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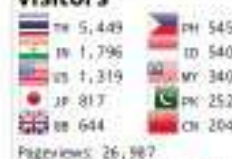Email: Pensri.2508@gmail.com

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MAKE A SUBMISSION

The Role of University in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals of Sripatum University in Thailand.

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Abstract

Universities are increasingly engaging with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As well as Sripatum University, because SDGs are seen as enablers of societal transformations and transformations within universities. This research article aims to study the situation of Sripatum University in SDGs and to establish a policy to support sustainable development goals. We use qualitative methods, utilizing a literature review, structured observation and comprehensive in -depth interviews. There are five key informants which was selected by purposive sampling, 16 participants, including students, academics (lecturers), sustainability coordinators, executives and support services. The instrument for this research was guideline for interview, Data was analyzed by content analysis. This study shows that the president has appointed a working group to drive the sustainable development goals. During the academic year 2022-2023, Sripatum University focuses on 6 groups of SDGs, including SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG-5: Gender Equality, SDG-7: Affordable and Renewable Energy, SDG-9: Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG-16: Peace and Justice and strong institutions, and SDG-17: Partnerships for the Goals. But knowledge, understanding and awareness in SDGs in staff and students are so little. Whereas everyone has continued to carry out activities or projects linked to the SDGs. However, they do not understand the relevance or relationship in the SDGs. Five strategies of the Sripatum University to encourage faster achievement of the targeted SDGs are proposed are as follows: Curriculum Integration, Research and Innovation, Community Engagement, Partnerships and Collaboration and Communication.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), University

Introduction

On September 15, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and its 193 member country leaders established a 2030 agenda for changing the world. The 2030 agenda goals approved by the United Nations consist of 17 goals called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals contain 169 milestones to be achieved by 2030 (UNESCO, 2016). They are clearly connected with the socioeconomic and environmental aspects of sustainable development (UN, 2015).

Every country in the world attaches importance to the Sustainable Development Goals. Understanding the basic principles of the SDGs and the cooperation of people in the organization are therefore the first factors that should be aware of. Therefore, every sector must be interested in

learning and working together to achieve sustainable goals, emphasizing three issues: 1) Inclusive development, 2) Aiming for transformation, and 3)Integrated development by using SDGs indicators as a tool for sustainable goals.

Sustainability is a goal for today, with the SDGs serving as a compass in a world defined by volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) conditions, and universities have a critical role to play as change agents (Purcell et al., 2019).

Most of Thai universities, besides being sources of teaching and learning, research and innovation are also essential actors in the achievement of the SDGs."

The Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings, which uses the SDGs to evaluate societal impact, have also influenced universities' interest in the Goals. This influence is most notable in the increase of participating universities in the last four years: from 467 universities in 2019 to around 1410 universities in 2022 (THE, 2022).

Sripatum University (SPU) is a mid-size private university based in Thailand. Established in 1970, SPU was not previously engaged with the SDGs in a deliberate manner, albeit some of their programs addressed sustainability topics. So this paper was studied situation and established the further of a policy to support sustainable development goals. However it's only some ideal to recommendation. According to Claros et al. (2023) said that SDGs was be fulfil transformative potential in university because of their be tool in communications and legitimizing.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows : Section 2 offers a brief overview of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and research on universities and SDGs, Section 3 show two research objectives then Section 4 conceptual framework. Section 5 introduces details the research methodology. Section 6 presents the result, which are discussed in Section 7. Finally, Section 8 presents the suggestion.

