



## **Sustainable Purchases: Benefits and Obstacles in a Community College**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The practice of sustainable purchasing is relevant for addressing environmental, economic, and social dimensions. However, this practice occurs frequently in public companies due to legal requirements of Public Procurement Law. Private Community Colleges, on the other hand, are not subject to these requirements. In this context, the objective of this research is to identify the benefits and obstacles of adopting sustainable purchasing practices in a Private Community College. The research methodology is exploratory, and the data collection procedure is documental. As a result, the possibility of adopting key sustainable purchasing practices is discussed, presenting the obstacles and benefits of sustainable purchases in a Higher Education Institution (HEI), with a focus on addressing social, economic, and environmental dimensions, aiming to explore possibilities for implementing these practices. In the final considerations, the advantages of adopting sustainable purchases by HEIs are argued, emphasizing the importance of taking a stance to promote initiatives that encourage more sustainable consumption patterns, as universities play a crucial role in the social and professional development of individuals.

**KEYWORDS:** Sustainable Purchases. Higher Education Institution. Sustainable Development.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Population and economic growth have exerted significant pressure on the environment and natural resources. According to Rodrigues et al. (2016), this scenario increases the pressure and use of natural resources essential for human survival.

Companies need to rethink their production methods, introducing innovations and technology into their processes to reduce the volume of natural resources applied in production, aligning towards creating guidelines and indicators and, ultimately, developing sustainability reports.

Consumption, whether individual or corporate, leads to the act of purchasing, which generally brings about a massive transformation in the market, and public procurement plays a significant role in this process, as the public sector is a major consumer and has high purchasing power due to its substantial consumption volume.

Public Procurement Law No. 8.666 (BRAZIL, 1993) brought the need for the adoption of sustainable criteria in public procurement. In recent years, purchasing and contracting decisions have gone beyond the barriers of purely measuring financial results, with attention also given to the depletion of natural resources.

Among public organizations obligated to practice sustainable purchases due to procurement law, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) hold a prominent position as they have high consumption demand and, consequently, a high purchasing volume.

Although private HEIs are not required to comply with procurement law, it is essential to consider that these organizations play a significant role in product consumption. According to INEP (2017), in 2017, Private HEIs were responsible for over 75% of higher education enrollments, and due to the intense number of students, staff, and visitors, private HEI networks have become consumers on a large scale, potentially influencing and regulating the market for sustainable products. Considering sustainability aspects in product purchases can contribute to mitigating negative impacts on the environment and improving human quality of life. In this line, Appolloni et al. (2014) clarify that the acquisition process can provide opportunities to consider environmental aspects in the organization.

## 2 OBJECTIVE

To identify the benefits and obstacles arising from the voluntary adoption of sustainable purchasing practices for products in a Private Community College.

## 3 SUSTAINABLE PURCHASES

Sustainable public procurement, according to the Interministerial Commission on Sustainability in Public Administration (CISAP) of the Ministry of Planning, created in 2012 by Decree No. 7,746 with amendments published in Decree No. 9,178, 2017, establishes as a requirement for public officials to consider sustainability criteria in the procurement process to meet the "public interest of a fairer and more egalitarian society" (MINISTRY OF PLANNING, 2023, p. 1).

Law nº 8,666, of June 21, 1993, represents the main regulation governing public procurement in Brazil and establishes rules for bids and contracts of the Public Administration, regulating Article 37, paragraph XXI, of the Federal Constitution (BRAZIL, 1993).

In general, the prevailing culture encourages consumption, and the act of purchasing involves choices and decisions that can impact life and the continuity of generations, such that the individual and the collective, the public and the private have their share of contribution and responsibility in the process (SILVA; GOMES, 2017).

On the other hand, the environmental issue provides an opportunity to discuss crucial dilemmas in the contemporary scenario, such as redefining the role of the State, emphasizing its importance and responsibility regarding its public policies and practical actions. Public policies face the challenge of promoting societal well-being, (individual and collective) satisfaction, social justice, and the consolidation of democracy, with a focus on social and environmental issues. Sustainable public procurement emerges as an example of social and environmental responsibility, with normative and legal support (SILVA; GOMES, 2017).

