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Making sense of CSR: translation between setters, enforcers and enactors

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Citation: WATTS, G., DAINTY, A.R.J. and FERNIE, S., 2015. Making Sense of CSR: translation between setters, enforcers and enactors. Presented at the International OFEL Conference on Governance, Management and Entrepreneurship, Zagreb, Croatia, 17-18th. April, pp. 59-77.

Additional Information:

- This is a conference paper.

Metadata Record: <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/20407>

Version: Accepted for publication

Publisher: CIRU

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Please cite the published version.

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies are mobilised by organisations as a way of rectifying negative impacts of their business activity, improving reputation and making positive differences to society, the economy and the environment. Arguably, CSR strategies are set by Strategic management which are then interpreted, enforced and diffused by middle management. Such enforcement and diffusion is then further interpreted and enacted by operational staff. It cannot be assumed that strategic management (*setters*), middle management (*enforcers*) and operational staff (*enactors*) interpret and make sense of CSR in the same way, nor can it be assumed what is enacted, matches what was envisaged by the setters.

Sensemaking is a continuous process of understanding individuals experience when faced with new information. In order to explore the on-going hierarchal process of interpretation when enacting a CSR strategy, a sensemaking lens is adopted to investigate the understandings, motivations and behaviours within a national construction organisation. Qualitative interviews were conducted with various practitioners in an attempt to discover how different levels of the organisational hierarchy made sense of a CSR strategy. Drawing from Weick's (1995) seven principles of sensemaking, analysis of the qualitative data revealed sensemaking to differ across those who set, enforce and enact CSR strategies. The research confirms arguments about the way strategies are typically assumed to diffuse and also draws in arguments regarding the separation between formulation and implementation of strategies.

Keywords: CSR strategy, Organisational change, Sensemaking,

Track: Governance.

Word count: 6,615

1.0 Introduction

Evidence suggests that the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) enacted by operational staff within an organisation is not always the same as what is set by those at the top of the organisational hierarchy (Murray and Dainty, 2009; Balogun and Johnson, 2005). This paper aims to ascertain why this phenomena occurs, and asks is it a result of the way the CSR strategy is translated through organisational communication from the top level setters through the middle management enforcers to the operational level enactors.

The concern of the business community for society can be traced back centuries (Carroll, 1999), but the concept wasn't a mainstream consideration in the public consciousness until the 1930's (Isa, 2012; Green, 2009; Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Blowfield and Murray, 2011). Bowen (1953) spearheaded the debate into the modern era (Carroll, 1979; Waddock and Cochran, 1985) when attempts to define CSR first developed (Carroll, 1999) and the term was introduced into common business terminology (Griffith, 2011). From an organisations point of view CSR focuses on both harm caused by the organisation itself (Wood, 1991; Fitch, 1976) and on rectifying larger social problems (Eilbert and Parker, 1973; Carroll, 1999)

Arguments around defining CSR have grown in recent years increasing both the number and variety of definitions available (Blowfield and Murray, 2011). However, at present there is no widely agreed and accepted definition (Zhao et al, 2012; Petrovic-Lazarevic, 2007) but it is argued that organisations are aware of what CSR means to them (Griffith, 2011). This paper uses a multi-part definition of CSR proposed by Carroll (1999).

The benefits of organisations engaging in CSR activities include an increased competitive advantage (Arjalies and Mundy, 2013) through actions such a positive effect on consumer purchasing habits (Oberseder et al, 2013; Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010). When an organisation does engage with CSR it does so through the use of setting strategies (Van der Heijden, Driessen and Cramer, 2010), with CSR then becoming a form of strategic change (Moodley and Preece, 2009). Further, Sonenshein (2010) goes on to show that the successful implementation of strategic change is of paramount importance for organisational success.

We can see that CSR as strategic change is set by top management levels (Ericson, 2011; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), however middle management level employees also play an important role in the success of the strategic change implementation (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010) through delivering this change to operational level employees (Huy, 2002). Research shows that strategic management (*setters*), middle management (*enforcers*) and operational staff (*enactors*) interpret and make sense of CSR in different ways (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007), and that what is enacted, does not always match what was envisaged by the setters (Bartunek et al, 2006; Balogun and Johnson, 2005).

