A Holistic CSR Maturity Assessment Model

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Abstract: *Recently, there has been an increasing interest in defining Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the factors that have the potential to influence it. CSR has become an essential strategic tool and its initiatives have increased in variety and scope, impacting communities and businesses in economic, environmental, and social terms as a means of raising the social profile and maximizing the corporation's long-term economic and social value. This paper aims to introduce the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and to investigate the key enabling factors and constraints that play a crucial role in the adoption and implementation of CSR initiatives. For this, a holistic framework, namely a Corporate Social Responsibility Maturity Model (CSRMM) for CSR assessment will be analyzed and presented.*

1. INTRODUCTION

It has been many years since Bowen published his work about the responsibilities of businesses for society, defining Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as the social obligations companies should fulfill through their policies, their corporate decisions, and their actions (Bowen, 1953). The concept of CSR is extended beyond legislation, as organizations voluntarily incorporate social and environmental concerns in their strategies, adopting a more responsible role. Implementation of CSR initiatives triggers organizations to undertake responsibility related to the impact their activities have on customers, employees, shareholders, the community, and the environment. CSR embraces three organizational aspects: economic, environmental, and social. Elkington (1999) identified a more common expression of these three aspects and named it with 3Ps**: people-planet-profit**.

The environmental pillar is the most well-known of the three. The main topic stressed here is the effect of organizational actions in the direction of the environment. Thus, this pillar refers to activities companies undertake to protect the environment and reduce their environmental impact and carbon footprint.

The second pillar is the Social one. It takes into account the interest of all stakeholders and the community in the progression of providing an impartial and ethical organization. It deals with companies' interaction and interrelations with their shareholders, customers, employees, and the local society and discusses the practices companies implement to engage their assets to enhance social sustainability. This pillar enhances operational performance through 'efficiency', quality products, and reliability, which increases productivity, corporate social performance, and customer commitment.

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The Economic pillar is considered one of the main drivers for sustainability and CSR. It is related to the implementation of sustainable business practices to promote long-term profitability and is assessed with indicators related to quality, speed, dependability, flexibility, and cost. This pillar supports the environmental and social pillars, embracing aspects that an organization must fulfill.

Figure 1. Illustration of CSR Pillars

For the successful development and implementation of environmental, social, and economic goals these three pillars must have complementary relationships and be equal without overshadowing each other. Thus, companies need a coherent framework to identify, develop, implement, control, and improve their strategy with social flair, able to ensure effectiveness and profitability.

CSR is considered one of the most important objectives for companies (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). However, despite its significance, it lacks a generalized and unique definition. To explain this concept, different definitions and theoretical perspectives have been framed – with a considerable common ground between them. It is associated with corporations and their evident societal obligations expecting that companies are not only responsible to their shareholders but to society in general, in addition, to pursuing profits (Hsu, 2012). Due to this, there is a growing interest in the topic from the academic world and CSR practitioners, aiming to investigate the CSR key enablers, the benefits generated by fulfilling social responsibilities, the impact on the company's reputation and the customer's perception, and finally the stakeholders' view.

The concept of CSR can be approached from different angles, which can vary in context, processes, and added value. For the purpose of this paper, we will consider CSR as a part of corporate strategy that is driven by ethical implications, social awareness, and environmental concerns, interacting with stakeholders, on a frequent and structured basis.

The contribution of our research is the proposition of a novel methodology and a holistic CSR Maturity Model (CSRMM) that assesses the CSR maturity level of corporations and can be implemented from small and medium enterprises to multinational organizations with the same efficiency. The resulting model provides all the necessary information for identification and mapping the drawbacks and the assets that strategy professionals and academics have to consider when designing CSR initiatives. It also provides practical guidance to corporations for succeeding at a higher level of maturity.

