

**STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF HEI REGARDING ENVIRONMENTAL
SUSTAINABILITY - A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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Área temática: H) Responsabilidad Social Corporativa.

Keywords: sustainability, environment, HEIs students, education, campus, perceptions

Students' Perceptions of HEI regarding Environmental Sustainability - a comparative analysis

Abstract

Higher education has a key role in sustainable development. Indeed, given its traditional primary mission, to disseminate and create knowledge, higher education is essential to help create a more sustainable future. Several higher education institutions have integrated principles, values and practices of sustainability in their curricula, research, partnerships and campus operations / activities. This phenomenon of the “green school” is becoming more prevalent, but it’s very important that being green not be in declaration only. Therefore, this study was designed to compare students' attitudes towards sustainability in Higher School of Health Technologies of Coimbra (a green school) and Coimbra Business School (a non-green university), both organic units of Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra. 832 students from two schools participated in this study and the differences in their perceptions related with the environmental sustainability, namely energy consumption, water consumption, waste recycling, sustainable mobility and biodiversity conservation were analyzed. The results show that overall, from the students' perspective, both analyzed schools are very similar with respect to sustainability issues, except for some key differences. For example, students from green school get more often participate in sustainability activities compared with students from the non- green school. However, the results suggest that in all areas there is still a significant percentage of students who do not recognize good environmental sustainability practices in their schools.