In his study Ericson (2001) found that when organisations face change, both employees individual and shared understandings are challenged, with research by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) concluding strategic change leads to the occurrence of both sensemaking and sensegiving. Sensemaking is the making of sense individuals experience when faced with new, unknown and complex information (Weick, 1995; Klein, Moon and Hoffman, 2006; Russell and Stanley, 2004), with sensegiving the process individuals practice in attempting to influence the sensemaker (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Filstad, 2014). Research on organisational change has confirmed that both sensemaking and sensegiving are crucial in

ensuring similar understandings of change are reached between the different hierarchical levels of an organisation (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007).

Previous research has adopted a sensemaking lens to review CSR from an organisational perspective (Basu and Palazzo, 2008) and the sensemaking of individuals at single and numerous hierarchical levels has been explored extensively (Filstad, 2014; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). This paper is one of the first to explore the on-going hierarchical process of interpretation individuals in a single organisation experience when setting, enforcing and enacting a CSR strategy.

This paper traces the theoretical and industrial based history of CSR and shows how a CSR strategy constitutes organisational change. A sensemaking lens is then adopted as qualitative interviews are utilised drawing upon Weick's (1995) seven principles of sensemaking to investigate the understandings, interpretations and beliefs of CSR that strategy setters, enforcers and enactors have within a national construction organisation to discover how different levels of the organisational hierarchy make sense of the same CSR strategy. The methodological approach taken is outlined and the results of the interviews are presented and divided into key findings for each hierarchical level; strategy setters, enforcers and enactors.

2.0 CSR as Organisational Change

The concern of the business community for society can be traced back centuries (Carroll (1999) and sometimes feels like an archaeological quest with examples as far back as the Roman times (Blowfield and Murray, 2011). Barthorpe (2010) summarised a more recent history with Derbyshire cotton mill owners developing good quality housing and schools for their workers in 1776. Isa (2012) brings the discussion into the last century by observing that debates around CSR emerged in the Great Depression of the 1930's, a point which is echoed by Green (2009).

Both Carroll (1979) and Wartick & Cochran (1985) believe that it was Bowen (1953) who began the debate about social responsibility and the modern era of CSR which had led to both business and academics contributing to the discussion to define the concept (Wartick & Cochran, 1985; Carroll, 1999). It was during this time that the concept of CSR was also first introduced into common business terminology (Griffith, 2011) with the main focus the business's responsibility to society (Madrakhimova, 2013).

In the 1960's CSR arguments began to emerge and develop from two main categories: academic and industry. Academically CSR matured (Green, 2009) with significant attempts made to formalise and define it (Carroll, 1999). However, from an industry point of view the focus shifted to the business individual and how actions taken by businessmen could benefit society beyond their own financial interest (Davis, 1960). Research by Montiel (2008) showed that academic articles regarding CSR began to appear more widely in the 1970's, with the area moving increasingly more toward the theoretical side with bodies of research being conducted to investigate and reinforce understandings (Wood, 1991). In the 1980's the business and social interests of the company became closer, and by the end of the 1990's the term CSR was universally accepted (Madrakhimova, 2013).

However, there has never been an accepted agreement on what the term CSR means, and the growing interest in the area has only served to increase both the number and variety of definitions (Blowfield and Murray, 2011), with the variety of views available reflecting the

confusing and contradictory opinions held (Montiel, 2008). This had led to the ascribed meaning evolving over time, and it will continue to do so as it is shaped by the prevailing political discourse (Green, 2009). At present a comprehensive conceptualisation is still being actively debated (Oberseder et al, 2013) but no agreed explanation as to what the term CSR even relates to has been widely accepted (Zhao et al, 2012; Petrovic-Lazarevic 2007).

Carroll (1983) built upon a definition he first proposed in 1979 which consisted of four key parts: economic, legal, ethical and voluntary. He stated that to comply with CSR a business needed to be economically profitable, as well as working within the law and supporting society (Carroll 1999). Differing combinations of these four parts have been further built upon and featured in several CSR definitions over the years (Murray and Dainty, 2009; Zhao et al, 2012). Definitions have also focused on the environment (Griffith, 2011; Wood, 1991b; Arjalies and Mundy, 2013; Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010), society (Petrovic-Lazarevic, 2007, Golob, Lah and Jancic, 2008; Kang, Lee and Huh, 2010), ethics (Maon, Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010), and extending beyond but acting within the law (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001) which has led to CSR being considered an 'umbrella' term integrating the variety of terminology available (Barthorpe, 2010). The concept of CSR is wide ranging (Van der Heijden, Driessen and Cramer, 2010) with the motivations to take part varying from company to company (Morton et al, 2011), however, despite the lack of a firm theoretical definition of CSR, it is argued that organisations are aware of what CSR means to them (Griffith 2011).

