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Excellence and Quality in Andalusia University Library System

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by Technical and Coordination Committees

Abstract

From 1996 onwards, then, the Quality Assessment National Plan and the adoption of its agenda by regional authorities and Universities alike has resulted in a growing acceptance by the Spanish academic community of the challenges and opportunities offered by evaluation and quality assurance activities.

Academic librarians have been committed to this culture of quality from the very beginnings and in most cases have being leading the way in their own institutions. General tools like the Evaluation Guide referred to above developed to be applied in administration and services alike were of little use for libraries, so academic libraries have been the first units to develop their own evaluation guides at local and regional levels.

University System in Andalusia (Spain) is formed by 10 Universities financed by regional government. The Quality Unit of Andalusia Universities convened in 2000 an *Assessment University Libraries Pilot Plan* to do a global analysis of the Library System. This Pilot Plan has had three steps:

- During 2000-2002, a technical committee to draft a new evaluation guide for academic libraries. Based on the EFQM, because of its growing influence in the evaluation of the public sector and not-for-profit organizations across Europe. During the course of our work we were delighted to see that we concurred basically with the approach taken by LISIM.

The Guide is divided into 5 parts, as follows: **Analysis and Description** of 9 criteria adapted to library scenario, 35 **Tables** for data collection, a set of 30 **quality and performance Indicators**, a **Excellence-rating matrix,** an objective tool, to determine the level of excellence achieved by the library on a scale from 0 to 10, and **General guidelines for the Assessment Committees** of University Departments (the basic unit of research assessment undertaken by the University) and of degree courses (the basic unit of assessment of teaching personnel).

- In 2002-2004, a coordination committee drove the assessment process of 9 libraries and tested materials and evaluation methodology. The Pilot Plan has finalised with External Evaluation for 5 External Committee formed by librarians, faculties and EFQM methodology specialist.

The aim of this paper is explain different parts and strong points of this process and how EFQM is suitable for all kind of libraries.

I. Introduction

From 1996 onwards, the National Quality Assessment Plan in Spain and the adoption of its agenda by regional authorities and universities alike has resulted in a growing acceptance by the Spanish academic community of the challenges and opportunities offered by assessment and quality assurance activities.

Academic librarians have been committed to this culture of quality from the very beginning and in most cases have being leading the way in their own institutions. General tools like the Assessment Guide developed to be applied in administration and service areas alike were of little use to libraries, so academic libraries have been the first units to develop their own assessment guides at local and regional levels.

The university system in Andalusia (Spain) is comprised of 10 universities financed by regional government. The Andalusian Universities Quality Unit (UCUA)[1] established a *Pilot Plan for the Assessment of University Libraries* in 2000 to undertake a global analysis of the university library system. This Pilot Plan had three stages, which are outlined below:

- Consideration of methodology, selection of an appropriate model, EFQM in this case, and establishment of a technical committee (2000-2002)[2] to draft a new

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[1] Andalusia Universities Quality Unit (http://www.ucua.es) is a consortium of 10 Andalusia Universities, accountable to regional government, whose objective is to foster improved standards of quality in the higher education sector in Andalusia. It is responsible for the assessment of university degrees and diplomas and of university departments and services. In addition, it serves as the instrument for liaison with the National Programme for Quality Assessment in Universities.

[2] The members of the Technical Committee include Carmen Baena Díaz (Director of the Pablo de Olavide Library of the University of Seville); Maria del Carmen Liñán Maza (Director of the Library of the University of Cordoba); Aurora

assessment guide for academic libraries. The EFQM model was chosen because of its growing influence in the assessment of the public sector and not-for-profit organizations across Europe. During the course of our work we were delighted to see that we concurred basically with the approach taken by LISIM.

- Implementation of the Self-Assessment Process. A coordination committee (2002-2004) drove the assessment process in 9 libraries and tested materials and assessment methodology. The Pilot Plan concluded with External Assessment by five External Committees formed by librarians, teaching staff and EFQM methodology specialists.

