ÉTICA EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EN EL CONTEXTO VENEZOLANO PARA LA SOSTENIBILIDAD ORGANIZACIONAL

ETHICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE VENEZUELAN CONTEXT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

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Proyecto de Investigación de donde se desprende la propuesta es "Ética y Deontología profesional en la labor docente: percepción de profesores y estudiantes de la Universidad Simón Bolívar Sede Litoral.

RESUMEN

Los procesos de enseñanza y aprendizaje se centran fundamentalmente en la transmisión de conocimientos utilizando mecanismos de comunicación, en los estudios superiores, técnicos y profesionales se prepara al individuo para el trabajo, para el ejercicio de una profesión, con un conjunto de conocimientos, habilidades y destrezas necesarios para la ejecución de determinadas funciones en un puesto de trabajo, que coadyuvan al logro de los objetivos organizacionales. En el marco de la Agenda 2030 de las Naciones Unidas para el desarrollo sostenible, la cual establece una visión transformadora hacia la sostenibilidad económica, social y ambiental para que los Estados, sus instituciones, empresas y personas promuevan el desarrollo sostenible de sus procesos dentro de la sociedad. Resulta necesario discernir respecto a los elementos éticos que pueden incorporarse en la educación universitaria para garantizar que los trabajadores también colaboren en la sostenibilidad de la organización. Para el desarrollo de la presente ponencia, bajo un enfoque documental, persigue como objetivo describir los elementos éticos necesarios para garantizar la sostenibilidad organizacional, para ello se identificaran elementos conceptuales de la ética y la sostenibilidad en las empresas entendiendo por Ética según Guevara, E (2007) "como la que se ocupa de definir lo que debe ser una conducta correcta, aspecto que se torna crítico cuando se trata de servicios y servidores públicos y en situaciones donde se manejan grandes montos de dinero"… "La ética se desarrolla, evoluciona con la evolución moral del individuo, al igual que el desarrollo profesional; ambos, desarrollo moral y desarrollo profesional, constituyen el sistema ético que utiliza el individuo en la toma de sus decisiones para resolver problemas. Sólo la cabal comprensión de ambos aspectos ayudará a conformar un sistema con los mejores valores".

PALABRAS CLAVE: ética, Educación; desarrollo sostenible, empresas.

Research Project from which the proposal emerges is "Ethics and Professional Deontology in the teaching work: perception of professors and students of the Simon Bolívar University Littoral Headquarters".

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ABSTRACT

The teaching and learning processes focus primarily on the transmission of knowledge using communication mechanisms, in higher studies, technical and professional studies the individual is prepared for work, for the exercise of a profession, with a set of knowledge, skills and skills necessary for the execution of certain functions in a job, which contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives. Within the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, which establishes a transformative vision towards economic, social and environmental sustainability so that states, their institutions, companies and individuals promote the sustainable development of their processes within the society. It is necessary to discern regarding the ethical elements that can be incorporated into university education to ensure that workers also collaborate in the sustainability of the organization. For the development of this paper, under a documentary approach, it aims to describe the ethical elements necessary to ensure organizational sustainability, for this, conceptual elements of ethics and sustainability in companies will be identified, understanding Ethics according to Guevara, E (2007) "as the one that is responsible for defining what should be a correct behavior, an aspect that becomes critical when it comes to services and public servants and in situations where large amounts of money are handled"… "Ethics develops, evolves with the moral evolution of the individual, as well as professional development; both, moral development and professional development, constitute the ethical system that the individual uses in making their decisions to solve problems. Only the full understanding of both aspects will help to form a system with the best values".

KEYWORDS: ethics; Education; sustainable development; companies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Having a company that is productive and sustainable at the same time, is the goal of administrators and managers at this moment. According to the official United Nations portal, it was announced that "in September 2015, more than 150 Heads of State and Government gathered at the historic Sustainable Development Summit where they approved the 2030 Agenda. This Agenda contains 17 universally applicable goals that, since January 1, 2016, guide countries' efforts to achieve a sustainable world by 2030"..."These new goals are unique in that they call on all countries, whether they are rich, poor, or middle-income, to take action to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that initiatives to end poverty must go hand in hand with strategies that promote economic growth and address a range of social needs, including education, health, social protection, and employment opportunities, while combating climate change and promoting environmental protection."

The Sustainable Development Goals are not mandatory rules or laws; however, it is expected that governments and businesses will apply them and evaluate their progress, all with the aim of achieving the sustainability of nations and organizations. Nevertheless, being responsible from within organizations requires education, a paradigm shift, the cultivation of new values and beliefs that our actions affect others. Both human beings and companies, as open systems, are exposed to impact and be impacted by the environment, so the change must come from within, with education at home, in schools, and in universities. Education loaded with elements that help in the ethical formation of the individual.

This article is developed under the premise of ethics for organizational sustainability, whether public or private. Speaking of ethics implies, contrary to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, a set of norms, precepts that must be followed in order to achieve the goal. The manifesto for life through Ethics for Sustainability describes that ethics for sustainability is nourished by a set of precepts, principles, and proposals to redirect individual and collective behaviors, as well as public and private actions aimed at sustainability.

