CONSTRUCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM. SUSTAINABILITY POLICY AT AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Esperanza Padilla Murcia. Master’s in biology. Master’s in education, Politécnico Internacional, Colombia. esperanza.padilla@pi.edu.co

INTRODUCTION

The conceptual and practical movement of sustainability, which has been generated to respond to the socio-environmental problems of the planet, must begin to materialize in higher education institutions (HEI), preparing technicians, technologists and professionals who favor sustainability models (Mora, 2012). To do this, HEIs must not only offer environmental training programs, or have the environmental plans or systems required by law. The challenge of HEI, at present, is to focus on systemic institutionalization of the environmental commitment in the organization (Saénz et al, 2017). That is, to return both environmental and sustainable, corporate issues that become part of management practices, the curriculum, the external community, and, in general, the entire education system (Mora, 2012; Benayas et al, 2014; Román, 2015; Holguín, 2017; Saénz et al, 2017 and 2018).

This is how, in the case of the institution where the research is carried out, the need and opportunity to institutionalize the environmental commitment to promote sustainability is recognized, and it is decided to build an Environmental Institutional System (EIS), or university as suggested by Román (2015). For this, a case study was defined, which allows observing, describing and analyzing the construction process [of the EIS], as well as the impact it has on people, the institution and the territory. Here, the result of the first phase of the EIS is presented.

Objectives

Develop an EIS in a technical-technological training higher education establishment, which favors the sustainability of the organization and the territory.

- Define the strategic lines and sustainability policy of the EIS.
- Co-build a EIS action plan in each work area.
- Implement the actions according to the opportunities and the reality of the institution.
- Perform feedback and evaluation for continuous improvement of the EIS.

Development

Focus: Descriptive case study, with qualitative and quantitative method.

Instruments: Surveys, work meetings, participatory dialogues, documents and reports.

Context: At Politécnico Internacional (PI), in the city of Bogotá-Colombia, with a population of approximately 10,000 people.

Participants: Academic and research area committee, students, university practitioners, teachers, administrators, managers, and external experts.

Process:

BASE
- Apply the institutional survey “Diagnosis of the institutionalization of the environmental commitment of Colombian universities.”
- Design the strategic lines of the EIS.
- Prepare the institution’s sustainability policy.
- Socialize and feedback with the general management

STRUCTURE
- Co-build with each area, the action plan and indicators, in relation to the Sustainability Policy within the framework of the EIS.
- Socialize and feedback the action plan of each area, with the general management.

ACTION-EVALUATION
- Implement the action plans of the policy within the framework of the strategic lines of the EIS.
- Evaluate the actions and impact of sustainability in the institution and in the territory.

Key facts: Was achieved:

- Build the basis to a systemic institutionalization of environmental commitment in the organization.
- Manage the environmental dimension in the institution, through a research project.
- Involve managers and decision makers.
- Form a support network with different actors, including managers, administrators, teachers, students, university practitioners, external managers and district entities.
- Act on the different environmental indicators for sustainability (Figure 1).
- Define five strategic lines of action as part of the Institutional Environmental System. (Figure 2).
- Co-construct a sustainability policy with five guiding principles that systemically reflect the sustainability axis and the key foundations of the SDGs, in accordance with the institutional analysis (Figure 3).
- Have more people and work areas sensitized, and willing to contribute in the process.
- Identify the limitations of time, budget, and lack of disposition of some people, that hinder the progress of the project.

Figure 1. Comparative diagnosis of the institutionalization of the environmental commitment in the PI, 2017-2019

Figure 2.

Figure 3. Sustainability policy within the framework of the EIS

In order to build an EIS in an IES of technical-technological training in the city of Bogotá Colombia, first you can:

- Starting from a theoretical and practical framework such as that offered by the work of the Networks of Environmental and Sustainable Universities, worldwide, regionally and locally.
- Persevere in the management process and form a network of allies of all instances of the institution.
- Apply an instrument that allows the traceability of the indicators and the process, as well as the categorization of environmental actions in specific thematic axes, and the systemic vision of sustainability in the institution.
- Work on strategic institutional lines of action, such as: Government and sustainable participation, sustainable environmental training, environmental management and planning, research and sustainable technology, as well as socio-environmental extension and projection.
- Build a sustainability policy for the institution, which includes guiding principles in the framework of the axis of sustainability, the objectives of sustainable development, and the same Environmental Institutional System.
- Finally, you can overcome the difficulties that arise, looking for different solutions to the problems, recognizing that this kind of process takes time.