In current purchasing models, price ceases to be the most important factor in the acquisition decision, risks regarding worker safety as well as environmental impacts must be considered to prevent harm to the company's image (CRESPIN-MAZET; DONTENWILL, 2012). Therefore, sustainable purchases pave the way to implement, in practice, the stances taken in theory (official speeches, agreements, and internal norms).

However, it is crucial to consider the eligibility criteria for sustainable public procurement proposals, supported according to the Ministry of Planning (2023, p. 1), in the evaluation of goods and services that have "suitable characteristics and specifications, both in terms of quality and functionality, as well as the principles and duties of the State defined in the Federal Constitution." It is clear, above all, that "quality and compliance with the State's duty to protect the environment" are important, and not just price as a criterion for proposal selection.

As Paes et al. (2019) point out, economic growth should not be the sole concern of governments and organizations, but rather promote the well-being of society. Furthermore, the same authors highlight that the existence of sustainable contracts signed by organizations favors the strengthening of sustainable production, especially at the local level. This thought is in line with ICLEI (2015), stating that the adoption of sustainable purchasing practices can promote the

development of markets and local communities, potentially generating employment (employability).

Therefore, it is a matter of adopting practices to qualitatively improve the purchasing process. What can happen, for example, with: "the acquisition of green computers, office equipment made of certified wood, recyclable paper, public transportation powered by cleaner energy" (MINISTRY OF PLANNING, 2023, p. 1), among other practices that contribute to reducing negative impacts on society.

#### 4 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN BRAZIL

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Brazil can be public or private. Public HEIs are maintained by the Government, at the Federal, State, or Municipal levels. These institutions are funded by the State and do not charge enrollment or tuition fees.

On the other hand, private HEIs are managed by individuals or legal entities, for-profit or nonprofit. Nonprofit private institutions include: Community institutions: which have representatives from the community in their maintaining entity; Confessional institutions: which adhere to a specific confessional and ideological orientation; and Philanthropic institutions: which provide services to the population in addition to the activities of the State.

To sustain themselves and offer their educational services, private institutions charge tuition fees, and their students pay with their own resources or through student loans. According to Brazilian legislation, a private university can be designated as a community university.

Community HEIs are often confused with private universities because both derive funds from tuition fees. However, while students invest a monthly amount to attend undergraduate or graduate programs at a Community HEI, it is characterized as nonprofit. The goal of a Community HEI is focused on education and social services to improve the quality of life of the society. The funds raised are reinvested in education, research, and extension projects that benefit the community.

The Brazilian Higher Education system has undergone significant changes in recent decades, experiencing high growth rates over a 20-year period, with private HEIs standing out with a growth of 197%, compared to 40% for public institutions and, therefore, it plays an important role in Higher Education. This growth made the private sector responsible for the largest number of enrollments in recent decades, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Proportionality of enrollment numbers between the public and private sectors, Brazil, 1933-2017 (in percentage)

Year	1933	1960	1980	2017
<b>Private Sector</b>	43.7	41.4	64.3	75
<b>Public Sector</b>	56.3	58.6	35.7	25

Source: INEP (2016, 2017, 2018a), Martins (2009) and Sampaio (2000).

Table 1 allows us to observe that the growth of private HEIs gained prominence from the 1960s onwards. The pace of enrollments in Higher Education has remained steady; in 2021, the number of students enrolled in the private sector was 77%, while in the public sector, it was 23% (INEP, 2021). This fact is caused by population growth, lack of available spaces in public education and the promotion of student financing programs.

Among the geographical regions of Brazil, the Southeast has the highest concentration of private HEIs, since according to Barros (2015), from 2001 to 2010, the number of enrollments in undergraduate courses by geographic region grew 79% and of this total, 48.7% were destined to the Southeast region.

