UNIVERSIDADES CORPORATIVAS E O ENSINO PARA A SUSTENTABILIDADE

CORPORATE UNIVERSITIES AND THE EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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MONICA APARECIDA DE SORDI MARTÃO ***monicadesordi@uol.com.br***
JACQUES DEMAJOROVIC
Centro Universitário FEI

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper to verify how corporate universities promote education for sustainability among its employees and external stakeholders in order to integrate this theme into the organization strategies. For this qualitative research, the data collection technique chosen was the semi-structured interview, performed with 16 corporate universities managers based in the state of São Paulo. Although, sustainability appears as a strategic component, in the organizational discourse, the results show that there are practically non-existent specific models and educational actions related to the theme. The barriers are the following: the lack of sustainability culture in the organizations and the concentration of the knowledge of this theme in specific sustainability departments. By assigning sustainability education initiatives to these departments, learning ends up being fragmented and punctual. As a result, it hinders the appropriation of this knowledge in other organizational units and the inclusion of this theme into the strategy of the organizations researched. Thus, the main challenge found is the construction of collaborative dialogue between corporate universities, sustainability areas and other organizational departments that could foster an effective learning process in organizations reconciling economic, environmental and social objectives.

Keywords: *Corporate University, Education, Sustainability.*

RESUMO

Este artigo tem por objetivo verificar como universidades corporativas promovem a educação para a sustentabilidade de seus colaboradores e stakeholders externos de forma a integrar esta temática nas estratégias organizacionais. Para esta pesquisa qualitativa, a técnica de coleta de dados escolhida foi a entrevista semi-estruturada, realizada com 16 Gestores de universidades corporativas sediadas no Estado de São Paulo. Os resultados apontam que, embora a sustentabilidade seja um componente estratégico presente no discurso organizacional, é praticamente inexistente modelos específicos e ações educacionais, relacionados propriamente com o tema. Destaca-se a falta de uma cultura para a sustentabilidade efetiva nas organizações e concentração do conhecimento relativo ao tema nos departamentos específicos de sustentabilidade, que contribui para um aprendizado fragmentado e pontual, dificultando a apropriação deste conhecimento nas demais unidades organizacionais e a incorporação da temática na estratégia das organizações pesquisadas. O principal desafio encontrado se refere à construção de diálogo colaborativo entre as universidades corporativas, áreas de sustentabilidade e demais setores organizacionais que facilite um processo formativo efetivo nas organizações, conciliando objetivos econômicos, ambientais e sociais.

Palavras-chave: Universidade Corporativa, Educação, Sustentabilidade.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate University (CU) and Sustainability are contemporary themes in organizations, intensifying their academic interest since the 2000s. Both understood as important elements of organizational strategies can be considered as sources of competitive advantage. However, despite the contemporaneity, these themes seem to go hand in hand in the organizational environment and there is a gap in the literature regarding the role and performance of the CU regarding sustainability education in organizations (BRUNSTEIN; RODRIGUES, 2014; ANTONELLI, CAPPIELLO; PEDRINI, 2013; PARENTE; FISCHER, 2014; ENGERT et al., 2015; ALVARES; SOUZA, 2016).

For organizations to remain competitive, they need to understand changes in the environment and quickly and effectively develop appropriate responses to address the new challenges posed by markets and technologies. For many authors, these challenges can and should be addressed through the continuing education of the organization's collaborators, with CU being a relevant actor in this process (CARBONE, 2013; ANTONELLI CAPPIELLO; PEDRINI, 2013; SENGUR; ACAR, 2014; RYAN et al., 2015; RHEAUME; GARDONI, 2015). Renaud-Coulon (2008) advocates the integration of new and complex responsibilities for CU, related to discussions of current issues, linked to social advances, such as: environmental responsibility, cultural diversity, ethics and citizenship, among others. In the same direction, Tsipes et al. (2016) argue that in a scenario of new areas of knowledge, techniques and professional standards, CU occupies a central position to prepare the organization to align with sustainable development and the interests of internal and external stakeholders.

Regarding sustainability, although discussed since the 1970s, it was from the late 1990s onwards that it was integrated into the daily lives of the most prominent organizations. Advancing environmental legislation and social pressures has led to the recognition that integrating environmental and social concerns into business is essential for organizations to address the challenges of sustainable development more effectively (OSAGIE, et

al., 2018) and contributes to securing competitive advantage in the contemporary landscape (BELINKY, 2016; HART; MILSTEIN, 2003). However, several surveys show great resistance from companies regarding the effective integration in the decision-making processes of environmental and social variables, as they are still often considered a financial burden and not a business opportunity or competitive differentiator (WILSON et al., 2006; HUBBARD, 2009; PORTER; KRAMER, 2011; COLEMAN, 2013; ENGERT et al., 2015; BLAKE, 2016).

For sustainability to be present in discussions of business strategies, we need to transcend current business models and develop a new way of thinking and planning for the future. This will be through continuing corporate education, individual and organizational learning for sustainability, innovative learning processes and the involvement of all hierarchical levels in organizations (DEMAJOROVIC, 2003; AREVALO et al., 2011; BRUNSTEIN et al., 2012; COLEMAN, 2013).

In this context, the following research question is proposed: How do CUs contribute to the process of education for sustainability in organizations in order to meet organizational strategies? To answer this question we set as objective: check how Corporate Universities promote sustainability education at its various organizational levels, both for employees and external stakeholders, in order to comply with organizational strategies related to sustainability. Therefore, we opted for a qualitative work, based on in-depth interviews with 16 managers of CUs based in São Paulo.

CONCEPTUALIZING CORPORATE UNIVERSITY

The term CU was defined by American researcher Jeanne C. Meister, as "a strategic umbrella for developing and educating employees, customers, suppliers and the community to meet the organization's business strategies" (MEISTER, 1999, p.29). A "CU is a generic name given to educational structures in public and private, commercial and non-commercial organizations, to help implement, through education, the organization's human, economic, financial, technological, social and environmental strategies", characterized as an important tool that "forges the corporate identity and the soul of the corporation" (RENAUD-COULON, 2008, p.23). Margherita and Secundo (2009) and Allen (2010) emphasize the breadth of CU's field of action, even promoting global processes and meeting multiple goals, multiple curricula, multiple learning methodologies, multiple technologies to fulfill their multiple roles. However, some argue that CU is an evolution of the well-known Training and Development departments (T&D) of organizations, especially in organizations that have come to consider the knowledge and learning ability of their employees as the main source of competitive advantage (MEISTER, 1999; ALPERSTEDT, 2001; EBOLI, 2004; SENGE, 2004).

