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The Role of Corporate Universities as an Instrument for Implementing Sustainability Practices in the Public Sector

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Abstract: This research portrayed the reality about investments in courses from the perspective of sustainability carried out by Escola Fazendária, which represents the corporate university of the Secretary of Finance of the State of Pernambuco. The study had the objective of analyzing courses and training actions of the aforementioned corporate university, as an instrument for the implementation of sustainability practices in the public sector of the State of Pernambuco. The common civil population and, also, the public servants of the State will be able to understand, through studies of this magnitude, how the Pernambuco public sector is in terms of the implementation of studies and the execution of new practices constituted in favor of sustainability. The research used a qualitative approach and of an applied nature, which consisted of an exploratory -descriptive character. Due to the fact that it is also one of the corporate universities that are part of the aforementioned corporate education program in the state of Pernambuco. The research was carried out in two phases: (1) institutional documentary survey, about the courses offered between the years 2016 to 2020, aimed at sustainability practices in the analyzed institution; (2) interview. The results were organized through the elaboration of annual tables of courses that were directly related to the study on sustainability, consequently, related to the implementation of the objectives of sustainable development. The end of the study brought the certainty that there is a range of achievements to be achieved so that sustainability is not only included in program content and, in fact, that it is the starting point for any and all actions carried out in the Pernambuco training program. and training of state employees.

Keywords: Corporate University; Organizational culture; People management; Sustainability; Environmental management.

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Introduction

Corporate universities are educational institutions created and linked to public or private companies that aim to qualify their employees through strategic plans drawn up by their sponsoring organizations. To this end, an articulation is made between corporate education, management by competences and knowledge management, making it possible to build the necessary means for the development of competences (ALMEIDA; FREITAS; FERNEDA, 2018).

The first corporate university (UC) in the world was the Crotonville Management Development Institute, created by General Electric, located in the United States, in 1956 (BARRIAC, 2017).

In Brazil, the first CU was implemented in the 1990s, more precisely in 1992 (SPADA; FORTE, 2018) developed by the ACCOR group. The original company was a hotel, of French nationality, founded in 1967 in the city of Lille, and in the 1980s it established itself as one of the leading groups in the hotel segment worldwide.

The word sustainability is complex and involves the following dimensions: environmental, social, political, cultural, economic and spiritual, whose pillars are indispensable for the permanence or durability of a place (DOMINGUEZ, 2017).

In the State of Pernambuco, there is a transparency portal, through which it is possible to check all the information relevant to the actions carried out by each of Organs state bodies and their respective costs (PERNAMBUCO, 2021).

In this context, the research had as a general objective, to analyze the training actions of corporate universities as an instrument for the implementation of sustainability practices in the public sector of the State of Pernambuco.

To achieve the proposed general objective, the following specific objectives were outlined: identify the actions implemented in favor of sustainability by ESAFAZ, through the analysis of courses designed and implemented with a focus on sustainability between the years 2016 to 2021; to analyze whether the courses implemented by ESAFAZ contain themes and proposals relevant to the UN Sustainable Development Goals - ODS, which can be achieved in the medium to long term.

In addition, the results of this research may help to carry out further research that deals with corporate education, in the context of sustainability, as a prominent agent in the process of training increasing numbers of trained and accredited public servants to act effectively in the most diverse state sectors.

At the same time, it will become possible to understand through this study how society will benefit from being inserted in a State in which public bodies act in the various instances of sustainability and that share the certainty that, working under sustainable designs, means understanding that the human being needs to be at the center of attention in all actions performed.

Literature Review

Corporate education: history and evolutionary trajectory

Corporate education has evolved in line with the growth of organizational management around the world. In this case, corporate education has undergone and is constantly undergoing transformations, mainly with regard to its strategic function for general

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administration, facing a reality of constant technological changes and fierce competition in the markets (ALMEIDA; FREITAS; FERNEDA, 2018).

It is worth remembering that the organizational context needs to constantly adapt to the new demands of society.