From 2015 to 2017 the number of private HEIs in Brazil grew by 4%, going from 2,069 to 2,152. Of this total, 1,121 HEIs were located in the Southeast. Despite this region having the highest number of private HEIs, its growth during this period was only 0.26%, compared to a growth of 13.3% in the Northeast, going from 456 to 517 (INEP, 2016, 2017, 2018b).

## **5 RESEARCH METHOD**

### **5.1 Method Characterization**

The research is classified as exploratory, as it seeks to identify the application of sustainable purchasing practices in HEIs. According to Collis and Hussey (2005), exploratory research occurs when there is little knowledge about the studied topic, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of the subject to make it clearer and provide an overall view of the matter. Exploratory research has a flexible plan, allowing the study of the topic from various angles and aspects, such as literature review and analysis of samples to stimulate understanding (GIL, 2012).

Regarding the problem approach, the research is characterized as quantitative, as, in addition to the theoretical survey, it evaluates numbers and information to obtain an analysis postulating the existence of an external reality that can be examined objectively by establishing cause-and-effect relationships, from the application of quantitative research methods that allow us to reach universal truths (TERENCE; ESCRIVÃO FILHO, 2006).

Regarding data collection, analysis, and interpretation procedures, for this work, documentary research is adopted since the document is the basis of its analysis instrument. However, the definition of a document goes beyond the idea of written and/or printed texts. Documents are used as sources of knowledge, information and clarifications that bring their essence intended to elucidate certain issues and serve as evidence for others. (FIGUEIREDO, 2007).

Documentary research relies on materials that have not undergone any analysis, meaning the sources are primary, requiring the researcher to conduct a more careful study since the documents have not undergone any scientific treatment before (OLIVEIRA, 2007). This type of survey enables the analysis of a specific problem indirectly through the study of documents prepared by humans, revealing their way of being, living, and understanding a fact.

With the aim of verifying prices and other commercial conditions of the products that are part of the object of study, consultations and research were conducted on documents related to the procurement processes of the studied HEI, including (a) Material Requisition (MR), (b) quotes presented by suppliers, (c) comparative price list, and (d) purchase order. Additionally, consultations were made on the websites of the suppliers of the analyzed products to identify the existence of sustainable products, as well as the sustainability reports of these suppliers.

### **5.2 Object of Study Characterization**

This study focused on a Private Community Higher Education Institution that considers values related to Social Commitments, Environmental Responsibility, and Economic-Financial Sustainability Development.

All requests for the purchase of products and services received by the Purchasing Department are made by the requester. The requester is an authorized employee to issue a Material Requisition (MR) and/or Service Request (SR) to meet their internal needs. The requester is subordinate to a technical approver and, in turn, is subjected to a budgetary approver.

The process of quoting and purchasing products and services involves agents, activities, and actions aimed at the realization of an acquisition and, consequently, the fulfillment of a demand through the issuance of a purchase order. The main agents are: the requester, merit approver, budgetary approver, Purchasing Department, and supplier.

The Buyer must, via the Purchasing Portal, analyze the proposals received, the commercial conditions presented by each of the suppliers, select the proposal with the best commercial conditions (lowest cost, better payment terms, etc.) among those that meet technical and deadline requirements, and finalize the process by issuing the purchase order.

The Purchasing Department serves approximately 500 cost centers, with an average of 965 purchase orders issued monthly and 1,300 items acquired, including products and services.

### **5.3 Data Collection and Treatment**

The study began with a documentary survey, using data collected from the purchasing processes available on the Purchasing Portal, which includes Material Requisition (MR), quotes, and a comparative price spreadsheet from suppliers participating in the quoting process. Internet searches were also conducted on the University's suppliers' websites.

Among the various consumer products used by the University with the possibility of acquisition through sustainable criteria, this study selected the following products: (a) White A-4 75g bond paper (1,500 reams of 500 sheets), (b) Disposable plastic cup 180 ml (1,000 packs of 100 units), and (c) Plastic coffee stirrer (100 packs of 500 units).