- Revision and assessment of materials and tools (2004-…)

The aim of this paper is to explain the different parts and strong points of this process and demonstrate the suitability of EFQM for all kinds of libraries.

II. Assessment and Quality Assurance in the Higher Education in Spain

The 1990s was a decade of assessment and quality throughout the university sector in Spain and the European Union, and began with the Experimental Programme for Quality Assessment in Universities (1992-1994), which sought inspiration from prevailing international practice. Under the remit of this programme, the Council of Universities (the public body in charge of university matters in Spain) chose to build on an integrated and institution-wide approach of self-assessment, plus external review by experts, of teaching and learning, research, services and organization. During the same period, a European pilot programme was developed, for quality management in the university administration and service areas, which greatly helped to expand the culture of quality among administrative and service staff and to spread strong support for the adoption of the EFQM model as the appropriate model for the assessment of university administrative services.

In 1994, the EU launched a pilot project for quality assessment in the higher education sector aimed at developing a European model for quality assessment (limited to teaching and learning). By the end of 1996, a number of conclusions had been reached: the autonomous and independent nature of the bodies in charge of the management, coordination and development of assessment and quality assurance activities must be safeguarded; the assessment process must allow for the matching and adaptation of assessment mechanisms to individual institutional profiles, as well as for the participation of all stakeholders and the confluence of internal and external elements; and, finally, the results of the assessment must be made publicly available.

The conclusions of the European Project were passed as recommendations by the European Commission at the same time that the Spanish Government was setting up a National Programme for Quality Assessment in Universities (1995), and consequently, the recommendations of the Commission were incorporated into the Spanish programme. In short, the Commission's recommendations established that quality assessment activities

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must seek to improve the quality of products and services as well as to offer accurate information to stakeholders on the use and the ultimate performance of resources channelled into the system.

From 1996 onwards, the National Programme and the adoption of its agenda by regional authorities and universities alike, has resulted in a growing acceptance by the academic community of the challenges and opportunities offered by assessment and quality assurance activities. A nationwide, technical committee for the National Programme, several quality units and technical committees for regional authorities and individual institutions, have paved the way for the development and implementation of the tools required for a successful programme of assessment.

The first such tool was the Assessment Guide (1998), in which the principal procedures for the assessment process are outlined. Support services, like libraries, are to be considered in relation to the particular degree or programme being assessed, but at the same time they can be reviewed on their own, as an organizational unit serving the whole institution across campus. In this case, the assessment guide builds on the EFQM model and offers a set of performance indicators to be changed and adapted to local conditions in the self-assessment process.

Academic librarians have been committed to this culture of quality from the very start and, in most cases, have been leading the way in their own institutions. General tools, such as the Assessment Guide referred to above, developed for use in administration and service areas alike, were of little use to libraries. As a consequence, academic libraries have been the first units to develop their own assessment guides at local and regional levels.

The first of these guides was compiled by the Catalan Agency for Quality in 1999; this has already undergone practical trials in several universities. Other university libraries have gone through the assessment process without a clear reference and without even breaking ground.

In 2000, the Andalusian Universities Quality Unit (UCUA) put together a technical committee to draft a new assessment guide for academic libraries. Based on the experience already gained, as well as on the recommendations of the national Assessment Guide, we chose to develop our own guide along EFQM lines because of the growing influence of the latter in the assessment of both public sector and non-profit-making organizations across Europe. During the course of our work we were delighted to see that our approach concurred basically with that adopted by LISIM. In addition, a new guide, also based on the EFQM model, has recently been issued for use in the administration and services sectors of our universities.

In 2001, the publication of the report entitled "Universidad 2000" and government proposals for a wide-ranging review of current university legislation sparked a debate about the future of the higher education sector in Spain. Undoubtedly, therefore, further changes and developments will come. However, the culture of quality management and assessment will continue to spread, academic libraries will continue to play a leading role in the development of new approaches and to share their experiences at international events such as this.

