



International
Higher Education
Teaching & Learning
Association

Vol. 1 No. 1
JANUARY 2023



HETL Frontiers

The aim of International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association (referred to as HETL) is to bring together higher education professionals and thought leaders from around the world to dialogue, network, and collaborate on issues relevant to teaching and learning in higher education.

Implementing the SDGs at Higher Education Institutions

Message from the President of the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association



Dear HETL members and global education community,

The year 2022 has been a productive year for HETL. To support the global educational community, HETL has continued to develop high-quality and meaningful initiatives that are in alignment with our four strategic focus areas: 1) rights, democracy, and sustainability, 2) educational development and capacity building, 3) advanced research, innovation, and publishing, and 4) educational futures, networking, and collaboration. These focus areas are also aligned with the most pressing issues facing education around the world, and they allow HETL to provide critical thought leadership to the educational community. HETL's mission is to improve and transform education around the world for the betterment of humanity and the planet. To further support our mission, in 2022, HETL launched several new initiatives, including:

- HETL Talks include webinars and podcasts. The purpose of HETL Talks is to bring together and provide a forum for educational leaders, policymakers, researchers, and scholars to discuss the most pressing issues relevant to educators around the world. These talks are available on our website and on our YouTube channel. Be sure to subscribe to our YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/HETLPortal> to keep up-to-date on the latest conversations with educators around the world on topics relevant to the educational community.
- Learning Futures newsletter. The purpose of Learning Futures is to rethink and reimagine how education, learning, and knowledge can transform the future of humanity. Be sure to subscribe to the newsletter on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/newsletters/learning-futures-6893907289548673024/> to stay abreast of cutting-edge topics relevant to the educational community.

We are looking forward to the new year of 2023. In 2023, we plan to launch a new magazine called, HETL Frontiers. This magazine will provide a voice for educators to share their thoughts and practices on ideas and issues of importance to education. The theme for the first edition will be on SDGs in higher education. Educational leaders and faculty from around the world will provide exemplars, cases, and expert commentary on how the 2030 Agenda is being implemented in higher education institutions as well as higher education's role in implementing the 2030 Agenda. We hope that the authors' contributions to HETL Frontiers will be thought-provoking and informative as you think about how to implement the SDGs at your institution.

We are also looking forward to the HETL 2023 Conference in Aberdeen, Scotland. The theme for the conference is: Re-imagining Education: Collaboration and Compassion. To register for the conference, go to: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/events/conferences/registration-2174.php>. We look forward to seeing you in Scotland on June 12 - 14, 2023.

HETL is planning to launch several new webinars and podcasts in 2023. To receive announcements of these events, sign-up for the HETL Newsletter at <https://www.hetl.org/>.

Finally, HETL continues to connect the global education community through networking and collaboration. Conflicts around the world are a continual reminder that we need to come together and promote a global culture of rights and justice. HETL fosters these values and we invite you to support our work by becoming a member at <https://members.hetl.org/>.

Regards

Patrick Blessinger

Message from the Editor of HETL *Frontiers*



Dear HETL members and global education community,

We are proud to share the first edition of the HETL *Frontiers*. The HETL *Frontiers* magazine aims to present diverse perspectives and ideas on the emerging trends in higher education development, innovation, sustainability, and educational futures, across the core functions of higher education: teaching, research, and service. HETL *Frontiers* includes easy-to-read, high-quality academic essays from educational leaders and scholars worldwide, allowing institutional leaders, faculty, and others to stay updated on the most relevant issues impacting higher

education.

This edition focuses on Higher Education Institutions' commitment to implementing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (the 2030 Agenda). Higher Education institutions play an essential role in creating the world of the future via the 2030 Agenda. This issue of HETL *Frontiers* showcases academic essays (opinion pieces, mini case studies) related to how higher education institutions implement the 2030 Agenda. This edition features essays from colleagues worldwide, including various HETL Country Directors (<https://www.hetl.org/country-delegates/>).

I want to express my most profound appreciation for the commitment of Patrick Blessing for his continued unselfish leadership. He ensures that HETL presents information on various aspects of higher education and allows colleagues to share their work on multiple portals.

Thank you to HETL Publicity and Promotions Committee, Sameera Saeed, Taisir Subhi Yamin, Rakel Kavena Shaleyefu and Mojca Kukanja Gabrijelčič for the dedication to ensuring that this first edition is published. We are also very grateful to the HETL Country Directors who assisted with the peer review process, Audrey Falk, Bhaskara Rao, Nour El Houda Chaoui and Amudha Poobalan. The HETL *Frontiers* will be published twice a year, and a call for the next edition will be forwarded through the HETL communication channels. We hope you will enjoy the reading and contribute to future editions.

Kind regards

Martina Jordaan

HETL *Frontiers* – Content

HETL *Frontiers* is published twice a year in English. You may circulate and reproduce as you see fit. Kindly cite the authors and refer to the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association. We are looking forward to receiving any suggestions, comments and new articles.

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1. Advancing The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals through Higher Education Community Engagement



by **Melissa Nemon**, PhD, Adjunct Professor, Merrimack College and **Audrey Falk**, Ed.D., Chair, Applied Human Development and Community Studies & Director, Master's Program in Community Engagement, Merrimack College

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are a critical map to helping countries and institutions address interconnecting issues of the environment, inequality, poverty, and lack of access to basic needs. SDGs are used to frame global issues while also providing a set of key indicators to track progress and inspire efforts. SDGs can be embraced by higher education institutions through the institutionalization of community engagement to prepare students for global citizenship, for service as anchor institutions, and for the application of knowledge toward the public good.

Higher education institutions must prepare the next generation of SDG leaders. Academia can be a meaningful contributor to SDGs by providing a purposeful learning opportunity that connects students to social justice themes, establishes the interconnectedness of social justice issues both within and between societies, and provides programs that allow students to learn in the field and demonstrate leadership skills that will move communities toward significant social change.

Community Engagement in Higher Education

Higher education institutions have moved toward the institutionalization of community engagement through centers of civic and community engagement, community-based degree and certificate programs, and purposeful and grounded experiential Service-Learning opportunities. These efforts are elevated through recognition and designation initiatives such as the Carnegie Classification in Community Engagement which reinforces the importance of community engagement work, and the Talloires Network, a global network of engaged colleges and universities.

Higher education community engagement centers and programs typically are based within the community settings in which they reside, although some expand their reach across regions and countries, and they have the capacity to bring significant resources to support the advancement of SDGs. The field of community engagement provides a theoretical framework for higher education institutions to do this work well, in partnership with communities over the long term, with an emphasis on inclusive participation, equity, and generating solutions that are based on community strengths and that leverage existing resources. By embracing the scholarship of community engagement (Boyer, 1996), faculty can intentionally build connections between academic concepts, community impact, and the SDGs.

Higher education community engagement programs may provide opportunities for students to engage in local initiatives pertaining to affordable housing, financial literacy, access to equitable education, food security, supporting vulnerable populations, and more. By placing students in community settings, students are able to work in real-world situations with real-world consequences. For example, community engagement initiatives align with SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities, specifically issues of inadequate housing (SDG 11.1.1), accessibility for persons with disabilities (SDG 11.2.1), participation in civil society (SDG 11.4.1), and environmental justice concerns (SDG 11.6.1 & 11.6.2). In essence, students are not just academically learning about social issues but practically and pragmatically thinking about and engaging with social issues and

sustainable development in a variety of spaces that encourage critical thinking, the use of multiple intelligences, and grounding solutions in the real world.

Making SDGs Manageable at the Individual-Institutional Level

SDGs connect to each other through a variety of disciplines and participants, and two key benefits of a community engagement program or initiative at an academic institution mirror these key connections through a focus on inclusion and the use of interdisciplinary approaches.

Community engagement programs seek to be highly inclusive, engaging students and faculty from a variety of identities, including racial, ethnic, LGBTQ+, religious, gender, cultural, and more. This diversity shows up in the classroom, where life experiences help inform ideas around social justice, as well as in the community engagement experiences, where academic learning can be applied in ways that promote community impact. Actively engaging in the community builds upon discussions that students and faculty are already having around topics of gender, racial justice, the environment and so on. For students who have a passion for doing good in the world but have not had spaces to meaningfully reflect on their experiences, the classroom may be the first time they have been challenged to consider their own positionality and faculty have an opportunity to help students through that process while engaging in authentic, real-world development work. As a result of promoting inclusion as a backbone tenet of community engagement work, community engagement programs foster an appreciation for diversity, equity and inclusion.

In many academic institutions, community engagement efforts are highly interdisciplinary, with work supported by professionals who come from a wide scope of academic disciplines such as STEM fields, education, economics, healthcare, social sciences, and community development. Likewise, within the classroom, there is ample opportunity for students to engage in social justice issues within multiple perspectives, which provides for a more interconnected view of how social issues permeate across different sectors of human life and how social justice can have accumulating effects. Interdisciplinary approaches mirror and promote the way solutions can and do happen in the real world. Just as we cannot disconnect the SDGs from social, economic, political and scientific involvement, we should not be teaching sustainable development and justice in silos. Academic institutions with community engagement programs or initiatives can embrace this interdisciplinary approach and offer students and communities a grounded, multi-focused approach that highlights collaboration and cooperation.

