

# Priorities of Education Quality Service with Higher Education for Sustainable Development Dimensions

Masmira Kurniawati<sup>a\*</sup>, Febriana Wurjaningrum<sup>b</sup>, Zahroh Naimah<sup>c, a,b,c</sup> Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia, Email: [\\*masmira-k@feb.unair.ac.id](mailto:*masmira-k@feb.unair.ac.id)

One indicator of a good quality of community life is when people have a good level of education. University is one of the institutions that carry this mission. With the enactment of the ASEAN economic community and also the global market, the demand to become a world-class university is getting bigger. It is therefore important to discover the current performance of universities to find out how it can make improvements in order to improve its performance. As one of the major university in Indonesia, Universitas Airlangga has made much effort to achieve that goal. This research aims to raise the issue of efforts and strategies of Universitas Airlangga in improving its performance for the achievement of international standard quality. This study identifies awareness about sustainability and students' perceptions of the Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) dimensions. Four hundred and eight respondents in this study are chosen by using purposive sampling method. The results of the study reveal that the Sustainable Environment Program is still considered weak in implementation while the dimension that is considered the best in its implementation is the Research and Development Program. Managerial implications and suggestions for future research then are delivered.

**Key words:** *Higher Education for Sustainable Development, University performance.*

## Introduction

Higher education now is in an industry that cannot escape the process of change and the dynamics of quality demands. Students' needs and desires vary greatly, but higher education management should be able to identify and meet the quality demands put forward by them. Universitas Airlangga (UNAIR) Surabaya has been one of the favourite state universities for high school students in Indonesia and is struggling to be part of World Class University

(WCU). Since Universitas Airlangga is still struggling to occupy WCU rankings in the world, a discussion on UNAIR's efforts and strategies to improve its performance with the achievement of international standard quality and become one of the top 500 University (WCU) in the world would be fruitful. In 2019, UNAIR made an extraordinary leap. From the previous ranking in number # 751-800, UNAIR rose to number # 651-700 (<http://www.unair.ac.id>). In the future, assessments of university ranking will be linked to sustainability programs with global changes occurring.

Since their introduction in 2015, the 2030 United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been readily discussed across a range of professional fields, including the tertiary education sector. The ongoing debate around how universities can benefit from engaging in the SDGs, and actively contribute to this mandate, has occupied academics and researchers for the past few years. As we get closer to the 2030 SDG agenda, it has become clear that achieving the UN SDGs is far from possible without the education sector's significant involvement in the cause. If universities want to stay at the top of their game, being an inclusive, active contributor to this global cause is essential. Being an internationally recognised organisation in the higher education sector, QS has been mindful of establishing products that measure academic institutions' efforts towards SDGs. One project that looks at the universities' social responsibilities is the QS Stars rating system. Universities are assessed on aspects such as 'water/energy conservation programs, recycling programs, community investment charity work' and more (Saeed, 2019). In line with Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) University Rankings, *The Times Higher Education World University Rankings* also have taken steps to focus on the social impact of universities and has been quick in shifting its primary attention on university's business interactions in February 2018 to measuring institutions' success in delivering the SDGs in September 2018 (Torabian, 2018).

In addition to the need for substantial funds, the matter of mentality in making changes is an important thing. In a study by Hayward (2008) in developing countries, it was found that "The major obstacles are not money but mentality." Journey to WCU needs a fundamental change, e.g. a mental change, which creates a desire to turn a university into the world-class university, and this requires support from all civitas academia. According to Hayward (2008), "Change will not take place without the general recognition within the university community that it is necessary. Part of the process of strategic planning is to get people to recognise the need for change."