The selection of these products was due to their significant purchase volume. Additionally, the disposal of unused products and their packaging has environmental impacts.

After selecting the products, it was defined as initial action, to gather information from the purchasing processes of the studied HEI as well as from the potential supplying sources for each product, aiming at obtaining prices and other commercial conditions for a comparison between sustainable products and those produced by conventional methods.

To carry out the quotation processes for conventional versus sustainable purchases, information available in the purchasing processes of the studied HEI was consulted, such as, the average monthly consumption and the respective price from the suppliers for each product acquired by the HEI. Some information was obtained directly from the suppliers' websites, such as: location, availability of sustainable products, prices, company size, and the existence of sustainability reports.

## **6 DATA TREATMENT AND ANALYSIS**

### **6.1 White A-4 75g Bond Paper**

In this section, the acquisition of two types of white A-4 75g bond paper is compared: regular and recycled, both in reams of 500 sheets. Table 2 presents the price quotes for white

and recycled A-4 75g bond paper for the quantity of 1,500 units per month. It is worth highlighting that pseudonyms are used to refer to the suppliers to preserve their identity.

Supplier A is a large paper manufacturing company based in São Paulo city, state of São Paulo, offering white and recycled paper, as well as cup cardboard made from renewable sources of eucalyptus planting. This supplier emphasizes the conscious use of natural resources through financial, social, and environmental actions. Additionally, Supplier A has incorporated various social projects, such as Heroes Schools, which promotes classes and awareness actions focusing on values that encourage practices for improving quality of life and the environment, among other culturally and sustainability-related values.

Supplier B is a medium-sized company based in Campinas-SP, offering a wide variety of office items, computer, stationery, and disposable, however, recycled A-4 75g bond paper is only available by order and is not part of its regular catalog.

Table 2 – Price quotes for white and recycled A-4 75g bond paper (in Brazilian reais)

	Supplier									
	A		B		C		D		E	
	White	Recycled	White	Recycled	White	Recycled	White	Recycled	White	Recycled
Ream with 500 sheets	16.86	19.02	22.30	22.48	19.75	22.70	14.20	18.91	21.40	24,45
Total per month - Buyer (1000)	25.29	28.53	33.45	33.72	29.63	34.05	21.30	28,37	32.10	36,68
Total per month - Buyer (1000)	303.4	342.4	401.4	404.6	355.6	408.6	255.6	340.4	385.2	440,2

Source: Own elaboration.

Supplier C is a small company based in Campinas-SP, offering stationery, computer, haberdashery and trims items. Its website provides a brief presentation with its mission, vision, and values.

Supplier D is a large wholesale company based in São Paulo-SP, with branches in Itu-SP, Feira de Santana-BA, and Itabuna-BA. This supplier has in its Portfolio a wide range of computer, stationery, and office items.

Supplier E is a small company located in Campinas-SP, specializing in office supplies, stationery, and gifts.

Among the suppliers analyzed, only Supplier A provides a Sustainability Report, released in 2018, developed through the concepts and methods of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

As seen in Table 2, there is a price variation among the consulted suppliers for both white and recycled paper, possibly due to market positioning, structure, pricing policy, and purchasing capacity, storage, and distribution. Supplier D has the lowest price for the ream (R\$

14.20 for white paper and R\$ 18.91 for recycled paper). Based on the average monthly consumption, the purchase of this product incurs an expense of R\$ 21,300.00 per month and R\$ 255,600.00 per year for white paper, and an expense of R\$ 28,370.00 per month and R\$ 340,440.00 per year for recycled paper.

Comparing the price of the ream of white paper (R\$ 14.20) versus recycled paper (R\$ 18.91) highlights a significant inequality between prices, with recycled paper being approximately 33% more expensive than white paper.