In Section 2, a literature review of the CSR concept is presented. It was based on the most prominent literature review articles related to the adoption and implementation of CSR policies and activities during the last years. The research has formulated the research objective that this paper addresses, namely: the proposal of a novel holistic and integrated framework for CSR Maturity Assessment since this literature survey revealed a gap in this field. Section 3 presents ISO 26000:2010, the standard that provides guidelines for CSR initiatives implementation, intending

to assist organizations to upgrade to a higher level of maturity. The overview of ISO 26000:2010 is crucial for the formulation of our research objective. In applying this standard, corporations should consider diversities related to society, environment, culture, law and organizational aspects, while being consistent with European and international norms.

Section 4 presents a short overview of the current maturity models, while Section 5 is the core of our research. A Holistic CSR Maturity assessment model is proposed. The Critical Success Factors and Enablers related to Corporate Social Responsibility in a Maturity Assessment Framework are depicted and their interrelations are analyzed. Finally, Section 6 concludes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE CONCEPT

Socially responsible activities of any company, represent their awareness about the environment they operate (Tuan, 2012) since these activities have a significant impact on society, the environment, employees, and, at the end of the day, the company itself. Corporate Social Responsibility is established as one of the most popular and emerging organizational issues for both the academic community and the business world. However, there is great variety as far as CSR understanding and implementation are concerned, and many definitions of the term exist.

CSR is traditionally perceived as philanthropic actions organized and implemented by corporations. The earliest definition of CSR is the one given by Howard Bowen who, according to Carroll (1999), is the father of corporate social responsibility. He defines CSR as the obligation of businessmen to implement actions, decisions, and policies that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society (Bowen, 1953). Davis described CSR as a firm's consideration of issues beyond the narrow economic, technical, and legal requirements (Davis 1973 cited in Carroll, 1999) while Carroll (1979) gave a broader definition defining CSR as the social responsibility of business addressing the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations each society has. Another scholar suggests that companies should be considered as the source of the social and environmental problems they are trying to solve (Granum et al., 2015) and not as part of the solution. Therefore, the debate about their role and their obligations is loud. Friedman (1970) argued that, the only social responsibility of a business is to increase its profits within a legal and ethical framework and that a firm cannot be held responsible, only people can. Similarly to Friedman, French (1979) states that companies can have responsibility and ethics, not as autonomous entities but via their people, since they are organizations with a specific structure that apply decision-making procedures. The result of this decision-making depicts the mindset and the ethics of their people.

On the opposite side, Zadek (2001) considers that companies have extended responsibility against society. Therefore, he categorizes them into three distinct generations regarding their social activities for sustainable development: philanthropy, corporate strategy to be used as a competitive advantage, and finally companies that implement activities that can make a difference. Following Zadek's view, Matten (Matten et al., 2003) describes the way companies implement those activities.

Looking behind the scene of this implementation, European Commission (2002) while addressing the CSR concept, has acknowledged the motivation that companies have as well as their role. So, it defined CSR as a corporate contribution to sustainable development, recognizing CSR as an undivided part of corporate business, and depicting the social and environmental concerns of stakeholders. However, nowadays the term has evolved and climbed up the

management ladder (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). Today, CSR has many forms, ranging from corporate-centered to business-centered to multi-stakeholder initiatives involving civil society and government. CSR has been transformed from philanthropy and voluntary actions to regulated practices and strategic corporate activities. Corporations are receiving pressure from society that demands compliance with regulations on aspects such as human rights, environmental protection, and transparency, necessitating the existence of CSR in the corporate strategy. Respecting legislation is considered a prerequisite for meeting the CSR concept but if companies want to be fully aligned they should have in place processes that integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights, and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders. Additionally, companies aim to maximize the creation of shared value for their owners/shareholders and society as well while, at the same time, they try to identify, prevent and mitigate possible adverse impacts.

Corporate Social Responsibility refers to both people and organizations behaving and conducting business ethically and respecting social, cultural, economic, and environmental issues. It is considered of high priority, climbing on the top of the agenda of corporations, while its scope spans from responsible business to strategic decision-making. CSR is often valued as a strategic competitive tool, embracing three distinct organizational, aspects: economical, environmental, and societal, which force companies to integrate systems that focus on the common good for society in general and stakeholders in particular. Businesses acknowledge their obligations towards society, extending beyond law mandatory aspects and the narrow goal of profit-making.