Literature Review

The United Nations has announced 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). to make the quality of life of the world's population better by 2030. Moreover, the level of human use of natural resources does not exceed the production potential of nature. The goals include (United Nation, 2022)

      1) No Poverty
      2) Zero Hunger
      3) Good Health and Well-being
      4) Quality Education
      5) Gender Equality
      6) Clean Water and Sanitation
      7) Affordable and Renewable Energy
      8) Good Jobs and Economic Growth
      9) Innovation and Infrastructure
      10) Reducing Inequalities
      11) Sustainable Cities and Communities
      12) Responsible consumption and Production
      13) Climate Action
      14) Life Below Water
      15) Life on Land

16) Peace and Justice and strong institutions

17) Partnerships for the Goals

The United Nations divided its 17 goals into 5 groups (5 Ps agenda) namely: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership and these five Ps were for all countries and peoples of the world, the following:

- People (social dimension) covering SDGs-1 to SDGs-6
- Prosperity (economic dimension) covering SDGs-7 to SDGs-10
- Planet (environment dimension) covering SDGs-11 tp SDGs-15
- Peace covering SDGs-16
- Partnership covering SDGs-17

Universities should give attention to be locally rooted and globally connected, they offer significant opportunities to deliver against the SDGs, working with faculty, staff and students, as well as their wider stakeholder community and alumni body. (Findler et al., 2019; Trencher et al., 2014; Cortese, 2003).

Sripatum University is a Private University in moderate size and there are at least 15,000 students. In addition, this university is focused on teaching-priority and led by the President with faculties and staff. It also is influenced teaching and learning strategy. As a result, it is yielded successful graduates. Transformations of the university are driven by its strategic plans. Evidence is demonstrated by graduates' employment and stakeholders' acceptances. (Analyzed by researchers, 2024)

Research Objectives

1. To study the situation of Sripatum University in sustainable development goals.
2. To establish a policy to support sustainable development goals.
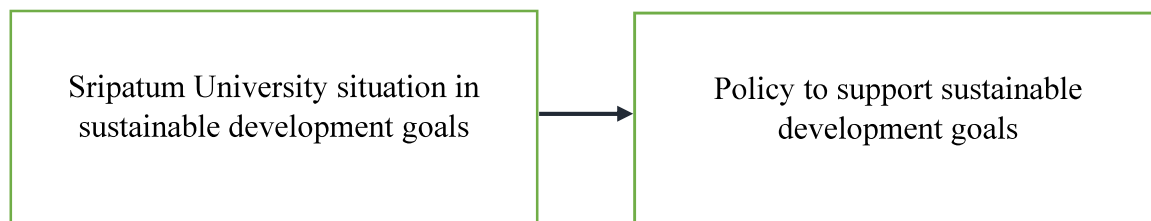
Conceptual Framework

Sripatum University situation in sustainable development goals → Policy to support sustainable development goals

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Research Design

This research employed qualitative methods, utilizing a literature review, structured observation and comprehensive in-depth interviews.

Key Informants

The informants are a purposively selected sample involved 16 participants, including five students who had studied in Asian Studies subject, three academics(lecturers), two sustainability coordinators, two executives and four support services.

Research Instruments

To meet the goals of this study, the researchers utilize a qualitative approach, relying on document analysis and website online, observation in the same thing and semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection tools according to the research objectives. Question points are as follow:

1) Have you understand to the basic principles knowledge of the SDGs? And how?

2) How do staff participate in working towords the SDGs?

3) What are the operational guidelines for driving towards the university's sustainable goals?

Data Collection

Researchers are important tools in collecting data. The data collection procedure of this study in outlined as follows:

1. Both researchers participated in participatory observation with the business administration faculty and Institute of General Education.

2. The two researcher coordinated and scheduled interviews with students (study in Asean Study Subject in Sripatum University), Academics(lecturers), sustainability coordinators, executives and support services.

3. Use a structured interview format which the researchers conducts the interviews ourself.

4. The two researcher analysis data together after data saturation.

Data Analysis

This research was qualitative research, data was evaluated using inductive and content analysis techniques. Post-interviews, audio recordings, and written notes were repeatedly studied and organized into categories based on the research framework. The data underwent a triangulation process to confirm its validity and was subsequently summarized in alignment with the research goals

Research Results

Objective 1 To finding the situation of Sripatum University in sustainable development goals

This mainly explains the data analysis results obtained by this research and underwent a triangulation process to confirm its validity in each researcher, observing the same thing.

Results from in-depth interviews with five groups of people: students (studying Asian Studies at Sripatum University), academics (lecturers), sustainability coordinators, executives, and support services.