Several studies have been conducted related to the students' perceptions of sustainability effort carried out by the campus (Emanuel & Adams, 2011; Yuan & Zuo, 2013). Previous research is carried out in China and America while according to Bantanur et al., (2015), the implementation of sustainability programs will be different on each campus. Thus research

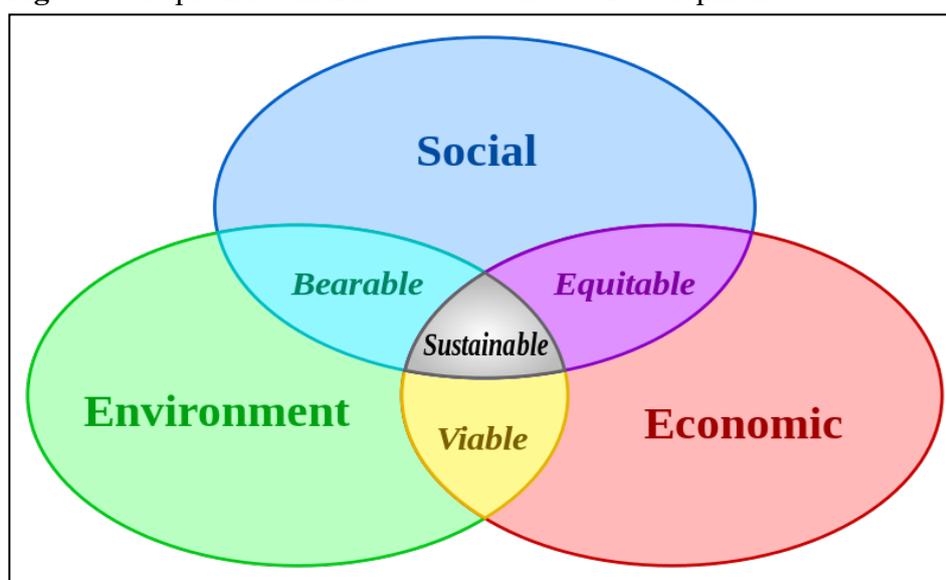
conducted at Airlangga University is needed to look more specifically about the implementation of its sustainability programs. Also, Yuan and Zuo (2013) on a critical assessment of sustainable development from students' perspective found that the last decade has witnessed increased public awareness on sustainable development and sustainable issue in higher education is no exception. This study concluded that higher education plays an important role to achieve sustainable development from local to a global level. This research focuses on environmental, social and educational aspects in the context of sustainable development in higher education.

## Literature Review

### *The Concept of Sustainable Development*

Sustainable development is a development process with the principle of "meeting present needs without compromising future generation needs" developed by Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development/WCED, 1987), underpinning the meeting point between economic and social aspects with environmental aspects resulting from corporate actions (often referred to as 'triple bottom line'). One of the factors in achieving sustainable development is how to restore environmental damage without sacrificing the need for economic development and social justice. Many UN reports, most recently the report of the 2005 World Summit, outline the sustainable development consist of three interdependent and reinforcing central (economic, social and environmental) pillars. In recent years, several higher education institutions have come to awareness to apply sustainable concepts in institution management (Madeira et al., 2011).

**Figure 1.** Triple Bottom Line For Sustainable Development





For some, sustainable development is closely linked to economic growth and how to find ways to advance the economy over the long term, without depleting natural capital. However, for some others, the concept of "economic growth" itself is problematic, because the resources of the earth itself are limited.

Sustainable development not only requires members of the community to fulfil their responsibilities but can also generate significant competitive advantages. Today, organisations are increasingly considering SD as a business strategy because it can provide higher shareholder value and provide access to capital and create strong performance over time that can increase shared value for business and community needs.

In the last few decades, organisation's attitude toward customers has changed. Paying attention to changing customer roles from customers to peers, partners, value creators, or knowledge developers has given a competitive edge to the organisation. Issues that are far more important in higher education are related to the structure, nature and mode of communication with students as dominant customers.