In 2003 the National Agency for the Assessment of Quality and Accreditation (ANECA) was created in Spain with the aim of:

1. To assist, by means of assessment, certification and accreditation, in measuring the performance of Higher Education as a public service, in accordance with objective procedures and transparent processes as a means to promote and guarantee the quality of the universities and their integration in the European Higher Education Area.

2. To foster improvement of the teaching, research and management activity of the universities with a view to augmenting cooperation and competition nationally and internationally.

3. To furnish Public Administrations with appropriate information about the Higher Education system.

4. To inform society about progress towards objectives in the universities' activities, in order to help achieve greater understanding of and support for the Higher Education System as an identity and guiding line for the Knowledge Society.

III. EFQM Model adapted to the University Library Environment

1. Guideline for Assessment Process

1.1 Activities to be evaluated

The use and consumption of information is increasingly necessary and the need for information, vital to the strategic development of the university mission, is constantly growing. In the future, the university user will be obliged to cultivate connections, skills and abilities which will allow him to make efficient use of the growing volume of information (both internal and external) which relates to or affects his professional activity.

In addition, certain trends, concerning a change in teaching practice and requirements, are becoming apparent and these will have a significant impact on research performance, to the extent that the working methods and productivity of lecturers, researchers and students will become elements of the utmost importance.

If we accept that improved productivity is directly related to the particular information policy adopted, then the library constitutes a primary support in the process of academic education and research.

On this basis, the proposed, overall assessment of the university library (taken to mean an administrative, organizational and functional unit), involves the assessment of both traditional activities (the ability of the library to provide documents and information) and non-traditional activities, currently emerging in the new educational context (the ability of the library to provide *integral training*). In addition, the assessment will need to take into account the connection between these two different types of activity and the ultimate mission, and the teaching and research objectives of the university, as well as considering the extent of the role the library may play as the University Knowledge Management Unit.

The activities to be assessed are as follows:

1. Global analysis of the library system: integration, relevance of objectives, participation in multi-functional teams, etc., within the university system.
2. Products and services which the library system provides to the teaching and research branches of the university.
3. Ability of the library system to provide documents and information.
4. Degree of stakeholder satisfaction with the products and services provided by the library.

1.2 Generic Assessment Strategies

The Guide and the process of assessment it recommends, are based on the following principles:

Integral Focus: the EFQM excellence model is an ideal tool to effect the integral assessment of the University Library System. The application of EFQM criteria in assessing the degree of quality achieved by the library helps to overcome organizational barriers (central services, branch libraries, etc.). In addition, concepts such as leadership, strategies or partnerships are applied to the organization as a whole and help to provide a global image of the library.

Global Focus: All the activities and tasks related to the different areas listed above are also submitted to analysis.

Emphasis on interaction: particular attention has been paid to highlighting the cause-effect relationships produced between the various EFQM criteria and sub criteria, as well as the relationships produced between, for example, the various activities and tasks (cataloguing, reference, teaching products, etc.), the organization of the library (central libraries, branch libraries, etc.) and the projection of results among the university community and stakeholders. A wide range of problems are pinpointed during the process of examination and appraisal of this interaction, and many opportunities for improvement are identified. An appropriate analysis of these findings will enable the most appropriate solutions to be developed.

Contrasting of information: a wide variety of information is employed, both in terms of the nature of the information itself (qualitative or quantitative) and the origin thereof (internal and external). This approach helps to overcome the problem of coincidences and discrepancies, an essential pre-requisite when issuing value judgements.

Systematic analysis of the results: the products provided by the library are the basic point of reference when formulating and issuing value judgements. Several tables of relevant information must be completed for each of the products.

Emphasis on assessment: the process of assessment entails far more than the mere compilation of data. Data collected requires due analysis and appraisal, value judgements must be formed, weaknesses must be identified and improvement actions proposed. To this end, the guide proposes the completion and analysis of a number of Tables.