When CSR moved from theory to practice, it was considered a breakthrough dimension of business operations. Literature contributed to the definition and characterization of the CSR phenomenon (De Bakker et al., 2005). To this end, Garriga and Mele (2004) map the present territory by classifying the main CSR theories and related approaches into four groups. More specifically, according to instrumental theories, the corporation is an instrument for wealth creation and its social activities are only a means to achieve economic results. Political theories deal with the power of corporations in society and the responsible use of this power in the political arena; integrative theories consider which corporations are focused on the satisfaction of social demands; and finally ethical theories, based on the ethical responsibilities of corporations to society. In practice, each CSR theory presents four dimensions related to profits, political performance, social demands, and ethical values. The findings suggest the necessity to develop a new theory on the business and society relationship, which should integrate these four dimensions.

When looked at strategically, corporate social responsibility can become a source of tremendous social progress, as the business applies its considerable resources, expertise, and insights to activities that benefit society (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Strategic management research has studied the positive interconnection between social success and economic and financial profitability (strategic CSR approach). Porter and Kramer (2006) stressed the high importance of integrating corporate strategy and society's needs while Lantos (2001) introduces the concept of strategic responsibility, linked to the fulfillment of philanthropic responsibilities that will simultaneously benefit the financial performance. Zadek (2004) states that organizations pass through five stages of corporate responsibility, from defensive, to compliance, to managerial and strategic, and, finally, to civil. According to Goyal and Kumar (2017), the top management's involvement and commitment play a crucial role in the successful implementation of CSR. However, the value system and the processes affect the formulation and implementation of CSR initiatives (Chin et al., 2013).

In 2011, the Commission adopted its renewed strategy for CSR, which combines horizontal approaches to promote CSR with more specific approaches for individual sectors and policy areas. Considering that a public authority has to support and ensure CSR conduct by using a smart mix of voluntary and mandatory measures, including regulation, puts CSR at the center of Commission policies and proposals. The actions that Commission is targeting are analytically described in a staff working document (SWD, 2019) which was published in March 2019. Extra emphasis is now given to the drivers of corporate social performance, the actions that managers can take to affect that performance, and the consequences of those actions on both corporate social and financial performance (Epstein & Roy, 2001) as well as the stakeholders. Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) identifies strategic motivations for relationships with the different categories of stakeholders. The differential roles that transformational and transactional leadership styles play in corporate social responsibility practices, as well as the interplay between leadership styles and institutional CSR practices, are also under continuous consideration (Du et al., 2013).

While exploring the need for systematic evaluation to identify the level of acceptance of CSR in strategic planning, several studies have been conducted. Maon et al. (2010) refer to stages of different levels of CSR dedication and implementation. These different stages are subdivided into different dimensions describing a consolidative model; different characteristics from academic literature are formulated into cultures and stages in which an organization can exist. In addition, Kouroula and Halme (Kourula, A., Halme, M., 2008), focus on the societal and business outcomes of engagement, classify different corporate responsibility (CR) actions into three types – philanthropy, integration, and innovation which influence corporate engagement and commitment.

To this end, different phases of maturity enable the evaluation of the distinctive levels of CSR integration into the company strategy and the stage at which the company currently stands on its determined path (Marques-Mendes & Santos, 2016) bringing into the spotlight maturity models as a key factor of successful CSR adoption.

3. ISO 26000:2010 STANDARD: GUIDELINES FOR CSR MATURITY

ISO26000:2010 was initially developed in 2005 and published in 2010, by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). The aim was to effectively assess and address social responsibilities that are relevant and significant to their mission and vision. Its target purpose was to give an overview of the Corporate Social Responsibility concept and under this frame; it identified opportunities arising from its implementation such as increased competitiveness and reputation resulting in profit increase. It does not dictate an obligatory procedure for companies that wish to behave socially aware. On the contrary, it provides valuable recommendations acting as a method pointer for creating social policy as an efficient tool through which organizations can contribute and perhaps influence social issues in the context of the wider communities they operate. The guidelines proposed by ISO 26000:2010 concentrate on their potential to contribute to the strengthening of the social establishments of the above-mentioned communities, to empower, generate autonomy, and develop skills in their final beneficiaries.