Making SDGs Manageable at the Community-Systemic Level

SDGs may seem overwhelming. There is no doubt that they are important and we need to make progress toward them, but how do you do that in your local community or in your region of influence? It is not uncommon for students to ask the question, "is change truly possible?" An asset-based approach focuses on the strengths and resources of a community rather than the deficits. This shifts the thinking from "what we don't have" to a mindset that allows for imagination and innovation using what we do have. This philosophy is often baked into the core of community engagement programs and reinforced through the Service-Learning opportunities where students engage in the community and help build solutions from what is available.

Further, such initiatives purposefully tie the ideas of global change and local impact as a means to ground student work and to offer a pragmatic social justice mindset. This aligns perfectly to the SDGs which allow each nation to use their resources and strengths to combat social, economic and environmental injustice, but to do so in a collaborative partnership. In this very real sense, individual students can make individual efforts in coordination with academia and communities in order to contribute to the greater good. It is in this context that by elevating the field and discipline of community engagement, higher education institutions can support the pursuit of SDGs across the globe.

Reference

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2. What higher education institutions can do to help implement the 2030 Agenda



by **Jean Lonie Dudley**, Associate Professor of Agri-Industries and Agencies, Tarleton State University, USA

The students we engage and educate face a variety of wicked problems waiting for them as they transition beyond higher education and into their professional careers. The growing sense of urgency regarding issues such as hunger, natural resource conservation, climate management, and community and economic development around the world reminds us that the stakes are high for our learners – and the communities they will ultimately be part of and lead. The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development creates a plan of action that empowers individual and collective actions to address the wicked problems we contend with. The challenge to us as educators is to figure out how to connect the framework of the 2030 Agenda to campuses, classrooms, and students.

As an educator in the agricultural sciences sphere, there is a clear connection between the three goals of the 2030 Agenda and the triple bottom line of an agricultural operation: people, planet, and profit (alternately profitability or prosperity may be used) (Miller, 2020). Yet there is little conversation about the relevance of this connection – in agriculture or elsewhere. How, then, do we integrate this global call to action in institutions often focused on serving local and regional citizens and communities? The immediate starting point is through the integration of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into curricula. These 17 goals serve as actionable guidelines to help developed and developing nations navigate the coming decade collectively and individually. The agriculture industry is connected across all 17 SDGs, making this industry vital to the partnerships and work that are necessary to address the challenges ahead.

Start with the Syllabus

Every course has a blueprint that outlines the activities, goals, and objectives set forth by the instructor. Used by learners as their guide to the course, this is a natural starting point to introduce and integrate the SDGs. Carving out a portion of this document to identify the SDGs connected to the course (including the use of the SDG iconography and descriptions) and including an overview of the SDGs during syllabus review is an initial step that introduces or reinforces these global markers of progress to a new generation of advocates and change-makers.

Recognizing repetition is a critical element of learning, consistently embedding relevant SDGs in syllabi – at either a course level or even the session/lesson level – helps students make the broader connections between what they are learning in class and its application to a more sustainable world.

Beyond the course, having students who have already been introduced to and are engaged with the SDGs from the syllabus is meaningful, as agricultural colleges within public and land grant institutions provide the theoretical and applied research that is put into practice by agricultural producers, communities, and individuals around the world.

Integrate and Engage

Connecting course content to SDGs begins the process of learners acknowledging and identifying the 17 goals. To build a deeper level of engagement, course projects and activities should also ensure students are thinking about the interdependence of what they are studying and efforts to end hunger, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity. This is also the space in which to highlight to students that any individual taking on any action to address any SDG is helping move the dial for their local community.

Providing space for the students themselves to think through and make the connection of topics and content to SDGs reinforces how any and all actions can contribute to meeting larger goals. This can help make large and ambitious concepts seem more actionable at the group and individual levels.

The process of linking SDGs to assignments/projects also creates a critical thinking opportunity, as students are forced to identify and articulate how specific course topics may live and interact with multiple goals – which mimics the interconnectedness of the societal wicked problems we are addressing. Engagement of all our learners, and particularly youth engagement, is key to building and bolstering resilient communities that can adapt to whatever challenges they may face.

Incentivize Action

If the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is, as the UN states, a blueprint for peace and prosperity for all people and the planet, the SDGs are the legend by which that blueprint is interpreted and implemented. Likewise, connecting the SDGs to curricula is a starting point for awareness – but action is necessary to create a sustainability mindset that lasts beyond the course.

As more campuses and institutions challenge themselves to give back through Service-Learning opportunities and activities, it is imperative that we showcase how these acts contribute to the SDGs. Campus and community philanthropy events provide relevant learning examples of how we all contribute to the SDGs and how we can achieve more when those actions are amplified by and with others. Developing students as proponents of SDGs gives them the agency and ability to engage others in this global effort to achieve transform the world – which can feel like an overwhelming task when added to an individual to-do list.

Investing in local people (i.e., our students) in this way ultimately makes local communities more resilient, adaptive, and successful. In this, service learning connecting to the SDGs becomes an act of capacity building and community development. Even if challenged by the SDG concept, the ability to break down big challenges and take local action empowers our learners and future leaders to deal with the issues of their local place.

Encourage Institutional Ownership

Beyond integrating SDGs into curricula, there exists an opportunity to develop institutional engagement in the sustainable development efforts. This can include institutions highlighting how majors and courses contribute to specific SDGs and provide for cross-institution organizations to become champions of showcasing how higher education consists of leading actors in the work to meet our global triple bottom line.

There also exists the space for institutions of higher learning to own this connectivity to and engagement with the SDGs. Issues can be defined and addressed regionally, allowing every institution to flex to their community and the combined strengths of town and gown.

The SDGs provide ladders for specific, individual actions to build on each other to achieve larger global goals. Our institutions of higher education are critical players in the work to implement these interlinked goals, shaping and empowering the individuals who must bring the blueprint to life.

3. Assessing the Roles of Higher Education Institutions in Creating Sustainable Urban Futures: A Global South Perspective



by Eric Yankson, Senior Lecturer in Spatial Planning, Department of Architecture, Planning and Construction, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia

This article discusses the contributions of higher education institutions in creating sustainable urban futures within the Global South or developing world. Sustainable urban futures, as defined here, refer to ecological, social and economic interventions which serve the interest of posterity while simultaneously meeting the needs of present generations in cities or towns. While national governments and local authorities have traditionally played this role, other actors, such as institutions of higher learning, are increasingly becoming important in this respect.

Higher education institutions include universities, polytechnics, technical and vocational training institutions, as well as other entities which engage in knowledge development, research, skills and capacity training at the post-secondary level. In this write-up, the term (i.e., higher education institutions) is primarily used to refer to universities since these are arguably the dominant players in the education space when it comes to matters of sustainable urbanism in the Global South.

Curriculum Development, Community Engagement and Partnership Building

To begin with, many institutions of higher learning spearhead the development or implementation of curricula focused on various aspects of sustainable urban futures. This may be particularly evident in fields such as urban and regional planning, rural and economic development, integrated water resources management, nature conservation and biodiversity management, as is the case of the Namibia University of Science and Technology, for instance.

In terms of community engagement, many academic departments are embarking on research projects which entail a strong social component. In Latin America, student-led sustainability initiatives at various universities in Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Peru and Bolivia have played important roles in projecting the role of the university as an agent for community engagement. To cite another example, the introduction of informal settlement upgrading modules by some African universities requires active stakeholder engagement involving community representatives.

Besides community engagement, strategic partnerships create platforms for promoting sustainable urban futures. Universities, through their research and innovation portfolio, avail knowledge to industry practitioners on how to implement initiatives with positive environmental impacts. Other strategic engagements by various actors help to pool synergies for attaining sustainable development goals. For instance, the 2020-2021 Asia-Pacific Mayors' Academy was organized by the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability together with other partners.

Social Entrepreneurship and Green Initiatives

Another important role is social entrepreneurship, in which higher education institutions engage in innovative ventures with a social mission in mind. For instance, the World Universities Network has, in the recent past, embarked on a project known as "The New African Urban University: Building partnerships to realize the promise and potential of sustainable urban transformations". The project seeks to collectively generate urban knowledge with the goal of ensuring sustainable urban futures in furtherance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 11, which focuses on sustainable cities and communities.

Also, institutions of higher learning can serve as agents for green initiatives. This may entail the creation of green belts and spaces within the university campus as a contribution to overall urban green strategies. For instance, the University of Cape Town started a Green Campus Initiative as far back as 2007. This involved efforts in recycling, the organization of a Green Week and the adoption of carpooling as a strategy for reducing carbon emissions.

Enabling Conditions

Towards creating sustainable urban futures, stakeholder engagement is pivotal. This involves higher education institutions teaming up with communities, local authorities, central government and industry. The engagements serve as platforms for knowledge exchanges and the pooling of social, political and economic synergies. Moreover, the establishment of thematic clusters which elucidate the concept of sustainable urbanism through stakeholder inputs is paramount. Specifically, broader engagement of the research community with practical issues on the ground can serve as a motivating factor for effectively addressing these problems.

Besides stakeholder engagement, effective resource mobilization enables institutions of higher learning to make meaningful contributions to urban development. These resources may be financial or human in nature. The financial resources could be in the form of government subventions, internally generated funds by universities and external research grants. Also, human resources entail the skillsets and knowledge base available to higher education institutions to make inputs in the sustainable development process.

