be socially responsible, regardless of whether or not it costs a little more to reduce your carbon footprint or manage your waste responsibly."*

Collective interpretation: the class found this drawing to be compelling due to the simplicity of having two scenarios presented side by side. This drawing is indicative of a good level of self-awareness and open-mindedness that characterises critical thinking associated with images (Cordell, 2016; Donnelly & Hogan, 2013).

Pedagogical Implications

There are numerous ways in which the higher education curriculum in Ireland has provided students with learning opportunities for embedding their learning in real world contexts. Company based consultancy projects, work placements, case study teaching methods, etc. provide some useful learning opportunities. Our use of drawings, and the interpretation that occurs as part of the in-class discussion, can go some way towards generating a sophisticated understanding of the world (Dehler, Welsh & Lewis, 2004), 'where students can challenge prevailing assumptions' (Smith, 2003, p.21).

17

Although often basic and superficial, when we pressed the students in their thinking on interpreting their drawings during the in-class discussion, they began to recognise and cautiously query their own and others' conjectures. Examining drawings and their ambiguity, through discursive interaction, highlights complexity and creates the possibility of richer thinking and expression that is otherwise restricted by relational and contextual custom in the classroom environment (Davison *et al.,* 2012, p.8). Thus, freehand drawing, employed in conjunction with image interpretation and discussion, can promote reflexive engagement to produce varied viewpoints. In allowing students to convey visually what can be challenging to verbalise, drawings permit us to participate in a dialectical interaction with them, wherein we can complicate their understanding and develop their aptitude for critical self-reflection. The process of drawing elucidates further the preconceived ideas about CSR, providing a foundation upon which to build critique (Dean, 2015; Thomson, 2008). In so doing, we are creating a learning space where all are on the same epistemological ground.

After participating in the exercise, some students discovered that they had a good basic appreciation of CSR, despite having never studied the subject. They recognised that they had gained an understanding from their environment and the media. Additionally, they recognised that by cooperating in critically examining each other's drawings, they were able to identify aspects of, and nuances in, their understanding of CSR.

For a country recovering from a serious economic crisis, an informed workforce that is capable of contributing positively to communities and to wider society is important. We feel that this approach, in encouraging students to reflect critically, contributes to developing the kind of engaged citizenry which is vital for a flourishing and self-critical democracy. The approach also surmounts the long-term bias in instructional pedagogies toward

18

oversimplification (Dehler *et al.*, 2004, p.168) and the favouring of propositional knowledge (Heron and Reason, 1997), as it allows students to appreciate that there are many ways to comprehend, contest and analyse issues. Our use of freehand drawing, therefore, is intended to address the calls by Bartunek *et al.* (1983) for 'developing complicated understanding' and by Dehler, Welsh & Lewis (2004) for 'creating richer complexities' in critical thinking that serve to question what is presented as 'the one true way' (Stepanovich, 2009. p.726).

The principles of best practice for a pedagogy of CSR include active learning, learning as a social process, contextual knowledge, reflexive practice and the ability to represent an idea in a variety of contexts (Colby *et al.*, 2003; Welch, 2007). The traditional approach is classroom based lectures, and focused upon the development of personally responsible citizens. In this respect, our use of images possesses great value, as they have the potential to 'encode significant quantities of complex information' (Ridley & Rogers, 2010, p.2). In seeking to create a space for nuance and ambiguity in the classroom, through the use of drawings, we complicate students' understanding through moving away from certainty towards an acceptance of ambiguity and paradox, complexity rather than simplicity (Zohar, 1997, p.9).

Conclusion

By choosing to employ student generated freehand drawings to facilitate a dialectical exchange with and between students about corporate social responsibility, we sought to cultivate their capacity for critical self-reflection. This enables the students to put into visuals a level of comprehension that might be difficult to articulate in words. The presentation of information visually enabled students to access unrecognised insights and make sense of complex issues by employing a whole brain approach to assessing information. Students,

19

through freehand drawing, and employing the higher order thinking that is integral to visualisation, can define their knowledge of a topic that is universally understandable and rich in complex content.

The drawings enable us to understand that 'through their ambiguity, visuals open up complexity' and 'generate richer thinking and expression, otherwise curtailed by power relations and contextual custom' (Davison *et al.*, 2012, p.8). Such a 'performative approach to the visual', as that offered by freehand drawing, 'explicitly invite[s] multiple and reflexive engagements with our own incomplete, open-ended and maybe paradoxical written performance in order to make audible the alternative readings and voices' (Steyaert *et al.*, 2012, p.49). Freehand drawings therefore can be used to embody the students' experience of corporate social responsibility that is available for reflection and sense-making by themselves and others (Broussine, 2008).

The fact that the students discuss the drawings as a group, in which every voice is heard, encourages interpretations from multiple perspectives and gives the students and professors an opportunity to challenge theories/presumptions/beliefs. This approach can raise questions about what is being viewed, and aids reflection on the wider context in which we are embedded. The objective of such critical pedagogies should be to produce questioning learners capable of self-reflection and willing to question widely held beliefs. This approach also challenges staff to reflect on their roles in the structures in society, how they reproduce these, and, along with their students, it asks that they contest the dominant social structures.

The aim in using this approach, with final year degree students in business studies is to compare and contrast each learner's understanding of CSR, a topic that is transdisciplinary in

20

nature, and one that can be dependent on individual experience. The activity involves the students representing through freehand drawings their personal, non-verbal, interpretation of what they understand CSR to mean.

We found that there was an awareness of CSR amongst the participating students. This is hardly surprising given the recent public scrutiny and debate on CSR issues in corporate organisations, in Ireland, particularly in the banking sector. The findings of this study suggest that there is still some work to do in building sustainable competencies and enthusiasm in students in understanding CSR and its application in business. It is particularly interesting that all of the drawings produced by the students involve third parties. Not a single student inserted themselves, or their families, into their drawings. It was not that surprising that some of the images created by students seemed to conflate civic engagement with CSR, given the fact that the business curriculum now includes civic engagement as an embedded component in many modules. Nevertheless, this conflation occurred despite the fact that much public debate has occurred on the importance of understanding CSR and its impact on corporations and wider society.

Several implications can be taken from this study. Describing CSR pictorially forced the participating students to think about what CSR is, for them, at its essence. The images that they produced showed that they absorbed a significant amount of knowledge and understanding of CSR from the world around them. With Waltz (1979) defining theory as a picture that is mentally formed of a bounded realm (Corry, 2010), the students were, through their drawings, creating their own theories of CSR. However, there is the need for further support and encouragement for students to participate in creating a culture of 'engaged scholarship' to facilitate further partnership, collaboration, knowledge sharing and knowledge

21

transfer, as well as sharing of resources between academic and business (and charitable) communities. We need to invigorate the student body to appreciate that higher education goes beyond preparing students for the labour market; it is about preparing them to be active, responsible and socially aware citizens. We will not create engaged citizens through teaching alone; we need to continue to create an environment where there is mutual appreciation of and respect for, differing traditions, identities and understanding.

22

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26

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27