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QUALITY PAPER

The relationship between EFQM levels of excellence and CSR development

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to analyse the level of corporate social responsibility (CSR) development, in accordance with the dimensions of Maon *et al.*'s (2010) model, which could be achieved when organisations adopt the EFQM model, as well as how the EFQM model can foster this CSR development.

Design/methodology/approach – The research method chosen was a qualitative methodology involving multiple case studies. The empirical research relies on an in-depth study of four cases of organisations recognised by the EFQM model in Spain.

Findings – The findings show that, although a higher commitment to the EFQM model implies a greater level of CSR development, with the knowledge and attitudinal dimensions more developed than others, organisations still have to make CSR an internalised management ideology.

Research limitations/implications – The very nature of the process of EFQM assessment does not ensure uniformity in all aspects of management. Limitations that are inherent to case studies: factors that can be chosen by the researcher, such as geographical location, size, sector and ownership, can have an influence on the characteristics of the CSR practices that are found.

Practical implications – This study contributes to the literature on excellence by approaching the EFQM model as a tool to integrate CSR issues into management.

Social implications – A relationship between commitment to excellence and CSR development does exist.

Originality/value – To the best of the authors' knowledge, no previous analysis has been performed to address the potential relationship between CSR development in accordance with Maon *et al.*'s (2010) model and commitment to excellence.

Keywords CSR, Assessment, Maturity

Paper type Case study

1. Introduction

Although there is no single approach that incorporates quality management (QM) and corporate social responsibility (CSR), there are several frameworks that have combined both (Waddock and Bodwell, 2004). Among these frameworks, the EFQM excellence model, which is one of the most used business excellence model across European organisations (Araújo and Sampaio, 2014), provides best practices to take into account the impact that organisational activity has on society and to balance the needs of different stakeholders (McAdam and Leonard, 2003; Asif *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, Jasiulewicz-Kaczmarek (2014) found that the literature acknowledges that the approaches based on business excellence models, such as the EFQM model, are used by organisations for the integration of CSR into business processes. In this regards, representative papers may be Tokarcikova *et al.* (2014), who considered the EFQM model to be one of the most commonly used methods for

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evaluating CSR; Olaru *et al.* (2011) showed that how specific values of CSR are comprised into the EFQM excellence model; or Avlonas and Swannick (2009), who exhibited how organisations adopting the EFQM model are more likely to increase value for stakeholders that those not adopting the model. Even the EFQM (2015) launched various initiatives related to CSR, such as the recently published EFQM framework for sustainability.

While previous research has noted a relationship between the EFQM model and CSR, no study has been conducted to determine how organisations develop CSR practices by adopting the EFQM model, or how far they can go in this development. Some studies in the broader QM literature (e.g. Mohammad *et al.*, 2011) concluded that high commitment to excellence would entail an integrated adoption of practices, while organisations that reach a lower commitment to excellence are likely to exhibit a more piecemeal adoption. Hence, one may expect differences in the development of CSR practices depending on the commitment to excellence, since this is a transversal topic in the EFQM model, which may only be developed when an integrated adoption takes place.

In this context, the purpose of this study is to analyse the level of CSR development, in accordance with the dimensions of Maon *et al.*'s (2010) model, that could be achieved when organisations adopt the EFQM model, as well as how the EFQM model can foster this CSR development. In doing so, this paper contributes to the scientific assessment of the EFQM model by providing an analysis of how commitment to excellence can lead to an advanced CSR development, and could make it clear what kind of actions organisations need to develop in order to improve their CSR development. Accordingly, it sheds light on how much value can be produced by the adoption of the EFQM excellence model.

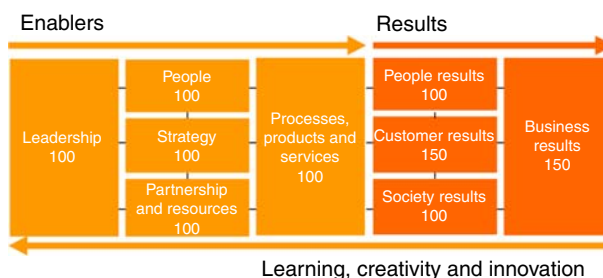
To reach our purpose, this paper is structured as follow. In Section 2, we outline the theoretical relationships that exist between the model of Maon *et al.* (2010) and the adoption of the EFQM excellence model. We will then go on to describe the research methodology used and to present the results of an empirical study aimed to explore the research formulated question. Finally, the findings from the study, its limitations and future lines of research are all discussed.

2. Adoption of the EFQM excellence model and consolidative CSR development

2.1 Levels of excellence according to the EFQM model

The EFQM excellence model offers a global vision of management that is oriented towards accomplishing balanced results for all the stakeholders (Bou *et al.*, 2009; EFQM, 2012). Figure 1 depicts the current EFQM excellence model as well as their criteria weights. This structure promotes an assessment of what an organisation does and the identification of what is actually achieved, thus enabling an evaluation of the progress an organisation is making towards excellence (Jayamaha *et al.*, 2009).

The EFQM launched a scheme of recognition to acknowledge firms that obtain a certain score using the EFQM model (1,000 points being the maximum score). This score is achieved



Source: Adapted from the EFQM (2012)

Figure 1. Criteria of the EFQM excellence model

after carrying out a thorough process of self-assessment followed by an external assessment in which the performance of the organisations is reviewed in each of the EFQM model criteria using the results-approach-deployment assessment and refinement assessment (EFQM, 2012). According to this recognition scheme, firms can be accredited at four levels: Committed to Excellence 200+; Recognised for Excellence 300+; Recognised for Excellence 400+; and Recognised for Excellence 500+ (if more than 200, 300, 400 and 500 points are obtained, respectively). This scheme of recognition fits the definition of maturity models given by Van Aken *et al.* (2005), who described them as the ones that demand the assessment of the performance of key systems of the entire organisation in order to create a high performance company. At the same time presents the idea of adopting the EFQM model as an evolutionary process in quite a clear way (Dale and Lascelles, 1997).