### ***Evolution of Sustainable Development in the Field of Higher Education***

Most previous studies have been aimed at assessing students' and deans' perceptions of factors contributing to sustainable development in higher education, analysing educational approaches to sustainable issues, evaluating factors that could impede the implementation of sustainable initiatives in higher education institutions or test cases based on an ongoing strategy implemented by a particular university, especially on environmental issues (Jorge et al., 2015). Wals and Blewit (2010) analysed research published by International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education (IJSHE) during the first nine years of its existence (2001-2010) and found that most of the articles in the journal focused on issues such as environmental management, greening the university and reducing the ecological footprint of a university. In more recent volumes, articles on pedagogy, learning process, instruction, community outreach and partnership are on the rise. Evangelinos et al., (2009) argue that sustainable promotion within the context of higher education institutions can be achieved through teaching and research, improving environmental management and transmitting knowledge to the community (Jorge et al., 2015).

Currently, there are many examples of universities seeking to reduce their environmental or ecological footprint where campus greening is often initiated by students. To achieve this goal, universities are implementing environmental management systems. Major concerns in the university's environmental management system have been identified as energy consumption, waste management, pollution prevention, and resource conservation (Jorge et al., 2015).

In the specific case in Spain, several studies to date have been conducted to determine the extent to which universities apply sustainable practices. Aznar et al. (2011) analyse moods while introducing sustainability on the curriculum at the University of Valencia. Their findings demonstrated broad support for sustainable introduction in the university curriculum. However, as expected, there are significant and clear differences in how these questions are addressed by staff from various disciplines, including how they relate to the perceptions, interpretations and performance of departments in conducting the learning process in a sustainable context. Garde et al., (2007) analysing whether sustainability has become an important element in activities related to university accountability, information transparency, and internet use. A comparative study of government and private universities in Spain suggests that a strong commitment to sustainable information is required online (Jorge et al., 2015).

Based on previous research, there is evidence to suggest that sustainable development is still considered an innovative idea in most universities and has not been absorbed in all disciplines. The findings of those studies show some possible answers as to why higher education does not implement sustainability development explicitly at the university level. The barriers associated with sustainable initiatives within higher education institutions are derived from a lack of policy or declaration to promote sustainable issues in university. Without sustainable policy or declaration, it will be challenging to encourage or motivate college members to participate in introducing sustainable aspects or sustainable development in higher education (Jorge et al., 2015; Siahaan et al., 2019; Dumauli, 2015).

Many authors note that there are many obstacles preventing the success of sustainable initiatives in higher education institutions, such as lack of support from university administrators; lack of timely information and ongoing communication; lack of general performance indicators; lack of interest, awareness, and involvement; lack of ongoing training; lack of incentives; lack of time; lack of financial resources; resistance to change and lack of interdisciplinary research (Jorge et al., 2015).

### ***World-Class University (WCU)***

The internationalisation issue for higher education in Indonesia, or World Class University (WCU), became widely known in Indonesia since the end of January 2006 when the Ministry of National Education established the Task Force Team for 10 state universities which are prepared to become world-class university. Journey to (WCU) is not an easy thing. The direction of development towards WCU proclaimed in Indonesia can be seen from the statement of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono disclosed at a public lecture at UNAIR Surabaya in 2007. He said, "I think, human resources is our initial capital to advance because developed countries generally have highly qualified human resources." At that time, UNAIR

has just ranked 330th in the World Top Universities' list of Times Higher Education Supplements (THES) - Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings. Therefore, it can be said that building a WCU is to build a nation through increased human resources and economic progress.

Since 2004 THES has ranked 200 universities. The methodology used to rank the world university focuses on:

1. International reputation;
2. A combination of subjective input (from peer review and survey of companies recruiting alumni);
3. Quantitative data (including the number of students and faculty);
4. The influence of faculty (reflected from the research citation).