Education in organizations has come to value the development of the individual's ability to learn, to think, to articulate, to participate, to seek new solutions and not just knowledge transfer (PRINCE; BEAVER, 2001; VERGARA; RAMOS, 2002; EBOLI, 2004; CONTE et al., 2011, WESSENLINK et al., 2015), reaching the most evolved stage to date, where CU relates the ability to catalyze institutional change, directly involving senior management (CASTRO E EBOLI, 2013). At this stage, CU becomes a partner in the organization's strategic planning, acting as a corporate culture management agent and developing strategic competencies aimed at ensuring the organization's success. Although many authors attach a high importance to UC, others claim that it is just a trick of organizations in order to promote themselves in the organizational environment (WALTON, 1999), causing the trivialization of knowledge, without promoting in employees the awareness of their roles as citizens in society (SILVA, 2005).

More leniently, Prince and Beaver, (2001) and Tarapanoff (2004), agree that the term CU has a symbolic value and even a marketing appeal that aims to improve the positioning of learning within organizations, point out that the term University is not intended to attempt to concur or replace the relevance and training provided by Traditional Universities (TU), but have the name "University" without having the characteristics, modus operandi and legislation of a TU, can bring many advantages for CUs as: name status by referring to a high level management tool; have autonomy to design the courses as needed; determine the length of time it deems appropriate; have the freedom to hire the professional they want as a teacher; and ease of conducting learning, which favors the alignment of learning needs with the strategic needs determined by the organization.

The most common objective of a CU is to promote the development of its main stakeholders through continuing education, in order to fulfill organizational strategies and generate competitive advantage and their implementation and operating mode differs between organizations, since each CU is influenced by the size of the organization, the financial availability and, mainly, the relevance attributed to it by the senior management. Therefore, it is not appropriate to establish the same implementation and performance model for all CUs. (BRANCO, 2006; MCATEER; PINO, 2011). Among the main characteristics of the education programs promoted by CUs, we can see highlighted the continuing education format, flexible curricula, differentiated methodologies, partnerships with third party institutions (traditional universities, consulting and specialized centers) and the diversity of the audience and can be direct employees, customers, suppliers and the community at large (MEISTER, 1999; VERGARA; RAMOS, 2002; EBOLI, 2004; ALLEN, 2007; CONTE et al., 2011).

Faced with such diversity of definitions and breadth of what can be considered a CU, Reis et al. (2010) infer that the CU is not defined by the set of training and development actions that organizations offer to their employees and partners in their value chain, but because it contributes to a larger objective which is to integrate all the educational actions of the organization, contributing to the effectiveness of the organizational strat-

egy (ANTONELLI et al., 2013; BAPORIKAR, 2014; RHÉAUME; GARDONI, 2015). To achieve this goal, the literature focuses on 3 central elements in the current debate related to CU: learning strategies; technological resources and partnership building.

Learning Strategies

Several learning strategies are employed by CUs. Many of them have been used since the early days of T&D. Others emerged as organizational learning evolved (BAPORIKAR, 2014; MOSCARDINI; KLEIN, 2015; CARMELLO, 2015). Examples include self-instruction, lectures, discussion, problem-based learning, case studies, role play, workshops, benchmark, job rotation, participation in projects, games, communities of practice, coaching, mentoring (MOSCARDINI; KLEIN, 2015). Other innovative methodologies for promoting learning and adapting to organizational and global change are listed by Carmello (2015): design thinking, 70/20/10 model, singular and / or personalized learning (development trails), hybrid learning and project-based learning. These learning strategies or methodologies are available to CUs, and their use and choices must be related to the knowledge development needs that are important for the achievement of the objectives and organizational strategy. The importance of exploring and developing new knowledge is recognized as a driving force for innovation. According to Rheaume and Gardoni (2015), CU can become a "true center of innovation", through strategic partnerships, facilitating and sometimes promoting the organizational changes needed for innovation.

Technological Resources

Information technology is recognized as an important ally of CUs. Most organizations invest heavily in e-learning as a way of promoting education and learning, as they realize the advantages this methodology brings, as a lower cost than face-to-face learning, flexibility for fast updating, and content customization, worldwide program management and the steady advancement of new social networking tools for content dissemination and discussion (EBOLI, 1999; ALLEN, 2002; HOMAN; MACPHERSON, 2005), in addition

to the ability to bring about a mental change in the employees, that is, to give autonomy for them to learn alone, without the dependence of classroom and teacher (ABEL; LI, 2012). Although the importance of information technology and e-learning methodologies has become unquestionable for CUs, research began to show dropout rate of e-learning program participants higher than face-to-face programs (ZERBINI et al., 2006) evidence that its effectiveness is not fully guaranteed. Research by Kimiloglu, Ozturan and Kutlu (2017) shows the need to balance the use of e-learning with other teaching techniques. For the authors, if on the one hand, e-learning provides as main advantages the cost reduction, functionality and customization. On the other hand, much attention must be paid to human aspects such as sociability and interactivity in the learning process. The fascination with the use of technology cannot lead companies to make the learning process a mechanical and fully systematized activity. Therefore, considering learning methodologies alternatives, in addition to e-learning, such as traditional classroom training and real case simulations combined, is critical to increasing the effectiveness of learning at all levels of organizations (STACEY; GERBIC, 2009; ALLEN, 2010; ABEL; LI, 2012; CASTRO; EBOLI, 2013).

Partnership Formation

CUs are unable to fully meet their learning demands and partnership development and management is required, internal (other departments) and external (TUs, consultants and suppliers) (ABEL e LI, 2012). In relation to TUs, partnerships aim to promote customized and personalized programs, aiming to develop content relevant to the work, may even have the degree certificate and MBA's legally recognized. Masters and doctoral programs may also be included to train professionals focused on research and innovation processes (RYAN, 2009). Baporikar (2014) emphasizes the importance of these partnerships, as the TUs can provide CUs with appropriate teaching structures, teachers capable of developing and updating models, and modern management and technical methodologies. In turn, the TUs realize in this relationship with CUs, the possibility of having a source of financial resources.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CORPORATE UNIVERSITY

The many definitions of CU, the lack of a specific model to be faithfully followed by all organizations, and a clear vision of how a CU effectively contributes to learning, innovation and organizational strategy (BAPORIKAR, 2014), drives organizations to format their CUs according to their needs and availability. Abel and Li (2012) conducted a research of 210 CUs from North America, aiming at obtaining empirical evidence to explore and advance the understanding of the phenomenon of CU. The results pointed out that CUs exist in a wide variety of organizations, with different structures and most are funded exclusively by the organizations themselves; that the greater the dependence of the organization on its intellectual capital to maintain it and/or increase its global competitiveness (e.g. IT organizations), the greater the emphasis given to CUs, with them being considered important partners for the promotion and organization of intellectual development.