2.2 Consolidative CSR development based on the EFQM excellence model

The consolidative model of CSR development of Maon *et al.* (2010), represented in Table I, serves as a guide for organisations convinced of the need to integrate CSR within their management. Its more important contribution is that the model considers the path towards CSR as moving through three cultural phases – CSR reluctance, CSR grasp and CSR embedment – which range from an absolute rejection of it to an attitude of full integration with the organisation's other policies and programmes.

In a more detailed form, the authors consider CSR development as taking place in seven stages, each of which is characterised by a different level of integration of CSR within management and by a different level of development of distinct organisational characteristics grouped within the three dimensions proposed by the researchers: knowledge and attitudinal dimension, strategic dimension, and tactical and operational dimension.

Taking the model of Maon *et al.* (2010) as our starting point, we will analyse the level of maturity in CSR, that is, the stage of CSR development that the adoption of the EFQM model is able to attain. To achieve this aim, the analysis is based on the stage of CSR development that different levels of commitment to the EFQM model are capable of developing, as well as how the EFQM model can foster CSR development.

2.2.1 Capability-seeking stage and committed to excellence. The use of the EFQM model as a referent in management together with the experience of the organisation in the process of attaining the Commitment to Excellence 200+, which involves a process of self-assessment and the establishment of improvement plans, generates some organisational processes and values that reflect special attention towards stakeholders, which may place an organisation at stage 4 “capability-seeking” of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010) (see Table I). In accordance with this model, although there is an instrumental stakeholder culture, this stage can be considered the beginning of clear CSR management: the relationships with stakeholders are more interactive, there is an increased awareness of issues related to CSR and the reputational risks associated with leaving these questions aside. The authors such as Castka, Bamber, Bamber and Sharp (2004) had also taken the standard ISO 9001, which can be compared to a Committed to Excellence 200+[1], as the beginning of the path towards gaining an understanding of CSR.

Regarding the specific dimensions of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010), the support of top management to go on to stage 4 of CSR can be achieved with a level of excellence 200+, since the leadership and commitment of top management is fundamental and must be present in an organisation on using the EFQM model (Pedersen and Neergaard, 2008). This involvement of top management has repercussions on the stakeholders' relationship. The interactivity required by Maon *et al.* (2010) can be fostered by adopting the EFQM model, since using it as a management framework makes it possible to satisfy the needs of the different stakeholders in a balanced manner (McAdam and Leonard, 2003; Isaksson, 2006; Tari, 2011). An organisation that has adopted the model and obtained at least a

CSR cultural phase	Stage of CSR development	CSR view/ prominence in organisational culture	Dimensions of CSR development						Tactical and operational dimensions				
			Knowledge and attitudinal dimensions			Strategic dimensions			Transparency and reporting	Stakeholders relationship	Resources commitment	Structuring of CSR initiatives	Coordination of CSR issues
			Organisational sensitivity to CSR issues	Driver of CSR initiatives development	Support of top management	Social responsiveness	Rationale behind CSR initiatives	Performance objectives					
CSR cultural reluctance	1. Dismissing	Winning at any cost perspective/ None	Active engagement to CSR broader than financial benefits	None	Rejection	None	None	Black-box	Purely contractual	None	None	None	None
CSR cultural group	2. Self-protecting	Reputation and Philanthropy perspective CSR as marginal	Lack of CSR orientation perceived as potentially harming business issues	Piecemeal involvement	Strong defence	Limitation of potentially harming and uncontrolled criticisms	Resolution of problems as they occur	Justifying posture	Factual	Budget for problems as they occur	Activities	Public relations concern	
	3. Compliance-seeking	Requirements perspective CSR as worthy of interest	Growing awareness of CSR-related troubles to be avoided	Involvement in theory/ professed	Light-defence / Reaction	Compliance objectives	Minimisation of harmfulities/ Respect of evolving norms and regulatory requirements	Internal / Legal disclosure posture	Unilateral	Limited minimal funding	Policies	Functional	
	4. Capability-seeking/	Stakeholder management perspective/ CSR as influential	Growing awareness of CSR-related advantages to be gained	Fair involvement/ supportive	Accommodation/ response	License to operate	Anticipating new requirements and expectations/ Selective disclosure posture for CSR initiatives	Internal reporting/ Selective disclosure posture	Incentive	Generally sufficient but constant funding	Plans of action	Multi-functional	
	5. Caring/	Stakeholder dialogue perspective CSR as embedded	Knowledgeable CSR awareness	Commitment	Adaptation	Competitive advantage	Active management of CSR-related issues/ Definition of business-wide opportunities	Public reporting posture	Reciprocal influence	Dependable funding	Programmes	Cross-functional	
CSR cultural embedment	6. Strategising/	Sustainability perspective CSR as prevailing	Leadership objectives on CSR-related issues	Sound commitment	Strategic proactivity	Value proposition	Leading the development of sustainable business levers through CSR initiatives	Certified reporting posture	Collaborative	Substantial funding	Systems	Organisational realignment.	
	7. Transforming/	Change the game perspective/ CSR as ingrained	CSR as an internalised management ideology	Devotion	Proactivity	Enlarged finality – Societal change	Diffusion of CSR initiatives/ Maximisation of positive externalities	Fully transparent posture	Joint – innovation	Open-ended funding and resource commitment	Core business – CSR as business as usual	Institutionalisation	

Source: Authors' own creation based on Maon *et al.* (2010)

Table I. The consolidative model of CSR development

Committed to Excellence 200+ will be managing itself according to the fundamental concepts of excellence, which include the need to orientate oneself towards stakeholders such as customers, employees, suppliers, partners or the community in general as a way to achieve sustainable excellence.