Syntheses and Conclusions

Ultimately, institutions of higher learning in the Global South serve as agents for the preservation of the environment through their curricula and research agenda to ensure ecological sustainability. As regards social sustainability, they champion causes which promote community engagement and better integration of local perspectives in the urban planning process. And for economic sustainability, these institutions engage with industry and other players towards ensuring a long-term approach to urban development. In many cases, the resources and networks available to universities for instance give them an unparalleled advantage in creating sustainable urban futures. Coupled with this is the general perception of the university as an institution for the ultimate advancement of the well-being of society.

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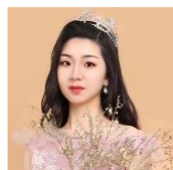
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4. Think Globally and Act Locally: Higher Education Can Make Critical Change of Collective Mindset on SDGs



by **Ying Liu**, China Delegate for the International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association, and a former Advisor to China's Education Ministry at Schooling Plan and Development Committee. He is teaching at the London School of Science and Technology, UK and **Yuanyuan Li**, professor at the Music College, Capital Normal University, Beijing, China



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Higher Education (HE) can be the best field to train thinking and creative skills to mindset SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). SDGs mindset is a critical and creative way of thinking from a broad understanding of

the SDGs' manifestations to find its expression in actions for the greater good of the whole (Kassel et al., 2017). Any SDG development begins with a mindset, and any SDG advancement needs to change the mindset in public institutions. Hence, the role of HE is critically emerging, not just as a constitution in human capital development but also as a chief executive with global responsibility for the knowledge development of leaders making global decisions.

Think Globally and Act Locally

Surely, HE cannot contribute to developments for SDGs by limiting itself to be just like SDGs' activists campaigning for its own brand through new 3Ps, i.e., public funding, public relation and public promotion, or merely "think globally and act globally" too. "Act locally" has been a critical necessity to implement SDGs to ensure the overall health of the planet. Let HE connect global thinkers and local actors, because neither global thinkers nor local actors can achieve SDGs alone; there must be a collective mindset bridging these two.

HE in developing countries represents a broad range of types of institutions engaging in diverse local challenges to achieve SDGs (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021). Developing countries have profound collective cultures underpinned by local social communities and environmental togetherness. Developing countries must have institutions act locally as a collective mindset through ethics of collective well-being, ethics of collective actions, and ethics of non-formal higher education on innovative, collaborative, and social actions to implement SDGs. Take China by and large as an example, on top of the national and global R&D for solutions that critically construct meta-knowledge and technology applied for SDGs, China also intends to establish, develop, and sustain a collective mindset to green revolution (Li, Shaikh & Ullah, 2022), so that HE has the capacity to play multiple roles in social communities as catalysts to achieve SDGs.

HE on local ethics of collective action

Ethics of collective actions are within and beyond the law. In developing countries, collective actions often take place by communities with accountabilities without democracies in terms of solidary groups and public community goods provision (Tsai, 2007). While HE concerns SDGs, so as to think globally, e.g., viewing humanity as a whole in a unified environment, the ideological principles are not sufficient enough to formulate SDGs' developments, nor are global leaders or activists acting alone. Local HE has been contributing to the meta-knowledge in respect of such ethics to mindset collective actions.

It has been widely debated that HE needs to become local ethical leaders first at themselves to be trusted for their own local human and social capital development, as well as for their students' all-round global citizenship skills, all-round thinking, creative, problem-solving and sustainable developmental skills. The critical challenge is enforcing HE to conceptualize interdisciplinary methodologies at levels that are abstract enough to enable global leaders with the knowledge to communicate with local communities.

The case of Beijing Capital Normal University's LivePBL project

Based in Beijing, China, Capital Normal University (CNU) is mainly for training local teachers across the country. The ethics of local actions taken to SDGs' developments have been driven by various national policies. Student teacher trainees have been highly motivated by local ethics to participate in international projects driven by hybrid R&D workshops and cross-cultural communications instructed bilingually. "Act Locally" has been provisioned by rapidly adapting SDGs teaching and learning curriculums, and shifting to critical pedagogy, social and cultural pedagogy, community and local reflective learning strategies.

During the last three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the university has been one of the leaders in HE to innovate a hybrid model of training for its university's student teacher trainees, as well as engaging a broad range of local school teachers across the country. At the heart of China's HE engaging SDGs, the concept of

sustainable development has been focusing on all-inclusive hybrid family education models connecting with local cultural heritage education in the line of teaching and learning on global leadership, the global environment, climate change, and corporate social responsibility. The first project of this kind had been pioneered by LivePBL, i.e., Linking Vocal Education with Project-Based Learning. By forms of folk operas, The Canal Ballad teacher training workshops have transformed teacher trainees to understand and develop new pedagogies for teaching and to learn the concept of sustainability through the music storytelling China's longest man-made ancient canal that still exists and operates today in local ecological systems along the canal from Hangzhou to Beijing (see Figure 1 illustrates).



Figure 1: LivePBL folk opera project of The Canal Ballad

Significance of Acting Locally

Local ethics of actions are often too complex for global leaders of SDGs to understand. That's why HE needs to become the local leader of SDGs themselves critically. For example, the music college of CNU had been engaging LivePBL SDGs with ethics of community-based and cost-effective actions, beginning with a family education community to provide Sino-Nepalese student teacher trainees with a "real" cross-cultural teaching and learning environment. However, the local family community leader had seen this as an opportunity to develop her own business. Families were instructed by the community leader to follow the workshops to train their own teaching teams. The pedagogy was in such confusing contexts to implement, which severely affected the project funding too.

Conclusion

Universities have a possibility as well as responsibility to achieve SDGs to help shape the normative contours of society for the better. HE needs to adapt the critical change of collective mindset on SDGs through policies, such as: developing interdisciplinary methodologies:

- Broadening the curriculums by crossing faculties
- Exploring ethics of local communities to re-shape professional identities for better societies
- Training teachers through learning by doing to innovating online and offline pedagogical resources
- Developing social partnerships through non-formal education approaches to make HE all-inclusive and changing norms to network with different types of universities
- Collaborating not only with national education authorities under the UN Agenda 2030 SDGs but also with projects engaging local communities
- Shifting HE from educational institutions to multiple actors networking social agents and making explicit meaningfulness of the qualifications, assessments, and expert knowledge to meet local social development objectives

Moreover, the case of the LivePBL project demonstrated that the mindset for "acting locally" requires HE to develop an "out of box" interdisciplinary methodology, i.e., music has been a vehicle stimulating mindset for global promotion, e.g., the Band-Aid, or mindset through local music and cultural lenses (Grant et al., 2022). The outcomes of these projects "acting locally" is both impressive and significant. However, because HE pedagogical developments are limited, many music projects are singular events that are not informative or intuitive; hence, the impact on organizational and political decision-makers remains very limited (Hesser and Bartleet 2020, p. 229; Grant et al., 2022).

HE drives the critical change of collective mindset on SDGs through developing interdisciplinary methodologies; this perhaps can be through converging "top-down" with "bottom-up" systematic thinking (UN, 2022), formal with non-formal education (Johnson and Majewska, 2022), critical and ethical research action with hybrid, cost-effective, and social community engagement.

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5. Advancing SDG Goals in Higher Education Institutions Globally



by **Beena Giridharan**, Curtin University, Malaysia, Country Director HETL, Malaysia and **Patrick Blessinger**, St. John's University, USA; Executive Director, HETL Association, USA

Introduction

It is undeniable that the pandemic has decelerated the pace of adoption of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) established by the United Nations globally in their 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Goals (United Nations, n.d.). Studies show that Covid-19 has had a huge impact on the education and well-being of learners across with world and that between 2020-2021, on average, students lost about eight months of learning, with greater disparities in nations with poor access to technology and resources (Bryant et al., 2022). Universities are not obliged to adopt the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs). Nevertheless, most universities believe they have a responsibility to advocate and adopt the SDGs, essentially due to the fact that they could influence governments to maintain their commitment to the SDGs, and secondly, they understand the value of delivering a systems approach in their teaching and learning and research that will assist learners in having a better understanding of addressing global challenges. How have universities and higher education institutions responded to the planning and implementation of SDGs institutionally, and what measures and strategies are needed to achieve them? This article will examine how higher education responds to Goal 4, which pledges to "*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*".

Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education

Higher education institutions worldwide have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused major disruptions in the way learning and teaching are delivered, engendering uncertainties in a number of areas, most importantly, student mobility. In the United States and around the world, institutions were compelled to switch to online learning, and students in study abroad programs were encouraged to return to their home campuses to complete their studies. How COVID-19 has impacted universities and higher education institutions in the long term is yet to be known, but dips in student enrolments and sustainability of institutions across Asia and the world are at risk. Against this background, we investigate how targets for embedding SDGs in the higher education sector have advanced. The article summarises the main gains attained while underscoring the targeted actions required.

Higher Education Voices

It is undeniable that in order to achieve progress on the SDGs, governments are required to work across policy areas; however, it is clear that political commitment alone will not suffice without clear-cut structures to direct their implementation. Policy decisions to meet the SDGs entail being informed by policy-relevant evidence, co-designed and co-produced with the relevant stakeholders, taking into consideration local and political context (Turner & Jardali, 2017).