As trends for CU, Baporikar (2014) highlights: greater use of learning outsourcing, professionalization of the role of Chief Learning Officer (CLO) and innovation in learning business management. As challenges, the author highlights cultivating and combining diverse and specialized experiences that translate into new knowledge for the promotion of innovation; becoming economically productive through the rapid and contextual application of the knowledge generated before they become obsolete; and monitoring and use of new ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), that provide the means to support virtual communities and pedagogically sophisticated e-learning formats. Ryan et al. (2015) also discuss trends for CU, such as: need for organizations to respond more quickly to external turmoil; physical structures due to the emergence and cheapening of new information technologies; greater use of outsourced services; attracting and retaining talent to compose the workforce; and customization of individual employee development plan.

The main challenge of a CU, according to Kolo et al. (2013), is to continually adapt its operating and structuring models to find solutions and

new strategies for an increasingly volatile and unpredictable world market, in addition to fostering constant lifelong learning for employees.

In Brazil, CU is defined as "a people development system based on people management through competencies"(EBOLI, 2004, p.48), with the mission of training and developing talent in business management, thus promoting the management of organizational knowledge (assimilation, diffusion and application) through an active and continuous learning process. In research with Brazilian CUs in 2009, Eboli (2010) pointed to the main objectives of CUs over the next five years: leadership development (78%); collaborative learning (64%); evaluation and measurement of CU results (57%); and the development and improvement of distance learning (54%). And as challenges: strategic performance (80%); evaluation and measurement of results (71%) and promotion of employee self-development (42%).

Research carried out in Brazil in relation to CUs continues to address primarily their characteristics, regarding the assumptions established in the emergence of the conceptualization made by Meister (1999) and by Eboli (2004). Little research, however, seeks to focus on specific themes developed in these CUs, such as: organizational strategy; and choices and definition of content of themes and how they are disseminated and transformed into practical actions.

The lack of a better understanding of CU effectiveness may be contributing to a scenario of uncertainty about their future in organizations. Alagaraja and Li (2015) identified that the relevance of CUs in organizations began to decline. First, due to the severe global financial crisis of 2008, which still has negative effects on the world economy, which causes budgetary limitations, as well as reduced investments. Second, due to the shift in focus from HR-related professional associations, consultants and organizations, turning their attention to talent management. And third, due to the sociocultural pressure of the TUs, which question the legitimacy of CUs with regard to the development of cutting-edge technologies and innovations.

Despite these uncertainties, for CUs to maintain their relevance in the training process of their employees and contribute to the effectiveness

of organizational strategies, it is necessary to incorporate new content in tune with social changes. In this direction, Renaud-Coulon (2008) highlights new responsibilities for CUs, related to the most current debates that have come to integrate discussions in organizations such as globalization, diversity and social and environmental responsibility.

CORPORATE EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Transcending current business models is imperative for incorporating sustainability into organizations and making it happen, Arevalo et al. (2011) advocate the need to develop new business models that incorporate variables such as differentiated strategic intentions and diverse cultural traits, thus requiring new skills at all hierarchical levels of an organization. For the author, this process depends on a new form of education that necessarily involves learning in organizations that promote actions committed to Sustainability.

In a study of eight cases of organizations from different regions of the world that have incorporated sustainability into their culture and business models, Arevalo et al. (2011) identified that the process of change happens slowly and gradually, as it needs an education that promotes the construction of an individual sense of sustainability that generates individual behavioral changes. These changes, in turn, tend to promote the construction of the collective sense of Sustainability, thus influencing organizational decisions and actions. These processes, when well conducted, also generate changes in organizational identity and, consequently, in organizational behavior and culture. For this culture of sustainability to be legitimate, it has to be disseminated at all hierarchical levels and translated into effective actions (HART, 2006; GAO; BANSAL, 2013; AHERN, 2015; BLAKE, 2016). Oncica-Sanislav and Candea (2010) argue that for leaders to set long-term goals that favor socio-environmental as well as economic aspects, it is necessary that the culture of sustainability is present, disseminated and validated throughout the organization. Otherwise, resistance to the incorporation of sustainability may prevent its insertion in the organizational culture. For Coleman (2013) and Blake (2016), resistance on the topic still exists at all hierarchical levels of organizations, mainly at the strategic levels, due to the dominant management model, which still values the economic factor over the social and environmental factors.

Traditionally in organizations, the functions of spreading culture, people development, Learning and behavioral change are under the re-

sponsibility of the Human Resources (HR) department, more specifically in T&D. For Crews (2010) it is necessary to develop an agenda that favors the implementation of Sustainability in organizations, through new talents and especially with the development of programs that enable the incorporation and practices of Sustainability.

Parente and Fischer (2014) also highlight that the challenge of organizations regarding the promotion of sustainability is directly linked to the mobilization and sensitization of the people, that is, sustainability cannot be addressed in organizations without thinking about people. Thus, they believe that the HR area of organizations is responsible for much of the sustainability policy. However, analyzing the national and international literature on the subject, investigating publications between 2001 and 2011, the authors concluded that there is still no research identifying specific models of HR practices for the development of sustainability. The research by Tsipes et al. (2016), which also emphasizes the importance of HR, warns that without real senior management involvement, incorporating sustainability into the company's culture becomes a very difficult goal to achieve. J Osagie et al., (2018) highlights that the leader is essential to influence the behavior of employees and raise their awareness to internalize environmental and social concern.

