

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5007/1983-4535.2022.e86644>

SUSTENTABILIDADE NA PERSPECTIVA DE UMA UNIVERSIDADE BRASILEIRA: DISCURSO E RELAÇÕES COM OS OBJETIVOS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL

**SUSTAINABILITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITY:
DISCOURSE AND RELATIONS WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS**

José Florentino Vieira de Melo, Mestre

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4500-9802>

jose.vieira.melo@icloud.com

Universidade Federal da Paraíba | Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração
João Pessoa | Paraíba | Brasil

Ana Lúcia Araújo Lima Coelho, Doutora

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0877-6351>

ana.coelho@academico.ufpb.br

Universidade Federal da Paraíba | Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração
João Pessoa | Paraíba | Brasil

Recebido em 22/março/2022

Aprovado em 15/abril/2022

Publicado em 30/julho/2022

Sistema de Avaliação: *Double Blind Review*



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RESUMO

Este artigo relata um estudo sobre o discurso da sustentabilidade manifestado por uma Instituição de Ensino Superior brasileira, a Universidade Federal da Paraíba. Baseamos a pesquisa na comparação de documentos e mídias institucionais e sua influência na formação discursiva. Empregamos a Análise Sociológica do Discurso como método de pesquisa para captar silêncios em meio aos discursos e revelar ideologias que formam ações e omissões. Desta forma, comparamos o discurso e os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Posições discursivas, configurações narrativas e espaços semânticos, considerados tendo como parâmetro os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável, revelaram uma organização que busca seguir a sustentabilidade, mas com esforços no campo social, deixando em segundo plano outros aspectos ligados ao tema. O fechamento temporário de diversos setores da organização devido à pandemia do COVID-19 dificultou as observações e entrevistas. Esse fato pode ter limitado nossa percepção, impactando nas inferências e resultados. As pesquisas voltadas para o discurso das Instituições de Nível Superior não são comuns. As comparações entre o discurso organizacional e os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável podem revelar compromissos institucionais com o tema, bem como ideias que influenciam, positiva ou negativamente, contextos e ideologias compartilhadas.

Palavras-chave: Análise do Discurso. Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável. Sustentabilidade. Universidades Sustentáveis.

ABSTRACT

This article reports a study of the sustainability discourse manifested by a Brazilian Higher Education Institution, the Federal University of Paraíba. We based the research on comparing documents and institutional media and their influence on discursive formation. We employed Sociological Discourse Analysis as a research method to capture silences amid the speeches and to reveal ideologies that form actions and omissions. This way, we compared the discourse and the Sustainable Development Goals. Discursive positions, narrative configurations, and semantic spaces, considered with the Sustainable Development Goals as a parameter, revealed an organization that seeks to follow sustainability but with efforts on the social field, leaving other aspects linked to the theme in the background. The temporary closure of several organization sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic muddled the observations and interviews. This fact may have limited our perception, impacting inferences and results. The research focused on the discourse of Higher-Level Institutions are not ordinary. Comparisons between organizational discourse and the Sustainable Development Goals can potentially reveal institutional commitments to the theme, as well as ideas that influence, positively or negatively, contexts and shared ideologies.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis. Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainability. Sustainable Universities.

1 INTRODUCTION

The concern with natural systems and the impacts that human action produces on them is not recent. Myths and stories presented in civilizations physically and temporally distant show common traits related to the conflict between humanity and nature, as well as the need to impose a moral that reflects on the perpetuity of resources and the ability of ecosystems to adapt to the increasing demands of human expansion.

The twentieth century was the stage for mutations in the relationship between humans and nature, particularly in the decades after World War II. Discussions about the model of economic growth predominant marked this period, based on the intensive use of natural resources and accelerated consumption patterns in industrialized nations as a result of aggressive marketing campaigns that sought to extol the benefits of capitalist logic (Nascimento, 2012).

Over the past four decades, the United Nations has promoted several events and released documents focused on the debate on the relationship between humanity and natural resources. Among them stands out the 2030 Agenda. This document, released in 2015, presented 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It covers aspects related to sustainability and seeks to inspire organizations and society to integrate and operationalize actions aimed at factors such as poverty elimination, income distribution, urban mobility, and reduction deforestation (Fonseca, Domingues, & Dilma, 2020).

