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The key role of alliances and multi-stakeholder collaboration for climate action implementation within higher education institutions: the Chilean experience

Professor Claudia Mac-lean, University of Magallanes
Maryon Urbina, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Óscar Mercado, Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana del Estado de Chile
Pablo Yañez, Universidad de Talca
Cecilia Campos, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Christopher Toledo, Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana del Estado de Chile
Dr. Juan Carlos Aravena, University of Magallanes
Dr. Rodolfo Sapiains, University of Magallanes

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER



The purpose of this paper is to present and analyze the Chilean Sustainable Campus Network (RCS) roadmap to achieve higher education institutions' carbon neutrality, in terms of the network maturation process and the outcomes of the collaborative endeavor.

Sustainable Campus Network (RCS):

- 30 universities in Chile
- helping to shape a fair and environmentally healthy civilization contributing from the higher education realm.
- organized in 10 working groups: Teaching, Carbon Neutrality, Mobility, Outreach, Governance, Nature Spaces, Circular Economy, Research, Gender, and Communications.

APPROACH USED



The methodology adopted has a two-track approach (1)

In-depth interviews were carried out with six key actors of the RCS to develop an explorative study to **characterize critical issues** that have been fundamental in this particular network's ongoing process and evolution.

We have adopted a **framework presented by Head (2008)**: eight relationship and process aspects that are probable to be of critical relevance for the achievement of networked governance mechanisms intended to face complex problems.

APPROACH USED



The methodology adopted has a two-track approach (1)

- Aligning the perspectives of different kinds of stakeholder groups
- Focus on local capacity building
- Trust within the network
- A learning orientation
- Clear rules for decision making and discussion
- Skills in bridging and linking among the sectoral stakeholder groups
- Leadership within the network

To illustrate how these **key aspects** can be characterized within the RCS, an adaptation was made of these issues to turn them into a set of questions for the interviews. The following open question was included additionally:

Do you agree with the affirmation that the RCS is accomplishing its self-imposed goals?

APPROACH USED



The methodology adopted has a two-track approach (2)

In-depth interview with the leader of the RCS carbon neutrality working group was carried out, which was complemented with a process of data gathering from secondary information sources.

A set of questions was designed accordingly to expose the working group context, objectives, internal organization scheme and external collaboration efforts, and the final products generated.

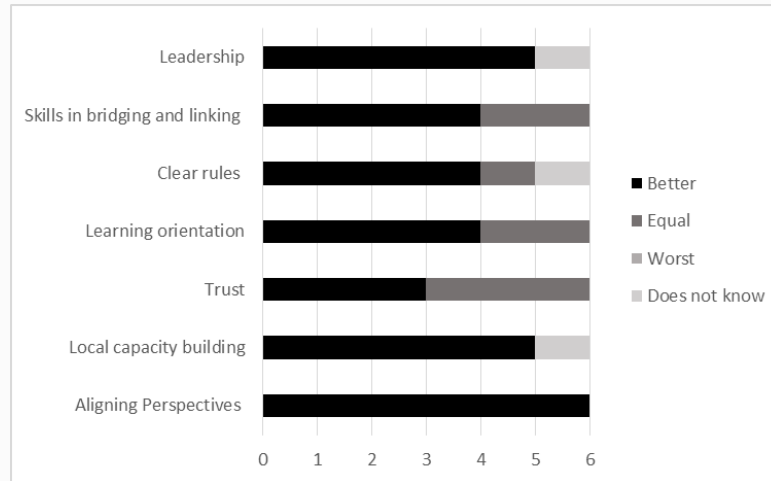
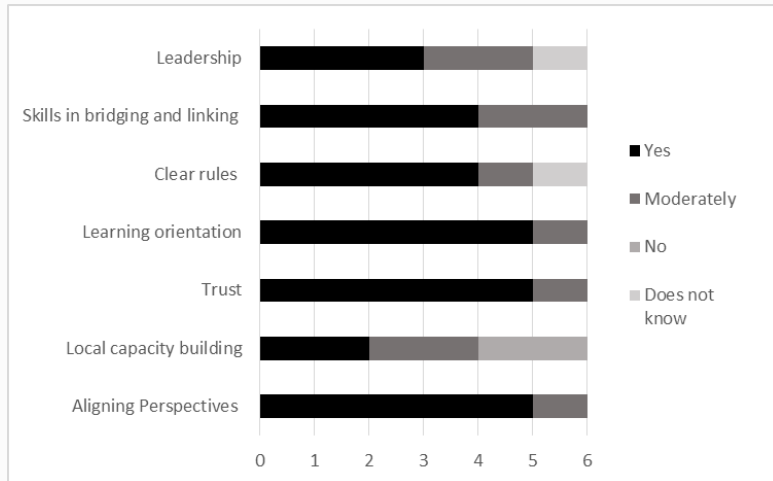
The interviews:

- 19th March to 25th March 2021, administrated through video, average duration of 35 minutes.
- Content analysis and simple statistical analysis were used to examine the open-ended and closed-ended questions' results.

KEY RESULTS



The participants were asked whether they consider that the RCS provides or accomplishes each one of the critical issues adopted. Also, the evolution over time of these aspects was assessed by the respondents. The findings are the following:



KEY RESULTS



Regarding the question: **Do you agree with the affirmation that the RCS is accomplishing its self-imposed goals?**

A tendency is found within the interviewees towards a **positive perception of the matter.**

The interviewees emphasize that the main objective of incorporating sustainability into higher education institutions has been achieved, which is reflected in the involvement of the RCS in the establishment of a Cleaner Production Agreement for universities and in the creation of RESIES - the Chilean Report and Evaluation of Sustainability System for higher education institutions.