ISO26000:2010 standard refers to corporations that develop and implement - or wish to do so- CSR activities in their strategic agenda. Its purpose is to provide guidelines that allow these corporations to perform their respective activities in compliance with social and environmental requirements in the framework of their corporate priorities. The standard highlights seven

key subjects underpinning the development and operation of any organization: More specifically, it guides recognizing social responsibility and engaging stakeholders and ways to integrate socially responsible behavior into the organization. In addition, identifies seven core subjects and issues pertaining to social responsibility namely Organizational governance, Human rights, alignment with the UN Guiding Principles, Labor practices, The environment, Fair operating practices, Consumer issues and last but not least Community involvement and development.
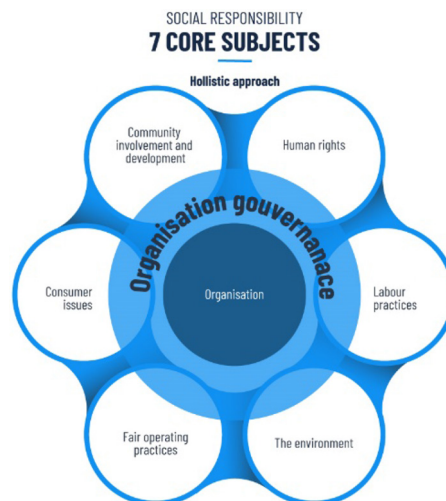

Figure 2. CSR Core Subjects Overview
Source: https://www.boreal-is.com/blog/iso-26000-social-responsibility

Moreover, ISO26000:2010 acknowledges seven key underlying principles namely Accountability, Transparency, Ethical behavior, Respect for stakeholder interests, Respect for the rule of law, Respect for international norms of behavior, and Respect for human rights, targeting in assisting organizations to address their social responsibilities, while at the same time, respect cultural, societal, environmental, and legal differences and economic development conditions. It provides practical guidance related to making social responsibility operational and places emphasis on performance results and continuous improvement. ISO 26000:2010 supports stakeholders' engagement and additionally enhances the credibility of reports and claims made about social responsibility. It aims at increasing confidence and satisfaction in organizations among both their customers and other stakeholders and ensures consistency with existing documents, international treaties and conventions, and existing ISO standards. Finally, ISO 26000:2010 promotes common terminology in the social responsibility field and targets to broaden awareness of social responsibility.

4. CSR MATURITY MODELS

CSR Literature regarding CSRMM focuses on the development of specific models, without verifying their practical application in companies (Marques-Mendes & Santos, 2016). When a company is Socially Responsible (SR), means that the company incorporates actions to ensure that its employees act responsibly. Becoming Socially Responsible implies that a company is in the transition of becoming SR, by undertaking actions and policies that enable responsible behavior. ISO 26000:2010 guides companies on how to create insight into these actions and policies.

A method to create distinction in the maturity level of companies when implementing ISO 26000: 2010 actions is to develop a maturity grid consisting of distinct maturity levels. These

levels contain actions and processes that a company should accomplish in order to qualify for that specific level. They can serve as a "roadmap" that enables managers to diagnose what capabilities a company currently possesses and which are lacking and need to be built in order to progress in a particular area. A CSR maturity model should be enabled from ISO: 26000 actions and act as a tool/method that assesses organizations regarding their CSR performance and the same time suggests actions for performance improvement.

Crosby (1979) introduced the first maturity model, which referred to the Quality Management Maturity Grid and contained five levels of organizational skills, dealing with methods and tools of quality management on a scale from one to five, such as uncertainty, awakening, enlightenment, wisdom, the certainty of sales, improvement actions and company quality posture. The grid revealed a development path defining all necessary actions that should be in place for the company to reach the next maturity level.