Universities are in a unique position to lead the multi-sectoral realization of the SDGs, providing an invaluable source of expertise in research and education among all areas of the SDGs, in addition to being widely considered neutral and influential players. Besides universities, it is acknowledged that think tanks and other institutions involved in the production and communication of knowledge have an important role in advancing the SDG agenda (El-Jardali, Ataya, & Fadlallah, 2018).

Despite the involvement of the universities in the SDG agenda, the participation of universities in middle-income and low-income countries is less proactive and lower than expected, as highlighted in the UN report showing that the rate of progress in many areas of the SDGs is lagging in order to meet the targets by 2030 (United Nations, n.d.). How are universities progressing against Goal 4, which promises to "*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*"?

The UNESCO Education Monitoring report 2021 shows that target 4.3 for **equitable access to technical, vocational, tertiary and adult education** has seen some countries substantially increase their share of participation in vocational training among 15-24-year-olds, notably in Uruguay, for instance, which benefited from an inter-American development bank loan (UNESCO, 2021), leading to systemic reform and relaunch of the TVET system from the late 1990s onwards. Needless to say, progress in equitable access to technical, vocational and tertiary higher education in select countries was achieved through considerable efforts supported by political will and commitment to inclusive education.

Impetus to Incorporate SDGs in Universities

Including SDG targets in operations is a measure by which universities have been ranked by higher education ranking agencies such as Times Higher Education and other global higher institution ranking bodies. Research conducted by universities in the area of sustainability and inclusive economic growth earns weightage, along with research carried out to improve society, both in current contexts and into the future.

Teaching is another important measure of SDG implementation at universities where higher education institutions are ranked against the development of students' global competence and ability to collaborate and lead across national boundaries (Grund, 2020). Additionally, universities are appraised on the inclusion of SDGs in their curriculum and the level of awareness of SDGs among students. SDG knowledge and awareness among faculty and their ability to incorporate global perspectives in teaching and being designated faculty members on aspects of SDGs, are crucial criteria applied in the ranking of universities, all of which clearly encourage the progressive implementation of SDGs in the higher education sector.

How are Universities Responding to the SDG Call?

Universities are accountable for their commitment to being sustainable, and numerous high-ranked universities follow through in their efforts and implementation of SDGs, making their sustainability reports publicly available. We cannot discount student endeavours for achieving sustainability policies of universities, as students play a key role in raising sustainability voices in the community through active engagement. Student associations and student chapters in universities are able to bring about small but notable changes in the community they live in through meritorious projects and structured events. Students and faculty should continue to uphold the SDG goals through committed efforts in education awareness and training to inform communities and society and exhort their executive boards to stay on track to commit to inclusive education for all. However, much needs to be done in the area of capacity building in higher education in developing nations where robust quality assurance and monitoring systems are still lacking.

For universities to contribute to the attainment of SDGs, concerted efforts between senior boards, policymakers, faculty and students to create meaningful SDG goals and targets which are monitored and implemented against timelines, is critical. Above all, a dedicated sustainability unit that analyses the progress and timeliness of the goal implementation is long overdue.

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6. SDGs in Higher Education: Decades of Practice and Collaboration



by **Fareeda Khodabocus**, Director Quality Assurance, University of Mauritius, and **Patrick Blessinger**, St. John's University, USA; Executive Director, HETL Association, USA

The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) came about in 2012 in order to produce a set of universal goals to solve the most urgent social, economic and environmental problems facing the world. The SDGs are universal and led by over 190 countries (De la Poza et al., 2022). Each country has its own sub-strategy defining and prioritizing the SDGs, which align with the global strategy. World leaders adopted the SDGs in 2015.

In Mauritius, the SDGs were actively involved in the negotiations leading to the adoption of the post-2015 framework. A new Rs 27 postage stamp (Figure 1) on the theme of *The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) marked this new phase. National consultations involving women, youth groups, the elderly, indigenous groups, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector allowed voices from different stake-holding groups to be heard in this process. With a target of 2030, the SDGs aim to end poverty and hunger, reduce inequalities, find solutions to climate change, pressing environmental and wildlife issues, provide better access to health and education, and encourage institutional partnerships and collaboration.



Figure 1: Postage stamps of Mauritius

The Sustainable Challenge

To achieve the goals and to drive organizations on the path of sustainability, there is a need for an improved understanding of the intricacy and inclusiveness of sustainable development. Sustainability is based on the three 'pillars' of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. It is also known as the triple bottom line principle and over the years, there have been a number of definitions developed by different academic scholars and business leaders.

The sustainability challenges we are witnessing today can be viewed as a funnel depicting the increased demand for resources, as the global population increases, within the context of limited resources.

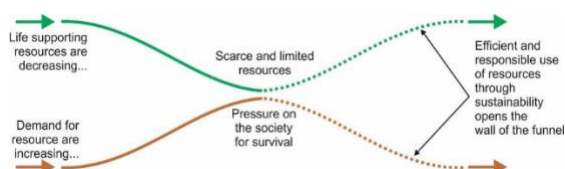


Figure 2: The sustainability funnel. The Natural Step.org (2022)

All countries respond to these economic and environmental pressures in various ways. For example, through government regulations, consumer demand, international competition, social norms, and technological innovation. Industry implements best business practices in order to position itself for the future. Businesses, therefore, direct their investments toward the future market, that is, the opening of the funnel.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are key stakeholders in implementing the 17 SDGs. The SDGs remain high on the higher education agenda through teaching and learning, research, community service, innovation, and quality. Universities have increased their collaboration and partnering with internal and external stakeholders and through inter and intra-disciplinary teaching, research, and service, in order to produce new knowledge on how best to implement the SDGs. De La Poza (2021), however, argued that an increasing number of declarations and agreements had been signed, but the impact of the changes and outcomes have been minimal. As we get closer to 2030, there will be increased pressure on HEIs to be more accountable for the impact of their activities on society.

HEIs must therefore expand their role in imparting the necessary sustainability knowledge, skills and expertise to their students at all educational levels (undergraduate and post-graduate) in order to produce graduates who can lead the world in creating a sustainable planet. Innovation and technology play a massive role in sustainable solutions. Appropriate tools must also be in place to measure and evaluate the outcomes over time.

The INQAAHE Framework for Evaluating the Implementation of SDGs

The international Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) funded a collaborative project and published a framework that aims to connect an HEI quality assurance framework with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Contribution of Higher Education at the Economic, Social & Cultural and Environmental Levels

	Economic	Social & Cultural	Environmental
Good governance and strategy	Ensures the formation of graduates locally, regionally and nationally in line with the economy and market needs.	Ensures that teaching, research and community engagement embrace and address the diverse facets of our social and cultural	Ensures and encourages that our curricula, teaching and learning, as well as research and community engagement, contribute

		activities in line with the requirements of our statutes.	environmentally to the attainment and goals of the SDG 2030.
Teaching and learning	Academics teaching in specific disciplines have participated in a professional development offering or in a development and change programme related to SDGs.	Graduates are equipped with the innovative skills needed in the 21 st Century job market in line with SDG requirements.	Ensures that graduates are sensitized to the innovative skills and environmental needs that their job place will demand.
Programmes	Adequately designed to meet the economic aims of the SDGs 2030.	Programme contents prepare learners to face the societal and cultural needs of each respective discipline.	Students and staff are adequately prepared to address the environmental needs of the 21 st Century job market.
Research	It is built on a policy that will drive the 17 SDGs of the 2030 Agenda.		
Campus	There are volunteer opportunities for engaging with the implementation of SDGs on campus from an economic perspective.	There are volunteer opportunities for engaging with the implementation of SDGs on campus in diverse social and cultural contexts.	There are volunteer opportunities for engaging with the implementation of SDGs to encourage the eco-campus green initiative.
Graduates and employers and the community at large (Public and Private)	Employers provide feedback on how graduates are contributing to the economic development of the country.	Employers provide feedback on how graduates are contributing to societal and cultural change and innovation.	Employers provide feedback on how graduates are contributing to protecting the environment, the country and the planet.
Quality Assurance	Internal and external quality assurance provides an evaluation and report on the institution's performance in relation to the SDGs.		

Table 1: An adaption of the Proposal of Indicators to Embed the Sustainable Development Goals into Institutional Quality Assessment. A Project co-funded by INQAAHE 2019.

The Move Toward Implementing SDGs

The authors attended the WHEC2022, the 3rd World Higher Education Conference organized by the UNESCO on May 18-20, 2022 to promote the contribution of HEIs to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Conference covered several themes ranging from the impact of Covid-19 on higher education, equity, inclusion, quality and relevance of programmes, academic mobility in higher education, governance in HE, financing HE, data and knowledge production, and international cooperation to enhance synergies and the futures of HE.

At the University of Mauritius (UoM) the theme for the 2022 Research Week is, *Fostering Research to Empower Society Through the SDGs*. The UoM has the mandate to develop professionals in diverse sectors of the economy, UoM has more than two decades of experience teaching, researching, and engaging with the community in the SDGs. The UoM, with its Centre for Lifelong Learning, is dedicated to serving all the 17 SDGs through its teaching and learning. The last decade has seen an increased focus on sustainability in both the private and public sector projects aiming to restore and preserve the fragile ecosystems of the country

Academic faculties have systematically integrated sustainability throughout their academic and research activities to make sure that graduates are ready to apply the skills and knowledge underpinning sustainable development. With the advent of the pandemic, where all lectures were compelled to be delivered online, faculties and centres have made a huge leap in the use of technology in their teaching, learning as well as research. Experience built and gathered has enabled various compendiums, books and articles in that area. The latest book is on *Sustainability and the SDGs in Mauritius. COVID-19: Opportunity or Constraints?* (Bunwaree, Dowarkasing, & Gunputh, 2022).