With regard to transparency and reporting, the self-assessment process, which organisations have to undergo to attain the recognition, bestows upon an organisation an attitude of information and transparency or, in other words, accountability. As claimed by Alfaro *et al.* (2011, p. 855), the information provided from self-assessment “can be used to describe a large number of a priori hidden factors that favour the understanding of the whole organisation”. This attitude allows organisations to be inclined towards the submission of reports, which would place them in at least stage 4 of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010), a stage in which there is a turning point between a posture of justification and a posture of information. Moreover, as claimed by Jacobs and Suckling (2007), excellence models provide a basis for evaluating the progress that has been made towards previously established goals. In this sense, the creation and implementation of improvement plans, which are derived from the self-assessment needed to obtain the Committed to Excellence 200+, make it possible to develop a series of organisational routines and practices that foster the establishing of performance objectives and the structuring of initiatives in the form of action plans that answer to and anticipate the stakeholders’ expectations, which characterise an organisation located at stage 4 of CSR development.

2.2.2 Maon et al.’s more advanced stages and higher levels of excellence. From this fourth stage onwards, reaching higher commitment to excellence may lead to progressive leaps in the stages proposed by Maon *et al.* (2010), thus dragging the development of the management towards greater CSR commitments. This can be explained if we consider the assessment processes that organisations follow to increase the level of excellence, which allow knowledge to appear in the form of strengths, areas of improvement and action plans (Van der Wiele *et al.*, 2000; Balbastre *et al.*, 2005). Some researchers, such as Balbastre (2006) or Calvo-Mora *et al.* (2015), found that self-assessment against the EFQM model may foster a learning process thanks to both the establishment of a common knowledge through the use of the same reference model, and the continuous provision of information regarding processes and the use of methods to improve them. The assessment processes needed to achieve the EFQM recognition imply (e.g. Balbastre *et al.*, 2005; Tari, 2010) management commitment, the development of improvement plans and follow-up and the establishment of an organisational climate that supports the values and elements inherent to the process. Thus, an organisation that has completed successive self-assessment cycles in order to reach higher commitment to excellence would be an organisation in which knowledge has been generated and certain competencies related with management’s commitment or the setting of objectives and planning of actions have been developed.

If we examine the characteristics of the different stages of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010), we find that the commitment of management, the structuring of initiatives and the setting of objectives are the basic aspects that must be developed in order to advance in the commitment to CSR. Another basic element is the drafting of reports and transparency, which can also be carried out within the processes of self-assessment, since an organisation that aims to achieve any recognised for excellence is required to draft a conceptual report (CEG (Excellence in Management Club, Club Excelencia en Gestión), 2014) in which the organisation must detail the good management practices it employs and their link with the results. This exercise in transparency, typically just internal, will be reinforced if the organisation undertakes the practice of allowing access to this document to more stakeholders, for example, by posting it on its website.

In short, the dynamic process of self-assessment which has to be undertaken in order to reach higher levels of excellence can generate a process of learning and an organisational context that are conducive to higher levels of commitment to CSR. These expectations motivate our research question:

RQ1. What level of CSR development, following Maon *et al.*'s (2010) model, can be achieved by using the EFQM model as a management model and how can the EFQM model foster CSR development?

3. Research methods

The research method chosen was a qualitative methodology involving multiple case studies. This methodology is considered appropriate since a direct access to the organisations is needed in order to know the actual practices used in a real-life context. In selecting the sample, an explicit methodological design was chosen which embrace all the most relevant proposals from the academic literature, such as Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (1998). As part of this design, validity, reliability and consistency were taken into account in order to ensure the scientific quality of the study, following Yin (1994, 1998) and Maxwell (1996).

3.1 Sample

The case studies were chosen by searching for those which allowed a greater opportunity for learning. To prevent business sector to cause a distortion in the study, the authors decided to apply the principle of homogeneity (Patton, 1990). Hence, organisations from the same business area were chosen. The geographical area chosen was the Principality of Asturias in Spain, where an important increase in the number of organisations with recognitions has taken place (CEG (Excellence in Management Club, Club Excelencia en Gestión), 2011). One organisation per level of recognition was chosen: Autoridad Portuaria de Gijón (APG, Port Authority of the city of Gijón) (500+), INMER (400+), CTAI Ingeniería (300+) and Asturfeito (200+). Table II shows the most relevant data for each of the cases analysed. The research was carried out between May and November 2012.

3.2 Instruments used in the case study

The research was based on a number of different sources, using triangulation to ensure that the study is reliable and valid (Eisenhardt, 1989). The actual process of granting recognitions has its own system of triangulation, as there are three sources of information: self-assessment, validation of self-assessment carried out by external experts, and the assessment by an external team. This process gives methodological robustness to the recognitions scheme.

First, face-to-face interviews were used to collect evidence. In order to ensure the reliability of the information, the method followed by Done *et al.* (2011) was chosen, and therefore at least three people were interviewed separately in each case: the highest executive in the organisation; the person/s responsible for implementing CSR practices; and a group of employees that could vary in number (depending on the size of the workforce and the complexity of the organisational chart), which would provide the researcher with evidence confirming the implementation of CSR-related practices. The interviewees were asked to self-assess the degree of CSR development in the organisation on one of the seven levels for each of the dimensions of CSR defined by Maon *et al.* (2010) (see Table I). To avoid social desirability, the columns that define the CSR cultural phase, the CSR development stage and the CSR vision and pre-eminence of the organisational culture were withdrawn from the summary chart of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010).

Second, a conversation based on the interviewee's responses was proposed with the purpose of providing (and indeed produced) verifiable evidences, such as allocated