Maturity levels describe the next levels of CSR implementation. They are hierarchically structured, and the levels follow a logical sequence, starting from total immaturity, (level 1), through informality or implementation (level 2), standardization and monitoring (level 3), aware measurement and management (level 4), until continuous improvement, as a display of the highest maturity (level 5). Each maturity level is described by the strategies, structures, systems, processes, and used methods and tools, describing at the same time the path of CSR implementation development as far as CSR and indicating the successive stages of maturity and the current position of the company.
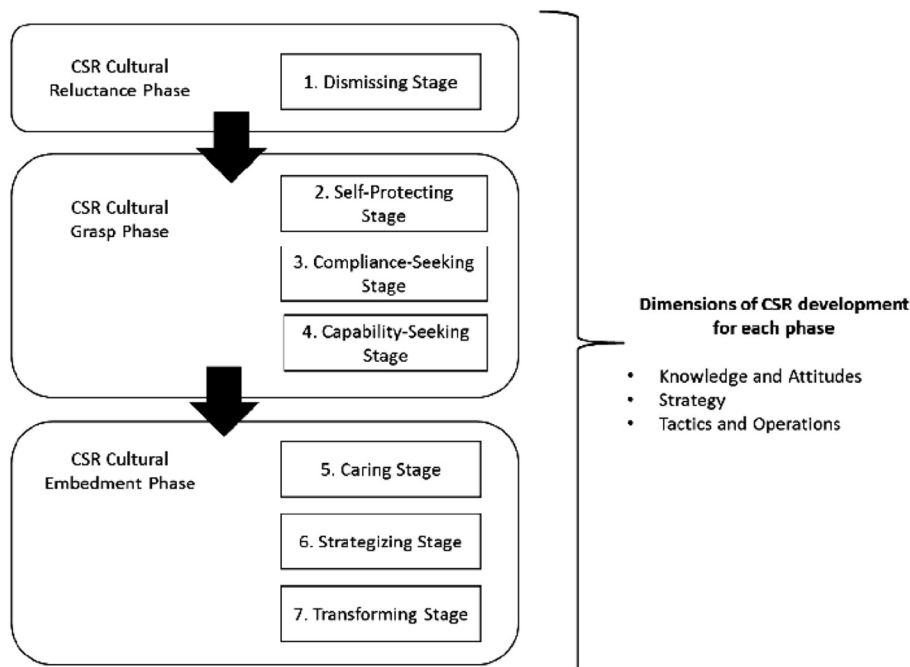

Figure 3. CSR implementation process
Source: Maon et al., 2010.

The two most comprehensive models describing the stages of CSR development are the Mirvis and Googins Model from 2006 and the Maon, Lindgreen, and Swaen model from 2010. The first assumes a finite sequence of stages in the development of corporate citizenship. The successive stages of maturity are enforced by the so-called triggers which are internal and external challenges that demand action. According to this model, these triggers focus primarily on the

credibility of the company as an entity, and then on its ability to meet the stakeholders' expectations. Coherence of efforts and, finally, involvement in the institutionalization of citizenship in its business strategies and culture are in the later stages (Mirvis & Googins, 2006).

Maon, based on the previous model, additionally introduces the stakeholder culture dimension and social responsiveness dimension and builds the consolidated, 7-staged CSR development model that integrates organizational values and culture with managerial processes and operations (Maon et al., 2010).

In their view, organizational culture plays a crucial role in CSR development, since the transition to the higher stages of maturity requires a good understanding of the concept and internalization of its respected values. Our methodology for a CSRMM development is a 6-staged procedure (Figure 4), strongly related to corporate strategy and organization:

Figure 4. Proposed CSR implementation process

5. PROPOSED INTEGRATED–HOLISTIC CSR MATURITY ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

CSR, as a part of management systems, has evolved from a systemic approach to pure strategic management. Organizations that have integrated and implemented CSR activities, compliant with ISO26000:2010 guidelines standard, must continuously improve it. Furthermore, measuring CSR activities is of key importance from a sustainable organization perspective. The concept of CSR is directly related to long-term focus and benefits. Maturity assessment in corporate social responsibility (CSRM) evaluates corporate evolvement in general and in specific areas and creates strategic improvements related to economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

The literature did not provide us with studies regarding the relationship of CSRM and the CFS with main management principles. Glykas Quality Compass (GQC) considers ten quality concepts subdivided into three categories: five core concepts, three intra-core concepts, and two auxiliary concepts as described below:

1. **Five core concepts:**
   a. **Strategic Focus:** Strategy is directly related to the vision of the corporation, the implemented CSR activities and the quality management system of the organization.