The benefits of organisations engaging in CSR activities include an increased competitive advantage (Arjalies and Mundy, 2013) through actions such as a positive effect on consumer purchasing habits (Oberseder, Schlegelmilch and Murphy, 2013; Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010). Research has also shown that CSR is viewed as a priority for organisations and a 'win-win' (Maon, Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010) with those accepting their responsibilities doing so to gain strategic advantage (Brammer et al, 2007). Organisations that embrace CSR tend to integrate it as a core business activity (Randles and Price, 2009) and set strategies in order to achieve their CSR goals (Saeidi et al, 2014; Carroll and Shabana, 2010). These strategies are essential for business reinvigoration (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Sonenshein, 2010), with research agreeing that a new organisational strategy is experienced as a change by the individuals within that organisation (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Ericson, 2001; Sonenshein, 2010; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007). However, if the change is not balanced with retaining some continuity of existing processes (Huy, 2002), overlaps with another change strategy (Bartunek et al, 2006), or is unclear or implemented incorrectly it can result in disastrous consequences for the organisation, and confusion, negative emotions, uncertainty and ambiguity for staff (Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007; Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Sonenshein, 2010; Huy, 2002). Bartunek et al (2006) also found that sporadic, insufficient and poorly timed communications have a negative impact within an organisation, and unclear information can result in poor sensemaking occurring resulting in the change strategy being interpreted in different ways (Van der Heijden, Driessen and Cramer, 2010) with collective meanings growing too diverse to coordinate (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010) which can mean the strategy has unintended consequences (Balogun and Johnson, 2005).

In order to prevent the CSR strategy failing, clear communication between hierarchal levels is needed to successfully set and implement change (Filstad, 2014). This can be achieved through successful communication (both sensemaking and sensegiving) (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005; Van der Heijden, Driessen and Cramer, 2010) as via communication employees share information and reach mutual understandings (Rogers and Kincaid, 1981)

which is imperative with CSR strategies (Golob et al, 2014). When faced with strategic change individuals are forced to find new meanings (Sonenshein, 2010) and are motivated to make sense of the change (Bartunek et al, 2006), which then triggers a sensemaking process (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007; Maitlis, 2005; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). The above confirms that CSR strategies lead to organisational change (Ven der Heijden et al, 2010) and change is a catalyst for the process of sensemaking to occur (Weick, 1995).

3.0 Sensemaking and Sensegiving

Sensemaking is the making of sense individuals experience when faced with new, unknown and complex information (Weick, 1995; Klein, Moon and Hoffman, 2006; Russell and Stanley, 2004). It underpins all organisations (Marshall, 2014) and was brought to prominence by Karl Weick (1995). It is generally understood to be a cognitive process (Russell and Stanley, 2004; Brown, 2000; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005; Golob et al, 2014) with seven key characteristics (Marshall, 2014; Weick, 1995; Weber and Glynn, 2006).

The first characteristic of sensemaking is grounded in identity construction. This characteristic draws upon a number of meanings at the same time (Thurlow and Helms Mills, 2009) and refers to an individual's prior experience (Ericson, 2001). It has been described as at the root of sensemaking influencing all other characteristics (Helms Mills, 2003), which is confirmed in research by Russell and Slanelly (2004) who conclude that an individual's background knowledge and experience contributes to their sensemaking process.

Retrospective is the second characteristic, as it is argued that sense cannot be fully made of a situation until it has occurred and been reflected upon (Pye, 2005; Seligman; 2006) it is the understanding gained through a self-reflective process which contributes to a full understanding of an occurrence (Thurlow and Helms Mills, 2009).

Enactive of sensible environments is a characteristic that argues a reciprocal relationship exists between an individual and their external environment, which could provide either a positive or negative influence on the sensemaking situation as if incorrect material goes in, incorrect material comes out (Seligman, 2006).

The importance of the social characteristic to an individual's sensemaking is illustrated throughout the literature (Gephart, Steier and Lawrence, 1990; Steinhorsson and Soderholm, 2002; Pye, 2005) with arguments suggesting that meaning itself is a socially constructed phenomenon (Gioia and Thomas, 1996) and sense of a situation being reached only when meanings are shared and mutually discussed (Brown, 2000).