1.3 Assessment Methodology

The self-regulatory method is employed (self-assessment and external assessment), which involves three separate stages:

- Self-assessment, undertaken by the Self-Assessment Committee, in accordance with the Internal Assessment Guide.

- External Assessment, undertaken by a Committee of External Experts, in accordance with the guidelines set out in the External Assessment Guide.

- A Final Report, prepared by the Self-Assessment Committee, based on the findings of the two previous reports.

2. An EFQM Self-Assessment Guide

2.1 The Guide is divided into 5 parts, as follows:

1. An Analysis and Description of the 9 criteria and the various sub criteria which make up the EFQM model, as adapted for university libraries. Each of the criteria and sub criteria are sub-divided as follows:

- Definition of, and comments regarding the criteria/sub criteria

- Key Performance Areas: a description is provided of those areas, within the criteria or sub criteria, which are particularly relevant.

- Approach: this section contains a description of the most suitable approach for each of the different criteria.

- Deployment: in the same way, this section contains a full description of the elements which are evidence of the appropriate and systematic implementation of each of the criteria.

- Corroboration: a list of possible corroborative evidence of the criteria or sub criteria is provided by way of example.

- Questions: a wide range of relevant questions which enable the Assessment Committee to satisfactorily complete the score table for

each of the criteria and sub criteria. At times, these questions may serve to provide quantitative data for inclusion in the Tables; at others, they may serve to confirm impressions, or to provide qualitative data relevant to the assessment.

2. Tables: the Guide includes 35 Tables for data collection, organized into four different areas: the Library Context (university, degree courses, etc.), Resources, Services and Stakeholder Satisfaction (users, personnel, etc). These tables were adapted in the second step of the process. A staff survey was used to measure staff satisfaction, working environment and the leadership of the Library Management Team.

3. Indicators: The Guide includes 21 performance indicators (see below).

4. Excellence-rating matrix: an objective tool, for use by the management team, to determine the level of excellence achieved by the library on a scale from 0 to 10. It serves as a quick guide to the approach adopted and to the degree of deployment achieved in each EFQM criteria/sub criteria, and is a useful planning tool, highlighting as it does those areas requiring improvements in quality[3].

5. General guidelines for the Assessment Committees of university departments (the basic unit of research assessment undertaken by the university) and of degree courses (the basic unit of assessment of teaching personnel). These guidelines cover the basic aspects of library services, whereby library products are converted into teaching and research resources and, consequently, these services may be assessed in terms of their impact on university research and teaching.

2.2 Strong Points of the Self-Assessment Guide

1. Special emphasis is laid on the concepts of Leadership, Strategy and Partnership, as key factors to increase the competitive advantage of the library system within the university system as a whole. The leadership of the library management team is a vertical element in the EFQM model, on which the remaining criteria and sub criteria depend for support. Together, these elements form the basic skeleton of the model, the foundation on which the entire structure of excellence may take shape.

In addition, the cultivation of strategic partnerships with customers and suppliers is a basic tool with which to maximise resources when these are scant and insufficient, as has been the case with libraries in recent decades.

2. The Guide represents an attempt to integrate the models of quality assessment and excellence: EFQM & ISO 9000:2000. Both models have begun to converge, although not as the result of any planned collaboration. ISO 9000:2000 sets out specific requirements for a quality management system, according to which the library must demonstrate its ability to provide products consistently to users, who need these products to be adjusted to

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[3] See Assessment of Academic Libraries in Andalusia: An EFQM-Compliance Guide. Proceedings of the 4th Northumbria International Conference on Performance Measurement in Libraries and Information Services, p. 74-76

certain *known and accepted specifications,* and concludes by recommending *processes* for continuous improvement and for the prevention of non-compliance.

As a result, the ISO standard is rendered not only more flexible and perfectly capable of being adapted for use with service-providing organizations, but it is also brought more closely into line with the EFQM excellence model: user satisfaction and continuous improvement.