Researchers such as Ruiz-Mallén and Heras (2020) consider that Higher Education Institutions play a crucial role in the engagement effort promoted by the 2030 Agenda by facilitating the acquisition of skills and perceptions about the need to ensure sustainability in socio-economic development. One of the SDGs is specifically dedicated to education and, worldwide, several universities study and practice sustainable actions (Gazzoni, Scherer, Hahn, Carpes, & Santos, 2018).

In this context, we place this research object, the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB), a Higher Education Institution founded in 1955. It counted, in the year 2021, with a structure divided into four campuses, sixteen centers, 128 undergraduate courses, 110 graduate courses. UFPB presented in its administrative department, at the time of this study, commissions related to sustainability, such as Environmental Management and Inclusion and Accessibility, and undergraduate and graduate courses focused on the study and research of

sustainable actions. This sample of the institutional interaction with the sustainability issue may lead to the hypothesis that UFPB prioritizes the subject.

This article reports an investigation to understand UFPB institutional discourse and its link to sustainability. Through Sociological Discourse Analysis, the research focused on official documents of the university and its media production to understand its sustainability discourse and its connections to the Sustainable Development Goals.

We idealized the investigation to discover whether the discourse recognizes the SDGs, whether these influence the organizational posture, and the extent of this influence. We divided the article into sections. Next, we expose the theoretical artifact as a guide for the investigation and data analysis. After this, we describe the methodological procedures of the research. The fourth topic presents the results collected in the investigation. Finally, there is a discussion about the results, conclusions, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

2 THEORETICAL ARTIFACTS

2.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Since the 1970s, the United Nations (UN) has sponsored conferences and debates focused on sustainability-related aspects. In 1987, the UN's World Commission on Environment and Development published the report *Our Common Future*, whose mission was to propose a global agenda for changes related to the economy, society, and environment. The document linked concepts of technology, economy, society, and politics, suggesting an ethical posture based on the responsibility between generations and a systemic view of environmental issues turned on the historical origins of socio-economic and ecological problems (Moyer & Hedden, 2020).

In September 2000, in an event known as the Millennium Summit, also under the patronage of the United Nations, the 191 participating countries signed the so-called Millennium Declaration. This document defines as a global challenge the fight against hunger, recognizing the existing inequality between industrialized, developing, and transitioning economy nations (Roma, 2019).

The Millennium Declaration originated, in 2001, a document that presented the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The signatory countries should achieve these goals by 2015, covering actions against poverty, health policies, sanitation, education, housing,

promotion of gender equality, sustainable development. Each of the MDGs brought twenty-one goals and a set of sixty indicators. Carvalho and Barcellos (2015) note that the MDGs should be a medium of stimulating aid from rich countries to poor ones and an energizer for increasing human development indications.

Scholars assess that hegemonic countries tried to impose the MDGs, without any debate with less economically advantaged nations, suggesting that many of the goals and targets were political, "the fruit of agreements between countries and organizations whose full logic will never come to light" (Carvalho & Barcellos, 2015, p. 13). Amin (2006) says that the document neglects the ways of achieving the intentions and ratifies the idea of compatibility between them and liberal economic policies of respect for the ownership of corporate intellectual rights.

In 2015, at the end of the period set for the fulfillment of the MDG program, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit was the arena for the launch of a new document, the 2030 Agenda (Okado & Quinelli, 2016). The signatory countries recognized poverty eradication in all its dimensions as a major global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development (Fonseca et al., 2020).

The document establishes the commitment to leave no one behind, referencing globally marginalized populations. It presents seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets that should promote new forms of dealing with recurrent global problems until 2030 (Roma, 2019). The elaboration of the SDGs gave room for discussion and participation of society, however, the result dispersed to the point of requiring hundreds of indicators for monitoring the established goals (Moyer & Hedden, 2020).

Carvalho and Barcellos (2015) interpret the SDGs as more ambitious than the MDGs to the extent that sixteen are thematic while one addresses the need to create partnerships for implementing the others. These would encompass all actors in society, from governments to communities and multinational organizations. For example, goal four seeks to assure inclusive, equitable education while promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. One of its purposes is to guarantee that all students have competencies linked to the promotion of sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace, citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity (Capponi, Ahlert, Dal'asta, & Fiirst, 2021).