The environmental dimension in the analysis of this product deserves attention because, as stated by Froehlich (2014), the manufacturing process of a product should consider the preservation of nature, protection of natural resources, pollution reduction, and rational use of natural resources.

All consulted companies manufacture recycled paper, although at a much higher price than white paper. One explanation for this may be clarified by Ribeiro et al. (2012) concerning energy and water consumption in the production process of white and recycled paper. The authors point out that producing 1000 tons of white paper consumes 4,000 Mega-Joules, while the same amount of recycled paper requires 10,500 Mega-Joules of energy. This significant difference directly impacts the production process.

Another relevant parameter in paper manufacturing is water usage, an essential component in pulp and paper production. For one ton of white paper, 8,500 liters of water are used, while for recycled paper, 13,500 liters of water are used. This is because the production of recycled paper is carried out using both virgin and recycled fibers. Obtaining recycled fibers is a slow process, requiring approximately 3,500 liters of water per ton in this process, as paper scraps after its usage do undergo various cleaning and de-inking processes.

As explained, the higher consumption of electricity and water in the production process of recycled paper may contribute to its higher price when compared to the production process of white paper. On the other hand, the production process of recycled paper uses recycled raw materials.

Another factor that may be contributing to the high price of recycled paper is the difficulty in meeting the demand for this product by manufacturers due to the lack of high-quality raw materials (LUCIANER, 2011).

## 6.2 Plastic Cup and Coffee Stirrer

In this section, the acquisition of two types of cups—disposable plastic cups and biodegradable cups—and two types of coffee stirrers—disposable and biodegradable—is compared. Table 3 presents the price quotes for the two types of cups, disposable plastic and biodegradable, of 180 ml for the quantity of 1,000 units per month. Table 4 presents the price quotes for plastic and biodegradable coffee stirrers for coffee for the quantity of 100 units per month.

Suppliers F and G are located in São Paulo-SP, being large companies in their segment. No information was found about offering sustainable products in their portfolios.

Supplier H from Campinas-SP is a large company. In its product portfolio, only selective waste bins and a hand cleanser gel with natural biodegradable exfoliant made from walnut shells were found.

Supplier I from São Paulo-SP is a large company in the cleaning, hygiene, and disposable products segment. The company provides biodegradable cup and stirrer products by order. Its website conveys a message that respects the environment and social development through sustainable practices.



According to Table 3, Supplier H proposes the lowest unit price (R\$ 1.99) for the pack of disposable plastic cups. Based on the average monthly consumption, this product represents an expense of R\$ 1,990.00 per month and R\$ 23,880.00 per year.

Supplier J from Valinhos-SP is a company specialized in biodegradable products (cups, straws, gloves, scoops, cutlery, etc.). The homepage of the website emphasizes the importance of preserving the environment and the use of biodegradable products. The site features a certification that all products are manufactured exclusively with biodegradable additives certified by ABNT PE.308.01, with an ecological seal from the environmental quality program offered by INMETRO and the Global Ecolabelling Network.

Table 3 – Disposable and Biodegradable Plastic Cup Price Quotation (in Brazilian Real)

	Supplier					
	F	G	H	I	I	J
	Plastic				Biodegradable	
<b>Packaging with 100 pieces</b>	2.20	2.18	1.99	2.06	49.50	7.96
<b>Total month - Buyer</b>	2200	2180	1990	2060	49500	7960
<b>Total year - Buyer</b>	26400	26160	23880	24720	594000	95520

Source: Own elaboration.

No information was found on the websites of the analyzed suppliers regarding the disclosure of sustainability reports.

As observed in Table 3, the lowest price for the biodegradable cup is from supplier J, R\$ 7.96 per package. Considering the average monthly consumption of 1000 packages with 100 pieces, the monthly expenditure for this product is R\$ 7,960.00 and R\$ 95,520.00 annually.