Status as WCU is a goal that university wants to achieve where its graduates are highly sought, excel in research, and high ability in transferring technology. These three WCU products can be attributed to a set of complementary factors that determine at a prominent university (Salmi 2009):

1. High concentration of talented people (faculty and students). The first and major factor of excellence is prominent students and faculty. WCU has an appeal and privilege of selecting the best professors and researchers.
2. Abundant resources are offered to create a good learning environment and carry out reliable research. Abundant resources are the second component that characterises WCU, which is spending enormous amounts of money to run universities with complex and intensive research. A WCU has four main sources of funding: government allocations for expenditure and research, contract research with public organisations and private companies, and reverse finance generated by subsidies and grants, as well as tuition fees
3. Management that is expected to promote a vision, strategic mission, and flexibility that enable institutions to make decisions in resource management without being mixed up with bureaucracy. This third dimension relates to the overall regulatory framework, competitive environment, and autonomous level of academic and managerial autonomy.

### **Research Method**

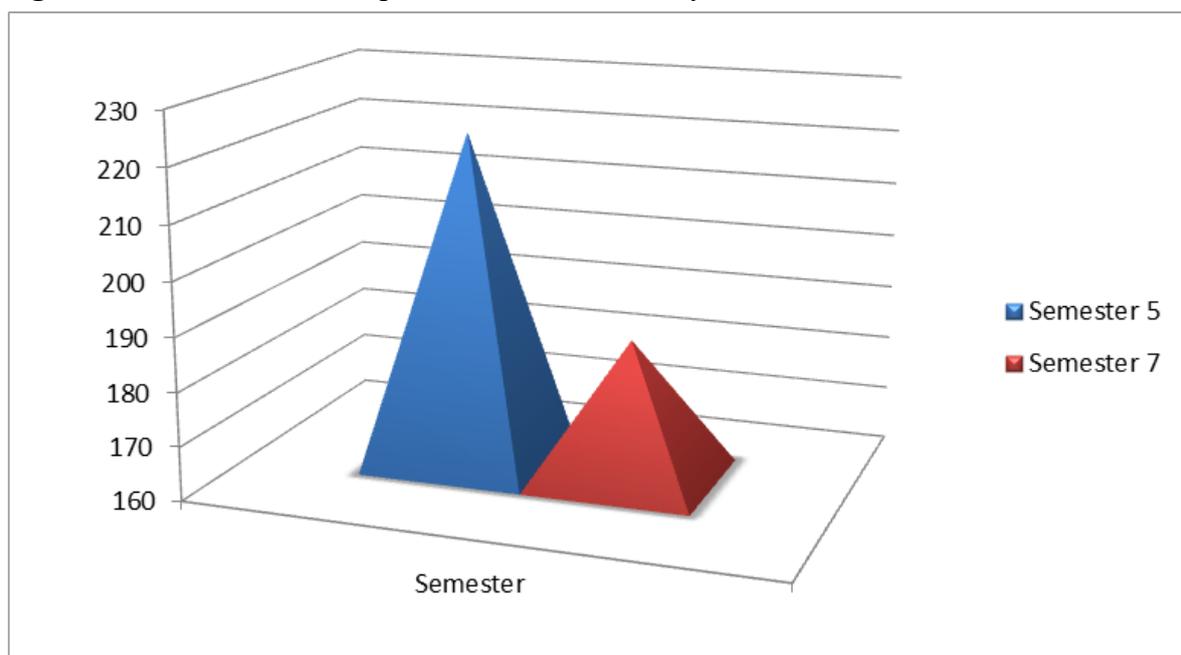
Purposive sampling is used as a sampling technique. This research uses descriptive study because this research tries to describe the state of objects or problem of interest. Samples are active students of Universitas Airlangga who are in their fifth or seventh semester because they are considered to be able to provide opinions on-campus sustainable development program.

Questionnaires are delivered to gather students' opinion about Higher Education for Sustainable Development (HESD) which has seven dimensions: management system, environmental sustainability, curriculum sustainability, research and development, staff incentives and development, student opportunities, and social responsibility.