Weber (2017) points out that the discourse of the SDGs is ideologically motivated since it would serve to justify the consolidation of the conditions by which deprivations of fundamental rights are sustained and reproduced. The author sees an embodiment of the neoliberal development project for the lack of commitment to guarantee universal rights to access to water, health care, shelter, or food. She cites that Goal seventeen, necessary for the others, is directly linked to the schedules of entities such as the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. In this context, Goal ten (reducing inequalities) would prove to be more concerned with economic growth than with income redistribution.

When we analyzed the debates that have taken place over four decades, we observed that many of them guided to contexts that have either facilitated or hindered consensus on the concepts of ecodevelopment and sustainable development. We noted a polysemy that covers universes of ideas and intentions, bringing the two terms closer or further apart depending on the political, ideological, and philosophical fields of those who pronounce.

2.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY

The first records of attention to sustainability, on the part of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), date back to the early 1990s as a reaction to ongoing debates (Rohrich & Takahashi, 2019). One of the first documents to formalize the commitment to sustainability in university education was the Talloires Declaration, which delimited actions for sustainability in universities, having been signed by over 350 HEIs from forty countries. From Brazil, fifty-two universities are signatories, including the Federal University of Paraíba. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed, in December 2002, the period between the years 2005 and 2014 as the International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, emphasizing as a challenge the stimulus to changes in attitude and behavior in society.

Aleixo, Leal, and Azeiteiro (2018) recognize universities' central role in sustainability promotion. Adams (2013) understands that some factors are decisive to building a sustainable culture in these spaces, like proactive leadership, clear and consistent communication, the inclusion of the topic in the organizational strategy, multidisciplinary in courses and research, engagement of students and employees.

Arroyo (2017) summarizes in four the areas that should be considered by managers when formatting a sustainable university: curriculum, with the integration of related topics in the pedagogical plans of courses; research, with the acceptance of multidisciplinary projects

aimed at sustainable socio-economic development; operations when implementing practices such as recycling, reduction in energy and water consumption, transportation sharing; dissemination and promotion of debates.

A sustainable university is an entity that applies sustainability concepts in its spaces, taking theory to practice (Dea Júnior, Rosa, & Sampaio, 2010). This organization type must minimize negative impacts generated by its activities, aiming to balance environmental, economic, social, and cultural challenges (Too & Bajracharya, 2015). The institutions that incorporate sustainability in their cultures and their strategies enable sustainable development to happen, in fact, in their dependencies (Pantaleão, Cortese, Ramos, & Silva, 2018).

König (2013) uses the expression Living Laboratory for Sustainability when referring to organizations that live active and creative experiences to develop learning communities on the subject. These should encourage culture change, reflections on energy efficiency, built environment, operations, preparing students for the reality of the labor market, and aiming at the production and dissemination of knowledge on sustainable technologies. A Living Laboratory is considered a protagonist in the partnership between public and private sectors and society (Voytenko, McCormick, Evans, & Schliwa, 2016). These spaces encourage research and practices aimed at the efficiency of urban management to foster innovation in the most diverse sectors.

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The sustainability discourse at a Higher Education Institution from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals was the object of appreciation of this study. We developed research of exploratory nature that prioritized social aspects in shaping the reality that we sought to understand. The exploration of data occurred through the Sociological Discourse Analysis, method of examination of Spanish tradition (Alonso & Callejo, 1999; Conde, 2009; Ruiz Ruiz, 2009) and that, in Brazil, has been applied by scholars such as Coelho and Godoi (2010), Coelho (2012), Godoi and Uchôa (2019a).

The Sociological Discourse Analysis enables the capture of silences amid the speeches to reveal under-covered ideologies that shape them. In this sense, this research used, as data sources, documents produced by the UFPB as the Institutional Development Plans that were in force between the years 2009 and 2020, and the Management Reports released in the same period. The Plans are a guiding instrument for the institution's managerial practices

(Francisco, Nakayama, Ramos, & Oliveira, 2012). The reports act as a document for accountability: they contain operation data, planning, resources, works (Beux & Telles, 2019). Another research source was the material produced and disseminated by the university via its television channel.