With the frequent emergence of new demands, corporate education acts to enable the organization to adapt. Its structuring tools are guided in order to train teams of employees for new working methods, as both companies and the job market have started to demand more qualified professionals at all levels of organizations (ROSINI; ALVES; ALVES, 2018).

In the early 1990s, organizations began to direct their management towards the knowledge society (TOLEDO; DOMINGUES, 2018), which is characterized by interactivity actions between individuals in the search for discussions and reflections on the most diverse areas of knowledge.

Initially, the main activities of corporate education were the implementation of managerial, administrative and career self-management training programs. But managers began to realize the “relevance of human capital, which made investments in corporate education become of significant importance” (MAURICIO; CLARO, 2018, p.109).

In this way, organizations perceive that in the medium and long term the quality of work increases more and more, according to the investment in training, since the CUs' strategy in encouraging the development of new skills, presents a return from the point of view of application of learned skills (ALMEIDA; FREITAS; FERNEDA, 2018).

In this way, it can be reflected that investing in actions and strategies aimed at the growth and development of an institution in its market makes it possible to discuss new management proposals and, at the same time, also about new effective management models and use of resources. resources (SILVA *et al.* , 2018).

The growing volume of CUs in Brazil makes evident the strong strategic load that makes up corporate education, as it enhances institutional strategies aimed at the educational development of employees, suppliers and customers (BARRIAC, 2017).

Finally, when analyzing the evolutionary trajectory of corporate education, it can be said that “the UC is one of the elements that will help companies migrate to the Knowledge Society” (SPADA; FORTE, 2018, p.192). Thus, we will discuss in the following section how business management can act to align the organization with knowledge management.

The competitive advantage factor of the implementation of CUs can be seen through the research by BARBOSA (2016), in which the fact that the main difference between corporate education practices and knowledge management is found in the interface between knowledge tacit and the explicit.

Therefore, it can be understood that “the permanent training of employees has been adopted, through Corporate Universities, with the purpose of companies gaining prominence within and outside their national market limits” (SOUZA *et al.* , 2016, p. 346).

Every day “the investment of organizations in distance education projects has emerged as one of the main solutions for the qualification of the staff” (SILVA *et al.* , 2018, p.185).

In this context, companies are increasingly being asked by both the government and their customers to adopt new corporate management postures aimed at sustainable management (SEHNEM *et al.* , 2019).

Corporate universities, as educational institutions implemented by companies in

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favor of professional training and continuous training of work teams, come to occupy the main work space for discussion and implementation of new organizational cultures, as described by Nascimento and Bianco (2017) when defend the belief that corporate education has the capacity to develop the formation of essential competences for the continuity and sustainability of organizations.

We must understand that modern companies should not only think about complying with the environmental protection laws of a country, state or municipality. They should be, as far as possible, proactive, and plan their activities in a sustainable way (TODOROV et al., 2014). In this sense, in the next section, we will discuss how to implement syllabus in UCS.

Implementation of Program Contents aimed at sustainability in corporate universities

The United Nations Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, known as the Eco 92, brought to Brazil the first discussions on ecology, environment and sustainability. Thus, coincidentally, in that same year, the first corporate university in Brazil emerged, developed by the Accor Brasil group, in the city of Campinas/SP.

By analyzing the results of the Ethos indicator, it is possible to verify that, for sustainability to be present in the discussions of business strategies, it is necessary to transform current business models and seek a new way of thinking and planning the future (MARTÃO; DEMAJOROVIC, 2019).

In order to understand contemporary issues relevant to sustainable development, it is necessary to understand the structural aspects of origin of each of the purposes related to it. There is currently an agreement signed in 2015, held at the UN headquarters, located in New York City (USA).