Organisation	Implemented initiatives and related documents reviewed			
	Year implemented	Documents reviewed	Persons interviewed	
Asturfeito: activity: capital goods engineering; employees: 140	2000	Definition of mission, vision, corporative values and its commitment with CSR. ISO 9001 certificate	Managing director	
	2006	UNE 166002 (certification of the R&D management system)	Director of quality and the environment, metallurgy, quality, prevention and environment manager	
	2007	OHSAS 18001 certificate	HR manager	
	2010	Recognition EFQM 200+: self-assessment documents, external assessment report	Two welders, one from each work centre	
		UN Global Compact participant		
		Sustainability report in accordance with Guideline G3 of the GRI, level C		
	2011	ISO 14001 certificate		
	CTAI Ingeniería consultants, training and engineering in industrial matters; employees: 35	1996	Definition of the mission, vision and values. DIRFO + (quality standard for training organisations)	General manager
		2000	ISO certificate	Director of quality, innovation and prevention
		2002	REPRO (accreditation of suppliers for the energy and petrochemical sectors)	Engineer from the area of industrial control
2004		1st EFQM self-assessment		
2005		EFQM 200+: self-assessment documents, external assessment report		
2006		2nd EFQM self-assessment		
2007		3rd EFQM self-assessment		
2008		EFQM 300+: self-assessment documents, external assessment report		
2009		4th EFQM self-assessment		
2010		ISO 27001 certificate		
INMER production of metallic parts and injection-moulded plastics for the automotive industry; employees: 45	1997	Definition of the mission, vision and values within the manual of values and competencies of the firm	Managing director	
		ISO 9001 certificate	Director quality	
	1998	QS 9000 certificate	Assistant director of quality	
	2006	ISO TS 16949 certificate; Impulso prize awarded by the local government of the principality of Asturias	Manager of the engineering department technician specialised in presses	
	2007	EFQM 200+: self-assessment documents, external assessment report	Technician specialised in injectors	
	2009	Impulso prize awarded by the local government of the Principality of Asturias		
		EFQM 400+ (implementation of: strategy, strategic map, integration plan and relevant indicators); self-assessment documents, external assessment report		
	2011	EFQM 400+: self-assessment documents, external assessment report		

Table II.
Data, implemented initiatives and persons interviewed in the case studies

(continued)

Organisation	Implemented initiatives and related documents reviewed			EFQM levels of excellence and CSR development
	Year implemented	Documents reviewed	Persons interviewed	
Autoridad Portuaria de Gijón, port of general interest; employees: 191	1999	Definition of the mission, vision and values, beginning of a QM system	General manager Assistant general manager (technical sub-director)	1165
	2000	Constitution of the environment and quality management committees	Director of quality	
	2001	ISO 9001 certificate; 1st EFQM self-assessment	Director of environmental affairs	
	2002	1st EFQM report, prize for quality in the general state administration III	Director of occupational health and safety	
	2003	EFQM 300+: self-assessment documents, external assessment report	Director of HR with corporate attributions in CSR	
	2004	Awarded the distinction of recognition of comprehensive system of quality tourist destination (SICTED), 2nd EFQM self-assessment, constitution of the port community association	Two officials from the quality department One official from the environmental affairs department	
	2005	Dirigentes prize for the best business management		
	2006	EFQM 400+: self-assessment documents, external assessment report Standard ISO 9001 of the Port Community Association, Certificate of the Maritime Navigation Assistance Service, 2nd SICTED, Impulso prize awarded by the government of the Principality of Asturias		
	2007	ISO 14001 certificate; 3rd EFQM self-assessment		
	2008	EFQM 500+ (4th EFQM report): self-assessment documents, external assessment report		
	2010	<i>Escoba de Plata</i> prize, flexible company prize, ESPO prize to the best Port-Town project EFQM 500+ (4th self-assessment, 5th EFQM report): self-assessment documents, external assessment report		
	2011	UN Global Compact participant; UNE 166002:2006 certificate		

Source: Authors' own creation based on information provided by organisations

Table II.

resources, KPIs or an adequate planning, to back up his or her statements so as to allow the researchers, in the light of the examinations of the documents presented, to carry out the corresponding triangulation.

Third, as standards have been used in the academic literature as a system for measuring CSR, organisations were also asked if they had implemented any norms and standards considered to be proxies of CSR, following Gjølborg (2009), Taneja *et al.* (2011) and Maas and Reniers (2013). Examples of such norms and standards include: membership of CSR communities (i.e. UN Global Compact); sustainability information practices (i.e. KPMG Sustainability Reporting Survey and Global Reporting Initiative); and certification schemes (i.e. ISO 9001, ISO 14001, EMAS Regulation, OHSAS 18001, ISO 27001, UNE 166002).

In this regard, we reviewed all the documents related with the implemented managements systems, whether certified or not.

Fourth, the documents from the whole cycle of the self-assessment and assessment process against the EFQM model were reviewed. In the case of Asturfeito this involved one cycle (2010), four cycles for CTAI Ingeniería (from 2004 to 2010), three cycles in the case of INMER (from 2007 to 2011) and four cycles for APG (from 2002 to 2010). It is worth noting that organisations may have not sought an external recognition, although they may apply processes to integrate CSR into management. Hence, some questions were also asked about the use of particular practices, following Agudo *et al.* (2012).

Further, the guidance on self-declaration NEN NPR 9026:2011[2] (NEN, 2011) was also used. This publication has 40 guiding questions about adherence to ISO 26000. The relevance of using this document is based on the fact that by doing so “[...] organisations go through a series of procedures that encourage them to collect information, present evidence, build an argument in favour of their application of ISO 26000” (Moratis, 2015). The NPR 9026 was used by the researcher as a guide to inform the direct observation process, involving regular on-site visits by the researcher (at least four whole man-day visits), whose role is similar to that of the EFQM assessor.

The persons interviewed in each organisation, as well as the documents revised are show in Table II.

4. Results

In this section we present, for each organisation, the findings regarding the main elements in the model of Maon *et al.* (2010) that were developed as a consequence of adopting the EFQM model and the assessment associated to the process of achieving an EFQM recognition. In Figures 2-4, organisations are located (using colours) in the stage of CSR development they have reached for each of the three groups of dimensions of Maon *et al.*'s (2010) model. In these tables, examples of the specific actions undertaken by the organisations are highlighted. The people interviewed agree in their answers, with just some different levels of intensity depending on the hierarchical level: managers consider that their organisations are more focused on CSR than is perceived by employees.

4.1 Analysis of the four cases

Asturfeito demonstrates its awareness of CSR with the presence of voluntary initiative issues such as certified management systems in environment and health and safety (ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001). These standards allow Asturfeito to reach the “Caring Stage” in CSR development in certain elements of CSR (support of top management or resources commitment) and the “Strategising stage” in the element regarding structuring of CSR initiatives. Moreover, since Asturfeito is UN Global Compact participant and has made a sustainability report in accordance with GRI, this organisation seems to exhibit a proactive orientation and initiates reporting efforts. However, due to the lack of public access to the reports, their transparency and reporting dimensions are placed in an internal reporting/selective disclosure posture. Hence, the level of Asturfeito's vision of CSR and prominence in organisational culture stands halfway between CSR as influential and CSR as embodied, mainly due to its membership of CSR communities, certification schemes and reporting efforts.