The learning skills for sustainability is through a continuous process, collective and contextual, difficult to be captured to be taught later (WESSENLINK et al., 2015). Self-development becomes a key for organizations, discussions and feedback on the topic must be constant. Brusntein and Rodrigues (2014) propose that this development of knowledge and skills on sustainability should occur through reflective dialogues. Some relevant experiments are conducted based on the use of learning through awareness raising. Leadership development programs, conducted through international service learning missions, are cited by Roome and Louche (2011) and Ragusa (2011). According to Pless et al. (2012), in some of these programs, executives and managers are sent to developing countries to work in local organizations to develop global leadership, real knowledge of the dilemmas faced by underprivileged societies, recognize and deal with the scarcity

of natural resources and minimal infrastructureand, thus, raise their awareness of the need to incorporate Sustainability into organizational strategies, aiming at sustainable world development.

In addition to internal factors that favor the development of sustainability competencies, the research by Antonelli et al. (2013) shows the importance of factors external to companies in the way their CUs act. In their work with six utility CUs in the energy industry, the authors highlight the main motivating factor for these CUs to incorporate sustainability into their curricula, was the growth of the principles of sustainability, understanding and compliance with the environmental policies set out in the Lisbon Agenda and also the initiative", Europe 2020 Strategy, which values achievements related to environmental sustainability. It is also noteworthy that these CUs organize and promote knowledge among various stakeholders, such as other TUs, other industries and the Government itself.

Although we consider these theoretical contributions, there is still a limited number of studies that examined how CUs are incorporating content and sustainability practices, besides investigating the challenges faced by these units in this process. Brunstein and Rodrigues (2014) report the lack of work related to the challenge of managers in transforming the discourse of concepts and competencies related to Sustainability, in everyday practical actions, and criticisms pointing to the dissonance between the speech given and the actions taken are frequent. Next, we detail the methodological procedures adopted for the fieldwork carried out.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURE

This research is qualitative in nature and intended to discuss the phenomenon studied from the worldview of people directly involved with the theme (MERRIAM, 1998). The choice to investigate the relationship between CU and sustainability education, is based on the assumption that these two themes should have many links, as both are related to the fulfillment of organizational strategies and are considered sources of competitive advantage.

We defined as research object 16 Corporate Universities, which operate in Brazil, based in São Paulo, belonging to both national and international organizations, from different sectors of activity – energy, logistics, specialized services (consulting), automotive services, automaker, pulp and paper, food, property security, chemical, animal health and financial services. Two factors influenced the choice of participating CUs. The first considered the existence of sustainability as a relevant factor for the organization to which CU belongs, either by practices or by the organizational culture disclosed, verified by the search in the official websites of the organizations. The second significant factor in choosing was access to these CUs. From 27 CUs contacted, permission was obtained from 16 of them. The reasons alleged by eleven CUs, for non-participation, were the most diverse, such as non-authorization of the board, lack of time to provide service, lack of interest in academic research and four CUs did not even respond to the invitation. Of those who agreed to participate, most were possible due to the authors' previous professional contact with people responsible for their own CUs or even responsible for the HR areas and through some referrals from teachers and other professionals.

Regarding data collection, we used two techniques. First we conducted a document analysis, via websites of organizations, in order to verify the relevance given to sustainability, from the inclusion of the theme in the mission, vision, values, culture or even the existence of any specific item highlighted on the website, about sustainability. These data helped in the interviews with the managers, made later.

The second technique was the semi-structured interview with the main managers of these CUs. It is noteworthy that the title of the position and its hierarchical position assume different nomenclatures in CU. Table 1 shows the profile of companies and respondents.

All interviews were transcribed for later analysis of their contents (BARDIN, 2004), based on the categories (Table 2) defined from the literature review.

Table 1 Company and Interviewee Profile

	Sector	No. of Employees	CU	Start	No. of employees CU	Job Title	Age	Education
Company 1	Financial	110,000	Yes	2002, however T&D 1965	200 direct	Manag. Advisor	40	Admin and post management people and EC
Company 2	Energy	12,000	Yes	2008, however T&D 1952	43	CU Coordinator	43	Philosophy MBA Management People and Leadership
Company 3	Logistics	118,000	Yes	2001	1,200	CU Manager	57	History and Geography and many post in the area
Company 4	Spec. Services	5,500	Yes	2015, T&D foundation	3	LPM and Culture Manager	43	Administration
Company 5	Autom. Serv.	3,500	Yes	2004	3	CU Coordinator	35	Administration, MBA people management and law
Company 6	Spec. Services	5,000	Yes	2007	31 direct	CU Director	55	Master of Business Administration HR and Doctorate Education
Company 7	Auto. Manufacturer	1,600	No (under training)	2010	20	EC Manager	46	Administration and Psychology, MBA people
Company 8	Paper and Cellulose	13,000	No (under training)	2013, before T&D	4	EC Manager	42	Psychology

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Company 9	Food	35,000	Yes	1997	8	CU Rector	35	Social Communication and MBA
Company 10	Security	17,000	Yes	2016, before T&D	5	SR Analyst	30	Administration after People Management
Company 11	Chemical	2,880	No (under training)	Expected 2018	16	SR Analyst	28	Psychology and MBA in People Management
Company 12	Auto. Manufacturer	18,000	Yes - EC	2007	17	HR Executive Manager	58	Psychology, several MBA in the area and also post in pedagogy
Company 13	Energy	5,000	Yes	2004	3	Organizational Development Consultant.	35	Pedagogy, Administration and post in People Management
Company 14	Animal health	1,000	No Embryonic T&D	2014 since found.	2	L&D Coordinator	30	Administration
Company 15	Financial services	2,500	Yes	2013	12	CU Coordinator	35	MBA Administration in People Management
Company 16	Financial	120,000	Yes	2013, T&D since found.	248 direct	EC Coordinator	35	Administration; MBA EC Management and post in ADM Management.

Source: elaborated by the authors.