The 2030 Agenda was essentially constituted by the construction of objectives necessary to be achieved for the sustainable development of societies, by the year 2030. Thus, in the aforementioned agreement, seventeen goals for sustainable development - SDGs were determined

Below, a brief description of the seventeen SDGs determined to be achieved by nations, by the year 2030, following the order defined in Agenda 2030 (INSTITUTO CAMÕES, 2016):

1. Poverty eradication (provide guarantees so that all people, regardless of gender, especially the poorest, have equal rights in terms of access to economic resources, natural resources, technologies and financial services in general);
2. Zero hunger and sustainable agriculture (extinction of malnutrition modes, doubling agricultural productivity and income of small food producers, as well as ensuring the implementation of sustainable food production systems and implementing agricultural practices that preserve ecosystems);
3. health and well-being (achieving universal health coverage, access to basic and quality health services, and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all);
4. quality education (construction of improvements in terms of physical facilities in the educational environment that are adaptable to children and have efficiencies, as well as gender equality, investment in teacher training and expansion of scholarship programs);

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5. Gender equality (extinguishing all forms of discrimination against women and girls, as well as all forms of violence against women and girls, and promoting the guarantee of the effective participation of women and equal opportunities for entry into politics and the economy);

6. Drinking water and sanitation (developing policies for access to sanitation and hygiene for all individuals and also the implementation of integrated water resources);

7. Renewable and affordable energy (promote infrastructure expansion and technology upgrades to provide modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, particularly the least developed);

8. Decent work and economic growth (providing the implementation of development-oriented policies in support of productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encouraging the formalization and growth of micro, small and medium-sized companies, offering access to financial services) ;

9. industry, innovation and infrastructure (developing subsidies for the implementation of inclusive and sustainable industrialization, also increasing access policies for small industries and other companies, especially in developing countries, to financial services) ;

10. Reducing inequalities (providing social, economic and political inclusion for all, at any level of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other condition, in order to guarantee equal opportunities and reduce inequalities through including through the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices);

11. Sustainable cities and communities (promoting access to safe, accessible, sustainable and affordable transport systems for all, and increasing road safety, as well as reducing negative environmental impact through public policies for municipal waste management) ;

12. sustainable production and consumption; (Achieve sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, as well as reduce waste generation through prevention, recycling and reuse. Also, encourage companies to adopt sustainable practices and integrate information on sustainability in the reports of its activities);

13. climate action (integration of preventive and strategic measures to mitigate climate change. In addition to promoting better education, aiming to increase society's awareness of human and organizational capacity in policies aimed at reducing climate impacts);

14. protect marine life (prevention and reduction of marine pollution, essentially from marine debris and nutrient pollution. Also, protection of marine and coastal ecosystems so that it is possible to effectively control the extraction of resources, ending the overfishing and illegal fishing);

15. protect terrestrial life (build the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and significantly increase afforestation and reforestation efforts, in order to extinguish desertification);

16. Peace, justice and effective institutions (ensure public access to information to promote the strengthening of relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, to build better capacity. Develop and ensure compliance with non-discriminatory laws and policies for the sustainable development) ;

17. Partnerships for the implementation of the objectives (promote the strengthening of domestic resource mobilization, through international support to developing countries, to improve national capacity for collecting taxes and other sources of revenue, to assist developing countries to achieve long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies).

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Further on, in this study, courses implemented by ESAFAZ were analyzed, in order to identify which of them had specific purposes for the implementation of sustainability and, also, add relevant actions that aim to implement the SDGs to be achieved in the medium to long term.

Methodological Procedures

This work carried out a research with a qualitative approach and of an applied nature, with an exploratory-descriptive character. For, according to Pereira *et al.* (2018) the qualitative study is essentially characterized by the fact that the data collected are, fundamentally, descriptive. Therefore, data analysis also followed an inductive process.

The study was based on the survey of institutional documents and also on a review of current scientific literature on the subject in question.

The research locus of this dissertation was composed by ESAFAZ, which was also selected as the institution analyzed because it is one of the corporate universities that are part of the aforementioned corporate education program in the state of Pernambuco, and it is the UC with the longest time of action and which carries out the largest volume of actions and courses implemented for training and qualification of the aforementioned program. ESAFAZ was created in 1992 by the Secretary of Finance of the State of Pernambuco, and is close to completing thirty years of operation.