It is said that sensemaking is continuous as it is a process that never stops, with the ongoing nature of sensemaking a key characteristic (Taylor and Van Every, 2000; Steinhorsson and Soderholm, 2002; Weick, 1995; Seligman, 2006), which is linked closely with the retrospective characteristic of sensemaking (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld; 2005).

Cues are picked up by an individual from their surrounding environment (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010) and can be both physical and social (Yeo, 2013) which help the individual interpret information and develop meanings, connecting cues to develop an account of what is going on around them (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). Focused on and by extracted cues is

an important characteristic in sensemaking as interpreted cues then impact upon how sense is made in the future as they shape the individual's sensemaking (Seligman, 2006).

Driven by plausibility rather than accuracy is the seventh characteristic of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). An individual's sensemaking starts with a search for what is accurate but settles for information discovered that is plausible, they understand, is based on what they have discovered and can stand up to criticism (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005; Pye, 2005).

Sensemaking as a process occurs both before and after decision-making (Maitlis, 2005) with action required before sense can be fully made (Weber and Glynn, 2006) with one or more of the characteristics playing a larger role at different times (Thurlow and Helms Mills, 2009).

Sensegiving is a term used to describe those who attempt to influence an individual's sensemaking process and understanding of a subject (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Filstad, 2014). It is a process whereby an individual communicates with another with the intention of aiding their understanding (Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). Sensegiving is viewed as a closely linked and fundamental concept in the assistance of sensemaking within organisations (Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis, 2005). Research has shown that different sorts of sensegiving can result in different sorts of sensemaking occurring (Maitlis, 2005), that an individual's experience of sensemaking influences their own sensegiving activities (Filstad, 2014; Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007) and that sensegiving is only engaged in when those who set strategies believe them to be unclear (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007). Research confirms that sensegiving is critical in strategic change (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) and that managers need to allow for sensegiving to others to enable sensemaking to occur (Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007).

4.0 Strategy Setters

By setting change strategies such as CSR, Senior Managers provide the blueprint for organisational change (Balogun and Johnson, 2005) and help the sensemaking of those below through the creation and sharing of a vision (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) with research showing that both effective sensemaking and sensegiving are key factors in whether the understandings of the CSR strategy at lower hierarchical levels of the organisation match those who set it (Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007; Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Maitlis, 2005). Therefore setters need to be aware they may hold different views towards a change strategy compared with those who enforce and enact it (Bartunek et al, 2006) with research showing that even between those who set the change there can be contradictions in how it is interpreted (Filstad, 2014).

Studies have shown that gaps are present in the understandings of organisational change between those who set the strategies and those who enforce them (Bartunek et al, 2006; Balogun and Johnson, 2004) as setters allow enforcers to construct their own understandings (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010). This could be potentially problematic as individuals at different hierarchical positions are likely to interpret similar information differently (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991) even if the language used is the same (Thurlow and Helms Mills, 2009) with lower hierarchical levels potentially enforcing and enacting a different type of change strategy from what was set (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010).

This could lead to strategic ambiguity where those who interpret the strategic change do so differently but believe they are in unison (Sonenshein, 2010). Those who set the strategies

need to be aware of this fact as different meanings within the organisation could give rise to negative views and tension (Ericson, 2001) as research has shown that situations in which setters only participated in low levels of sensegiving led to fewer and less controlled organisational sensemaking (Maitlis, 2005). However, one argument against this is that setters should intentionally leave CSR strategies vague and participate in low levels of sensegiving as by not fully making sense of the strategy, enforcers and enactors are uncertain about the exact requirements and will therefore perform better as they aspire to reach the highest standards they can (Christensen, Morsing, Thyssen, 2013).

4.1 Strategy Enforcers

The position of enforcers (middle managers) in the sensemaking of the organisation has been described as of key importance (Balogun and Johnson, 2005) but that they have little involvement and power in the setting of the strategy, only in implementing and disseminating information (Balogun and Johnson, 2004). Huy (2002) confirms this opinion but believes that the role of middle managers in organisational change has been overlooked in the literature to date. However, the majority of literature and past research on sensemaking of strategic organisational change has been on the actions and experience of those middle managers who enforce the change (Beck and Plowman, 2009; Bartunek et al, 2006; Balogun and Johnson, 2004; Huy, 2002).