Table 2 Analytical Categories built from Literature Review

Organizational dimension	Culture / Mission / Values / Organizational Strategy	Economic zustainability	Meister (1999); Eboli (1999); Veiga (2010); Claro O. and Claro D. (2014); Parente and Fischer (2014); Engert et al. (2015); Blake (2016); Tsipes et al. (2016)
		Social sustainability	
		Environmental sustainability	
	Governance	High admnistration	Pless et al. (2012); Parente e Fischer (2014); Castro and Eboli (2013); Baporikar (2014); Alagara and Li (2015)
		Human Resources	
		Independent	
	Scope / relevance	Education / Development / Training	Wilson, Lenssen and Hind (2006); Allen (2010); Jothi (2010); Porter and Kramer (2011); Abel and Li (2012); Carbone (2013); Baporikar (2014); Ryan et al. (2015); Dlouhá (2013); Rheaume and Gardoni (2015)
		Support for organizational strategy	
		Research and Development Center	
	Structure	Physical (%)	Meister (1999); Eboli (1999); Homan and MacPherson (2005); Abel and Li (2012); Baporikar (2014)
		E-learning (%)	
		Mixed (%)	
	Financing	Organization dependency	Meister (1999); Eboli (1999); Branco (2006); Baporikar (2014)
		Self-sufficient	
Education for sustainability dimension	Target Audience	Internal (employees)	Meister (1999); Eboli (1999, 2004a); Prince and Beaver (2001); Kraemer (2004); Ragusa (2011); Gao e Bansal (2013)
		Supply chain (suppliers and customers)	
		Community / society in general	
	Curriculum	Personal skills development	Wilson, Lenssen and Hind (2006); Renaud-Coulon (2008); Edwards (2009); Claro (2008); Brunstein et al. (2012)
		Knowledge aspects sustainability	
		Challenges for innovation	
	Organizational Involvement	Boarding (top management)	Wilson; Lenssen; Hind (2006); Claro (2008); Crews (2010); Brunstein et al. (2012); Dlouhá et al. (2013);
		Management (middle leadership)	
		All organizational levels	

to be continued...

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Education for sustainability dimension	Partnerships	Traditional universities	Eboli (2004); Allen (2007); Margherita and Secundo (2009); Abel and Li (2012); Castro and Eboli (2013); Alagaraja and Li (2015); Ryan et al. (2015)
		Specialized Consulting	
		Specialized Institutes	
	Information and Communication Technologies	e-learning (virtual only)	Homan and MacPherson (2005); Stacey and Gerbic (2009); Balkanska; Georgiev; Popova (2010); Crevani; Lindgren; Packendorff (2010); Stacey and Gerbic (2009); Abel and Li (2012); Moscardini and Klein (2015)
		Mixed learning	
		Mobility learning	
	Learning Methodologies	Formal (lecture, self-paced learning, seminars, case study, study groups, workshop)	Allen (2002); MacGregor and Semler (2012); Balkanska, Georgiev; Popova (2010); Moscardini and Klein (2015); Carmello (2015)
		Experiential (projects based on real problems, benchmarking, games or gamification, communities of practice, work learning, experiences in different regions and communities	Illeris (2003); MacGregor and Semler (2012); Gao and Bansal (2013); Ceasar and Page (2013); Canto de Loura (2014); Moscardini and Klein (2015); Carmello (2015)
Dimension Challenges	Barriers	Resistance (employees / senior management)	Hart (2006); Claro (2008); Oncica-Sanislav and Candea (2010); Albetin and Brauer (2012); Coleman (2013); Blake (2016)
		Difficulty cultural change	
		Financial resources	
		Others	
	Challenges	Diversification of learning methodologies	Demajorovic (2003); Arevalo et al. (2011); Baporikar (2014); Canto de Loura (2014); Ahern (2015); Ryan et al. (2015)
		Measurement of strategy effectiveness	
		Results obtained vs. expected	

Source: elaborated by the authors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the organizational dimension it was found that 12 of the 16 CU are consolidated, three are in the process of formation and one is as T&D department, but with intentions of evolving to CU. Of those already formalized, two did not adopt the Corporate University nomenclature, but actually Corporate Education because they understand to be the most comprehensive; 14 of them were founded after the year 2000, following a worldwide trend of this time, and are distributed over these 18 years, one started in 1997, as a result of the strategy of the international headquarters, which had been promoting corporate education since the 1960s and the other has not yet announced a start. As for the track record, 14 CUs originated in the organizations' T&D departments and are considered a natural evolution, a maturation of the area.

> We say that training is already in our DNA, that being a company that does not find skilled labor in the market, it had to develop internally… And in 2008 we changed the model, understanding that in addition to training we needed to look to the future to develop more critical skills, what would be critical for us to develop business sustainability, for us to stay active in the sector and ensure these skills internally, and then we started to change the model, we had to get closer to strategic planning (Company 2).

> The T&D part already existed, and there was a demand, it had an internal appeal for the company to take new steps in this direction to evolve with the market, to have a new posture of meeting the strategies outlined… I think it was a combination of the need to evolve, innovate and meet a demand that was already emerging behind the scenes of the organization (Company 10).

One has already emerged as CU and another is not yet established. This validates the researched literature, which certifies the emergence of CU as evolution of T&D, when their actions became proactive, strategic in scope, using various technologies and acting at all hierarchical levels to

cover the production chain (PRINCE; BEAVER, 2001; EBOLI, 2004; CARBONE, 2013; SENGUR; ACAR, 2014).

The number of direct employees in each CU differs greatly, with the range of 2 to 1200 people, as some have a fixed staff only for management, have professionals who are in units outside the headquarters and are often located in other areas, that is, they work in some area related to HR, including in the activities of the position, acting in Corporate Education, but not as sole or main activity. Others have a very large team because they serve their own CU employees, all units of the company. These figures do not include any facilitators who are usually the employees of the companies themselves.

> We have 31 in the administrative area, and 930 facilitators, 85% are employees and 15% are hired professionals, more for soft skills that we hire or when it is a very specific topic, as legislation, something like this, that has a professional in the market that we do not have the knowledge, but it is difficult, usually we have it at home (Company 6).

> Me and 3 other people who stayed here at headquarters and took close care of the executives and strategy, and then we have in the units all the structures including the HR part that incorporates the most operational education and training, depends on the unit a larger structure or a smaller structure and then they do any unit training action (Company 8).

Regarding the positions of the interviewees, the nomenclatures and hierarchical positions are diverse, there are organizations whose analysts are responsible for managing CU and reporting directly to HR boards. In others, there are executive managers who report to the CEO or vice chairman, as well as coordinators who report directly to HR boards. It is noteworthy that all respondents have, regardless of title, autonomy to perform the management of CU, either for decision making or for proposing solutions. The age of these professionals is between 30 and 43 years old (70%). Regarding training, the course of Business Administration predominates: nine professionals have a degree in Business Administration, three in Psychology, one in both previous, one in Philosophy,

one in History and Geography and one in Communication. Of the total, 15 managers have taken postgraduate or MBA courses related to People Management, Business Management or Corporate Education, with only one of them having a degree in Business. With an academic background at strictu sense level, only one of the 15 has a master's degree in HR and a doctorate in Education.