HEIs are strengthening efforts to collaborate and share knowledge to find solutions to the complex social, economic and environmental challenges of the planet, for which a clear language and shared definition of success are crucial. More effective tools and methods are needed when transforming towards a sustainable society. It can only be achieved by engaging and collaborating with all key actors, with a common objective and an effective process.

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7. Educational Institutions and Their Commitment to SDG: A Private University Perspective from Global South



by **Sabiha Ahmed Diba**, Research Associate, Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) and **Mohammad Tareque Rahman**, Country Director-HETL, Director-Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) & Associate Professor-General Education Department (GED), University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

It's been more than a while since higher education institutions have made the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals their business, and this has been done in different ways at times, institutionalizing these agendas through integrating them into curriculums, including them into their transformation agendas or at times translating them into direct practices. While tertiary educational institutions are adjusting their policies and procedures to address the SDG goals and targets for universities in the Global South and, more specifically, Bangladeshi ones, there is still a long way to go before the agendas are met by 2030. This short piece hence raises certain issues and problematizes how educational institutions intend to address gaps.

To do that and further extend the discussion, it employs an example of a private university (University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh-ULAB) located in the capital of Bangladesh. The article demonstrates the policy adjustments and practices that ULAB is currently doing and the challenges it is experiencing. The discussion concludes by pointing out some of the ways through which similar institutions could be more efficient with the task.

ULAB and Sustainable Development

ULAB was founded in 2004. It is dedicated to providing high-quality education by creating systems for deliberate, consistent, and catalytic action to enhance administrative and academic performance. To make quality education a priority, ULAB has always emphasized sustainable development as it has made sustainable development one of the six guiding principles. The ULAB's Strategic Plan for 2017–2023 outlines the university's goals for sustainability, including achieving international credentials for its sustainability programs that incorporate sustainable development into all teaching, learning, research, and administrative practices and creating a first-rate "green and sustainable campus" that clearly represents ULAB's effort and will to contribute to the cause.

Establishment of the Center for Sustainable Development, ULAB

As sustainable development is one of the guiding principles, the ULAB has established the Center for Sustainable Development (CSD), passed policies in order to ensure student education in sustainable development, and launched numerous outreach initiatives to achieve relevant SDGs. The CSD, Bangladesh's pioneer research institution is one of the ULAB's oldest research center founded in 2006. CSD has made impressive progress with a positive impact over the past 16 years with a vision for a sustainable future and missions focusing on three interconnected approaches: research, education, and making space for sharing power.

Minor in Sustainable Development Studies (SDS)

Sustainable Development Studies (SDS) is offered by CSD-ULAB as a minor subject to the students. Students have the chance to deepen their knowledge and acquire the necessary skills through the minor in order to be competitive in a variety of job sectors. Since the majority of enterprises, institutions and organizations are being urged to "go green," ULAB has made a point of providing its students with courses that will keep them aware and updated about the SDGs. Although it's impressive, it's really important that departments/schools take that as an example and incorporate sustainable development agendas equally in their learning modules for their respective courses.

Capturing Collective Contributions of ULAB toward 17 SDGs

As an emerging tertiary education institution and research facility, ULAB has significantly contributed to attaining SDG 4 in accordance with its guiding principles, policies, values, and strategies. In addition to working directly on SDG 4, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), another research center at ULAB,

also has connective activities with SDG 8, 10, 16, and 17 going forward with its objective of organizing professional development activities for ULAB's academic and non-academic staffs.

Besides, through on-campus and off-campus activities by the instructors, students, and research centers, as well as research and publications by the faculty members, ULAB is constantly organizing SDG-related activities, including planning seminars, workshops, and international conferences, doing research under national and international MOUs; presenting and publishing research in different areas, etc. Even though all these are praiseworthy, students are yet to be fully engaged in the process and, more importantly, add their voices. Even though ULAB and very few other universities or centers are constantly working to support students to grow empathy for a sustainable life by adopting the SDGs in their personal and professional lives, it still seems not enough when other universities are yet to start thinking this way.

ULAB's SDG Mission through Impact Ranking

When Times Higher Education (THE) announced the Impact Rankings, the first such attempt to assess university development in connection to the SDGs, ULAB recognized this as an opportunity to highlight the excellent work it has accomplished and rationalize the effort. ULAB has been sharing its contributions to the global efforts to achieve the SDGs by publishing the SDG Report every year since 2020. For the first time in 2020, ULAB took part in THE impact ranking under SDG 17 and placed 156th out of more than 1100 universities which highlights its commitment and efforts. Bangladesh also placed first in SDG 11.

Way forward in Achieving SDGs

Even though ULAB's individual approaches and efforts in pursuit of the SDGs are exemplary in many ways, ULAB and other universities need far greater contributions to the SDGs' cause. It is clear that some of the universities of Bangladesh started measuring their SDG progress only when the Impact Rankings system was introduced by the Times Higher Education (THE). And thus, activities are still ranking-oriented and, in many cases, limited to pen and paper. But if the educational institutions really want to make a meaningful impact and help to meet the 2030 agenda, they must come out from a particular thought of showing progress only for impact ranking and take holistic approaches to get SDG agendas built into their day-to-day teaching-learning activities, integrate them into their strategic development policies.

Future Actions to the Meet 2030 Agenda by the Educational Institutions

Universities have a direct role in achieving the SDGs because of their direct role in knowledge sharing and, more importantly, knowledge creation for the various SDGs. Unfortunately, the existing conceptualization of SDGs and, more than that, their translations into action at times are problematic. All educational institutions should see these goals and indicators inbuilt in their strategic development goals. More importantly, it is essential that these goals and indicators are converted into learning outcomes so that academics and students can aim their teaching-learning activities accordingly.

Individual contribution is important but it is more crucial that educational institutions work together to achieve the 2030 agenda by building an inclusive platform through regional, national and global partnerships following the SDG 17. Only then a positive progress by the educational institutions can be made to keep their commitment to meeting the targets by 2030.

8. Transforming and Aligning Our World (institution) with SDGs



by **Sweta Patnaik** a Senior Lecturer, Curriculum Officer in the Department of Clothing and Textile Technology at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa.

The year 2015, when Education 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, a structured pathway to making education accessible to all and to set the foundation for sustainable development and peace came into the picture. The Global Education Cooperation Mechanism was inaugurated in November 2021 at the Global Education Meeting for SDG 4, which gathered experts to reimagine and realign their work towards the education targets in the goal. The aim is towards collective action and joint accountability and building on. If we specifically speak of SDG **Goal 4, it ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. It works hand in hand with Agenda 2030.**

Sustainable Development Goal 4 has 10 targets encompassing many different aspects of education. There are seven targets which are expected outcomes and three targets which are means of achieving these targets by 2030.

4.3 Equal access to technical/vocational and higher education: ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

4.4 Relevant skills for decent work: substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

4.5 Gender equality and inclusion: eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

4.6 Universal youth literacy: ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

4.7 Education for sustainable development and global citizenship: ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

Effective Learning Environments

Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

Scholarships

Substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular, least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries.

Teachers and Educators

By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States.

While institutions nationally have to meet and fulfil their requirements and have to focus on achieving them, there is the global pandemic which will undoubtedly leave traces of its impact on an unprecedented scale. While the global capitalist economy is fighting against the crisis in which it finds itself, another vast issue has emerged in education systems and, to an unimaginable degree, even in the world's most developed education countries. In most areas, however, infrastructure, access to the internet, and economic deprivation make it difficult to provide education. South Africa was not just faced with basic network and connectivity issues like the others, it fell into the trap of load-shedding where all systems fail.

Considering all this, the institution came up with a learning teaching and assessment policy. The policy is adaptive and responsive and approaches to prepare graduates for a changing world through multimodality in learning and teaching considering environmental influences, context, and technology. This policy replaces many other institutional policies, e.g., the Teaching and Learning Policy, Curriculum Development Policy, Policy for New Program Approval, Policy on Advisory Committees, Policy on e-Learning, Policy on Assessment, Student Feedback on Teaching and Courses, Plagiarism Policy, Language Policy, etc. This policy will contribute towards Vision 2030 Principles – Ubuntu and its dimensions (Oneness and Smartness). The policy takes the agenda 2030 and SDG goals seriously and has specifically outlined them to be followed and always implemented.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Policy encompasses multimodal learning, teaching, and assessment, including the use of technology, for all levels of study in the institution. The policy addresses learning & teaching in face-to-face, blended learning or fully online learning; and covers all aspects around it. The objective of the policy - is to provide parameters and guidance for quality practices and assurance in learning and teaching, leading to improved academic staff development and student access, retention, and holistic success; to ensure alignment of learning and teaching activities with CPUT's vision, mission, and values; assist with meeting national qualification program standards; and contribute towards addressing the requirements of relevant Professional/ Industry Councils.