Asturfeito acknowledges that although clients do not consider the presence of certified management systems (i.e. ISO 9001, ISO 14001 or OHSAS 18001) as a sufficient guarantee, its CEO admits that these standards do allow organisations to improve processes and offer proof, up to a certain point, that all the organisation's process are running smoothly. At the same time, these norms provide a certain kind of differentiation from competitors, at least in the early stages of commercial relations, which is coherent with the findings of

Stage of CSR development	Dimensions of CSR development		
	Organisational sensitivity to CSR issues	Knowledge and attitudinal dimensions: evidences.	
		Driver of CSR initiatives development	Support of top management
1. Dismissing	Active opposition to CSR broader than financial benefits	None	None
2. Self-protecting	Windows-dressing and/or lack of awareness or ignorance about CSR issues	Lack of CSR-orientation perceived as potentially harming business	Piecemeal involvement
3. Compliance-seeking	Growing awareness of CSR-related troubles to be avoided. Corporate values in line with CSR have been defined. EFQM assessment evidenced that, environment should be defined as an issue that must be tackled; a more thorough definition of the company culture must be carried out; a strategic review process must include information for more stakeholders; a comprehensive approach to CSR issues is needed	CSR perceived as a duty and an obligation – Focus on restricted Requisites	Theoretical/professed involvement: top management fully believe that high ethical standards are needed although this is something that is assumed and evaluated but not explicitly promoted by direct actions. EFQM assessment showed that tools to review leadership must be implemented
4. Capability-seeking Committed to Excellence 200+	Growing awareness of CSR-related advantages to be gained: certified standards, such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001 or OHSAS 18001, are not sufficient guarantee for clients, but provide a differentiation from would-be competitors; Culture, Ethics Principles, and Corporate Values of the company defined thanks to improvement areas defined in EFQM assessment Growing awareness of CSR-related advantages to be gained: Corporate values and core competencies in line with CSR have been defined; three cycles of EFQM assessment have demonstrated the benefits of focusing on employees as key stakeholders. EFQM assessment showed that Mission, Vision and Values needed to be updated	CSR perceived as a duty and an obligation – Focus on confluent expectations: ethics is viewed as a valuable asset, one that must be exercised by all employees, but this attitude is not supported by more advanced approaches	Fair/supportive involvement: top management encourages CSR initiatives and was fostering the three cycles of EFQM assessment
5. Caring	Knowledgeable CSR awareness: Corporate values and core competencies in line with CSR have been defined and thoroughly developed; their aim is to generate trust with society at large: Port Community Association	CSR perceived as important as such: UN Global Compact participant. Sustainability Report in accordance with Guideline G3 of the GRI, level C CSR perceived as important as such: three cycles of EFQM assessment have demonstrated the impact of the management of People's interest as stakeholders	Commitment: allow employees to take actions in business initiatives which provide the organisation with value from both the external and the internal perspectives Commitment: support and promotion of all actions undertaken by executives such as the Port Community Association; Each group of stakeholders has a member of the Board of Directors in charge of their relationship; Leadership Behaviour Competencies defined. EFQM Assessment showed that ethical codes need support from top management to be fully deployed; Leadership Model needs a review; Leadership Model would be deployed to all leaders, not just top managers
6. Strategising	Leadership objectives on CSR-related issues	CSR perceived as inexorable direction to take	Sound commitment
7. Transforming	CSR as an internalised management ideology	CSR as the only alternative considering universal mutual interdependency	Devotion

Notes: The organisations have been represented in colours. Thus, Asturfeito is shown in orange, CTAI Ingeniería in blue, INMER in green and APG in red

Source: Authors' own creation based on Maon *et al.* (2010)

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Figure 2. Evidence found and organisations' self-assessment of their CSR activities in the knowledge and attitudinal dimensions

Heras *et al.* (2006) and Marimón *et al.* (2009) regarding the search for differentiation, since the value of a certification is inversely proportional to the number of them on the market. The reason given by Asturfeito's CEO to explain why his organisation is involved in CSR activities such as sustainability reports and UN Global Compact are to allow employees to take actions in business initiatives which provide the organisation with value from both the external and the internal perspectives.

In the case of CTAI Ingeniería, since the organisation still adopts a quality focused stance, where views of CSR take an external requirements perspective, meeting all the legal requirements and the very exacting demands of its customers, we can place it within the "Compliance-seeking" stage. Its approach is focused on the hard dimensions of quality, which does not help in its efforts to reach higher stages in CSR development. However, it is worth noting that organisational climate surveys have been implemented since 2004 due to an area of improvement detected during an EFQM assessment cycle. The findings from this case suggest that this organisation finds itself in the assumption highlighted by Castka, Balzarova, Bamber and Sharp (2004), Vives (2006) and Sweeney (2007) where, given the limited resources of SMEs that their approach to CSR is more theoretical than real, despite their genuine desire to implement it. It is reasonable to expect that in the near future, CTAI Ingeniería will reach higher levels of CSR development due to the fact that the CSR orientation stated by its CEO is only lacking certain specific actions to support it. One of the reasons which was found to explain this inconsistency is the low impact of the organisations in the more widely acknowledged CSR dimensions, such as environment and social issues.