The data analysis began concurrently with the collection so that, inductively, it was possible to verify gaps and lack of material. We expected that the corpus obtained and its analysis through Sociological Discourse Analysis would allow the comprehension of the degree of institutional involvement about the Sustainable Development Goals and the alignment of discourse and management practices with the ideas disseminated by the 2030 Agenda. We sought the discursive styles within each source from an analysis of "the most expressive, idiosyncratic, singular, enunciative forms, of the expressive turns, narrative styles and types of discursive approach/construction of a social phenomenon" (Coelho, 2012, p. 201, our translation). This identification pointed to ideologies that shaped the enunciations and silences that camouflaged meanings for what was said.

The study of the discursive positions of the sources sought to apprehend the perspectives of the subjects on sustainability, undressing the individuals who spoke and from which hierarchical location they did it, and also identifying the polarization or not of dominant thoughts, the social representation, and the generalization of the discourse (Coelho & Godoi, 2010). Through the analysis of narrative configurations, we exposed the hidden meaning of the words. We intended to capture dimensions, axes, or vectors that led to shared discourse guidance, as well as tensions, conflicts, and divergent opinions (Coelho, Coelho, & Godoi, 2013).

The semantic spaces analysis involved elements such as the dominant verbal and symbolic expressions that configured the meanings of each space, as well as the discursive axes that linked different semantic attractors (Ruiz Ruiz, 2009). We reviewed the language and the linking or dissociation in different ways of approach. From these steps, we scrutinized the sustainability discourse manifested by the Federal University of Paraíba from a perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals launched by the United Nations on the 2030 Agenda.

4 RESULTS

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

We analyzed three Institutional Development Plans (IDPs) of UFPB: the first two were in force between 2009 to 2012 and 2014 to 2018. The third one was in force during the research since it is valid from 2019 to 2023. We analyzed each IDP in chronological order to identify relevant circumstances in their production in social, economic, political, and any other aspects that could influence the speeches present therein (Ufpb, 2020).

The 2009-2012 IDP had a tone of manifesto in defense of the public university. It focused on social assistance and inclusion of groups historically removed from the national socioeconomic preeminent role. It talked about increasing the number of vacancies for courses, expansion of internship activities within the university administrative structure, modernization of classrooms and laboratories, construction of new buildings. The valorization of local culture, an aspect sustained by scholars such as Sachs (2009) as one of the dimensions of sustainability, was emphatically defended. The IDP did not mention sustainability, taking university expansion as precedence. The document presented the need for minority inclusion, student aid programs, research, and extension schedules promoters of regional development. There was no mention of the Millennium Development Goals, still in force at that time, as well as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.

The 2014-2018 IDP had a more technical format and a neutral stance, seeking to move away from the political tone of the previous one. The document innovated when dealing with sustainability as it entered the environmental universe in a topic called *institution's socio-environmental responsibility*, where informed the reader about the creation of an Environmental Management Commission in 2013. This approach might reflect academic debates that occurred in the wake of those promoted for the preparation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

We noticed a new format in the 2019-2023 IDP. The document appeared to be more technical than previous ones by presenting strategic objectives, goals, and indicators. There was a clear evolution of the concern with socio-environmental responsibility, notable when analyzing how the document referred to the environmental policy approved in 2018. This IDP is the one that dedicates more space to sustainability, addressing the subject as an organizational objective.

Concerning the factors raised by Adams (2013) as decisive for implementing a sustainable culture in universities, we perceived some effort for the theme inclusion in the organizational strategy and a shy incentive to multidisciplinary in courses and research. We did not notice any systemic process that manages to disseminate this culture. The gradual evolution of the treatment given to issues related to sustainability is notorious. If before social responsibility was the only dimension contemplated, the last IDP addressed several topics related to sustainability. This evolution may reflect similar movements initiated by other Brazilian HEIs and the debates about the SDGs (Capponi et al., 2021; Gazzoni et al., 2018; Pantaleão et al., 2018; Rohrich & Takahashi, 2019).