An organization that has a clear strategic direction, provides senior management the roadmap for alignment of functional activities towards achieving the corporate goals and objectives and consequently increasing operational efficiency. Clear strategy achieves greater employee involvement and contribution, improved human efficiency, enhanced performance, greater commitment, higher levels of internal and external customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage and thus increase profitability and market share.

b. **Customer Focus:** Refers to the required actions and procedures that must be addressed so as a corporation to meet customers' needs and expectations. It concerns actions related to the general direction of the quality management system, the policy, the objectives, their design, the awareness, the production, the support, the monitoring of customer satisfaction and the continuous improvement. Customer focus can affect brand reputation and increase loyalty.

c. **Human Resources Focus**: Human Recourses of all organizational levels is fundamental. Employees must be engaged and contribute by creating and delivering value for the achievement of the organization's target goals and vision. Effectively managed employees comprise a high performing workforce providing the organization a competitive advantage. This can be achieved through proper coordination and communication within the organization. Through active participation, employees gain knowledge and experiences, understand the importance of quality, and create and enhance strategic partnerships while at the same time increasing their commitment to the organization. Essential considered the incentives, the education and employees' training as well as their integrity and the way they conduct business promoting respect, trust and fairness.

d. **Process Focus:** It deals with processes and interdependent activities that convert inputs into outputs adding value, increasing quality levels and productivity leading to continuous improvement. Extra emphasis is given to achieving efficiency and effectiveness during organizational processes.

e. **Leadership Focus:** One of the most important factors for the continuous improvement of the quality of an organization is that of the appropriate senior management. Leadership sets clear organizational goals, establishes unity and decides and defines quality policy that must be aligned with quality objectives as part of the corporate culture. Leadership communicates the vision and strategy of the organization motivating employees to participate toward achieving the goals of the organization.

2. **Three intra-core concepts:**
   f. **Change Management Focus:** It is a framework or a systematic approach, related to organizational changes affecting employees, customers, core values processes and profitability through evaluation methods and corrective actions provided by data analysis. Change management metrics should be considered holistically, providing the organization with the required information for implementing strategies and methods that will ensure effective change and tactics adjustment to achieve its goal.

   g. **Performance Measurement Focus:** It is the process of evaluating, measuring and determining the efficiency and effectiveness of actions of an employee. Performance measurement brings scientific metrics into the decision-making process, underlining the change derived from information accuracy and knowledge, instead of practical experience. The primary goal of performance measurement is the identification of opportunities that can contribute to employees' evolution inside a corporation as

well as to act as a motive for succeeding in their maximum performance through appropriate and continuous support. Evaluates productivity and ensure the personal development of individual employees, increasing at the same time job satisfaction, motivation and commitment to the organization and its vision.

h.   **Continuous Improvement:** Also known as a continual or continuous improvement process. It's a continuous effort for products, services or processes of an organization improvement, focusing on value-added activities enhancement. Organizations with a culture of continuous improvement can benefit from inherent flexibility and techniques improving knowledge sharing, process improvement and workflow management.