Stage of CSR development*	Dimensions of CSR development			
	Strategic dimensions: evidences			
	Social responsiveness	Rationale behind CSR initiatives	Performance objectives	Transparency and reporting
1. Diminishing	Rejection	None	None	Black-box
2. Self-protecting	Strong defence	Limitation of potentially harming and uncontrollable criticisms	Resolution of problems as they occur	Justifying posture
3. Compliance-seeking	Light defence / Reaction	Compliance objectives: due to the fact that it focuses on the hard dimensions of quality standard ISO 9001	Minimisation of harmful externalities/ Respect for evolving norms and regulatory requirements: limited management structure focused on hard dimensions of quality. A sufficiently large number of resources to solve problems are allocated to ensure that the issues do not happen again; EFQM Assessment showed that more performance objectives must be defined	Internal reporting/ Legal disclosure posture: the seven cycles of EFQM assessment have only been available to the workers and the external assessors involved in it. EFQM Assessment showed that more communication channels with stakeholders are needed
			Minimisation of harmful externalities/ Respect for evolving norms and regulatory requirements: objective focused on hard dimensions of quality. A sufficiently large number of resources to solve problems are allocated to ensure that the issues do not happen again; EFQM Assessment showed that a systematic approach is needed to manage environmental performance; all performance indicators would be assessed regularly	
4. Capability-seeking/ Committed to Excellence 200+	Accommodation/ response: no dedicated tools to answer the CSR concerns of external stakeholders. EFQM Assessment showed that a more active role must be adopted by the organisations in their relationship with society at large.	Licence to operate: the soft dimensions of ISO 9001 and ISO TS 16949 have been developed by three cycles of EFQM assessment	Anticipating new requirements and expectations / Identification of profitable niches for CSR initiatives: ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001; EFQM assessment. Measurement of client's perceptions. A new set of performance objectives beyond the economic ones	Internal reporting/ Selective disclosure posture: the three cycles of EFQM assessment has only been available to the workers and the external assessors involved in it but the 2006 and 2009 Award for Prize awarded by the Local Government of the Principality of Asturias must be assessed for a wider range of individuals from society at large. EFQM Assessment showed that internal communications systems must be improved.
			Anticipating new requirements and expectations / Identification of profitable niches for CSR initiatives: ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 implemented. Involvement of contractors in Quality, Environment and Health & Safety issues. EFQM assessment showed that the efficiency of the Port Community Association needs a regular APN Performance data from other organisations at least.	Internal reporting/ Selective disclosure posture: Sustainability Report in accordance with Guideline G3 of the GRI not externally validated; Lack of UN Global Compact Communication on Progress report
5. Caring/	Adaptation: some dedicated tools to answer the CSR concerns of stakeholders: ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001, CSR Reporting	Competitive advantage: based on the many management tools implemented related with CSR dimensions, i.e. ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001 and GRI Sustainability Report	Active management of CSR-related issues/Definition of business-wide opportunities	Collaboration and Transparency have been defined as a core corporate value. Four cycles of EFQM assessment, the Port Community Association, UN Global Compact participation as a means of evidence that implies the need for accountability and transparency before stakeholders and society at large. Draft of Sustainability Report in accordance with guideline G3 of the GRI
6. Strategising/	Strategic proactivity	Value proposition	Leading the pack/Development of sustainable business leverages through CSR initiatives	Certified reporting posture
7. Transforming/	Proactivity	Enlarged finality - Societal change	Diffusion of expertise/ Maximisation of positive externalities	Fully transparent posture

Figure 3. Evidence found and organisations' self-assessment of their CSR activities in the Strategic dimensions

Notes: The organisations have been represented in colours. Thus, Asturfeito is shown in orange, CTAI Ingenieria in blue, INMER in green and APG in red

Source: Authors' own creation based on Maon *et al.* (2010)

We suggest that one of the motives underlying this is that organisations with fewer than 100 employees are less inclined to be very involved in CSR actions because, depending on the size of an organisation (Graafland, 2002), cost can be a key factor for their survival (Ahmed *et al.*, 1998). So, consequently, its vision of CSR and prominence in organisational culture is on the "CSR as worthy of interest" level.

The level of INMER can be placed, like Asturfeito, halfway between CSR as influential and CSR as embodied, but closer to the first than Asturfeito. The reason for this is that, despite having certain dimensions of CSR with the same development as Asturfeito (see Figures 2-4), the initiatives that were deployed cover sections of the CSR that are mainly related with quality topics. This means that INMER, through consecutive cycles of assessment, has deepened its knowledge of the QM dimensions related with CSR and thus displayed an instrumental stakeholder culture more than a proactive approach. In this respect, INMER would be an example of the CSR development path that organisations that are too focused on QM could achieve.

APG presents a level of development where knowledge and attitudinal dimensions in the model of Maon *et al.* (2010) are more advanced than the strategic and tactical and operational dimensions. Since APG, like Asturfeito, applies international standards like ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 or other initiatives such as UNE 166002, it is logical to think that the tactical and operational dimensions would be at an advanced stage of development. The explanation for this finding may lie in the low degree of consideration granted by the interviewees to the section called resources commitment. With regard to the other two dimensions, APG presents an important level of development that is sustained in initiatives like the Port Community Association [3] and the organisation of management according to the dimensions of CSR, which allows for a higher degree of definition in the actions performed in CSR. As a result, in terms of the stage of CSR development, APG is between CSR as embodied and CSR as influential.