Table 1. Institutions of the Corporate Education Program analyzed (state public sector)

INSTITUTION	SUPPORTING INSTITUTION	YEA R OF FOUNDATI ON
ESAFAZ - Farm School (corporate university of Secretary of Finance of Pernambuco)	Secretary of Finance of PE	1992

Source: the author

Furthermore, this research was carried out in two phases, following the methodological mooring matrix in Table 2.

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Table 2. Methodological mooring matrix

Phase of research	Specific objective	Procedure	Instrument
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the actions implemented in favor of sustainability by ESAFAZ, through the analysis of courses designed and implemented with a focus on sustainability between the years 2016 to 2021 	Documentary survey	Reports made available by the institutions' corporate education sector.
two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the process of training leadership teams directly responsible for conducting pedagogical activities aimed at sustainable management 	1) Interview with the general director and coordinator of corporate education at ESAFAZ	Content analysis

Source: the authors

The descriptions of each of the phases will be made in the next sections.

Phase 1: cataloging of courses offered by the institutions

The first stage of the research consisted in carrying out a documentary survey, because, for the realization of any and all case studies, it is possible to use the document technique, which consists of identifying documents that can collaborate with information for a research (PEREIRA *et al.*, 2018).

In this way, reports were analyzed about the courses offered in the face-to-face and distance modalities by the aforementioned institutions of the sample under study, which addressed issues involving sustainability and its relevant practices, between the years 2016 to 2020.

Phase 2: interviews

The data collection process took place through contacts made with the following work teams: corporate education and general administration of ESAFAZ.

Field research took place through digital mode, due to the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, an interview was carried out with the general director and the person responsible for the institution's corporate education sector, through video call. It can be said that it was a structured interview, because according to the concepts of Pereira *et al.* (2018) the structured interview has structuring characteristics as it is guided through a sequence through the logic of themes.

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Results

Next, the presentation of the results, sorted into two sections. The first is intended to demonstrate the surveys, from the period between the years 2016 to 2020, of courses related to sustainability in the aforementioned institutions analyzed in this study.

Specific survey of courses offered by ESAFAZ between the years 2016 to 2020

The initial phase of the research consisted of the institutional survey about the courses offered between the years 2016 to 2020, aimed at sustainability practices in the two aforementioned institutions surveyed.

In view of the survey carried out with ESAFAZ, the only course found on the theme of this research was the course on Environmental Agenda in Public Administration - Knowing and Practicing - A3P.

The first realization of the course took place in 2012, initially with the number of 24 participants. From then on, the course was held once, uninterruptedly until the year 2015, it was not offered in 2016, and resumed in the year 2017, and had its last edition in the year 2018. As the specific time period of this research consisted of the years 2016 to 2020, the last two editions of the course were listed, which took place in the years 2017 and 2018.

The general objective of the course is to raise awareness on the part of servers for changes in attitudes, as well as guide them in the sense of how actions can be practiced in the work environment, resulting in better quality of life, cost reduction for the State. and consequent repercussions in environmental preservation, proposing to build understanding about the environment as the server's work environment.

Regarding the issue of quality of life, the study by Ribas *et al.* (2017), found that topics that address the protection of life, improvements to the environment and quality of life are essential issues for sustainable development.

A forty-one-page booklet was made available to each participant of the ESAFAZ A3P Agenda course, in addition to other teaching materials.