4.2 THE MANAGEMENT REPORTS

We studied the Management Reports released in the same Institutional Development Plans' period. After reading each one, we identified similarities and differences between the presentations and the tone of the speeches. Subsequent re-readings led to the perception of continuity in the discourses expressed in reports produced in consecutive years, generally linked to repeated contexts. For this reason, we grouped the documents according to their similarities, thus facilitating the assimilation of these contexts.

In general, the Reports reverberated the discourses contained in the IDPs in force at their respective times. Between 2009 and 2011, sustainability was addressed only when talking about a proposal for university environmental management which was not implemented. In 2012 and 2013, sustainable bidding was discussed but there was no debate on the subject. The 2014 Report opened space to talk about the Environmental Management Commission, mentioning the work it has started to develop to raise awareness of the academic community as to the relevance of acting in a socio-environmentally sustainable manner.

Between 2015 and 2017, the Reports stated that UFPB, concerning sustainability, was doing more than what documents such as the SDGs would suggest. They mentioned sustainable logistics plans and the development of environmental programs, but without further details.

It is clear the advance of the sustainability discourse in the 2017 report. This one dedicated space to inform about the Environmental Management Commission. According to the data provided, there was a concern with the management of virgin forest reserves present on the campuses to protect flora and fauna and with the search for the engagement of students

and employees through acts such as reducing paper, water, and energy consumption. Such concerns fit into the SDGs objectives and matched the university's environmental policy, which would be approved the following year.

From 2018 to 2020, the Reports made several references to UFPB's Environmental Policy. The sustainability discourse appeared to be more mature. The management policies mentioned sustainable attitudes like the necessity of a decrease in natural resources consumption, paper use, printing cartridges, and pollutant waste. These discourses had been amplifying since the 2014 report, giving the impression that managers needed time to understand concepts of socio-environmental responsibility.

The regulations presented by the Environmental Policy were divided into nine guidelines (Ufpb, 2018), as shown in Table 1. Although the text does not explicitly mention the SDGs, we noted their influence on the preparation of the document.

The Environmental Policy made room for the actions of the Environmental Management Committee. The reports pointed to a considerable range of gestures, policies, and attitudes capable of raising the UFPB's relationship with sustainability if they did not remain at the ideas level. The relevance that, little by little, this Commission has been conquering in the speeches seems to point to the administration's effort to modernize its policies aimed at the theme. The perception that the university has been, over time, giving more comprehensive attention to issues related to sustainability seems to correspond to the gradual increase of the theme's exposure in media and academia, much as a result of the SDGs. The higher need, perceived by governments and companies, to show itself to society as a green organization reflects this increase (Jerónimo, Henriques, Lacerda, Silva, & Vieira, 2020).

Table 1 Connections between UFPB's Environmental Policy and the SDGs

UFPB's environmental policy guideline	SDGs to which it links
Integrated waste management	12 (responsible consumption and production)
Management of green areas	13 (action against global climate change) and 15 (terrestrial life)
Water management	6 (drinking water and sanitation) and 14 (life in water)
Energy efficiency	7 (clean and affordable energy)
Use, sustainable occupation and mobility	11 (sustainable cities and communities)
Environmental education	4 (quality education)

UFPB's environmental policy guideline	SDGs to which it links
Conscious Consumption	12 (responsible consumption and production)
Digital support document management, production and preservation	12 (responsible consumption and production)
Environmental health	3 (health and well-being)

Source: elaborated by the authors (2022) based on Weber (2017) and UFPB (2018).

4.3 THE MEDIATIC DISCOURSE

The UFPB's TV channel has operated since 2012 in the city of João Pessoa. The examination of its productions started from selecting those focused on the sustainability debate. Since this point, we watched the videos in chronological order, opening with the oldest to the most current.

We observed a considerable amount of material focused on disseminating sustainable actions. The content referred to ongoing researches and the need to publicize extension projects. In this sense, Nascimento (2012) emphasizes that the media acts as an instrument for disseminating ideologies and meanings. The press can influence the potentiation or demystification of stereotypes. The videos made the impression that the content creators had the ambition to make the channel, while mass media, a means of propagating news that contributes to social advancement through prejudices reduction and the socialization of scientific knowledge.