It is pertinent from this point on to assess higher education institutions and how important the ethical component is in teaching and learning processes. By conducting a documentary analysis of the subjects, it is possible to evidence that ethical aspects are not sufficiently present in the studies of our students. This article will present the result of a documentary research carried out at Simon Bolivar University regarding its curriculum and supported by documents and publications related to ethics and its importance for organizational sustainability.

2. METHODOLOGY

A review of scientific literature related to higher education, ethics, and sustainability was conducted. The researcher is involved as part of the object of study; however, the method used is documentary. The review was carried out on public documents from Simon Bolivar University, study plans and contents, as well as epistemological conceptions of higher education, organizational sustainability, and ethics, and how these variables are interconnected to fulfill the objective of the document, which is to describe the ethical elements necessary to guarantee organizational sustainability. The conceptual elements of ethics and sustainability in businesses are identified.

3. ETHICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The following are definitions of the concept of higher education in order to describe the importance of ethics in educational tasks related to the studied topic. There are many authors who describe the term from different perspectives. Since the focus is on relating higher education to ethics, we will start with the question posed by Chaves, J. (2002): "How can we not understand education in ethical values?" He expresses that "it is important to point out the position of this work regarding how university educational tasks in ethical matters should not be understood. It is not that the university, as an entity specialized in knowledge, analysis, research, and teaching, can present itself as the main responsible for the ethical formation of young generations within various professional careers.

On the one hand, that way of seeing things would be very restrictive in conceiving a university contribution of national scope, considering the relatively small percentage of young people who manage to enter and graduate from university."

Chaves' reasoning is based on the premise that every teaching and learning process in higher education should inherently contain ethical elements. However, our documentary review reveals that it is not so explicitly developed in the curriculum of Venezuelan universities.

Méndez, Z. (2017) states that,
in the particular case of teachers and students in the specialty of comprehensive education at a public university in Venezuela... It could be observed that ethical and moral principles, among others, are absent from the curriculum of this teacher training institution.

Following Aznar Minguet and Martínez Agut (2013),
University education understood in this way requires a change in teaching culture in the faculty and in the educational institutions themselves. In the case of learning competencies oriented towards sustainable development, the existence of institutional commitment and the involvement and perception of faculty as actors in the inclusion of contents consistent with the values of sustainability and the application of socio-environmental criteria and approaches in their teaching programs are relevant."

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development aims to provide education professionals with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values compatible with the values of sustainability. In line with this objective, it has established a competence framework for the professional development of educators working in formal, non-formal, and informal settings (UNECE, 2013, cited by Aznar Minguet and Martínez Agut).

Salvatierra, M. (2018) states that
university education in Venezuela is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Popular Power for Higher Education, Science, and Technology. The ministry is responsible for higher education at the university level and the subsystems contained therein, policies in the fields of science, technology, innovation, and their applications, the National System of Science, Technology and Innovation, telecommunications, information technologies and their development, postal services, and the state's telecommunications network. According to the ministry's website, the state will ensure the implementation of higher education programs through a ministry that combines the importance of science and technology. Being professionally educated in a university institution in Venezuela is part of the educational rights of Venezuelans, as described by law as mandatory and free. However, there are many highly prestigious private higher education institutions in the country that guarantee high-quality educational professionals.

International university education rankings place the Central University of Venezuela, Simon Bolivar University, Catholic University Andrés Bello, and the University of the Andes among the top 100 higher education institutions in Latin America, according to the eighth edition of the QS World University Rankings by Subject published by the educational consultancy Quacquarelli Symonds in 2018 (Salvatierra, M., 2018).

Regarding Simon Bolivar University, Salvatierra (2018) states that

> The study of ethics in the curriculum of Simon Bolivar University is elective and distributed according to the attached table, which consists of two general studies, two professional studies, and one for community service. This applies to the total enrollment of the university and its two campuses, usually offering one section per quarter, and the quota is not consistently filled. This indicator suggests a very low probability that all professional graduates receive the component of professional ethical competence, which is essential in today's times and demanded by the national and international job market.

Ethics in the USB curriculum is elective.	FCI181: Ethics and Use of New Information Technologies. General Elective for Short Programs TS4130: Ethics and Social Responsibility in Organizations. Professional Elective for Short Programs CCY514: Education, Ethics, and Leadership. General Study for Long Programs CEC240: Starting a Business: Professional and Ethical Alternative. Professional Study for Long Programs CCY517: Ethics and Community Service in the University. General Study for Long Programs

Source: Author, 2017, data taken from http://www.usb.ve/

Professor Balbo (2008) explains that

> the importance of integrating ethics into the university curriculum largely lies in providing individuals, in this case, students, with the possibility of engaging in behavior governed by norms. According to Sánchez (1999), it is a type of human experience or form of behavior that falls within the realm of morality, which is the science of a specific form of human conduct. It derives from the Latin-Greek term "ethos," which means way of being or character as a way of life acquired by humans. To address this, Professor Balbo suggests: a) Creating an ethical code for university staff and students, b) Introducing ethics as a subject in the curriculum of all majors and incorporating a course for teachers, c) Incorporating ethics, social capital, and development topics into the university curriculum, and d) Taking concrete actions to promote ethics in the various functions of the university.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

The United Nations General Assembly defines sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Report titled "Our Common Future" by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987). Sustainable development has emerged as the guiding principle for long-term global development. It consists of three pillars, aiming to achieve balanced economic development, social development, and environmental protection.