It is argued that the role enforcer's play in the sensemaking of others within the organisation is crucial (Beck and Plowman, 2009) as strategic change is usually implemented top down requiring enforcers to play a pivotal role and to actively sensemake information from setters above and sensegive to enactors below (Bartunek et al, 2006; Balogun and Johnson, 2006; Beck and Plowman, 2009). Research by Filstad (2014) found that enforcers can be overlooked by strategy setters in terms of sensegiving, as setters instead focus on the sensemaking requirements of enactors. This results in the enforcers repeating instructions verbatim leading to poor organisational communication and a low appreciation of the change strategy as enforcers don't fully understand it, and enactors believe enforcers are simply following orders (Filstad, 2014). However, if enforcers do make sense of the strategy for themselves it would improve the sensemaking of the organisation leading to fewer mistakes (Beck and Plowman, 2009) as enforcers can help reduce negative emotions in enactors (Huy, 2002) and better tailor communications to meet the needs of enactors (Sonenshein, 2010).

4.2 Strategy Enactors

If enactors have a lack of understanding of the change strategy they can view the change as a pressured challenge placing increasing demands on their time, however, this can be reduced if middle managers fully understood the change strategy and passed on this information via sensegiving (Filstad, 2014). It's important that enactors feel engaged with CSR change strategies as all employees can make positive contributions to organisational change (Yeo, 2013) and those who participate in organisational change rate it higher, have increased positive emotions, and have a higher perception of their own quality of life than those who don't (Bartunek et al, 2006; Yeo, 2013). A large part of the sense enactors can make of a CSR strategy is down to the performance of enforcers sensegiving abilities (Filstad, 2014) which is therefore critical as in most organisational change strategies it is the enactors who are responsible for implementing the bulk of the work (Maitlis and Sonenshein, 2010).

The above literature shows the importance of each hierarchical level within an organisation for a strategic change such as CSR. Each level is important in implementing the change (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007; Maitlis, 2005; Filstad, 2014), however, the focus of several papers seems to be at only one hierarchical level (Beck and Plowman, 2009; Bartunek et al, 2006; Huy, 2002) with some using the middle management (enforcers) views as representative of the whole organisation interchanging the terminology of manager and organisation (Beck and Plowman, 2009). We can see that the participation of employees across the organisational hierarchy in sensegiving impacts the sensemaking that occurs with regards to the CSR strategic change (Bartunek et al, 2006) and that the successful management of organisational change is down to the communication between staff of all levels. Next the methodology of the study is outlined before the findings are reported, discussed and compared with the conclusions drawn from the literature.

5.0 Methodology

The research is primarily ethnographic in methodology as it studies the everyday occurrences of the organisation members. It was decided qualitative data would be collected as an in-depth understanding of the participant's views was required (Creswell, 2013), and it would allow issues to be discussed in detail and deeper understandings and motivations to be ascertained. As a research technique, interviews are a way of collecting qualitative data (Balogun and Johnson, 2004) and have been extensively used to study both organisational change (Sonenshein, 2010; Maitlis, 2005) and sensemaking (Pye, 2005; Stensaker and Falkenberg, 2007; Gioia and Thomas, 1996). It has been argued that mainly quantitative data collection methods have been used in CSR fields (Van der Heijden, Driessen and Cramer, 2010; Lockett, Moon and Visser, 2006), however, numerous CSR studies have also utilised qualitative research techniques (Angus-Leppan, Metcalf and Benn, 2010; Fassin, Van Rossem and Buelens, 2011). Conducting interviews empowered the participants to freely discuss a wide range of issues (Creswell, 2013). They allowed individuals to use their own words when answering questions (Edwards et al, 1997) allowing for a greater insight to be gained, to focus on the participant's perspective (Bryman, 2012) and to encourage long responses to questions (Arjalies and Mundy, 2013). Semi-structured interviews were selected in an attempt to ensure the discussions remained broadly focused on the intended areas (Ericson, 2001) and to allow data analysis to be conducted in a timely and efficient manner as previous research which employed unstructured interviews reported having several hundred pages of notes to review (Gephart, Steier and Lawrence, 1990). The focus of the interviews was how the participant understood the CSR strategy, how this understanding was created, and their interactions with colleagues and perceptions of other staff's interpretation and motivations behind the strategy. The interview questions were based around the seven characteristics of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) and were purposefully selected to generate meaningful discussion around the participant's personal views from which an understanding could be elicited during analysis of the data.