3. Along these same lines, the Guide proposes a model for the multidimensional measurement of the library organization, to serve as a counterbalance to the 9 criteria of the EFQM model, from the point of view of strategic management. This approach will permit the development of an integrated model of measurement, in the form of a balanced scorecard, which will combine both the model of quality and that of excellence (ISO, EFQM, stakeholder theory...).

4. Finally, the Guide contains an excellence-rating matrix, suitably adapted for use in the library context (see the end of this report) in which each criterion may be graded on a scale of 0 to 10: Leadership, Policy and Strategy, Management of Staff, Partnerships and Resources, Processes, and Customer, Staff and Society Results.

The matrix represents an attempt to attach an objective, numerical value to the level of excellence of each library and to the final results of the assessment. It also enables comparisons to be drawn between the different libraries assessed, irrespective of their size or their differing levels of resources. It permits to compare with the numerical value propose for the External Committee in their assessment.

3. External assessment toolkit

The external assessment process is regulated by the set of "Documents for the external assessment of university libraries", that includes both the Guide and the External Assessment Toolkit (on a CD Rom that accompanies the Guide), and the "Guidelines for the Production of the University Libraries Final Report".

1) The aim of the External Assessment Guide is to "*facilitate the preparation, coordination and implementation of the external assessment process within the framework of the Andalusian Universities Quality Plan*".

It centres on defining the objectives of the external assessment, establishing the profile and structure of the External Assessment Committee, outlining the tasks it should undertake and dealing with the way it functions, its work plan and programme during the visit to the library, the action to be taken prior to the visit, collectives to be interviewed, information to be gathered during the on-site visits, etc. It also includes other recommendations for the creation of value judgements for the production of the External Assessment Report, the structure, the time allowed for its production and delivery, and recommendations to libraries on the correct procedures for the External Committee's visit.

2) The Tools are divided into two areas. The first is used for the analysis of the university library via the Self-Assessment Report, the interviews and the on-site visits. The second,

more concerned with synthesis, deals with the production of the External Assessment Report.

3) The "Guidelines for the production of the Final Report" is the guide to the completion of the final phase. As a synthesis document, it consists of various parts:

- Identification of the assessed library and the period during which the assessment is undertaken, and a summary of the processes involved, both internal and external. This mainly involves the composition and establishment of the Self-Assessment Committee and the External Assessment Committee as well as their work plans and an assessment of the differences between each phase.

- The results of the assessment, the synthesis of the strengths and weaknesses, presented in accordance with the nine EFQM criteria.

- The Improvement Plan in which action to be taken is outlined, prioritised and scheduled with a completion date. This action plan also includes an indication of those responsible, performance indicators to monitor the process and objective goals to be achieved during the implementation period.

- By way of conclusion, there is specific section in which to evaluate the assessment process as a whole.

- The toolkit is completed by annexes summarising the basis on which the process has been carried out: general data about the university and the library, the documents used and the performance indicators.

III. - Deployment of the Process (2003-2004). Application of the EFQM model and its tools in university libraries in Andalusia

1. Cooperation as the basis for deployment

Given that it was planned to start the assessment process simultaneously in all the libraries involved, the Coordination Group for Assessment Processes in Andalusian University Libraries was set up, under the auspices of UCUA. The aim of this was to take advantage of the experience of joint projects undertaken on other occasions, dealing with other matters, in particular those carried out by the Andalusia University Libraries Consortium.

1.1 Coordination Group Objectives

The starting point of the process is the use of the EFQM model and its implementation guides, as well as the support of the Group with regards to the development of materials, procedures and schedules. The specific objectives established by the Coordination Group are:

1) Use homogenous criteria, methodology and tools. Deadlines, the type and origin of the documentation to be used, questionnaires, indicators etc are all established.

2) Take advantage of the synergy of the Group to exchange information about individual experiences.

3) Achieve a high level of homogeneity in the compulsory reports (self-assessment, external and final) in order to open up the possibility of contrasting results and maximising benchmarking.