The information is summarized as follows:

Students have been introduced to the philosophy of Sufficiency Economy by King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand since 1997. However, the content of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is actually covered during class learning and participation in activities. In the future, SDGs will surely be integrated into students' daily lives. According to one student:

"I didn't understand the meaning of SDGs, but in class, the teacher mentioned and explained the 17 goals. I am interested in SDG-4: Quality Education because education will build success for me.(student-1,15 January 2024)".

Sripatum University places great importance on sustainable development goals, as evidenced by the announcement of the 5-year strategy from 2020-2024, divided into two parts: the

personnel section designates instructors to create research, creative art, or innovation in line with the SDGs or BCG. The second part involves all staff and students participating in social responsibility projects to promote physical and mental health and develop organizations and society sustainably. According to one academic:

"Everyone knows that Sripatum University has 5 important strategies, with 2 strategies related to the SDGs. There will be 6 indicators that they must be aware of and pay attention to. One strategy involves research, creative work, or innovations that benefit society and provide quality academic services, while another focuses on social responsibility and sustainable development.(academic-1, 25 February 2024)".

Various faculties at Sripatum University have activities and projects addressing the SDGs across many targets. For example:

- The Business Administration faculty has established activities with communities to introduce new products, change processes to increase income, and develop sustainability related to SDG-17: Partnerships for the Goals.

- The Institute of General Education offers 14 subjects related to sustainable development linked to 10 SDGs, including Sufficiency Economy for Sustainable Development (related to SDG-9, SDG-11, SDG-16), BCG Economy for the 21st Century World (related to SDG-13, SDG-14, SDG-15), Science and Technology in Modern Society (related to SDG-2, SDG-14, SDG-15), Science and Environment in a Changing World (related to SDG-2, SDG-3, SDG-7, SDG-13, SDG-16), and Circular Lifestyle for the 21st Century (related to SDG-13, SDG-14, SDG-15).

According to one sustainability coordinator:

"The SDGs are embedded in various subjects and are also found in the form of activities or projects that each faculty has continuously implemented.(sustainability coordinator-1, 26 February 2024)".

The president has appointed a working group to drive the sustainable development goals. During the academic year 2022-2023, Sripatum University focuses on 6 groups of SDGs, including SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG-5: Gender Equality, SDG-7: Affordable and Renewable Energy, SDG-9: Innovation and Infrastructure, SDG-16: Peace and Justice and strong institutions, and SDG-17: Partnerships for the Goals. The SDGs are implemented through the university's four missions in teaching and learning, research and innovation, academic service to society, and preservation of arts and culture. Through various activities and projects, Sripatum University has announced policies and missions to drive sustainable development goals, as follows:

1. To provide education and lifelong learning for everyone, particularly enhancing educational equality to improve quality of life. This includes inclusive education to equip locals with tools for developing innovative solutions to global problems.

2. To promote gender equality, especially for women and girls, as equality is a foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. Women and girls should have equal access to education, a key aspect of delivering gender equality.

3. To support and promote access to water, food, and affordable, clean energy for everyone, as they are key enablers of human life. Energy should be accessible, available, and affordable for all to ensure sustainable development. Research and outreach activities related to affordable and clean energy should be conducted to meet this goal.

4. To invest in infrastructure – transport, irrigation, energy, and information and communication technology – to empower communities and achieve sustainable development.

5. To provide various activities to prepare sustainable cities and communities, making them places of innovation and opportunity. The university acts as a custodian of heritage and the environment in communities; a sustainable community must have access to its history and culture to thrive.

6. To promote sustainable development and partnerships for SDGs. The university is responsible to every part of society worldwide. It fosters linkages and collaboration between other institutions, governments, companies, NGOs, and stakeholders in Thailand and worldwide to achieve SDGs.

According to one executive:

"Our university is committed to driving sustainable development goals. Everyone has implemented activities and projects extensively. Now, I would connect activities and projects to SDGs. It's so easy. (executives-2, 24 January 2024)".