3.   **Two auxiliary concepts:**
i.   **Information-Knowledge management:** Knowledge management is the process of creating, maintaining, using and sharing exchanging knowledge and experience of employees in an organization. Although knowledge management is usually about know-how, information management is about know-what referring to the management of data both facts and figures obtained from vertical sources. It is a cycle of knowledge, a multidisciplinary approach to improving performance by avoiding previous unsuccessful approaches and strategies and by making the best use of knowledge. In organizations with continuous learning and development culture, knowledge management is focused on improved performance, competitive advantage, innovation and exploitation aspects, and knowledge sharing to ensure the continuous improvement of the organization.

j.   **Corporate responsibility**: It concerns the impact that an organization has on society, the environment, the economy and all stakeholders. Organizations that have effective corporate responsibility programs add value to the organization itself, ensure its viability and operate in ways that enhance society and the environment. In addition, CSR activities can help forge a strong bond between employees and the organization, boost morale and increase commitment.

Figure 5. Glykas Quality Compass Concept

The above concepts are used in all four-quality perspectives (CSRM, standards, methodologies and Quality excellence awards) and follow the PDCA cycle for continuous improvement. The PDCA cycle, or Deming cycle, is a methodology that consists of four stages: Plan, Do, Check and Act.
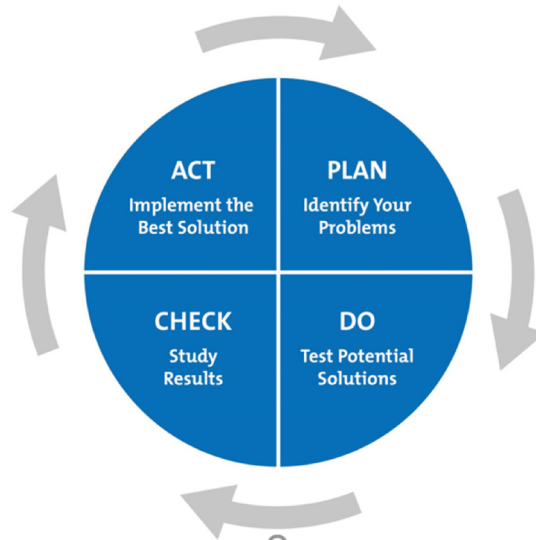

Figure 6. Deming Cycle Graphical Representation
Source: https://deming.org

The Glykas Quality Compass (GQC) framework provides a matrix, a ten-to-ten table, founded on the ten, most crucial, critical-success factors, which are identified in current, maturity-assessment frameworks and the ten, best-known enablers, which are identified in the literature. The matrix can be used regarding the CSFs during the design of the framework and regarding the enablers during the implementation of the CSRM framework, for the three-fold managerial perspective **Processes – Human Resources – Information Technology.**
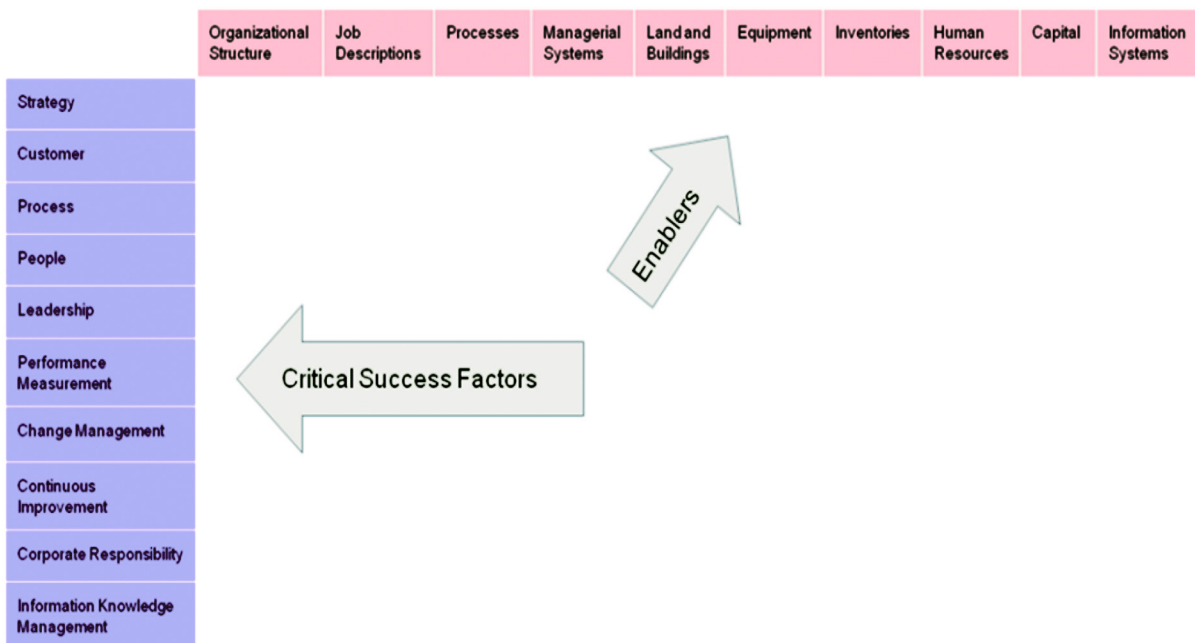