Regarding governance, i.e. the hierarchical position of the CU, 11 report to the HR Board, two to the HR Vice Chairman, and three report directly to the CEO. According to Meister, (1999), Eboli, (2004), Castro and Eboli, (2013) and Baporikar, (2014), A CU should be hierarchically linked to senior management in order to facilitate knowledge of strategy and thereby define what educational needs are needed to enable strategy and strengthen organizational culture.

The structures used in learning solutions are: face-to-face, virtual or mixed. For 13 CUs, learning actions happen more in person than virtual, in a percentage, most of the time, over 70% face-to-face (including companies with many employees); virtually 30% virtual and very little mixed. Only three CU report having most of their learning solutions available primarily on a virtual basis. It was found in some cases that despite the offer of face-to-face learning solutions being larger in number, the number of accesses in virtual solutions exceeds the face to face, i.e. more employees take the same virtual course than the same face-to-face course.

> In general, I would say 75% are in person and 25% are distance training... the e-learning landscape is here to stay, it is not in the futur, it's already here, but now big companies have a critical mass issue, and because companies are multi-site, they have no choice but to do online training... but the big discussion for me is the impact that all this will have on the citizen's daily life, the channel we need to learn both in e-lerning and in-person, because we have the illusion we learn, but there are many people who are in training and with their heads in the clouds (Company 6).

> I think the trend is to grow, even correcting, I think today here we have 60% in person and 40% online, and I think e-learning will increase

> more, but it will never be 100%, there will always be a face to face piece that is fundamental, I think they are not competitors, they are complementary (Company 8).

There is a tendency for more use of virtual solutions, due to the scope, speed, lower cost and autonomy for employees to choose the time and place of learning (ALLEN, 2002; ABEL; LI, 2012), however, face-to-face solutions are still the most used and preferred (70%), there is a challenge here to change the mindset of employees, development of the culture of self-development through virtual learning (MOSCARDINI; KLEIN, 2015); RYAN et al., 2015); EBOLI, 2016).

The priority target audience is primarily internal, employees, for the 16 CUs. Of these, nine also develop programs for franchisees and resellers, focusing on business as well as developing some solutions for the community, helping poor young people prepare for the labor market, thus playing a social role. In some cases, they also offer virtual courses for the general population, of the most varied subjects, available on their websites.

> Employees of all hierarchical levels, we have a division of 4 schools, operational excellence, leadership, business and development and innovation, and they all have their trails that are displayed as well as free courses. In addition, we also empower our suppliers and franchisees with core business competencies, and we still have the social arm, empowering young people for the market (Company 9).

In addressing leadership participation in learning solutions as proposed Kolo et al. (2013), Eboli (2016) and Tsipes et al. (2016), all CUs declare that leaders have strong involvement as teachers, instructors, content developers, performing the transfer of accumulated knowledge, both explicitly and tacitly, these actions are considered important vectors of propagation and maintenance of the organizational culture.

> We have a lot of knowledge inside the company, especially inside the factories this is very strong, knowledge is in the collaborators themselves, it happens in a very widespread way... is talking about number 1 in

> that area of industry, and he comes here at the corporate to teach the company's business, so yes it existis, and with online courses no different, we have about 70 online courses... and 26 are from the employees themselves (Company 8).

When asked about the relevance of sustainability in the organization, 14 respondents state that the theme is highly relevant and related to organizational strategy. However, Sustainability has had several interpretations, according to the interest of each organization. This fact is supported by authors such as Esteves (2009), Engert et al., (2015), Antonelli et al., (2013) and Parente and Fischer (2014), who claim that there is no consensus yet, a unique definition of what sustainability is and that each organization can understand and apply concepts of sustainability, according to interest or need for business. Responses were quite varied and generic, relating Sustainability with Tripple Botton Line, financial sustainability, ethics and citizenship and business perpetuity.

> The company's purpose goes beyond its own mission, which is to build a better world of work, the question of sustainability is implicit. This in the economic, social and environmental pillars, so everything we do, the practices we have here are aligned in these 3 pillars, in the concept of sustainability (Company 6).

> Sustainability is very intrinsic to the company's business, because basically most of the revenues come from agribusiness and the products we sell are following the animal health trend, which is the question of polluting less, contributing to animal welfare, which is a law here and worldwide, but side projects like recycling and so on, we don't have (Company 14).

Edwards (2009) and Gao and Bansal (2013) argue that understanding sustainability deserves a deeper understanding, as it would be a requirement to lead the organization to consider Sustainability as a value that can be incorporated into the strategy and translated into learning actions aimed at adapting its products and/or services, in order to transcend the current macroeconomic model in the world.

> Put together with people and technology promoting innovation, which is the core of the organization, the pillar of sustainability is in this sense, be it perpetuity, ensuring employees and their families a decent job as well as the community a social insertion (Company 16).

About the presence of the sustainability theme in the curricula of the courses and contents offered, 12 of the CUs state that the theme is present in some way, most often in the format of ready-made courses, also called shelf courses. For Hart (2006) and Edwards (2009), sustainability will only integrate organizational culture when, through educational content and actions, all employees learn, understand and incorporate the concept of sustainability in order to change their values and personal and organizational practices.

Importantly, four respondents report having little or no approach to sustainability in their learning solutions, this can be considered as a misunderstanding, as only one of these four does not acknowledge Sustainability as a relevant factor for the organization.

> I did a recent benchmarketing with other CUs that have this front developed, I think it's the hardest front to develop is linked to sustainability, sometimes they put across 2, 3 shelf content, which honestly roughly is what we did too, there is a lot of commodity content inside an open platform, it helps but doesn't tick the pointer of a small business (Company 15).

> I can't see some sustainability pillars still in our courses, I think it's a little raw yet (Company 7).

> Speaking of sustainability programs, the company has training from the sustainability team itself, in which they go to the areas and are doing sustainability rounds, so today there are two people focused on this, that they run the units and work with employees to discuss sustainability. They have another action that is, they launched like a cartoon, a storybook with testimonials from employees, telling real situations inside or outside the company, that sustainability in their lives, an example is one collaborator here who comes by bicycle every day, as is the impact of this, the other likes plants, but CU doesn't interfere with this work (Company 8).