KEY RESULTS



In terms of the in-depth interview with the leader of the RCS carbon neutrality working group, there were **three main findings and highlights**.

Nine Chilean entities have already joined the **Climate Emergency Letter of the SDG Accord**. These are listed below:

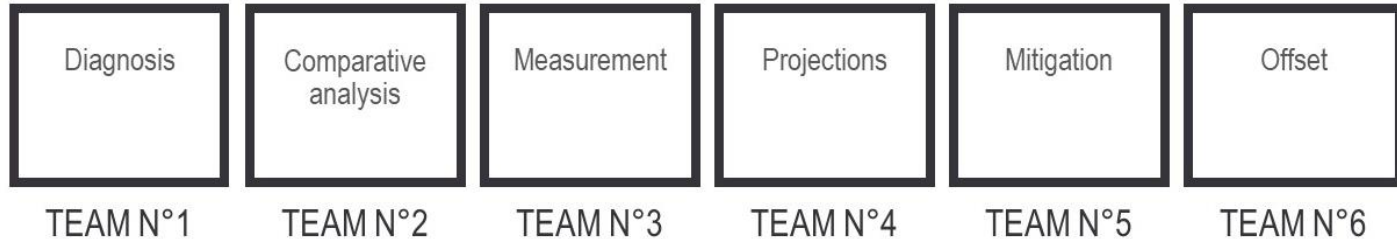
- Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (2038),
- Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación (2040),
- Universidad de Chile (2050),
- Universidad de la Frontera (2040),
- Universidad de Magallanes (2040),
- Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana (2020),
- Universidad de Valparaíso (2050),
- Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (2050), y
- Sustainable Campus Network (2050).

KEY RESULTS



This specific challenge highly **influenced the creation** of the carbon neutrality working group within the RCS in **January 2020** and with **16 members**.

Its objective is to generate a roadmap for HEIs to move towards carbon neutrality, regardless of the degree of progress in terms of measurement and implementation of projects that each institution has.



Internal organization carbon neutrality working group

KEY RESULTS



Team	Objective
Diagnosis	Generate a diagnosis of higher education institutions in terms of their organizational structure, carbon neutrality goals, and progress in quantification and mitigation.
Comparative analysis	Generate a compilation of progress on carbon neutrality goals between institutions that are international benchmarks.
Measurement	Adapt the Chilean "Huella Chile" methodology of the Ministry of the Environment to the reality of higher education institutions, providing methodological guides for estimating activities that are difficult to measure for universities.
Projections	Build a methodological guide to project GHG emissions in higher education institutions.
Mitigation	Generate a basic guide of already implemented mitigation projects that would orientate investments selection for reducing emissions in higher education institutions.
Offset	Create a guide to advance on the matter of capture and compensation projects for higher education institutions in Chile.

KEY RESULTS



In terms of the specific way in which the performance of the working group has been facilitated by the RCS, the leader of the carbon neutrality working group refers to five main aspects:

- Perceiving the RCS as a platform that has generated spaces through collaboration.
- The **freedom and flexibility** that working groups have to set their own annual objectives, ways of working and goals as a relevant factor in their evolution.
- The **national recognition of the network among HEIs and Ministries** has increased the working group possibilities and allowed to create alliances with international entities such as Second Nature and Partners of the Americas.
- The RCS has managed to generate trust among its members.
- The network has generated a **sense of belonging and responsibility with sustainability**, which motivates team members to dedicate hours of work to the network.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

Even though climate action movements at the university level can be found during the decade of 1990 in the US and the UK through networks such as Second Nature and EAUC, the context of the COP25 and the collective commitment to address the climate crisis from higher education through the global letter for Climate Emergency of the SDG Accord, have had an important impact in Chilean universities developments to accelerate their carbon neutrality target setting, planning, and in adopting additional actions.

It has been possible to understand at an exploratory level that certain critical issues have highly influenced the RCS maturation process, such as its learning orientation, the trust relation between its members, the alignment of perspectives within the network members, and the flexibility of working groups to design their own internal processes.

It has been identified that the RCS approach towards climate action has a strong focus on specific and project-based implementation for carbon neutrality in particular. This is mainly campus operations measures.

The fact of collaborating in this inter-university network has allowed its members and institutions to further create alliances with multiple stakeholders, including the public sector, other HEIs, and also international bodies.

CONTACT DETAILS OF THE AUTHORS

Professor Claudia Mac-lean, University of Magallanes

E-mail: clau.maclean.b@gmail.com

Maryon Urbina, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

E-mail: mmurbina@uc.cl

Óscar Mercado, Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana del Estado de Chile

E-mail: omercado@utem.cl

Pablo Yañez, Universidad de Talca

E-mail: pavanez@utalca.cl

Cecilia Campos, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

E-mail: cecamposm@uc.cl

Cristopher Toledo, Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana del Estado de Chile

E-mail: ctoledo@utem.cl

Dr. Juan Carlos Aravena, University of Magallanes

E-mail: juan.aravenadonaire@gmail.com

Dr. Rodolfo Sapiains, University of Magallanes

E-mail: rodolfo.sapiains@gmail.com