Figure 7. Framework of Glykas Quality Compass
Source: Glykas, 2019.

In order to examine whether the GQC can be expanded to apply to the ISO26000:2010 requirements, given that the standard's scope is to "provide guidance to those who recognize that respect for society and environment is a critical success factor". The holistic approach of the GQC maturity assessment model combined with CSFs corporate social responsibility management principles and organizational resources could be implemented for the assessment of the ISO26000:2010 Corporate Social Responsibility Standard, providing a useful guide for the continuous improvement of organizations. At the same time, it depicts the level of maturity when it comes to CSR implementation in corporate environments. The GQC approach could also assist CSR management implementation team to clarify the CSR concept and link it properly with corporate strategy (Glykas, 2019).

This research could be used as a recommendation and implementation guide according to ISO 26000:2010 for an organization in order to test the GQC method. Such a case study would provide findings, tools and categories to expand the GQC model, producing thus a generic GQC CSRM maturity framework to be used as a reference by future researchers in the field of CSR maturity assessment.

6. CONCLUSION

Contemporary companies measure their success beyond profit. The positive impact they provide to both society and the local community is critical. Thus, corporate social responsibility should be seen as an appropriate process, for advanced mitigation actions that minimize the negative effects and not only as a strategic competitive tool. CSR can assist companies to self-regulate their activities and be socially accountable to their customers, stakeholders, and society, at the same time. So, in a nutshell, corporations engage in CSR aiming to enhance financial performance, achieve a competitive advantage, and broaden their reputation and image.

In this paper, we provided a literature survey in the field of our study focusing on the investigation of the relationship between ISO2600:2010 and CSR dimensions, aiming to develop a maturity model that verifies the influence of the standard guidelines in CSRM. Our research verified that ISO 2600:2010 does not influence CSR dimensions in the same way. It acts more proactively in ethical and environmental dimensions and is less present in social and strategic CSR. We found evidence of a positive association between the standard guidelines and CSR principles, which indicates the importance of its implementation as well as in the dissemination of values and behaviors aligned with its scope.

The Critical Success Factors (CSF) related to Corporate Social Responsibility in a Maturity Assessment Framework have been identified and thoroughly analyzed. Moreover, the relationship between CSR activities that influence corporate performance, reputation, brand name, and finally profitability was presented.

Research contributions are important for both professionals and academics since the study's research objective resulted in the proposal of a holistic and integrated Corporate Social Responsibility Management Maturity Assessment framework encompassing the core guidelines of ISO26000:2010 in order to be used by both researchers and practitioners. In order to answer these questions, the GQC model was presented and a framework combining this model with the requirements of the ISO 26000 was designed in order to be tested in a future case study.

During the study, we had to overcome several limitations. The relevance of this study relies on the association of ISO 26000:2010 with the advancement of corporate social responsibility, especially in the context of implementing its guidelines. Although there are studies that investigate the relationship between these constructs, there is a gap in the literature regarding standard implementation and its influence on the different dimensions of CSR.

Our ongoing research on the Corporate Social Responsibility Maturity Assessment Framework application includes the implementation of the proposed framework in a corporate environment. This will prove its feasibility and furthermore will define the extent of influence each of the critical success factors has on the evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility.

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