Another four declare that courses with this theme are developed by the sustainability department with little or no CU involvement, this demonstrates the poor understanding of CU professionals regarding sustainability, which may indirectly influence the low amount of specific sustainability approaches by CUs.

> The sustainability area has more punctual actions, is an area that is very well structured, has relevant themes that they work, but CU has not been so near yet, I think we never talked about it, we were never worried about it, we still have a lot to introduce, to fulfil a program that the company expects from this CU, maybe later we can think about these other issues (Company 4).

No participating CU mentions covering at the same time sustainability content relating all its aspects – economic, environmental, social and even cultural – in their learning solutions. When one says that it is present across the board, it cannot clarify how this is effectively done. When present, these contents appear in a fragmented manner, addressing specific and specific issues, such as legislation and sometimes mixed with other themes, such as ethics and diversity.

> We have the challenge of having sustainability across all courses, aiming at the promotion and practice of sustainable actions, especially in courses for managers. We also have specific sustainability courses, around 9 courses dealing with social and environmental topics, but we also have other courses related to sustainability, such as ethics and corruption, human rights, diversity. These are mostly online courses (Company 1).

> Today we are certified by ISO 14000, the seal has several contents related to the environment that are mandatory, e.g. our EMS (Environmental Management System), until recently it was mandatory for everyone, now we are leaving this level and treating only those who enter the company, to understand this topic a little, so we do not have the content about what sustainability is, but there are several contents that are related to sustainability (Company 2).

This fragmentation can compromise the understanding of what is sustainable. And if the theme is not fully understood, the teaching of Sustainability may be incomplete, inconsistent and also compromise compliance with organizational strategy. This reinforces the claim by Demajorovic (2003) that an organizational change in relation to social and environmental aspects is strongly related to a new process of formation of professional organizations, not only by putting the socio-environmental variable into the strategy, but by considering a new, more comprehensive way of learning.

With reference to access to sustainability content, there are no restrictions, so in most CUs this content is available to all employees, regardless of hierarchical level. For managers, according to 12 respondents, participation in CU courses is mandatory and part of the full training for the position along with topics such as business development, people management. However, one of the problems reported by organizations to include all employees in CU learning processes is the lack of adequate infrastructure, since locations far from major centers have poor internet, making it impossible for the organization to benefit from distance learning processes, since in these cases the contents are virtual by necessity, and not by considering the relevant tool.

> Yes, all levels have access, and as it is in the company's strategy everyone has access, but they are not mandatory for all positions, it depends on the learning path drawn. But if you are to consider the ethical theme, all employees have to do and renew this course annually, via portal (Company 1).

> Recently I used a program that the idea was to disseminate the pillars and the policy of sustainability in all units, which are 3 items, yes there will be a formal training about the idea and do an online training, since our portal is very strong, we want to reach a larger number of employees, we understood that the most interesting channel is more online than face-to-face, because it would take a long time (Company 8).

Regarding the barriers raised in the literature, Coleman (2013) and Blake (2016), stress that resistance to the issue still exists at all levels of or-

ganizations, especially at strategic levels, due to the operant management model, which still values the economic factor over the social and environmental factors. In order for Sustainability to be incorporated into organizations, a change in the macro and microeconomic management model is required. However, 15 CUs reported no resistance, but no knowledge of the subject, or when known, be superficially understood, which hinders its application in planning and day-to-day practices, contributing to a discrepancy between discourse and practice.

> I think what we see here and it includes me in this, is the lack of knowledge. What it is, what it does, where it came from, where it lives, and to be a little more alive. As the sustainability team will become more robust I think it will make this limbo that exists a little clearer, I don't know if the word is resistance, there is something that is natural and may have the responsibility of the area, the HR problem is HR and the sustainability issue is from the sustainability department (Company 11).

> I think I had a certain need to understand and position. What is sustainability in this company? What does it mean? Where it can act sustainably, despite every sustainability program, I felt that people wanted to understand more about it. I saw no resistance no, on the contrary, people wanted to know more (Company 12).

One respondent states that there is no resistance to sustainability in his organization, which is the main value adopted by the owner (the current chairman) of the organization. Sustainability is fully experienced, being addressed in hiring interviews, reinforced in integration and experienced in daily actions, through the valorization and stimulation of participation in voluntary actions promoted by the organization.

> Here we already have the culture of sustainability, since our chairman, who owns the company… that is so much in our veins already; I think for new people coming in it's a challenge, so we need to culture them in our sustainability environment..., so I think our biggest challenge is to hire people well, but also to accultuate them in our way of being (Company 5).

This case reinforces the arguments by Tsipes (2016), Blake (2016) and Osagie et al., (2018) highlight the relevance of sustainability learning to leadership and its crucial role in embedding sustainability, because it is from this hierarchical level that dissemination will happen effectively to all organizational levels. The change in management style comes from the chairman (owner) and shareholders, with the promotion of knowledge and awareness of leadership, systemic dialogues, dissemination of the mission and values aligned with sustainability to all employees, continuous development, culminating in product innovation and management (ROOME; LOUCHE, 2011); RAGUSA, 2011).

> To strengthen the leadership competence, which is a gap in most organizations, we realized that there was a difficulty in understanding what sustainability is, what the company meant by leadership, we developed the 5 practices of the leader, and within these 5 practices, one of them is a commitment to society, so act with integrity, with ethics, that is, act with principles of sustainability (Company 16).

Another barrier is the existence or not of a culture that favors sustainability. The importance of spreading a culture of sustainability is fundamental for its translation into management and actions, as advocated by Hart (2006), Edwards (2009), Gao and Bansal (2013), Ahern (2015) and Blake (2016). For Oncica-Sanislav and Candea (2010) for an organization to have sustainability embedded in its culture, need to have shared vision of their values throughout the organization as a consequence, leadership will set long-term goals that bring economic, social and environmental benefits. Four CUs declare that sustainability is already part of the culture, another three declare that sustainability is becoming part of the culture, with influence still limited in strategic decision-making. For the other nine CUs, even if sustainability is reportedly present in the mission, vision and values is not yet present in the culture, which makes the economic factor prevail in the moments of strategic decisions and guiding definitions of both organizations and CUs.

> It is already part of the company culture, and also the strategy (Company 1).

