

# The Impact of using UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 2030 Agenda as a Performance Indicator in University Ranking

Mustafa Kayyali

<sup>1\*</sup> Manager of Higher Education Quality and Assessment Council HEQAC

\*Corresponding Author: e-mail: [kayyali@heranking.com](mailto:kayyali@heranking.com)

Available online at: <https://ijmsit.com/volume-3-issue-6/>

Received: 12 Nov 2022

Revised: 25 Nov, 2022

Accepted: 28 Nov, 2022

**Abstract**— Over the past few decades, university rankings have become an increasingly important factor in the higher education sector. Universities are ranked based on various criteria such as research output, teaching quality, and graduate employability. However, there is a growing movement to incorporate sustainability and social impact into the ranking process.

**Keywords**— Higher Education – SDGs – UN Sustainable Development Goals – 2030 Agenda.

## I. THE IMPACT OF USING UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) AND 2030 AGENDA AS A PERFORMANCE INDICATOR IN UNIVERSITY RANKING

Over the past few decades, university rankings have become an increasingly important factor in the higher education sector. Universities are ranked based on various criteria such as research output, teaching quality, and graduate employability. However, there is a growing movement to incorporate sustainability and social impact into the ranking process. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda provide a framework for this effort.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are a set of 17 global goals and 169 targets adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015. The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all people, while also taking into account the specific needs of developing countries.

Using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as performance indicators in university ranking can provide a more holistic and comprehensive assessment of a university's impact. It allows universities to be evaluated not only on their academic achievements, but also on their contributions to sustainable development and social impact.

There are several ways in which universities can integrate the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda into their ranking systems. One approach is to create a separate ranking system that focuses specifically on sustainability and social impact. This

could include criteria such as the university's carbon footprint, water use, and waste management practices. Another approach is to incorporate the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda into existing ranking systems by including them as additional criteria alongside traditional measures such as research output and teaching quality.

There are several benefits to using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as performance indicators in university ranking. First, it encourages universities to prioritize sustainability and social impact in their operations and decision-making. By integrating the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda into the ranking process, universities are motivated to take action on these issues and to demonstrate their progress and impact. This can lead to more sustainable and socially responsible practices, which can have positive impacts on the environment and local communities.

Second, using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as performance indicators allows for a more accurate assessment of a university's overall impact. Traditional ranking systems often only consider a narrow set of metrics, such as research output and teaching quality. By including the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, universities can be evaluated on a wider range of factors that reflect their overall impact on society and the environment.

Third, using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as performance indicators can help to promote transparency and accountability in the higher education sector. Universities are required to report on their progress and impact in relation to the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. This information can be made available to the public, allowing stakeholders to see

how well universities are meeting these goals and taking action on sustainable development and social impact.

There are also some challenges to using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as performance indicators in university ranking. One challenge is that it can be difficult to measure and compare the progress and impact of universities on these issues. The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda cover a wide range of issues, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to measuring progress and impact. This requires a nuanced and multi-faceted approach to ranking, which can be complex and time-consuming.

However, there are also some challenges and limitations to using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a performance indicator in university ranking systems. One challenge is the lack of a standardized framework for measuring and reporting on the progress of universities towards achieving the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. While there are a number of tools and resources available for universities to measure their progress, there is currently no single, universally accepted method for doing so.

Another challenge is that there may be a lack of consensus on the specific criteria and weightings to be used in the ranking process.

HE Higher Education Ranking has focused on the importance of using UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda, and made a specific criteria for this purpose.

Despite these challenges, the trend towards using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a performance indicator in university ranking systems is likely to continue. As the global community increasingly recognizes the importance of sustainability and social responsibility, it is likely that universities will come under greater pressure to demonstrate their commitment to these values. By using the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda as a performance indicator, universities can not only contribute to the global efforts to achieve sustainable development, but also distinguish themselves in a highly competitive higher education landscape.

## II. IMPACT OF UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) ON UNIVERSITIES

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 as a global framework for sustainable development. The SDGs represent a call to action for all countries and stakeholders to work towards achieving a more sustainable and equitable world. As key institutions of knowledge and learning, universities have an important role to play in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. In this blog post, we will explore the impact of

the SDGs on universities and the ways in which universities are responding to this global call to action.

The SDGs provide a framework for addressing some of the most pressing global challenges, including poverty, hunger, inequality, and climate change. Universities can contribute to achieving these goals through their research, teaching, and outreach activities. Many universities have embraced the SDGs as a guiding framework for their work, and are actively working to align their activities with the goals.

One way in which universities are responding to the SDGs is through the incorporation of sustainability into their curricula. Universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of preparing students for a world that is facing significant environmental, social, and economic challenges. By incorporating sustainability into their curricula, universities can help to equip students with the knowledge and skills they need to address these challenges. This can include courses on sustainability, environmental science, and social justice, as well as interdisciplinary programs that bring together students from different disciplines to work on sustainability-related projects.

Another way in which universities are responding to the SDGs is through their research activities. Universities are conducting research on a wide range of topics related to sustainability, including renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and sustainable urban development. By conducting research that is relevant to the SDGs, universities can help to generate new knowledge and solutions to the global challenges we face. This research can also inform policy and decision-making at the local, national, and international levels.

In addition to their research and teaching activities, universities are also working to reduce their own environmental impact. Many universities have established sustainability offices or committees to help coordinate their sustainability efforts. These offices are responsible for developing and implementing sustainability plans that address issues such as energy use, waste reduction, and sustainable transportation. By reducing their own environmental impact, universities can serve as models for sustainable practices and demonstrate their commitment to the SDGs.

Some universities have gone even further in their efforts to contribute to the SDGs. For example, the University of California system has established a Global Food Initiative to address the challenge of feeding a growing global population sustainably. This initiative brings together researchers, students, and community partners to develop and implement solutions to food-related challenges, such as food insecurity and climate change. Other universities have established centers or institutes focused on sustainability or

social justice, which bring together scholars and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines to work on sustainability-related issues.

The SDGs are also driving collaboration and partnerships between universities and other stakeholders. Universities are working with governments, non-governmental organizations, and businesses to develop and implement solutions to the global challenges we face. For example, the SDGs have helped to drive collaboration between universities and businesses on sustainable development issues. Many businesses are recognizing the importance of sustainability and are looking to universities for expertise and solutions.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the impact of the SDGs on universities is significant, but there is still much work to be done. While many universities have embraced the SDGs as a guiding framework, there are still some that have not yet fully integrated sustainability into their activities. In addition, there are challenges to incorporating sustainability into university curricula, such as limited resources and resistance from some faculty members. Addressing these challenges will require commitment and collaboration from university leaders, faculty, and students.