According to Aznar Minguet and Martínez Agut (2013),

> Sustainability is a concept that refers to the pursuit of environmental quality, social justice, and a fair and viable long-term economy. In this sense, it defines a set of criteria aimed at ethical behavior towards everything that surrounds us (resources, people, spaces, etc.). It involves managing relationships with the natural and social environment while maintaining availability and ecological balance and promoting a more equitable and just distribution of resources, benefits, and environmental costs.

Being ethical in relation to everything that surrounds organizations can make their functionality more sustainable, as stated by Aznar and Martínez in their 2013 document.

Under the systems theory approach, companies must consider that they are not isolated and that everything they do affects their environment, either positively or negatively. Each organization must know itself and take an interest in recognizing the characteristics of its local, regional, and even national environment. They must assess if the impact of their product or service generates alterations in the environment and if their employees can live with dignity considering their salary and working conditions. Meeting these criteria is key to long-term sustainability and being environmentally friendly.

In an untitled document, Guimarães, R. describes the ethics of sustainability and the formulation of development policies. He explains that it is not enough for development to promote qualitative changes in human well-being and ensure the ecological integrity of the planet to be considered sustainable. The changes must be more profound, and from the analysis carried out in this article, the proposal is to achieve it through education. Education is the key link between ethics and organizational sustainability. Guimarães proposes an ethics in which the economic objectives of progress are subordinated to the laws of natural systems and criteria of respect for human dignity and improvement of people's quality of life. Therefore, we must focus on how we are currently educating professionals.

Loza, Lurent, and Rosales (2011, p. 35), cited by Cantun (2014), suggest the following: "Conservation and restoration of the environment; Occupational safety; Creative work with a dignified salary; Corporate social responsibility; Development of inherent ethics; Contribution to the development of non-polluting and soft technology; Community and

group agreements; Fiscal equity; Fair prices determined not by supply and demand but by the human effort to produce goods and services; Social justice and respect for laws; Administrative simplification; Inclusion of art and aesthetic sense; Freedom and independence with responsibility; High humanistic productivity; Consciousness and anti-consumerist attitude."

Aznar Minguet and Martínez Agut (2013) state that,

> Sustainability aims to achieve the balance that must exist between human beings and nature, between human beings and others, and between human beings and themselves to generate a harmonious world in a sustainable interconnected knowledge society.

Indeed, based on his statement, we propose that there should also be a balance in the behavior of organizations, involving everyone around them such as employees, customers, suppliers, business partners, government bodies at the state and regional levels. It requires the construction of a code that guarantees sustainability within the harmony of the environment, human beings, and business in an ethical manner.

Undoubtedly, the existence of profit or non-profit social organizations is driven by the need to achieve goals, which are materialized through the attainment of objectives and the fulfillment of responsibilities by all stakeholders. Each one, from their own role, must recognize and understand their responsibilities to make the business more sustainable.

Our business is education, the educator, and their conditions, the students and their conditions, in order to cultivate professionals who are strengthened not only in technical and professional knowledge but also in the necessary ethical values, both universal and particular. The existence of codes of ethics has generated prestige and confidence in some professions. For example, doctors are trusted with lives because of their knowledge and ethics. Perhaps it is due to taking an oath or the existence of a code recognized and known by all. These are just a few examples, but based on this premise, I continue to suggest that ethics is a matter of education.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The review of documents related to ethics and sustainability, specifically those referring to education as largely responsible for ethics, served as inputs to reach the following conclusions.

Firstly, it is important to recognize that education is the key link between ethics and organizational sustainability. This education is obtained within higher education institutions and universities, where norms and policies are established, and may even be supported by ethical codes for professionals.

On the other hand, ethical behavior should be applied to everything that surrounds us. Being sustainable inherently means being ethical, whether it's with resources, people, spaces, or everything related to the business environment. Companies need to understand themselves, and their location is a starting point for planning actions towards sustainability.

An emphasis that needs to be made is that the Sustainable Development Goals are not about mandatory rules, policies, or laws. This is why the value of ethics in education is so important. It is necessary to move away from the conception of ethics solely as an obligation and to have an awareness of the effects of organizations on the environment. However, given the behavioral nature of humans and the coercive effect on individuals, it is likely that the starting point for sustainable mainstreaming is the mandatory imposition of norms.

The current curriculum of Universidad Simón Bolívar only includes ethics as elective courses. Not all students take subjects with ethical topics. It is relevant to evaluate the design of mandatory courses aimed at strengthening ethical competence in different professions or electable courses with a professional elective nature that help strengthen ethics as a skill and work proficiency. This is to ensure that everyone obtains demonstrable knowledge of ethics in their profession.

We are not alone; companies must consider their environment as an open system, whether at the local, regional, national, or global level. Being in harmony with the planet, nature, and people while remaining productive is an important part of sustainability.

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