The TV categorized content according to its message. From this, we delimited three strands: research and extension, temporary events, and events of non-transitory nature linked to management. We noticed a concern to disseminate environmental education for children in alignment with the fourth SDG. The development of skills to sustainable development, the promotion of human rights, gender equality, and respect for different cultures is, according to the document, a duty linked to education regardless of the individual's age. The earlier students start dealing with the theme, the more effortlessly they can embrace it.

Contexts of more prominent media dissemination of sustainability and more comprehensive social demand for its absorption by governments and companies seemed to be present, in a veiled way, in the incentive to research and extension projects conveyed. This fact supports the ideas of scholars such as Ferrer, Moreira, and Jesus (2019), Too and Bajracharya (2015), Pantaleão et al. (2018). It is evident the need to make UFPB recognized by its peers and society as an institution of excellence. Besides serving as a tool of

accountability, the media exposure fulfills, for the managers, the role of diluting the conception of the inefficiency inherent to the public activity widespread in Brazilian society. The discourse shows an avant-garde institution in the incorporation of its socio-environmental responsibility.

The temporary events reported by the TV were generally related to the debate on public policies and linked to some course or administrative body. Several moments had national reach, revealing some institutional disposition to promote exchanges of experiences. The media highlighted debates amid UFPB, the public sector, and private companies. In some cases, they extended the discussion to the relationship between universities and the reality of management aimed at sustainability. The intention to promote links among academia and practice is appreciable, showing a less closed university and more observant to its socio-environmental duty, confirming the discourses of the Institutional Development Plans and Management Reports.

One event that received recurrent attention was the Environment Week, which usually occurred during the ingress of new undergraduate students. Acts such as those express a university committed to raising students' awareness since their admission. The TV did not broadcast reports addressing policies related not to entrants but the university community in general.

Some events focused on the Sustainable Development Goals and included public managers in the debates, prioritizing dialogue with towns. The university assumed the role of a bridge between them and the United Nations, thus linking itself to goal 17 and the importance of promoting partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. By placing the university as an ally of the SDGs, the discourse reinforced the perception of an institution that seems to want to contribute to changes that positively impact society.

The managers and the community seem to understand the importance of dialogue in the composition of a sustainable university. TV reported events directed to the academic community, but there was no mention of a body responsible for concatenating sectors and promoting cooperation. When thinking about the fields that form a sustainable university, according to Arroyo (2017), TV UFPB analysis reveals an irregular situation. Dissemination was the most explored aspect, even though interdisciplinarity does not seem to be a priority. Operations represent the third force since it was possible to observe sustainable practices,

even if isolated. The discourse ignored the debate on ways to integrate sustainability into academic curricula.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The discursive positions are associated with a kind of general orientation for the different forms of manifestation of the discourse of sustainability (Coelho, 2012). We noticed higher consideration to sustainability over time in the rhetoric of Management Reports, Institutional Development Plans, and the TV. It deserves recognition, however, the fact that this maturation is not reflected broadly throughout the institution.

Narrative configurations represent a way of bringing to the surface the content latent in the manifest level of texts and images, which provides progressive chaining of themes that configure the basis of Sociological Discourse Analysis (Godoi & Uchôa, 2019b). By studying the documents, we observed that starting from the leading axis that comprises, on one side, the untouched nature and, on the other, the nature transformed by a sustainable economy, there is a wave of propagation that represents the social interests of the institution. These remained united to the sustainability discourse manifested over the years.

The positive semantic spaces connect to the politically correct formal discourse. The perceptions arising from moments of silence show an emptiness that questions the positivity of what is openly expressed and presents an institution that is still immature in its ability to promote internal changes capable of raising it to the level of Living Laboratory of Sustainability (König, 2013).

The discourse emphasizes UFPB's social role in rescuing excluded populations through student aid policies and actions that may contribute to socioeconomic advancement in regions lacking natural resources and public services. The university respects legislation linked to sustainable habits and demonstrates interest in being a vanguard organization in its relationship with socio-environmental responsibility. However, discourse contradictions reveal issues in the environmental policy operation and difficulties in internal and external communication.

The discourse presents broad connections with the Sustainable Development Goals because UFPB has placed itself in a position of 2030 Agenda disseminator to governments and society. Table 2 shows links between the institutional discourse and the SDGs, the speech pronounced, and the ideas underlying the lines.