4) Tackle jointly all the action in the improvement plans which have general repercussions.

Later, and as a consequence of the satisfactory development of the assessment processes and a greater knowledge of the model, three new objectives may be added:

5) Disseminate and communicate the experience of the application of the model and the cooperative work, given the conclusion that the process could be applied beyond the initial sphere: Andalusia university libraries. From UCUA, via the Group, came the idea of presenting the methodology and the tools used to a wider audience.

6) Work collaboratively with UCUA in the application of the model and the tools in other spheres: other universities and other types of libraries.

7) Support the implementation of the improvement plans, taking into account that assessment implies a cyclical process, with annual and bi-annual reviews.

1.2 Working Procedures

Each university library, although acting independently in putting the generally established principles into practice, also respects the minimum agreements established, thus giving coherence and a global scope to the process.

The Group, made up of representatives of all the Andalusian university libraries, possesses an internal structure that facilitates this aim.

In any case, either directly or via the local support given to each representative, the University Quality Units can be relied upon to be involved in the process. These are bodies charged with putting assessment processes of a general character into practice (qualifications, departments, services, etc) in their corresponding universities.

1.3 Uniformity of the process and action

As previously mentioned, one of the objectives of the Coordination Group has been to make uniform and standardise the process, establishing agreement on aspects such as; structure of the Self-Assessment Report, improvement plans, questionnaires etc…

With regard to the questionnaires, a template was produced which specified a series of common questions to be used in all cases and criteria to be met:
- Size of the sample: this should reach 5% of students and 100% of all the other categories of users (distributed via email).

- Questionnaires aimed at students to be distributed:
  - in major subjects.
  - in each of the five knowledge areas (Humanities, Science, Social Science, Health and Engineering)
  - in all years of degree courses
  - proportionally by institution, depending on the number of students

In this way it was possible to achieve the objective of choosing the correct sample in each university, and in addition, to obtain a uniform opinion from the users and staff from the perspective of the different institutions that participated.

Thereby, one more step is taken and it is possible to establish some homogenous guidelines for the analysis. The methodology to undertake the analysis is established, highlighting the level of detail and the grouping of the questions into seven thematic blocks: facilities, resources, services, customer service, user training, personnel and another optional one to allow the inclusion of the specific circumstances of each library. In each case, the assessment is made according to the importance to, the use by and the satisfaction of users.

With regards to the Self-Assessment Report, the agreements centre on structure, content, analysis of evidence and proposals for the improvement plan in which should be included the objective, the related criteria, those responsible, resources, scheduling, and performance indicators.

In the case of the Final Report, the result of the last phase of the process, common criteria have also been established. It is based on the adaptation of the guidelines for the production of the final report for UCUA qualifications, and is the document which integrates and synthesises the two previous reports (self-assessment and external), with qualitative assessment having predominance over quantitative.

1.4 Cooperation in the implementation of improvement plans

At the current time, with the assessment processes completed and the improvement plans put into effect, another objective for cooperation is put into place: the creation of improvement groups, or other methods of collaborative working, via which agreement can be reached on similar action to be taken with regards to library management: communication plans, training plans, marketing plans, process mapping, etc. The final objective of this process is therefore the creation of framework documents, in which basic requirements are outlined, but which can later be adapted and developed by each library according to its particular characteristics.

1.5 Training and dissemination activities for the model and the materials

In the environment of each university, in addition to the dissemination work carried out, training sessions have been run for library staff. This training work has also been extended to other university services that intend to start their assessment processes in the future.