This study was based within a single UK national construction organisation, with the staff member's interpretation and understanding of a single CSR strategy assessed at three hierarchical levels utilising the lens of sensemaking. The strategy is a nationwide work experience programme aimed at recruiting participants aged 14+. It provides a trade based mentor (enactor) who volunteers to participate with the strategy and works with each participant for a set duration. The aim of this strategy is to increase the amount of 'job ready' individuals from the communities in which the organisation operates, which in turn reduces unemployment, and improves the standard of applicants applying for apprentice positions.

Staff members involved with the CSR strategy were identified as they could offer the most information about the research focus (Creswell, 2013), before being purposefully grouped together into strategy setters, enforcers and enactors to ensure participant responses would be relevant (Bryman, 2012) as the views of individuals within these three hierarchical levels would be compared. A method of convenience sampling was then undertaken as all individuals from each hierarchical level were contacted and those who were immediately available to participate in an interview were used (Walliman, 2004). The participants were from a wide geographical spread across the UK, and a total of 17 interviews were conducted over a two-month period (2 With setters, 7 with enforcers and 8 with enactors). The lower levels of interviews conducted with those who set the strategy reflects the population numbers of staff at that level within the organisational hierarchy, which itself reflects a pyramid structure. The average duration of each interview was an hour with permission gained from each participant before the interview commenced. The outline of the study and purpose of the interviews was discussed and each participant's anonymity confirmed. Due to this anonymity and the relatively few employees at each geographical location it was impossible to separate the interviews by region without the interviewees being identifiable.

6.0 Results

Once the interviews were complete results from those within the same hierarchical level were collated to identify any trends, consistencies and differences in the understanding and interpretation of the CSR strategy. The results from each of the three hierarchical levels were then compared against one another to identify if the understanding of the CSR strategy was different dependent on the organisational hierarchical level of the individual. The findings of the research are discussed below divided into the key topics identified, and the opinions of the strategy setters, enforcers and enactors are discussed within each topic. The chosen method of communication between the hierarchical levels is discussed first as it was found this impacted on the understandings and interpretations individual's formed of the strategy.

6.1 Top down Communication

Those who set the strategy believe it is communicated and driven by a top down approach. There is a preference amongst setters for verbal and face-to-face communication, and they believe this should also be done throughout the organisational hierarchy as it aids understanding of the strategy, but are realistic in that time restraints can prevent this from occurring. Setters also disseminate information to only a few people below them in the hierarchy and expect it to be repeated and driven downwards by the enforcers whom they see as key to the strategy success. The main communication method of setters to enforcers was verbal.

This communication preference mirrors that of a majority of enforcers who like to receive information concerning the strategy from setters verbally. Some enforcers do prefer email communications as they can refer to them at a later date for clarity, however, they reported this did not happen often. This led to a mixed opinion of the relationship that exists between setters and enforcers, with those enforcers whose primary communication preference was not met felt professionally isolated and unsupported in relation to delivering the strategy, whereas enforcers who received communication in the form they preferred reported better and closer working relationships with setters, and showed a greater understanding of the strategy itself. When communicating down the organisational hierarchy to enactors, enforcers once again showed a difference in individual preference for the communication method used. The majority of enforcers reported that they preferred verbal communication as it allowed for a

clearer understanding to be reached, with some attending regular meetings to increase the number of enactors participating with the strategy. However, some enforcers reported little direct communication with enactors, and when this did occur it was through the use of email as it was easier. A consistency across all interviews with enforcers was that when verbal communication was utilised with enactors, they reported higher levels of responses compared with those who used email communication only.

Enactors preferred verbal communication to receive information regarding the strategy as it allowed them to proceed with tasks with minimal disruption to their day. During the interview some enactors commented they had little or no access to emails and literature concerning the strategy, but that literature would be good as a way of informing new enactors of the strategy as there was little verbal contact between them on a daily basis with most working in isolation.

6.2 What is the Strategy

The verbal communication down the organisational hierarchy resulted in the core message of the strategy being passed on correctly as all hierarchal levels understood its key purpose. There was a general consensus at each hierarchal level as to what the purpose of the strategy was. However, from comparison of the interview questions between the hierarchal levels, knowledge and opinion of the 'wider societal' impacts of the strategy reduce as the strategy is communicated downwards. Those who set the strategy consider it to have a wider positive impact on society and other stakeholders, compared to the enforcers who only see limited wider benefit. The wider benefits then almost disappear according to enactors, who only see the more immediate impacts such as improving skills and experience on an individual participant level, with few possible organisational benefits discussed. The larger impacts on the organisation, clients and communities were not raised by enactors.