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Table 3. Program Content of the A3P Agenda course (ESAFAZ)

<p>Module I - Course Presentation</p> <p>1.1. Summary description of A3P - Environmental Agenda in Public Administration</p> <p>1.2. course objectives</p> <p>1.3. Preliminary reflections.</p> <p>Module II - Pre-test</p> <p>2.1. Reflective self-assessment.</p> <p>Module III - A3P: Some Results</p> <p>3.1. A3P results and experiences in Brazil</p> <p>3.2. A3P Pernambuco.</p> <p>Module IV – Notions of Ecology: the importance of A3P</p> <p>4.1. The urgency of the ecological crisis</p> <p>4.2. Basic concepts – ecology and sustainability</p> <p>4.3. Millennium Development Goals</p> <p>4.4. Practice: calculating your ecological footprint.</p> <p>Module V – Running A3P</p> <p>5.1. Notions of Environmental Management</p> <p>5.2. Deployment Methodology</p> <p>5.3. Action strategies in the work environment.</p> <p>Module VI – What you can do</p> <p>6.1. Individual actions to collaborate with environmental preservation</p> <p>6.2. Changing values and attitudes - Importance of a new culture</p> <p>6.3. Ecology and Spirituality at Work</p> <p>6.4. Practice: Personal environmental commitment agenda</p>
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Source: the authors

On the participants' portal, in addition to the course handout, in all editions of the course, didactic support materials were made available. These materials were arranged in a specific area named support material, which contained the following texts for enlightening reading:

Table 4. Contents for Supporting Reading

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Selective collect ● Buy Ecological ● Sustainable Shopping ● Decree 33528 ● Law 13047 ● Sustainable Label Manual ● Life Project
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From the survey of the syllabus of the course, it was possible to understand that it brings relevant themes to the study in favor of structuring the 17 sustainable objectives stipulated in the 2030 Agenda.

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In 2017, the course was held for a group of twenty-two participating servers. The course followed the pattern of the EAD modality in all the years of its realization. In 2018, the course had the participation of 12 servers.

Regarding the fact that there is only one ESAFAZ course in the area of sustainability, it is possible to make a comparison about the difference in reality perceived in the research by Barbosa (2016), which demonstrated, through tables, the presence of sustainability purposes in the organizational vision of the three institutions analyzed in their research. This prism allows reflection on how far sustainable issues are still far from UCs in the public sector.

Table 5. General specifications of the ESAFAZ A3P Agenda course

COU RSE	WORKLOAD	MODAL ITY	ANNUA L AVERAGE IN OFFER	YEA RS IN WHICH THE COURSE WAS TAKEN
Envir onmental Agenda in Public Administrati on - A3P - Knowing and Pract icing A3P (ESAFAZ)	20 hours	EAD	1	2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017 and 2018

Source: the authors

The course carried out by ESAFAZ has very peculiar specifications, from the frequency of the course, as only one class is formed each year. With varying averages in the number of participating servers.

ESAFAZ has always carried out the course in EAD mode, probably because of the flexibility in terms of time and schedules for carrying out the study. Therefore, the institution used the workforce of properly trained instructors to teach the course, however, as it is an EAD course, there are, in addition to the general course booklet, other specific support materials permanently available in the VLE so that servers can access whenever feel the need.

The course offered gives employees the possibility to study in more depth each topic contained in the A3P Booklet. Which, possibly, provides more time for discussions, reflections and, consequently, construction of greater learning and awareness for public servants about their role in the implementation and execution of the environmental agenda in the State of Pernambuco.

Analysis of the Interviews

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Due to the current context experienced by the whole society due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interview took place remotely, through the Google Meet platform. Therefore, as already explained initially, CEFOSPE is the regulatory institution and coordinator of the Corporate Education Program of the

Regarding sustainable development, it is necessary to open a parenthesis in order to understand that for its real implementation, in a corporate education program, as well as in the implementation of a successful enterprise, it requires a long-term vision (Ribas *et al.*, 2017)

To carry out the data collection of ESAFAZ, the means of video call interview was used, through which Ms. Juliana Guimarães, current director general of the institution, provided several clarifications about the reality of study and training of servants of the Secretary of Finance of Pernambuco regarding sustainability. Thus, it was clarified that the only course that deals with sustainability issues and contexts is the Environmental Agenda in Public Administration (A3P).