The LTA policy and the L&T strategy development is an ongoing process where it touches base on various aspects under Oneness and Smartness. This brings up a few questions to consider as faculties and departments – how faculties have embraced Vision 2030, how it has impacted practices, what the challenges and gaps are, what steps need to be taken to overcome LTA and what will LTA look like in the future. Depending on the governing external bodies that few departments comply with, they are bound to set their learning and teaching, and assessment modalities to meet the criteria. The institution, in general, lays down a broad platform of learning and teaching formats both synchronously and asynchronously, however, the students majorly want to come back to campus to get that pre-COVID vibe back and study and learn together.

One major factor for that as stated by students, was the fact that they found it difficult to stay indoors with family and be part of curricular activities amidst family daily chores. Whereas there is another bunch of graduates who prefer the hybrid platform due to personal and professional reasons. This gives them an opportunity to multitask roles and be able to study. The academics amongst this are trying their best to accommodate student needs and provide quality education. In conclusion, by providing multimodal platforms this year and in the coming years, the institution prepares itself well and ensures inclusive and lifelong opportunities for all.

9. The Development of an Institutional Structure for the Integration of the SDGs: The Case of Stellenbosch University



by **Corina du Toit**, Programme Manager: SDG/2063 Impact Hub and **Maryke Hunter-Hüsselmann**, Director: Research Information and Strategic Initiatives, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Higher education institutions (HEI) can contribute to sustainable development (SD) through their teaching and research efforts by producing thought leaders, policymakers, and researchers of the future. Moreover, they can have a meaningful impact on the communities they serve through educational outreach programmes, as well as through stewardship of their resources, both physical and human.

Sustainable Development at Stellenbosch University (SU)

SU's Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024 identifies six core strategic themes: 1) A transformative student experience, 2) networked and collaborative teaching and learning, 3) research for impact, 4) purposeful partnerships and inclusive networks, 5) employer of choice, and 6) a thriving SU. These themes were developed considering South Africa's National Development Plan, the African Union's Agenda 2063 (African Union, n.d.) and the United Nations` Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) (UNDP, n.d.). The launch of the SD Impact Hub (SDG/2063 Impact Hub) in late 2021 is testimony to SU's commitment to becoming a systemically sustainable institution.

Looking Inward: Sustainable Development Impact Reporting

The Hub's main activities in its first year involved identifying the main contributions to the SDGs and presenting a Sustainability Literacy programme. The findings were summarised in an SD Impact Report (SDIR), which will form the basis of an annual report on SU's SD contributions to the two SD Agendas in a centralized, compact manner. The methodology used to create the SDIR stems from the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings (THE, 2022), which offers HEIs a set of metrics to collect evidence for their impact related to the Goals. In time, this information will also be used to take part in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings and other reporting requirements.

Finding the pockets of excellence in research

As indicated earlier, *Research for Impact* is a core strategic theme at SU, which aims to optimize the scientific, economic, social, scholarly and cultural impact of our research. Our focus is on research that benefits society on a national, continental and global scale. SU has identified five strategic research areas (SRAs) to refocus our thinking and strategic planning to hone the strengths of the University in becoming a leading HE institution on the African continent. The SRAs represent areas of research expertise for the strengthening and development of specific inter- and transdisciplinary cross-faculty research to support research collaboration, societal impact and sustainability while allowing for the development of new expertise in emerging areas.



Since finding in-depth information on all 17 SDGs is an extensive undertaking, the SDIR working group started by performing a SCOPUS query to find research articles published against each of the SDGs. This assisted in identifying niche areas that are most active in producing research related to the Goals. The SDGs were also cross-referenced and mapped to our research activities within the five SRAs to the Goals, focusing on our visibility through research chairs, centres of excellence and a selection of high-level research entities that contribute greatly to SU's visibility, uniqueness, and competitive advantage. Based on the research output productivity and mappings, a number of SDGs were identified for in-depth investigation of SU's contributions to the Goals.

Impact for good: Teaching, Stewardship and Outreach

Once the most active SDGs were identified, further activities in teaching and learning, stewardship and outreach were documented within those focus areas. While the research output productivity was relatively easy to identify and map, other areas proved to be more challenging. Apart from outreach programmes such as health clinics and training for members of our communities, information was less apparent, embedded within write-ups and reports that required qualitative data analyses. This involved following up with environments individually about their initiatives and included liaison and discussions with non-academic environments such as facilities and property management services (for example, on the nature of waste management and the 'greening' of buildings at SU).

Sustainability Literacy

SU offered its first short course aimed solely at sustainability education in 2021. Working with a consortium of four universities in a 12-week programme, the *Future17 SDG Challenge* was initially conceptualized by QS World Rankings and Exeter University (UK). Multi-disciplinary teams of students and mentors across institutions were instructed in key sustainability concepts and then given a challenge by industry partners to solve, using the SDGs as a framework. There was considerable interest among students to take part in the programme, with student applications exceeding available spaces on the programme three-fold, as well as academics to mentor the teams. This highlighted the need for such programmes, with the response from students and staff reaffirming that there is an interest at SU in SD literacy and that this kind of intervention could potentially be implemented university-wide.

Looking back on 2021 – and the way forward

SU's first round of fact-finding enabled us to identify pockets of excellence within specific SDGs and related Agenda 2063 goals for the first SDIR. Through this deeper focus on sustainability, SU identified areas for further development. These include:

- The creation of the SDIR that will flow into an annual report that showcases activities and provides a track record of successes and areas for further development.
- Awareness raising and encouraging environments to be more actively involved and to consider sustainability in their activities and initiatives.
- The development of processes to formally note and acknowledge SD contributions.
- Acknowledgement of the areas where bigger contributions are being made.
- Advocacy for better integration of research and other activities to highlight the importance of the SD Agendas.
- The creation of a space where recognition is given to high-impact environments.

The development of an institutional structure through the SDG/2063 Impact Hub proved to be crucial to ensure the integration of the SDGs and the Goals of the AU's Agenda 2063 into the generation of new

knowledge through research, education through teaching and learning and engagement with society through stewardship and outreach. It creates the platform from which sustainability activities within the three pillars can be identified and reported and provides the necessary guidance for processes to initiate directed future efforts.

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10. Higher Education Promotes Good Health and Well-Being



by **Sameerah T. Saeed**, Monitoring and Quality Assurance Agency, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Kurdistan Region, Erbil, Iraq

The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development cannot be achieved without the support of higher education institutions. As the world's greatest centres of learning, universities are the gatekeepers of knowledge and the engines of change. They teach the next generation how to think, how to act, and what to value: education empowers students to make a difference, and research yields the breakthroughs that improve people's lives and the environment.

As part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the third goal: Good Health and Well-Being was established in order to address a wide range of public health issues worldwide, addressing maternal and child mortality, communicable diseases, and family planning among others. It is important to pursue this goal because it seeks to improve the quality of life for people around the world by ensuring that they have access to quality healthcare. An overview of how higher education contributes to good health and well-being, the progress made toward that goal, and the obstacles encountered along the way is presented in this article. In particular, the situation in Iraq is discussed.

Education and Health

There is no doubt that universities play a vital role in both education and health. It is their responsibility to educate the next generation of physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. Additionally, they conduct research that contributes to the advancement of our understanding of human health and disease.

Universities contribute significantly to the well-being of societies through health and education. In the absence of their dedication to these important areas, we would be at a loss.

As part of their mission, universities around the world have educated and trained individuals on health topics, conducted research to develop new treatments and cures for diseases and provided access to healthcare. The number of people dying from preventable causes is declining, thanks in part to advances in medical science and technology that have led to better detection, treatment, and prevention of disease. Improved child mortality rates in developing countries over the past two decades are a testament to these efforts. These reductions in mortality are, in part, a direct result of the concerted effort by higher education institutions and the international community to improve living conditions in these countries. Improved maternal health, increased access to health care, and better nutrition have all been contributing factors.

As an example of universities' efforts, the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) has been selected to lead SDG 3 through a Global Cluster on Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Development. The SDG 3 cluster for good health and well-being promotes multi-disciplinary and international collaboration and aims to develop sustainable education and research programs that address good health and well-being challenges in local and global communities. Moreover, several universities already offer paramedic courses, but more healthcare-related courses and diplomas are needed to address all aspects of the healthcare industry and bridge the gap between healthcare professionals and the general population.

THE Impact Ranking 2022: Iraq context

In the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2022, 47 universities in Iraq have been ranked; a few are among the top 400-600 and a few are among the top 1000 universities in the world in terms of their contribution to the 17 SDGs. In addition to the goal of creating partnerships for the goals, Iraqi universities have performed well in SDG3, SDG4 and SDG5.

Iraqi universities, particularly the University of Baghdad and Hawler Medical University, have played a significant role in promoting good health and well-being in the country. Through their research and teaching, they have helped to raise awareness of important health issues and promote healthy lifestyles. They have also provided training for healthcare professionals, who are now working to improve the quality of care in Iraq. In addition, Iraqi universities have worked with international organizations to develop programs that address specific health needs in the country. As a result of these efforts, Iraqis are now enjoying better health and well-being than ever before. Iraqi universities also work with local communities to promote health awareness and provide access to quality healthcare. Through their efforts, Iraqi universities are making a positive impact on the health of their students and the community at large.