Additionally, Sripatum University has built a website to communicate about and drive SDGs, as shown in Figure.2. The website showcases case studies linking each SDG, as seen in Figure. 3, e.g., SDG-11, SDG-17, and SDG-5.

Figure 2 website : https://www2.spu.ac.th/sdgs/ to communicate about SDG.

Figure 3 website : https://www2.spu.ac.th/sdgs/ which show case studies to link SDGs
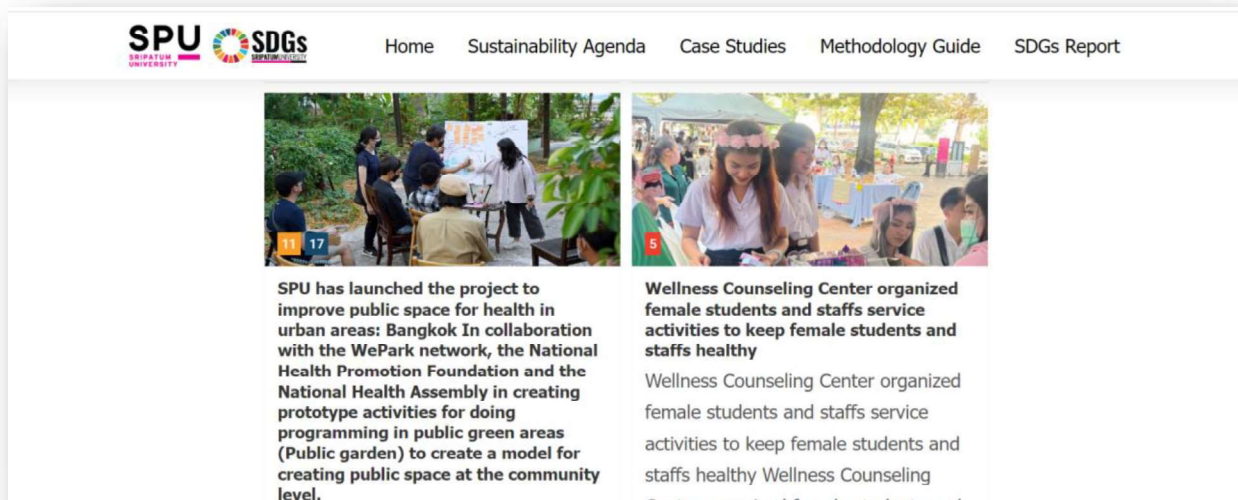
There is little knowledge and awareness of SDGs, but they are aware of the policies and announcements of the university that have appointed a working group to carry out the work on the SDGs.

According to of one support services said:

" *no knowledge about SDGs. But I understand to reduce energy by stop electric in lunch or recycle paper to use again.* (*support service-2, 24 January 2024)*".

Objective 2 To establish a policy to support sustainable development goals.

Because of all Thai University have four mission: teaching and learning, research and innovation, academic service to society. and the preservation of arts and culture. So Sripatum University can be engines of societal transformation for engaging with the SDGs. Five strategies of the Sripatum University to encourage faster achievement of the targeted SDGs are proposed, as follows :

1. Curriculum Integration: sripatum university can manage teaching and learning mission by integrate the SDGs into their academic programs by developing courses, majors, or concentrations focused on sustainable development. This includes incorporating concepts, case studies, and projects related to the SDGs into existing programs across disciplines. Students have be with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to contribute to the SDGs.

"Everyone think that SDGs are environmental only. So we will integrate the SDGs into academic program. This includes to create new course relate to SDGs only. (executives-1, 17 January 2024).

"Now one part of concept of SDGs integrate to course only 5% in subject. The student can implement but they do not know how related to SDGs (executives-2, 24 January 2024).

"I had pratice a project about SDG-4 which made me know about education in ASIAN countries(student-1,15 January 2024)".

2. Research and Innovation: Encouraging research that addresses challenges outlined in the SDGs is crucial. Sripatum University can prioritize funding and support for research projects that contribute to sustainable development goals, fostering innovation and solutions for local and global issues such as such as climate change, poverty alleviation, healthcare access, and social inequality.