This confirms that as the strategy is verbally communicated top down the benefits associated with it are reduced to what is in the individual's own immediate surrounding, and with a lack of literature to reinforce the wider stakeholder benefits, discrepancies appeared between the different levels when asked about the motivations behind the strategy creation, as one disadvantage to verbal communication is the original message can become distorted (Turkalj and Fosic, 2009).

6.3 Motivation behind the Strategy

The interviews show that the key motivation behind the CSR strategy was effectively communicated down the organisation and understood at each hierarchal level. However, as the message translated through the organisational hierarchy a variety of interpretations appeared as to what the additional motivations were. Those who set the strategy agreed the motivation behind doing so was to create a positive difference in the communities the organisation operates, and target the large skills gap the construction industry currently faces. They also agree that meeting the needs of clients, the expectations of wider society, and leaving a lasting legacy also played a role in the setting of the strategy.

The general theme of the organisation's motivation behind the strategy was the same when interviewing all the enforcers; to help the communities in which the organisation operates. However, there was no consensus with regards to the details of the strategy, with enforcers each having differing interpretations of additional organisational motivations. PR reasons were highlighted by several enforcers, as was the ability to retain knowledge within the organisation and the benefit of creating their own workforce. Each enforcer had interpreted

and made sense of the motivations behind the strategy in an individual way and it seemed that prior knowledge of existing alternative strategies from other organisations played a large part in the sensemaking each enforcer made of the strategy.

The same can be said for enactors as they agreed with the main strategy motivations both setters and enforcers mentioned, but several also listed motivations unique to this hierarchal level such as the reclaiming of monies from Government per strategy participant. The general consensus between enactors was the strategy equally served the interests of the organisation as it did the interests of the communities and wider society. However, the motivation behind the strategy in general was not something any enactors actively thought about or discussed with colleagues, with each only focused upon their own responsibilities and requirements in relation to delivering the strategy on a daily basis.

6.4 Bottom-up Communication

When receiving information from enforcers, setters preferred it to be verbal as it allowed them to discover more qualitative benefits of the strategy. However, time restraints resulted in primarily quantitative information received in the form of reports that reduced the information to 'high level' statistics only. Based on the information they received setters felt all enforcers were passionate and viewed them as the driving force behind the strategy success. They also feel the strategy is currently effective but can be improved. The main focus of this improvement is greater information on what happens to participants once they have finished the work experience, and to ensure they go onto something positive. However, all potential improvements raised by setters in the interviews concerned the participant's experience as participants are the focus of the strategy, but nothing was discussed with regards to possible improvements required for the way information was reported or the experience of the enforcers and enactors when delivering the strategy.

Most enforcers preferred to ask verbal questions of setters for clarity on the strategy but delivered updates on progress in the form of reports as they believed this to be the best way to communicate the key quantitative information required to meet the targets of setters. The interview responses are mixed with regards to how enforcers feel about current communication between themselves and setters, but a correlation can be seen that enforcers who prefer verbal communication report having a better relationship with setters and greater access to and awareness of strategy supporting literature. Those who prefer email communication report feeling isolated, have poorer relationships with those above in the hierarchy, and are less likely to be aware of and have access to strategy supporting literature. All enforcers believe setters to be passionate and enthusiastic but some report that regular meetings do not occur anymore which reduces the chance for the enforcers to provide feedback to setters. When receiving communications from enactors, the majority of enforcers feel verbal is best for clarity, but a few report a preference for email for ease of response.

Enactors also agree a preference for verbal communication when reporting to enforcers but state the opportunity to do so is limited. The interviews show that even though both parties at the lower end of the organisational hierarchy prefer verbal communication, important items are not discussed, as there are competing opinions as to why some enactors do not get involved in the strategy. The enactors are the only level of the organisational hierarchy who have choice over their strategy participation, and it is a job of enforcers to 'recruit' enactors. A consistently discussed reason for lack of strategy participation from the interviews with enactors is that working with a work experience participant can be time consuming and therefore slow down daily progress, and the enactors have a daily target programme for work

to achieve which is linked to a financial bonus. This target is not amended for participation with the strategy. Another reason enactors highlighted to explain why some colleagues don't participate with the strategy is a lack of awareness due to little contact with enforcers.