The work of Iraqi universities is essential in tackling the country's many health challenges. These include a high rate of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, as well as communicable diseases such as tuberculosis. Iraqi universities are working to find solutions to these problems through their research programmes. Despite these efforts, Iraq continues to face many obstacles to achieving SDG 3. Lack of access to quality healthcare is one of the most significant obstacles.

What are the Chances of Reaching SDG 3 by 2030?

To achieve SDG 3, concrete steps need to be taken by all stakeholders, including ensuring universal health coverage, eliminating non-communicable diseases, and reducing maternal and child mortality. As reported by the World Health Organization, approximately half of the world's population is unable to access basic health care. There is a serious problem here since it indicates that people are not receiving the necessary medical care to remain healthy. Furthermore, COVID-19's outbreak only reemphasized the need for a strong public

health infrastructure worldwide. A global health crisis has been resulting from COVID-19 since the beginning of 2020. Due to this, billions of people have suffered, and thousands have died around the world.

There is a high probability that the world may experience additional health emergencies or pandemics in the future. By developing a strong healthcare education program, however, a cadre of first responders can be developed. With appropriate training and preparation, these first responders can help to mitigate the effects of a health emergency or pandemic. By allowing for early warning systems and better coordination of disparate public health actors, states can limit the impact of outbreaks and save lives.

To conclude, the achievement of SDG 3 is not possible without the engagement of all stakeholders, and we must ensure that everyone is on board. To ensure that, we must promote and protect the participation of all people in decision-making on health. This includes ensuring that marginalized groups such as women, children, older people, and people with disabilities are included in health policy and planning. A community-based strategy is an efficient way to prevent the spread of disease and protect people's health.

11. Struggling to Sustain: A Case of Higher Education Institutions in Nepal and SDGs 2030



by **Hari C. Kamali**, PhD, an associate professor of English Education at Far Western University, Nepal.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) need to take main initiatives to achieve the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) 2030 (<https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/>), and some HEIs are working on with this spirit. However, most of the HEIs in the world is incapable of taking on these initiatives mainly because they are struggling themselves to sustain. The HEIs in Nepal represent this case as most of them are newly established and they are struggling themselves simply to grow, which seems to be challenging both in the domestic as well as international context.

Although Nepalese history contains a long wisdom tradition guided by highly valuable scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishadas, Puranas and the Gita, when it comes to the formal HEIs in Nepal, it does not have a long history as the oldest university, Tribhuvan University (TU), was only established in 1959. And now, it is the largest university in terms of programs and courses it offers, number of students and teachers and research centers. This university alone has more than 87% percent of the total enrolment in higher education, with 335,126 students in 1140 campuses (60 constituent, 1080 affiliated campuses) and 7,592 teachers (<https://www.ugcnepal.edu.np/>, 2021).

The position of this university in the world university ranking, however, is below 800, and it has not focused on SDGs with the exception of only one post-graduate program focusing on sustainable energy! This university has institutes that focus on technical and specialized courses, e. g. science, engineering and medicine, which are again insufficient to address the SDGs. Similarly, the other faculties offer courses on liberal education, such

as business studies, humanities, education, and law, both at graduate and post-graduate levels, which do not have any specific academic programs focusing on the SDGs.

Besides TU, the other universities in Nepal—Nepal Sanskrit University (1986), Kathmandu University (1991), Purbanchal University (1994), Pokhara University (1997), Lumbini Bouddha University (2005), Far-western University (2010), Mid-Western University (2010), Agriculture and Forestry University (2010), Nepal Open University (2016), Rajarshi Janak University (2017)—are simply struggling to sustain! Among these newly-established universities Kathmandu University (1991) is making significant progress in quality education; however, its contribution to education at the national level is quite insufficient, let alone for the SDGs.

University Grants Commission, Nepal, has been facilitating and monitoring the higher education institutions (HEIs) in Nepal. Recently, it has proposed "higher education policy" which seems to guide the universities to achieve the SDGs 2030. However, the challenges with the HEIs are so threatening that they can be managed only with the combined efforts from different national as well as international bodies working on higher education and developmental fields.

The Government of Nepal (2021) has identified the major problems with HEIs as follows (<https://www.ugcnepal.edu.np/uploads///upload/JobSdt.pdf> [*my translation*]):

- The increasing demand for higher education in Nepal has not been properly planned and managed.
- Access to higher education for economically and geographically backward people is very low and the provision of scholarships for these people is not sufficient.
- The higher education curriculum has not been updated timely. Similarly, the examination and evaluation system, teaching-learning activities, follow-up of the academic calendar, development of a suitable academic environment and empowerment of professionals and institutional development are not running as to the objectives of the HEIs.
- The HEIs have not run academic and professional activities like workshops, seminars, research and publication, innovative projects and international collaboration are not taking place as to the expected level.
- There is a lack of coordination and cooperation between the HEIs. As a result, the expected level of professional and human resource development has not been achieved.
- The HEIs in Nepal are unable to compete with the HEIs in the global context as there is high explosion of knowledge, and development in information technology and open learning.
- With the lack of integrated policy in higher education, HEIs do not have their fixed mission in action. So they are simply running at their own pace without any unified strategies and mission.
- There exists a high degree of unfair competition among the HEIs due to the lack of proper plan and coordination between them with regard to investment, professional practices and the targets.

These problems and challenges are common among the HEIs in Nepal, so they are simply struggling to sustain themselves let alone be the SDGs 2030. I think there are many HEIs in the world that are facing such challenges and they are unable to contribute to achievement of SDGs. It is, however, essential that all HEIs in the world contribute to achievement of SDGs though in a varying degree. For this to happen, it is mandatory that the HEIs need to be guided by the global Roadmap to Higher Education, 2030 as approved by the UNESCO world conference on higher education, 2022 held in Spain.

Besides, the HEIs need to collaborate with each other at the national level as well as globally along with the international agencies working on higher education and sustainable development because SDGs 2030 is a grand, global mission with insurmountable challenges which are common with all global HEIs. If this cannot happen, the achievement of SDGs 2030 is simply a mirage!

12. The Involvement of Universities in Achieving the SDGs



by **Mirela Panait**, Professor at Faculty of Economic Sciences, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti (Romania) and **Patrick Blessinger**, International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association and St. John's University, USA

Climate change has generated an increase in stakeholders' attention to the planet and the importance of new concepts such as sustainable development and the circular economy. Public authorities, companies, universities, and civil society organizations have been reconfiguring their activities in order to advance the principles of sustainable development. At the global level, concerns about the sustainable use of resources and reducing the negative impact of economic activity on the environment have increased. Within this context, many organizations have been modernizing their strategies, processes, and products in order to realign themselves with current and emerging sustainability demands. The increased global demand for electric vehicles is one example.

Universities and Implications for Society

The involvement of universities in society and the economy has changed over the centuries. Higher education institutions exist to serve the needs of society and the whole. These institutions have remained remarkably stable over the centuries, they also must change in order to remain relevant in a fast-changing world. In addition to the traditional teaching and learning function, universities also developed strong research activities through which to support scientific innovation, economic development, and social progress at all levels, local, regional, national and international. Oftentimes, for instance, research activities take place on the basis of partnerships with organizations that need the involvement of academic specialists for the development of new products and processes.

Gradually, collaboration with companies has diversified and become more nuanced. Currently, universities have a strong entrepreneurial function through which they support student start-ups, offer entrepreneurship courses in local communities, and get involved in projects that aim to promote entrepreneurship. These activities promote technological innovation and economic development. The internationalization of universities through the mobility of teaching staff and students not only supports globalization but also serves as a tool of soft diplomacy that contributes to intercultural collaborations, which has beneficial effects at the economic level (for example, international movements of goods, people, and capital).

Universities and Sustainable Development

Expanding the role of universities in the economy and society means that the separation of higher education institutions from the professional world is reduced because all stakeholders understand the importance of cooperation and collaboration given the complexity of the sustainable development process and the need to promote it at different. Universities are important players in the effort to promote the principles of sustainable development. The promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is done by universities not only through teaching and research activities but also through their involvement in the development of local communities.

SDGs stand out in their comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing the world's most intractable problems. The SDGs provide higher education institutions with an inter/transdisciplinary framework through

which to focus their teaching, research, and service functions. The complexity of the world economy, the existence of overlapping crises, and the need to reconfigure business ecosystems under the pressure of the 3 C's (COVID-19, conflicts, and climate change) emphasize the promotion of integrated education programs (for example, financial, energy, sustainable development) that can be carried out through partnerships between universities, financial institutions, regulatory authorities, and consumer associations.

Sustainable development requires paradigm shifts in the production of goods and services, which is why the output of university research and innovation is essential in growing and developing the local community. As such, higher education institutions play a critical role in the economy and society.

Conclusion

Universities have a decisive role to play in promoting sustainable development by expanding the competencies of human capital towards sustainable development. One-way universities do this is by offering courses to students in such a way that they understand the economic, social and environmental implications of their future activity as employees or entrepreneurs. The research activity carried out in universities is also oriented towards finding implementation solutions for the SDGs in order to promote the circular economy. In addition, the implementation of the SDGs requires the existence of mutually beneficial partnerships, where universities play a central role in preparing employees, managers, entrepreneurs, and leaders for the future of society.