Table 2 Relations among UFPB's sustainability discourse and the SDGs

Sustainable Development Goal	What is explicit	What is implied
Poverty eradication	UFPB partner in public policies, collaborating to promote social change.	Investment in retention policies for disadvantaged students. Accelerate regional development.
Zero hunger and sustainable agriculture	Projects to use leftovers and alternative materials as a strategy to fight hunger.	Leading role in the promotion of avant-garde and sustainable agricultural techniques.
Health and well-being	Sustainable gastronomy project, with the use of alternative vegetables and seeds in food, promoting healthy eating.	Extension projects enable healthy eating alternatives and medical care in vulnerable communities.
Quality education	Highlights on TV about the more than two thousand students in scientific initiation programs.	UFPB is the most important university in the region and plays a key role in regional development.
Gender equality	Seminars to discuss alternatives for a more inclusive university and community awareness.	UFPB is a plural organization that fights social prejudices.
Safe water and sanitation	UFPB's participation in the development of research and public policies on rainwater harvesting and use.	Cutting-edge techniques help combat water shortages, bringing progress to underserved regions.
Clean and affordable energy	Research on alternative energy sources in an energy crisis scenario.	A study center dedicated exclusively to the subject, showing the value given to that matter.
Decent work and economic growth	Encouraging farmers in semi-arid regions to plant sustainable and profitable crops.	Public-private partnerships to foster job and income creation.
Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Creation of the UFPB Institute of Development of Paraíba, to encourage technological creation and contact with the market.	UFPB is the second university in Brazil in number of patent applications.
Reduction of inequalities	Projects to provide occupation to residents of poor communities near the university.	Grants and student aid are vital for reducing social inequalities.
Sustainable cities and communities	Studies on control of urban expansion to ensure sustainable development of urban centers	Advocacy for historic centers, encouragement of bicycling and alternative transportation.
Responsible consumption and production	Practices for rationalizing spending on consumables, electricity, water, purchasing and contracting.	Digitization of processes, preparation of risk maps.
Action against global climate change	Encouraging research into the use of solar panels and other clean energy sources.	Projects for the use of alternative energy sources.

Sustainable Development Goal	What is explicit	What is implied
Life in water	Projects to clean up rivers and protect marine life.	Maintain extension projects to promote sustainable fishing.
Terrestrial life	Research creates tree capable of monitoring forest fires.	Protect preservation areas on campuses.
Peace, justice and effective institutions	Holding conferences with government agencies for the dissemination of the SDGs and sustainable economic alternatives.	Maintain dialogue with public agencies and promote the rescue of citizenship in needy communities.
Partnerships and means of implementation	Agreements with governments and companies for research and technology exchange.	UFPB is vital to regional development.

Source: elaborated by the authors (2022).

This work has limitations due to the subjective positioning of discourse analysis. Other researchers would likely take different attitudes. However, this is an inherent characteristic of qualitative-discursive studies that testify to the potential for discoveries typical of the method.

It was not possible to conduct focus groups during this exploration. This methodology's use is suggested by leading contemporary scholars in Sociological Discourse Analysis (Alonso & Callejo, 1999; Coelho, 2012; Godoi & Uchôa, 2019b; Ruiz Ruiz, 2009). The temporary closure of sites due to the 2020 pandemic of COVID-19 made in-depth observations at all campuses of the institution impossible, so we kept the focus on João Pessoa's campus, the largest of them.

The continuity of the Institutional Development Plans and Management Reports investigation is oriented. These documents present a convincing way to tell the period to be studied story. The organizational media productions constitute material rich in signs of ideologies. We suggest a subsequent resumption of the discourse analysis of the UFPB so future comparisons can be made with the findings of this research, obtaining a broader view of the evolution of the sustainability discourse manifested by the institution over time.

We expect that this study represents a stimulus to reflection in the organization studied, promoting an analytical verification of possible failures and omissions, thus facilitating the adoption of proactive actions linked to sustainability promotion. We understand that management, more aware of the relevance of sustainable thinking, can contribute decisively to the process of free experimentation, reflection, and promotion of an

ethical, critical, and engaged community living, to the conservation of natural resources, and social justice.

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