## Results and Discussions

After delivering questionnaires to 408 students who are in their third and fifth year, the following data are the results of the analysis.

**Figure 2.** Distribution of Respondents Based on Study Period



Respondents' distribution based on the origin of the faculty can be seen in the following table:

**Figure 3.** Distribution of Respondents Based on the Origin of the Faculty

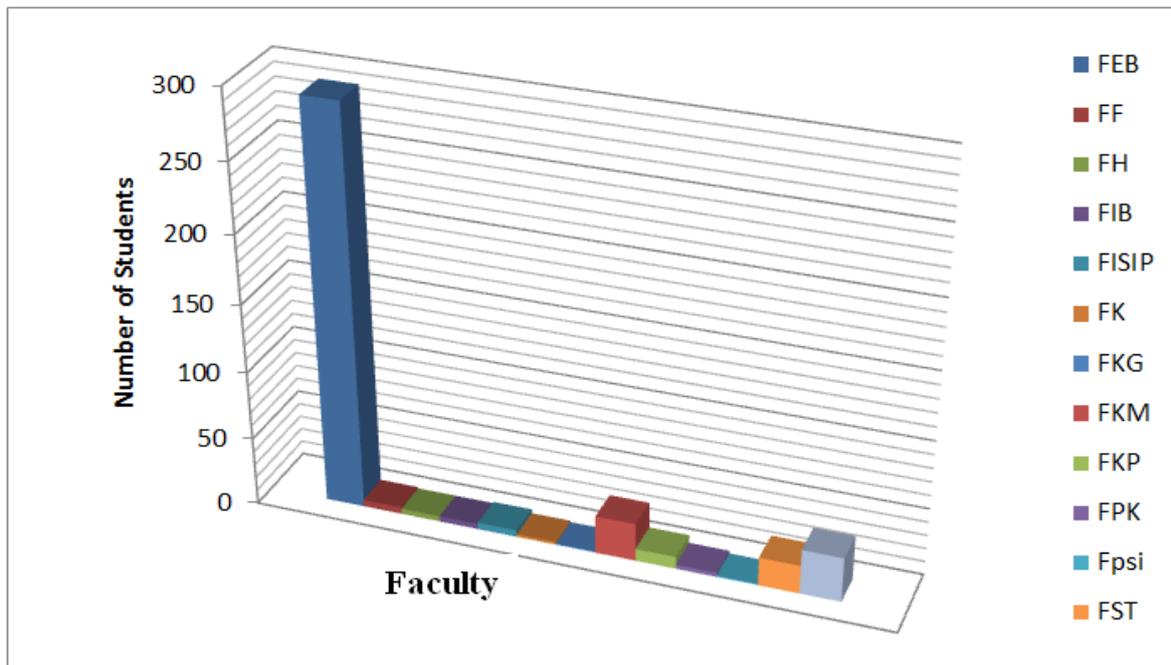
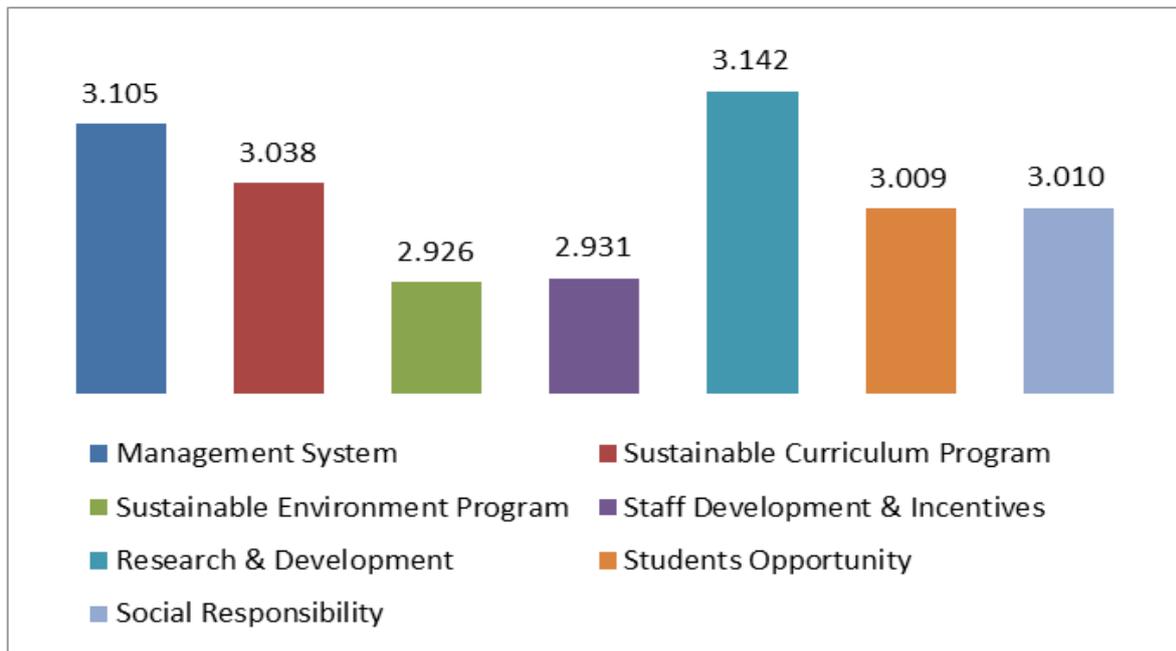