Table 4 – Plastic and Biodegradable Coffee Stirrer Price Quotation (in Brazilian Real)

	Supplier					
	F	G	H	I	I	J
	Plastic				Biodegradable	
<b>Packaging with 500 pieces</b>	2.99	3.39	3.65	3.45	35.00	34.50
<b>Total month - Buyer</b>	299.0	339.0	365.0	345.0	3500.0	3450.0
<b>Total year - Buyer</b>	3588	4068	4380	4140	42000	41400

Source: Own elaboration.

As observed in Table 4, the lowest price for the plastic stirrer is proposed by supplier F: R\$ 2.99 per package. Considering the average monthly consumption of 100 packages with 500 pieces, the monthly expenditure for this product is R\$ 299.00, that is, R\$ 3,588.00 annually.

As it can be seen in Table 4, supplier J presents the lowest price for the biodegradable stirrer: R\$34.50 per package. Considering the average consumption of 100 packages with 500 pieces, the monthly expense for this product is R\$3,450.00 and R\$41,400.00 per year. It is interesting to mention the low availability of suppliers of biodegradable products.

### 6.3 Results Analysis

It was possible to verify that sustainable products - recycled, biodegradable - have a higher cost when compared to conventional products. Some of these products have a low availability of suppliers in the market, making the production process expensive and non-competitive (SEIXAS, 2018).

Biderman et al. (2008) emphasize the importance of changing consumption patterns. The same author adds that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) could adopt a sustainable requirement in their procurement processes. This could initiate a movement among suppliers to meet this new requirement, resulting in an increased supply of these sustainable products, causing a reduction in prices.

According to Beltrame (2017), sustainable purchases seek to achieve the appropriate balance between the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

In the not-too-distant past, the act of "buying well" brought great concern about evaluating the cost-benefit relationship, focusing only on price, deadline, and quality.

For Walker and Brammer (2009), the cost versus benefit principle must be considered, as currently, buying well should not only take into account the lowest price but also the benefits of including environmental criteria in the procurement process.

The main barrier to the adoption of sustainable procurement practices lies in the economic factor since sustainable products have higher costs compared to conventional ones (PREUSS, 2007; WALKER; BRAMMER, 2009; ZHU; GENG; SARKIS, 2013).

In addition to the economic obstacle, the lack of suppliers for some of these products is also a prominent factor (KORKMAZ, 2010; TESTA et al., 2012). The inclusion of sustainable procurement practices in the procurement process of the studied HEI can meet sustainable production and consumption standards, aligning with the UNO Sustainable Development Goal 12 (UNO, 2015).

Frame 1 indicates the benefits and obstacles on the economic, environmental, and social dimensions from the buyer's view for the analyzed products.

Furthermore, the resulting contribution of sustainable procurement practices can lead to the effective use of natural resources, significantly reduce the origin of waste through recycling and reuse. The demand for sustainable products by HEIs can induce companies to modify the manufacturing processes of their products to more sustainable standards, generating jobs and promoting local progress (UN, 2015).

The adoption of sustainable procurement practices can contribute to the principles related to environmental protection of the Global Pact (OLIVEIRA et al., 2008). In this line, ICLEI (2015) and Santiago and Duarte (2011) point out that the adoption of sustainable procurement practices can bring benefits and advantages such as: reduced use of water, energy, and other natural inputs and improvement of institutional reputation.

According to ICLEI (2015), the adoption of sustainable procurement practices can

support all three dimensions of sustainability. In the environmental dimension, there is a reduction in the use of water, energy, natural raw materials, and favoring recycling. In the social dimension, there is accessibility, basic rights, and fairer wages. Finally, in the economic dimension, there is innovation, product life cycle, growth, and job creation.

Frame 1 – Benefits and obstacles (economic, environmental, and social) from the buyer's viewpoint

Product	Benefits - Dimension			Obstacles - Dimension		
	Economic	Environmental	Social	Economic	Environmental	Social
<b>A-4 75 g. Recycled Copier Paper</b>	Gain reputational value for actively participating in socio-environmental protection: "positive image"	Stimuli, development, and awareness of local markets/communities, job creation	Stimuli, development, and awareness of local markets/communities, job creation	Perception of higher costs, as it does not include future economic benefit	Lack of environmental knowledge by suppliers	Not applicable
<b>Water Cup</b>						Few suppliers of sustainable goods or service.
<b>Coffee Stirrer</b>						

Source: Own elaboration.