"Sripatum University currently has a strategy to support research and innovation related to the SDGs. The university must promote and encourage more action with the social sector and community(executives-2, 24 January 2024)".

3. Community Engagement: Sripatum University can engage with local communities to address issues relevant to the SDGs. This might involve partnering with local organizations, governments, and businesses to implement projects related to poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, education, and healthcare.

Figure 4 Case study: lifelong learning relate to SDG-4

4. Partnerships and Collaboration: Collaborating with other universities, research institutions, government agencies and private sector organizations can amplify the impact of efforts towards achieving the SDGs. These partnerships can facilitate knowledge sharing, resource pooling, and joint initiatives.

"Faculty must join together with other universities, government agencies, private sector to create activities or projects. As show: idea collaborate to create innovation(executives-2, 24 January 2024)".

5. Communication: Sripatum University shall establish communication protocols to ensure that information of SDGs to spread in all stakeholders. All staff can know and implement clearly. However some activities is relate to SDGs but implementor don't know about relation in SDGs.

"There should be more publicity in various channels. Now only sustainable operator had known in SDGs(support service-1, 24 January 2024).

"When my university has announced what policy, everyone must go on. For example : switch off electricity in lunch, exercise and take care for being well and healthy. Is these relate to SDGs or not? (support service-2, 24 January 2024)".

"Communication can be variously repeat and more channel(executives-2, 24 January 2024)".

Discussions

Sripatum University can be engines of societal transformation surely when sripatum university had imposed the strategic alignment of the academic mission with sustainable development goal. (Rouxle and Pretorius, 2016) i.e. Curriculum Integration, Research and Innovation, Community Engagement, Partnerships and Collaboration and Communication. As well as, university in Indonesia founded 5 strategies of the goals associated as the basis university management towards global competitiveness as follows : Improvement of higher education quality, improvement of higher education equity, improvement of sanitarian and environment, improvement of research and innovation, and global partnership (Utama et al., 2018).

We should continuous to raise awareness of SDGs. This will make driving the SDGs even more clearly. While leadership at all levels, and by student, was key to success in acting with a shared purpose. Partnerships within and with universities can help accelerate delivery of the SDGs, enabling higher education to make a fuller contribution to sustaining the economic, environmental, cultural and intellectual well-being of our global communities (Purcell et al., 2019)

The research findings revealed a comprehensive engagement with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at Sripatum University, involving students, academics, sustainability coordinators, executives, and support services. Students exhibit growing familiarity with SDGs, particularly through class learning and participation in activities, suggesting a future integration of SDGs into their daily lives. The university's commitment to SDGs is evident in its 5-year strategy, which includes provisions for research, creative arts, and innovation aligned with SDGs, as well as participation in social responsibility projects. Various faculties offer courses and activities addressing multiple SDGs, demonstrating a holistic approach to sustainability across disciplines.

Key stakeholders, including academics and executives, acknowledge the importance of SDGs and emphasize their integration into academic programs, research initiatives, and community engagement efforts. However, there is a need for greater awareness and understanding of SDGs among support services personnel. Moving forward, Sripatum University can further its commitment to SDGs by integrating them into the curriculum, prioritizing research on SDG-related challenges, engaging with local communities, fostering partnerships, and improving communication to ensure widespread awareness and implementation of SDGs across all levels of the institution. Ultimately, Sripatum University has the potential to serve as a catalyst for societal transformation through its sustained efforts in advancing sustainable development goals.

Suggestion

Recommendation for policies formulation

1. Administrators must play a role model and give importance by announcing operational policies for each SDGs so that personnel within the university can actually put them into practice. And if possible, it should be set as a KPI.

2. Everyone shoule be aware and see the importance of SDGs as they relate to university rankings.

Recommendation for practical formulation

1. Administrators must announced of the policies espectialy SDGs do guide sripatum university's strategy.

2. Everyone must have an understanding of the fundamentals and meaning of each SDGs and target to be success goals.

Recommendation for Further Research

1. Tracking reports on the implementation of the SDGs every year to achieve sustainable change.

2. Studying each selected SDGs of Sripatum University

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