Figure 2 shows that most respondents of this study (54.41%) are 5<sup>th</sup>-semester students, while the rest are from 7<sup>th</sup> semester. Figure 3 shows that most respondents are students from FEB (Faculty of Economics and Business). This is because researchers are instructors at FEB so that they have greater access to data from students. However, given that the composition of the number of FEB students is quite dominant compared to the number of students in other faculties, this condition is considered justified.

The results of the analysis of data obtained can be seen in the following diagram picture:

**Figure 4.** Scores of HESD Dimension



Questionnaire items in this study were measured using a 4-point Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree – 4 Strongly Agree). According to the perception of students on Higher Education for Sustainability Development (HSED) dimension, it can be seen that the dimension of Sustainable Environment Program get the lowest score while the dimensions of Research and Development and also Management System get the highest. This means that Universitas Airlangga is considered to have a poor Sustainable Environment Program. Based on the indicators used in this study, these results indicate that in their daily operations Universitas Airlangga has not been too concerned about its environment, especially the campus environment with lack of activities such as efforts to reduce toxic materials, waste recycling, energy conservation, waste reduction efforts, biodiversity, as well as utilisation of renewable energy sources. Meanwhile, the highest score is the dimension of Research and Development. Based on the indicators used in this study, Universitas Airlangga has been very good at carrying out research and development activities related to sustainable development issues, but unfortunately, the lowest score on the dimensions of the Sustainable Environment Program shows a lack of efforts to implement the results of these studies. The lack of efforts to implement the Sustainable Environment Program is very unfortunate considering the second-highest score in this study is the Management System dimension, which based on the indicators used means that Universitas Airlangga has taken the initiative to form an institution responsible for coordinating sustainability development programs, carrying out ongoing audits, and trying to incorporate the sustainable development program into educational and scientific activities.



## **Conclusion**

This study shows that respondents' assessment of the implementation of the sustainable development program in Universitas Airlangga varies. Some dimensions show a high score and some dimensions are still low. Nevertheless, the implementation of this program, in general, can be said to be good considering that most dimensions have a high score (greater than 3). This study does not confirm the implementation from a management perspective so that further research needs to add this to find out whether there is a gap between the perceptions of students and management. Differences in perceptions that might occur will inform the need to deliver the right information to give a true picture of program implementation. This will also be a guide for management to plan the implementation of this sustainable development strategy in the following years.

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