Some particularities called attention to the course, as it has a workload of twenty hours, made available in the totally distance mode since the beginning of its implementation, in 2012. In fact, it is close to completing ten years of existence in the schedule of courses on the ESAFAZ portal, something that is positive as it reflects the reality that the study on sustainability was in fact incorporated into the objectives and strategies of the institution's pedagogical sector.

The present study was carried out with some limitations due to the pandemic not yet overcome, which led to using the virtual sending with those responsible for the organizational teams of ESAFAZ as the main contact, in order to be able to understand how sustainability was experienced in the daily life of each one. from them. The absence of a personal contact in the sense of being able to know the physical structures of the institutions is something that was to be desired, because it would help as subsidies so that information could be inserted with more precision about the technological and didactic resources used in the study environments.

Conclusion

Corporate education has undergone several transformations, mainly due to the evolution of its role with organizations. Because, initially, over the decades, having structured the human resources sector, today called human development and/or human capital, many changes regarding the way of executing employee training had to be implemented and adapted.

In order to study the role played by a CU, it is essential to first carry out a historical survey so that one can understand the reasons for its current importance in the organizational context through the study of all the evolutionary processes carried out by these institutions. Every year, since the advent of the industrial revolution, new technologies have been tested and implemented at the operational, tactical and strategic organizational levels, consequently, also in their departments.

Therefore, it is already possible to reflect on the necessary development that has taken place, over time, in order to train and, more remotely, train capable professionals with comprehensive specific knowledge to work in the existing functions within an organization, because, according to studies de Pinto Brito e Castro (2019), organizations increasingly enter the field of education in order to remain in the market.

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When analyzing the CUs, from the 1990s onwards, a better adequacy and also a structuring of the CUs becomes more evident, since it was also at this time that the first studies on the conception of the so-called knowledge society emerged and, also, strategies for the development of human competences. Academic interest on the subject has intensified since the 2000s.

The Escola Fazendária (ESAFAZ) was selected as the locus of this study due to the fact that this is a UC integrated to the aforementioned training program for servants in the State of Pernambuco. In addition to the fact that ESAFAZ, in 2022, will complete thirty years of operation, in addition to being among the CUs integrated to the aforementioned program, the one that has a significant volume of practices and courses carried out in favor of the training of State servants.

The research emphasized and used as a reference for data analysis the main actions proposed in the agreements signed in the 2030 Agenda, in 2015, through which proposals were presented that aimed at new perspectives for the implementation of sustainable practices. That is, the SDGs stipulated as goals to be achieved by nations by the year 2030 were studied so that all courses carried out by the aforementioned institution were analyzed in order to identify which SDGs their respective pedagogical proposals reached.

When analyzing the role of ESAFAZ with the corporate education program studied, we can see the long path that needs to be taken so that the space belonging to it is actually used in order to become a place where discussions relevant to the necessary practices are promoted. For assertive action in sustainability, at the Finance Department of Pernambuco. In other words, there is still a lack of proper use of the space of this UC as a true experimental laboratory for the improvement of studies and practices aimed at sustainable issues.

ESAFAZ has an admirable physical and pedagogical structure, mainly due to the organization with which the pedagogical activities are planned, structured and executed. What leaves certainty, in practice, what is lacking is the emergence of new courses, belonging to different areas of knowledge, that address sustainability, in its most diverse scopes through which the SDGs could be identified as essential points in each program content. Hence the understanding that there is an adequate physical and pedagogical space for the study of sustainability and its practices, what is lacking is a pedagogical reality in the institutionalized State in which sustainable issues are not just a subject linked to the area of environmental management and, yes, that sustainability is inserted as a primordial foundation for the structuring of all institutional pedagogical activities.

The legacy left by this research consists in the possibility that this is a starting point to help other researchers from master's and/or doctoral programs to carry out surveys that seek to understand the process of how the sustainability theme is constructed and inserted into the themes of the courses of training programs for public servants and, obviously, how these researchers will be able to develop new methods for discussing and including this theme in all areas of knowledge.

Notes

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