From the buyer's point of view, a company can have numerous benefits and advantages by incorporating sustainable procurement practices into its processes. As a result, North (1990) highlights some benefits, such as reducing the consumption of water, energy, and other inputs used in the manufacturing process; trade and reuse of waste resulting from the recycling process; a decrease in fines and penalties for contamination, and improvement of institutional image and reputation.

On the other hand, Testa et al. (2016) point out some obstacles to sustainable procurement, such as the lack of information about the real environmental impact of products, the difficulty of finding suppliers and defining guidelines for purchases.

## 7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research made it possible to identify and analyze the procurement processes of some products to detect the benefits and obstacles of adopting sustainable procurement practices in a Private Community Higher Education Institution (HEI).

To overcome identified obstacles, a possible suggestion would be to use the concept called Demand-Driven Production, in which production occurs based on customer demand. The demand for products could be increased by joining several HEIs to collectively purchase common-use products.

To overcome some obstacles, in the case of recycled A-4 75 g. bond paper, some actions could be implemented to reduce its consumption: electronic document storage, digital filing; internal awareness campaign; creation of a bureau or printing island, where users need to

go to the location to retrieve their prints using a password release. This can cause an inhibitory feeling, as other people may view the printed documents, and as a result, prints may be more conscious; implementation of a billing software to identify the quantity, date, and time of sheets printed by each user. Additionally, it would be interesting to create a waste management plan that includes selective collection policies, recycling, and reverse logistics.

It can be affirmed that for the analyzed biodegradable cup and stirrer products, the main obstacles encountered were economic and the lack of suppliers. Some possible internal actions that can be taken in the consumption of these plastic products to mitigate the mentioned obstacles and, at the same time, favor the reduction of waste generation include: awareness campaign about the use of plastic cups, sensitizing employees about the importance of reusing them; encouraging the use of bottles or squeezes by employees for drinking water and non-disposable mugs for drinking coffee; creating equipped pantries for washing reusable utensils.

It is noteworthy that one of the obstacles to the adoption of sustainable procurement practices in the institution studied is the lack of suppliers offering goods and/or services based on sustainability criteria. One way to overcome or at least minimize this obstacle is to implement a sustainable procurement policy in such a way as to encompass the development of suppliers who consider environmental issues integrated into the production process.

Regarding supplier development, initially, a regional, state, or even national survey should be conducted on the existence of suppliers who have environmentally friendly products in their portfolio, efficient in energy consumption and natural resource use, and that can be recycled, reused, or safely stored. An effort is recommended to sensitize local suppliers to the importance of having sustainable products in their portfolio, as this can, in addition to improving their image, contribute to environmental and social issues.

It is essential to develop a permanent relationship program between the customer and the supplier, involving not only occasional or scheduled purchases but also the development of products with the aim of increasing their performance and capacity to meet the sustainable supply needs of purchasing companies.

The partnership with suppliers can also include studies on the development of more sustainable products that include low-impact materials and energy sources, reuse, reduction of packaging, and transportation costs.

In addition, after establishing partnerships with suppliers, it is necessary to maintain this source of supplies, and one of the tools is monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation of these suppliers, a process that must be continuous in the purchasing departments of organizations.

It is worth highlighting the visibility that can be provided with the implementation of sustainable procurement in Educational Institutions, given their role as opinion makers, especially for private institutions, as they are responsible for a large part of the Higher Education offer in Brazil, covering gaps found in public education, such as flexible class schedules. The purpose of a community institution is focused on education and social services with the aim of improving the quality of society life. The resources collected are reverted to teaching, research, and extension projects that serve the community.

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