Considering the geopolitical situation in Europe, the triggered energy crisis calls into question the energy transition plan initiated by the EU member states. The question arises of how universities will cope in this context and how they will reconfigure their sustainability policy. Will they revise their bold goals of giving up fossil fuels and drastically reducing CO2 emissions? To this question, the future will give us answers that will probably be different depending on the geopolitical context in which each university operates. Regardless, to remain economically and socially relevant institutions, universities must not only be involved in the implementation of the SDGs but they must also, as knowledge producers, take a leadership role in their implementation.

13. Creating Some Certainties in a Highly Uncertain Country: How Can Lebanese HEIs Align their Efforts with the UN SDGs?



by **Ahmad Samarji**, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Phoenicia University, Lebanon

The UNDP (2022) has recently warned about the multiple crises striking the world and the fact that 90% of the countries are falling behind in terms of human development. In Lebanon, the situation is even worse. This

economic crisis in this country had started several months before the pandemic commenced. The pandemic catalyzed the economic crisis and the deterioration of the value of the national currency and the purchasing power of the majority of the population. The recent global challenges have made the situation exceptionally worse in the country.

In such a devastating and perplexing situation, Lebanese HEIs have been struggling to sustain their academic and administrative operations and maintain the quality education that has always hallmarked the country. Through their perseverance and as reflected by anecdotal conversations with senior administrators from several Lebanese universities, this article sheds light on how many Lebanese HEIs were able to contribute to the UN SDGs, particularly SDGs 4, 5, and 8.

Quality Education

Despite the many challenges encountered by Lebanese universities, Nietzsche's quote, "Whatever doesn't kill you, simply makes you stronger", actually stands very true for the Lebanese context. The multiple crises that have stricken the country prompted the resilience of the Lebanese higher education community, with the students, university professors, and administrators becoming exceptional problem-solvers in an exceptional situation. All the members of this community have had their skills and capabilities in "crisis management in an educational setting" being spontaneously developed. Faculty members, administrators, and students are always prepared for a "Plan B" and "Plan C" whenever Plan A does not work in terms of internet connection, power outages, and availability of fuel, to name a few. The troubling situation in Lebanon has—beyond a reasonable doubt—negatively impacted the higher education industry in the country; nonetheless, Lebanese universities have continued to persevere to sustain quality education, and this is reflected in many respects, one of which is the ranking and acknowledgment of a number of these universities by international bodies and associations.

Gender Equality

Lebanese women are generally empowered when it comes to education, work opportunities, and social recognition. The pandemic and multiple crises have contributed more to the integral role of Lebanese women in managing these crises, particularly in the context of primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Female Lebanese faculty members have equally been sharing the responsibility with their male counterparts in sustaining quality education, and they have been equally acknowledged for such an achievement. Lebanese women still need empowerment across many areas and fields, but the overwhelming situation in the country has prompted everyone to be engaged.

A Relatively Decent Work

With a collapsing economy such as the Lebanese, career opportunities become very limited, and turnover rates become significantly high. Nonetheless, many Lebanese graduates have been equipped and creative enough to secure jobs in multinational and international companies that operate abroad but have an office or branch in Lebanon. This does not grant the adjective "decent" to the work and economic situation in Lebanon, but we can confidently modify "Decent" to become "Relatively Decent" work and career opportunities, given the context.

A Collective and Collaborative Effort

What is really missing in the remarkable efforts of resilience and perseverance of Lebanese universities is a collective and collaborative approach. The devastating situation in the country, on top of the understandable competition between Lebanese HEIs, may have led each university to address the challenges in an individualistic manner rather than a collective one. It will probably take a while until the situation in Lebanon

starts improving. Hence, instead of exhausting each university's resources and efforts with a set of processes or a trial-and-error approach, it is inevitable for all Lebanese universities to create a sustainable hub or community for higher education. The focus of this hub or community would be to exchange best practices in the "educational management" of the multiple crises, create effective communication avenues not only at a broad institutional level but also at college and departmental levels, advocate for flexibility across all plans to map to the vulnerable and rapidly changing situation in the country, and create hope to the new generation of graduates by focusing on achievements and success stories rather than simply highlighting challenges and miseries.

This community or hub for higher education will not only bring the Lebanese HE stakeholders together but will optimize the support of international stakeholders, such as UNESCO, UNDP, and Erasmus+. Such a collective and collaborative community will help create sustainable plans, projects, processes, and practices that would support Lebanese universities to achieve more and effectively map their efforts toward the remaining UN SDGs.

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14. A Sustainable Culture of Gender Equality in Higher Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain



by **Diana Abdul Karim Aljahromi**, Assistant professor of Linguistics, Director of the Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership (UTEL), University of Bahrain; Bahrain

Bahrain has long been one of the most pioneering Arab and MENA countries in empowering women, safeguarding gender equality, and meeting the Sustainable Development Goal No. 5, which has been locally celebrated as a governmental objective and a professional endeavor. The truism of this is obvious in the numerous endeavors it has been taking for over a century to ensure that its female citizens continue to thrive as key stakeholders and equal partners of the society.

History of Gender Equality in Education

A brief historical flashback reveals that this endeavor has been long founded since the beginning of the 20th Century, when girls' schools were established around the same time boys' schools were, at a time when many

neighboring countries barely provided formal education to their male members of the society. During the first half of the 20th Century, Bahraini women were working side-by-side with their male counterparts. Ever since the 1970s, co-ed higher education was facilitated to both genders equally on the ground that both Bahraini men and women are equal representatives of the Bahraini demographic ecosystem and hence, enjoy equal educational rights in addition to political and socio-economical ones.

Recent Gender Equality in Higher Education

The last two decades, in particular, have witnessed a paradigm shift in ensuring gender equality in academic and non-academic facets. This shift was due to the immense efforts and support bestowed upon Bahraini women by the Supreme Council of Women (SCW), which has enacted a significant number of initiatives to support women in education. Under the generous initiative of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain President of the Supreme Council for Women, On the 1st of December of every year, Bahrain celebrates the Bahraini Woman Day, each year with a specific focus on a certain discipline. The theme of Bahraini Women's Day 2019 was dedicated to celebrating 'Women in the field of higher education and future sciences to present and document the march of Bahraini women in this field and to coincide with the centenary of formal education in Bahrain, which was launched in 1919. This day was allocated to document the national efforts that have contributed to sustaining academic women's engagement, highlighting the importance of investing in academic studies and research in the field of women, and showcasing Bahraini women's participation and competitiveness in the field of higher education and future sciences. On that day, a significant number of female academic scholars and key female executive figures in academia were honored by the SCW.

By and large, local and international higher education institutes (HEIs) in Bahrain are considered healthy environments where the provision of equal opportunities to their affiliates is vividly projected. Male and female students receive equal opportunities to enroll in all the academic programmes, even those that were traditionally and culturally considered more suitable to male students, such as hardcore sports, quantity surveying, aviation, etc. Female faculty in these HEIs, who come from different international backgrounds, enjoy the initiatives of the 'Equal Opportunities Committees' formed in each HEI by endorsements from SCW and the Higher Education Council (HEC).

In alignment with the country's keen drive to support women and provide them with equal opportunities, three of the Bahraini HEIs have female presidents, one of whom is the President of the University of Bahrain (UoB), which is the only national university. It is worth mentioning that UoB has had two female presidents ever since its establishment in 1986 and has always maintained a high percentage of female leadership in its senior and junior managerial positions (i.e., vice-president, deans, heads of departments, etc.). UoB has also taken leaps in creating a culture of equality between its male and female affiliates through multiple annual initiatives carried out with international partners. Aimed at addressing the fifth and also the fourth goal of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (i.e., Quality Education), UoB's Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership collaborated for two successive years with Advance HE (AHE) in the UK to facilitate two programmes on female leadership in academia called 'She Leads'. These programmes, which were conducted in 2021 and 2022, were geared towards exploring female academics' leadership skills and exploring HE opportunities and challenges for Bahraini women aspiring to lead in higher education by honing communication, reflexivity, political astuteness, and 'doing leadership'. These programmes were attended by around 120 female academics from local, regional, and international HEIs and educational bodies and were considered by AHE as a success story and an exemplary women empowerment scheme.

In addition to these endeavors, numerous local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which often have female representation in their boards or councils (e.g., Bahrain Society of Excellence and Scientific Research, IEEE Women in Engineering, etc.), are dedicated to sustaining a culture of equal opportunities in higher education. Furthermore, the Leadership Excellence for Women Awards (LEWAS) annually commemorates

academic achievement for female university professors and students in addition to awarding them for corporate leadership excellence. It is clear that these NGOs' efforts are reflections of societal appreciation geared towards recognizing the indispensable role Bahraini female higher education affiliates play in the educational frontlines to ensure the quality and sustainability of the teaching and learning and the achievement of the graduate attributes set forth by the job market.

A Final Word

In sum, Bahrain has always enjoyed identifying its male and female citizens as equal partners and key stakeholders in sustaining the national economy and shall continue to ensure the sustainability of this culture. The Bahraini higher education context shall uniformly thrive to maintain its endeavors to sustain the culture of gender equality locally and regionally, a culture that is one of the key pillars of the 2030 National Vision set by the government. This success story and best practice could serve as a commendable case study for all the Arab and MENA countries to ensure that gender equality is emphasized in all higher education institutions. As a result of the sum of all of these endeavors, Bahraini female members of HEIs today are strong and inspiring leaders, robust international researchers, exceptional and award-winning teachers, and active members in the local and international scenes.

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