The cooperative work, under the auspices of UCUA, has been extensive and has been aimed at providing training in the use of the model and the associated materials. Members of the Group have participated in:

- Training Days for External Assessment Committees held in Antequera, Málaga (Spain), in March 2004.
- Presentation to the 2004 IFLA Conference, held in Buenos Aires, within the Discussion Group on Questions of Quality in Libraries.
- Papers in the Library and Society Forum: Experiences of Innovation and Improvement, held in Murcia, Spain, in October 2004.
- Papers, presentations and participation in round table discussions at the XIII Andalusia Library Conference, held in Alcalá la Real, Granada (Spain), in October 2004.
- In addition, further activities within the Andalusian university system and at other professional meetings were considered

These training and dissemination initiatives regarding the progress made are justified by the Group's conviction that the model is valid for the assessment and improvement of the quality of libraries, and not only those within universities, but also those of other types that share some structural similarities. Therefore, its application in provincial public libraries, municipal library systems, specialised libraries, etc., is seen to be feasible.

IV. Assessment and Results of the assessment process. Improvement Plans

1. Impressions of External Committee

The following conclusions have been drawn from the documents produced by the various committees that participated in the assessment processes which are the object of this study.

Firstly, the External Committees' impression of the assessment process is analysed. It should be noted that only three External Committees were constituted to assess nine libraries with the aim of achieving simultaneity in the process and that their composition was subject to rigorous analysis in order to ensure a perfect balance between experts in quality and experts in library management.

These External Committees started their reports with a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the internal assessment process. In the quantitative assessment the scores given, in all cases, are above 3 on a scale of 0 to 5. In the qualitative assessment the aspects to be highlighted because of the similarities seen across the different reports are:

- High level of involvement and positive attitude demonstrated by the different Internal Committees.
- Appropriacy of the information used, including evidence, the opinions of the internal committees contrasted with the documentation gathered and value judgements.
- High level of self-criticism in the different internal reports.
- Large number of similarities with regards to strengths, weaknesses and proposals for improvement of Internal and External Committees.

Secondly, the impact of the assessment process on the libraries evaluated is analysed. This may be summarised as follows:

- Development in the staff of the idea of belonging to the subsystem of the library as a single service, within which the key results obtained are a direct consequence of the synergy between the different services and/or units that make up the said subsystem.
- Development of the awareness of belonging to the university system and that the results of the library should contribute to the achievement of the university's objectives.
- Development of a culture of quality amongst Andalusian librarians.
- Generalisation of the use of quality tools.

Thirdly, from the point of view of the universities, the conclusions that can be drawn from this process are the following:

- High level of involvement of the libraries in the development of a quality management system.
- Projection of an image of cohesion and capacity for cooperation shown by the libraries in the context of Andalusian universities.
- Availability of improvement plans, endorsed by committees of experts and the result of a rigorous assessment process.

2. Revision and assessment of the indicators used

The model draws on opinion surveys and performance indicators as the background information for the analysis of quantitative data. Therefore, in the *EFQM Guide to Self-Assessment for University Libraries* data tables and indicators were included and the Coordination Group produced a draft standard questionnaire for each interest group.

Although the *Guide* proposes a wide range of indicators connected with the different criteria and marked as "recommended" or "essential", most self-assessment reports only include those considered to be "essential". These are outlined below:

1. *Potential users : total staff (-grant holders)*
2. *Potential uses : total staff (+grant holders)*
3. *Staff costs (-grant holders) : number of potential users*
4. *Staff costs (+grant holders) : potential users*
5. *Potential users : total space in square metres*
6. *Number of students (3 cycles): total space in square metres*
7. *Potential users : number of computers (work + public)*
8. *Students (3 cycles) : number of computers (work + public) (optional)*
9. *Open hours for reading per year : potential users*
10. *Potential users : opening hours for reading*
11. *Costs of electronic resources over total costs in information resources*
12. *Potential users : journal subscriptions*
13. *Costs of acquisitions of information resources : potential users*
14. *Total of live journals : researchers (lecturers + 3rd cycle)*
15. *Annual increase in volumes (monographic): potential users*

16. Computerised volumes over the total bibliographic collection
17. Total loans per year : potential users
18. Inter-library loans requested : total lecturers + researchers
19. Inter-library loans conceded to other libraries: items requested from other libraries
20. Total accesses to databases : total of potential users
21. Potential users : total electronic journals