Stage of CSR development*	Dimensions of CSR development			
	Tactical and operational dimensions: evidences			
	Stakeholders relationship	Resources commitment	Structuring of CSR initiatives	Coordination of CSR issues
1. Dismissing	Purely contractual	None	None	None
2. Self-protecting	Punctual	Budget for problems as they occur. Resources for CSR issues are allocated only when it is absolutely necessary to take action.	Activities: ISO 9001: actions focused on the hard dimensions of quality	Public relations concerns: nobody is in charge of just CSR issues or certified systems as the only person responsible
3. Compliance-seeking	Unilateral: traditional approach with stakeholders such as society, employees and suppliers; EFQM assessment showed that there was a need for new means of communication. A new strategic planning that is more focused on stakeholder relationships Unilateral: traditional approach with stakeholders such as society, employees and suppliers. EFQM assessment evidenced the need for an employment-climate survey; a new strategic planning that is more focused on social, legal and health & safety issues; Stakeholders' point of view must hold rather than clients'; A new strategy to seek and assess alliances must be defined	Limited minimal funding	Policies	Functional: Mainly focused on quality issues (ISO 9001)
4. Capability-seeking/ Committed to Excellence 200+	Interactive: Identification of 8 groups of stakeholders and strategic lines towards them. Successive plans to interact with stakeholder based on EFQM induced practices. <i>Impulso</i> Prize for Excellence awarded by the Local Government of the Principality of Asturias. EFQM Assessment showed that a systematic approach is needed to manage information from the Employment climate survey; EFQM Assessment: a systematic approach is needed to collect information from all stakeholders	Generally sufficient but inconstant funding	Plans of action: Improvement actions derived from ISO 9001 (both hard and soft dimensions); Employment climate survey. With items related to CSR issues; Employment climate survey	Functional: Focused on quality, health & safety issues but not coordinated (ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001) Functional: Focused on quality, health & safety issues but not coordinated (ISO 9001, ISO 14001, OHSAS 18001)
5. Caring/	Reciprocal influence	Dependable funding; but only for activities derived from certified standards requirements Dependable funding; but only for activities derived from certified standards requirements and some CSR objectives	Programmes	Cross-functional
		Dependable funding; but only for activities derived from certified standards requirements. Employees interviewed share the impression of insufficient funding, which has no correlation with the evidence found		
6. Strategising/	Collaborative: Identification of 6 groups of stakeholders and 21 subgroups. Collaboration and Transparency have been defined as a core corporate value. Port Community Association. <i>Dignitos</i> Prize for the Best Business Management. <i>Impulso</i> Prize for Excellence awarded by the Local Government of the Principality of Asturias. EFQM assessment showed that Society's APQ perception is not well known; there is an Employment-climate survey; there is room for improvement in diversity management not based on gender; Quantitative methodology to gather information from stakeholders	Substantial funding	Systems: certified standards in key CSR issues: environment, ISO 14001, and Health & Safety, OHSAS 18001 Systems: certified standard in a key CSR issue: environment, ISO 14001, Health & Safety standard, OHSAS 18001, implemented but not certified. Employment climate survey	Organisational realignment
7. Transforming/	Joint innovation	Open-ended funding and resource commitment	Core integration - CSR as business as usual	Institutionalisation

Notes: The organisations have been represented in colours. Thus, Asturfeito is shown in orange, CTAI Ingeniería in blue, INMER in green and APG in red
Source: Authors' own creation based on Maon *et al.* (2010)

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Figure 4. Evidence found and organisations' self-assessment of their CSR activities in the tactical and operational dimensions

4.2 Knowledge derived from the four cases

CTAI Ingeniería and INMER have a greater degree of development in the knowledge and attitudinal dimensions than in the strategic and the tactical and operational dimensions. In the case of Asturfeito, the greatest degree of development is reached in the tactical and operational dimensions, followed by the knowledge and attitudinal dimensions, the strategic dimensions being the least developed. For all four cases, it can be said that a more robust development of the knowledge and attitudinal dimensions may mean that a change in attitudes is more attainable for organisations than a change in their way of doing things.

In a similar line, in the four cases, ethics was evidenced as an important issue derived from the use of the EFQM model. Ethics is a pillar of CSR since it implies a more humane, more ethical and more transparent way of doing business (Van Marrewijk, 2003). It is behind some of the elements of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010), particularly those in the knowledge and attitudinal dimensions. Indeed, during the conversations with the representatives of the four organisations, one of the issues that arose was ethics, in particular, building trust with clients. In the case of APG, they also seek to generate this commitment with society at large too. This trust is constructed upon the proven capability of being able to meet the commitments the company has acquired, which can be identified with the concept of integrity, as defined by Erhard *et al.* (2009). In this regard, CTAI Ingeniería's CEO considers ethics as one of the organisation's more valuable assets. Sustaining commercial relationships with clients for more than 30 years would have been impossible without ethics. He also considers that ethics allows a group of people to work in a fairly independent way, spending a lot of time in clients' facilities and working with little or

no support from head office, and to be able to form a homogeneous workforce with little staff turnover. In the same way as in the case of APG, the concept of integrity held by CTAI Ingeniería's CEO matches the one expressed by Erhard *et al.* (2009). In this particular case, integrity towards clients and employees is considered a key element with which to build the success of the organisation. In the case of APG, the deputy technical director's view is that CSR is an issue that APG has to exercise as a reference within its sphere of influence. In this regard, the APG mentioned its leadership in the Port Community Association in areas such as quality, environmental issues, and health and safety.

To sum up, it appears that it is possible to distinguish a greater commitment to CSR as the commitment to excellence becomes higher. CSR is widely tackled through the use of quality practices oriented to processes management based on ISO or other standards or agreements. However, an almost total lack of strategic orientation regarding the integration of CSR into management is observed. Hence, it could be said that the adoption of certain standards is more "a license to operate" than a robust and harmonious process of alignment of management towards the development of CSR within the organisational structures and operations.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1 contributions in the academic area

First, the main conclusion that can be drawn is that a relationship between the commitment to excellence and CSR development does exist. Our findings provide empirical evidence to support the claims by Tari (2011) that QM and CSR have common philosophical roots, which display a significant amount of overlapping and several similar practices. This study shows that the iterated process of successive assessment, both internal and external, has highlighted areas of improvement related with CSR. In line with the findings of Van der Wiele *et al.* (1996), Samuelsson and Nilsson (2002), and Ahmed *et al.* (2003), we conclude that a positive relationship can be established between the use of the assessment process against the EFQM model and the performance of organisations (in this study, in the specific case of CSR).

Yet, second, there is no uniformity in the development of CSR among the organisations studied. One of the possible reasons derives from the multiples approaches in adopting EFQM since organisations can achieve high commitment to excellence by shining in some criteria, although at the same time they rate poorly on others. That is, the final score (the basis upon which a recognition is granted) may not reflect a homogeneous level of performance in the EFQM excellence model. Despite CSR being a transversal topic that affects all the EFQM criteria, the resources allocated by organisations to CSR are not uniform and, in consequence, cannot be accompanied by high performance in each and every one of the dimensions of CSR.