> We understand that people already recognize, but it's not in the DNA yet. It's a journey and we are working to make the theme natural (Company 15).

> It is economically viable to be sustainable, which when it has an economic, social and environmental focus, it creates a positive image for the organization... but the process is slow, the company today needs to survive, needs new business, whether it is sustainable or not, It doesn't matter, you need new business, but as people become more aware, they get closer and change (Company 3).

Regarding the challenges, one is related to finding, developing and even applying new learning methodologies. Again the answers were generic, related to various themes and not specifically to Sustainability. The biggest challenge, regardless of the theme, is the fact that people learn in different ways, therefore, they need several methodologies for the same theme, aiming to individually provide service to each collaborator. Arevalo et al. (2011) points out that there are still not enough empirical studies to prove that experiential methodologies are more effective than formal and traditional methodology, or vice versa.

> I think it's something that we always try to look for, we are very aware of this, all the time, I think we try to keep up, in today's world you can't stand still and I think it's really cool and each person learns in a way, so to make it possible, and search the different channels... and the important thing is not to do it because everyone does, but when you realize that it makes sense to do that. For example, the issue of mobile phones, we have a lot of things on our mobiles today, and it's not because it's fashionable, but it's proven and our audience uses it and we have the application (Company 8).

> Diversification of methodologies is a necessity. People no longer learn as they used to in long courses, they must be connected with

> practice, make sense all the time. Then it becomes a beautiful challenge (Company 15).

Only one CU refers to the specific methodology for teaching Sustainability and focuses on free and open dialogue, in which people can talk and think, in a process of knowledge building.

> I would say the following, first make room for dialogue about it, I speak of open dialogue, it is not presentation, it is dialogue, it is to put groups of people from different areas, is it work? Yes, but it's one of the most effective ways to do that, bring it up for people to talk about and think about what sustainability means to me and what it means to the company I work for, what is important that I think for us and you do a knowledge building process, with various dialogues, prepare appropriate person conducting this dialogue than the dialogue drivers, but the dialog facilitators (Company 12).

Pless et al. (2012) points out that leadership programs conducted through international learning and service missions in resource-poor settings, needy societies and minimal infrastructure, can raise awareness of the relationship of sustainability to strategic decisions and even contribute to greater awareness of global challenges. Two CUs declare that their executives have training outside Brazil, not through missions, but in TUs or in the organization's own CUs. As an advantage, they state the greatest advance in sustainability issues in both CUs and TUs abroad.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research aimed to verify how CUs promote sustainability education at its various organizational levels in the current scenario. On the one hand, CU is held responsible for promoting and preparing human capital for the achievement of organizational strategies, and on the other, sustainability is considered as one of the central elements of these same organizational strategies, it is expected that there are models and joint actions dialogue, involving those two areas of organizations. However, the results show a great distance between them that seems to make an adequate connection impossible, indicating that these two areas walk parallel, that is, they practically do not meet or interact.

Although CUs report that they have specific sustainability content and different methodologies as components of their educational practices, none of them stated that they had any education plan that would indicate their specific commitment to sustainability. The equivalent actions or methodologies of CUs do not serve as a basis for the elaboration of any theoretical-empirical model for teaching and learning sustainability, since each CU tends to customize its own model.

Another relevant result is that there is no resistance, but a lack of knowledge of what sustainability means, how it can be related to organizational strategy and how it can be translated into daily actions of the organization, i.e. how sustainability can be part of the culture. This fact reinforces the importance of sustainability education at all hierarchical levels, to disseminate knowledge and enable its inclusion in culture and organizational practices. Managers consider the main challenge for the CU, regarding sustainability education, the lack of dialogue between CUs and sustainability departments. Sustainability knowledge and actions are concentrated in their specific departments and CUs in turn, have not yet assumed their role in the dissemination of this knowledge. Thus, knowledge of sustainability are often restricted to professionals and specific departments of organizations. These departments are responsible for actions related to sustainability management itself, such as compliance with specific

legislation, environmental risk controls, social actions, and the preparation of annual sustainability reports. In addition, sustainability departments are also responsible for educational actions that promote sustainability education internally within organizations and sometimes, with other stakeholders, which leaves CU outside these educational actions. Thus, this learning ends up being fragmented and punctual because it is not directly related to the strategy.

It is inferred, therefore, that sustainability is not part of CU actions, there is little knowledge of the theme by CU professionals, which may justify the low interest in this theme and the few actions found. It can be seen that the dialogue between the CU and the Sustainability department is practically nil. A fact that stands out in this research is that one of the participating CUs is subordinate to the same board as the Sustainability department and yet, the dialogue and actions involving both, so far, is nonexistent. It also reinforces the importance of the external environment to encourage companies to incorporate sustainability, as observed in other countries, leading to a greater involvement of CUs in this issue.

The results contradict the assumption of this research that CU and sustainability education can jointly contribute to enhancing organizations' performance in the economic, social and environmental fields and the few studies linking both themes, neither found support in the organizations studied and no identified elements could change this reality in the near future.

Other questions may be raised to advance this discussion, such as: Is sustainability really relevant and meaningful for organizations to the point of being present and influencing their organizational strategies? Does senior management's understanding of sustainability in any way interfere with its prioritization of teaching and learning solutions? Can the understanding of sustainability by CU professionals positively influence a new position of it regarding sustainability education? Can any specific methodology promote more effective outcomes in sustainability education in order to positively influence organizational culture and financial outcomes?

Questions like these can guide discussions between Corporate University professionals and sustainability professionals, promoting debates in the organizational sphere, in order to find new ways forward regarding sustainability education. These are relevant issues that need more data from empirical research, enabling the advancement of the theoretical framework and new insights for the promotion of sustainability education in organizations through CUs.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MONICA APARECIDA DE SORDI MARTÃO ***monicadesordi@uol.com.br***

PhD in Business - FEI

Institutional bond: Centro Universitário FEI

São Paulo/SP - Brazil

Area of interest in research: Corporative Education, Human Resources, Sustainability.

Rua Justino Paixão, 547, casa 13 Jardim São Caetano São Caetano do Sul/SP 09580-780

JACQUES DEMAJOROVIC ***jacquesd@fei.edu.br***

PhD in Education - USP

Institutional bond: Centro Universitário FEI

São Paulo/SP - Brazil

Area of interest in research: Reverse logistics, education and innovation for sustainability, tourism and sustainability and social license to operate.