When questioning the enforcers of the reasons some enactors do not participate with the strategy, there was a variety of responses including enactors not seeing the wider organisational benefits, not understanding the strategy benefits, and not seeing the strategy importance. However, some enforcers did discuss the potential programme of work conflict and most enforcers stated that the majority of enactors did understand and participate with the strategy fully.

Again this shows the upwards communication between enactors and enforcers is intermittent with some reporting clear and efficient lines of communication which was evidenced by consistent conversation points in the separate hierarchal level interviews such as an agreement of common problems and that the overall strategy is effective and makes a real and positive difference to the lives of participants. However, other enactors reported poor lines of communication, which was evidenced in the differing and conflicting opinions of why some enactors don't get involved with the strategy, and confirms arguments of how a lack of understanding of the strategy can lead to an increase in the pressures and demands enactors believe they may face (Filstad, 2014), and situations where enforcers did not participate in sensegiving led to less sensemaking occurring for enactors (Maitlis, 2005).

7.0 Research Findings, Limitations, and Recommendations for Future

The findings of this research suggest that the understanding of what the key message behind the CSR strategy is, and the motivation for its creation is communicated down the organisation effectively with an accurate awareness at all hierarchal levels. The chosen primary method to both give and receive communications for the majority of staff at all levels is verbal, and generally the top down communication, and strategy itself is considered a success by staff. However, the strategy is translated as it passes through the organisation and knowledge of the wider benefits are reduced to what that level of employee finds immediately applicable to their day-to-day job role. We can therefore conclude that sensemaking does occur and is effective at all hierarchal levels, but without consistent literature to back up the sensegiving of verbal communication, the sensemaking of enforcers is slightly reduced and less controlled compared to the intentions of setters, and the sensemaking of enactors is reduced further compared with enforcers, reinforcing arguments outlined by Maitlis (2005). For individuals that prefer non-verbal communication methods, they report feeling more isolated, having a more distant relationship with those immediately above in the hierarchy, and have a lack of awareness of available strategy supporting information compared to those who prefer and receive verbal communication, confirming arguments that an increased participation with a strategic change increases the positive emotions experienced compared to those who don't participate (Bartunek et al, 2006; Yeo, 2013).

Bottom up communication within the organisation is less effective concerning the CSR strategy and can be traced to a failure of effective sensegiving by enactors to enforcers and then enforcers to setters. This lack of effective sensegiving impairs each hierarchal level's ability to sensemake the views of those staff below correctly, findings which confirm research by Filstad (2014).

We can conclude that top down communication is more effective than bottom up communication with regards to the CSR strategy. This is due to effective sensegiving of information when communication is top down which facilitates effective sensemaking, and a failure to effectively sensegive when communicating bottom up which results in poor and incomplete sensemaking occurring. However, the sensegiving can be improved at all hierarchal levels as it is currently delivered inconsistently between staff, reinforcing findings in the literature that there are gaps in the understandings of organisational change between those who set the strategies and those who enforce them (Bartunek et al, 2006; Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

The findings of this research suggest that setters sensegive to enforcers who in turn interpret and sensegive to enactors, which allows sensemaking to occur at each hierarchal level regarding the CSR strategy. However, communications regarding this strategy are translated down the organisation verbally which leads to the original message becoming distorted (Turkalj and Fosis, 2009). To improve the effectiveness of top down communication both enforcers and enactors believe strategy supporting literature would be beneficial. It would also be beneficial for setters to directly engage more with enforcers who in turn could increase their direct engagement with enactors to reduce feelings of isolation and increase the information exchange which can lead to higher feelings of engagement with the CSR strategy and positive contributions from all employees (Yeo, 2013).

This research has contributed to the understandings of how sensemaking and sensegiving occur in an organisational setting, reinforced current theoretical conclusions, and provided an insight into how CSR theory is diffused within large organisations.

The main limitation of the research was the lack of interviews with enactors who did not participate in the strategy. All hierarchal levels referenced this group of employees, with differing opinions as to why they were not actively involved with the strategy, but they were not included within the interview sample due to time and logistical limitations. More validity could be added to future research findings if enactors falling within this category were also interviewed.

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