Third, the findings of the empirical study reveal the presence of different levels of CSR development for different dimensions of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010) among the four organisations studied. The adoption of the EFQM model seems to develop those elements of CSR concerning the use of systems to structure CSR initiatives, and the perception of CSR as an important issue. The systematisation of processes implicit in the EFQM model and in QM in general (e.g. Bou *et al.*, 2009) may be responsible for this finding. However, a high level of excellence does not seem to promote progress in reporting or in the establishment of active management of CSR-related initiatives such as performance objectives and coordination of CSR issues. It seems that these elements are not fully considered into the EFQM model and organisations may need some other frameworks to develop them. This finding tallies with Kok *et al.*'s (2001) opinion that the EFQM model does not drive a proactive position regarding CSR, while suggesting the additional use of an audit tool to assess CSR.

Finally, the actions observed in the organisations analysed reveal the inherently multidimensional nature of CSR (Waddock and Graves, 1997; Schreck, 2011). CSR practices

are prioritised according to the impacts the organisation has, which is a good example of Argandoña and von Weltzein (2009) findings that CSR is a reflection on the nature of the firm role in society and its relationships with its internal and external stakeholders. For instance, organisations like Asturfeito and APG, with a greater environmental and occupational health impacts prioritise CSR practices concerning standards ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001. In short, each organisation has to seek its own level of CSR development, depending on its organisational values (Van Marrewijk and Werre, 2003), which means applying a contingency approach to CSR (Carroll, 1979; Rowley and Berman, 2000). Hence, an organisation does not necessarily have to go through all the stages of CSR development or even begin with the least advanced. This approach may change as a consequence of the appearance of certain situations (Van Marrewijk, 2003) and the influence of the contextual characteristics of each organisation (Blombäck and Wigren, 2009).

As a concluding remark, it can be stated that the EFQM model presents a solid, but limited, value proposition in CSR in the topics it addresses. This assertion is based on the fact that, given the clear processes orientation of the EFQM model, it is relatively easy to implement certifiable standards, such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001, which have important synergies with different dimensions of CSR. However, organisations that adopt a management system in accordance with the EFQM model of excellence, and that do not have management systems in place concerning these norms or similar, can present lower levels of CSR development. This idea seems to tally with Waddock and Bodwell's (2002) work, in that most of the norms and frameworks focus on the management of social responsibility in a vertical way and, therefore, as they lack the ability to manage other areas of organisations that influence CSR, they cannot provide answers to the needs arising from the integration of CSR actions within the management system of organisations.

5.2 Management implications

The results of the study allow us to suggest that CSR development could be achieved by way of the EFQM model, in particular the knowledge derived from the assessment process in the form of areas of improvement. Throughout the study, it has been seen how organisations make use of certified management systems, such as ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001. Organisations that have reached high levels of excellence therefore seem to have sought (see Figures 2-4) the operational support of these standards, which allow them to attain certain levels of development within certain dimensions of the evolutionary model of CSR. In contrast, in other dimensions of the model of Maon *et al.* (2010), these tools do not provide all the support required for a good integration of CSR within management. We are referring, in particular, to organisational elements like "Organisational sensitivity towards CSR issues", "Performance objectives" (when they do not refer to objectives related with the management systems that have been implemented), "Transparency and reporting" and "Coordination of CSR issues". The reason suggested explaining the existence of these shortcomings is that CSR actions have been undertaken in an uncoordinated way due to the absence of strategic thinking as regards the relationship between each particular organisation and the dimensions of CSR. Consequently, our findings exhibit where organisations can reasonably expect to reach achievements in CSR if these standards are implemented in a suitable fashion, and where it is necessary to resort to other types of approaches. Likewise, it has been shown how CSR actions can be implemented without the need to raise the level of impact on CSR artificially (e.g. by implementing and certifying management systems that lack any direct relationship with the impact of the organisation on the dimensions of CSR) but instead through a stricter application of the value that the EFQM model has in CSR.

5.3 Limitations and future lines of research

The research process entails the need to make a number of choices about different aspects of the goals, the methodology and the subjects of study. It can therefore be said that the limitations are inherent to the process and, in many cases, are the origin of future lines of research. One of the limitations of this study is to be found in the very nature of the process of EFQM recognition, which does not ensure uniformity in all aspects of management, due to its being the sum of the scores from the assessment of the actions that are implemented. Because the research is focused on a case study, it presents the limitations that are inherent to this methodology. Therefore, factors that can be chosen by the researcher, such as geographical location, size, sector and ownership, can have an important influence on the characteristics of the CSR practices that are found.

Throughout the research process lines of work have arisen that it has not been possible to address but which are considered to be of interest for research in the near future. We propose that the relationship between the model of Maon *et al.* (2010) and other excellence models, such as the case of Malcolm Baldrige and the Deming Prize, should be tested, both theoretically and empirically, since this would make it possible to determine the contribution made by QM to the implementation of CSR. As a way to avoid the limitations of a case study, in future research the intention is to conduct a study using a wider group of organisations. Thus, it could make sense to carry out a study with a larger number of cases to increase the number of organisations at each level of EFQM recognitions, to conduct a study of all the organisations in the same territory or to perform an in-depth analysis of organisations from the same sector.

Notes

1. In the recognition scheme, the standard ISO 9001 is related to the first level of excellence: Commitment to Excellence 200+. Although having previously implemented the standard ISO 9001 is not a necessary condition, many organisations do start out from there in the search for higher levels of performance after having reached an impasse that does not allow them to continue with the spiral of learning and improvement or on a search for differentiation (Marimón *et al.*, 2009).
2. More information can be found at NEN (2011). NEN White paper “ISO 26000 Statement of application” (www.nen.nl/web/file?uuid=a08e8b10-d65e-4b96-ae9e-a287b235dc1b&owner=ccdd2a27-7f28-43b1-a3cb-d01e2bf2a56a&contentid=150021).
3. The Port Community Association is a mechanism to promote teamwork among the 92 organisations which are part of the Port Community. It consists of three forums, each of them focusing on a specific field (quality, safety and security, or promotion) under the coordination of the association. More information can be found at: www.puertogijon.es/index.asp?MP=2&MS=281&MN=2

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