A clear lack of specific indicators to quantify some of the criteria, and even some of the agents, such as criterion 1 (Leadership) or 2 (Policy and strategy) can be observed. Most of indicators used correspond to criterion 3 (People) and criterion 4 (Alliances and resources) It should be stated, therefore, that there is a need to enlarge the table of proposed indicators, in order to include indicators associated with all the criteria. With regards to this point, however, the absence of impact indicators that measure the contribution of the library towards the general results of the university (i.e., research and teaching) should be insisted upon.

The information provided by the analysis of opinion surveys, undertaken with library staff as well as with different user groups, has been used to evaluate criteria 1 and 2 and principally, criterion 6, Results on clients and 7, Results on people.

3. Strengths and weaknesses of the process

To complete this overview of our study, we offer a brief reflection on the usefulness of the process followed, mentioning both the strengths and weaknesses as detected by the different agents involved:

Strengths:

- The use of the EFQM Model that allows the assessment of library organisations of different sizes and with different management styles.

- The global focus of the EFQM Model that allows the library to carry out an internal diagnosis via the interrelation of all the criteria.

- The use of a variety of data, both qualitative and quantitative.

- The homogeneity of the process that allows the whole Andalusian library system to be assessed but at the same time allows the libraries the opportunity to identify their place within the system.

- The capacity for collaborative working on the part of the participating libraries has allowed the results discussed here to be obtained extremely efficiently.

- The institutional support of UCUA has facilitated the above-mentioned collaborative working.

- Knowledge/Recognition of the level of quality of the library achieved both on an internal level as well as on an organisation-wide level.

- The similarities in the definition of suggestions for improvement that allow joint projects to be undertaken.

- The fact that the libraries have been pioneers in the assessment process within the universities converts them into models to be followed by other university services. An example of this is the participation of library staff in the training of other university service staff in assessment processes.

Weaknesses

- The disparity in the levels of knowledge about the EFQM Model amongst the agents involved in the assessment processes.

- The methodological inflexibility "imposed" by the External Guide that principally bases the external assessment on quantitative aspects.

- The innate uniformity of the process, also considered to be a strength, that also constitutes a weakness because of the "obligation" to make all the processes followed the same.

- The input of time necessary in order to carry out the process that slows down the normal pace of the organisation and that may seem excessive.

- The existence of various external committees that could make objective comparison of the different libraries difficult.

- The repetition of questions included in the different criteria that result in redundancies in the reports produced.

- The lack of response from the university community that has not contributed directly to the production of the reports by the different committees, despite the use of various means of publicity and invitations to participate.

5. Conclusions

The collaborative work undertaken in Andalusia in the application of the EFQM Model and its tools should be highly valued both in terms of the materials produced and the experiences shared.

Working in this way has allowed uniformity in the processes and in the resulting reports which will greatly aid benchmarking and the implementation of joint improvement plans with the consequent mutual benefits.

In addition, it is clearly shown that teamwork generates a positive dynamic of improvement via the increase in participation and communication and that making joint use of experiences facilitates and speeds up the individual implementation of the model and the tools.

Although the materials were prepared for use in the Pilot Scheme for the Assessment of University Libraries in Andalusia, they are broad in scope, fully comprehensive and detailed.

Their purpose was to facilitate the work of the assessors, to help highlight the strengths of the libraries assessed and to provide sufficient contrasting information to enable weaknesses to be pinpointed and improvement actions to be proposed.

The use of the different materials throughout the duration of the Pilot Scheme helped to identify any shortcomings, gaps or omissions in the Guide itself, which will be submitted to a process of revision.

It is believed that the model is valid for university libraries of varying types. This is backed up by the characteristics of the nine libraries that have participated in this project. For this same reason, it is considered that its implementation is also feasible in other libraries that share a similar structure: public libraries, specialist libraries, government libraries, etc.

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