

Social indicators on USR activities for achieving SDGs

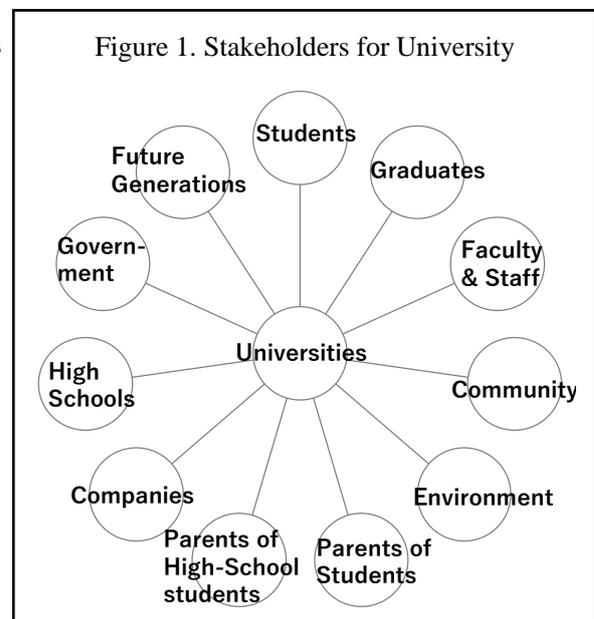
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1. Introduction

Nowadays universities face diversified needs/expectations in the context of social change such as widening economic gaps, environmental/energy issues, the decline of 18-year-old population in aging societies, and increasing importance of collaboration with government, business and NGO/NPO sectors. Universities need to assess and address those needs with meaningful responses considering impacts on environment and society as the University Social Responsibilities (USR). Stakeholders monitor and assess those USR activities, which should develop better and sustainable university operations. However, a variety of university rankings as major assessment tool tend to focus on the difficulty of entrance exams, citations, job placement, teaching, international outlook and/or financial performance, and is not sufficiently aware of impacts on environment and society. Chiba University of Commerce started research on social indicators on USR activities, in 2017, under the initiative of President Dr. Harashina to be sustainable, competitive and prideful university.

2. Previous Study on USR

A research group composed of 32 private universities in Japan examined the previous study on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and discussions on ISO 26000, the international guidance on Social Responsibility for all types of organizations regardless of their activity, size or location, and issued reports (Research Institute for University Social Responsibility 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008). It defined USR as “university faculty and staff implement appropriate university management to substantiate the vision, by research and education, responding social needs of stakeholders flexibly and structuring accountable organization to feed back the outcomes”, presented 7 core subjects for universities as 1) Governance, Compliance, Risk Management and Accountability, 2) Human Rights, 3) Labor and Education Environment, 4)



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Concerns for Environment, 5) Stakeholder Issues, 6) Fair Operating Practices and 7) Community, and brought up a list of agendas for each subject (Research Institute for University Social Responsibility 2005, pp.92-97). The agendas for 7) Community, for example, are contribution to community by after-school activities, extension lecture series, free access to university facilities, revitalization of local shopping malls, information disclosure of contribution to society, promotion of academia-culture-industry network, cooperation between university and high-schools and so on. There are approximately 50 agendas for each subject.

Although the research reports serve as fruitful references, including the definition of USR and the list of agendas for 7 core subjects, they were issued before 2015 and it is necessary to integrate USR and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) when developing the social indicators on USR activities. Therefore, we used the list of agenda by Research Institute for University Social Responsibility as a prototype of social indicators to start our research with. It was effective to implement the preparatory self-check to identify priorities and progress of our own USR activities. In the following section, we report our research methods and progress.

3. Research Method and Progress

3-1. Case Study of University Ranking

One of the pioneering and informative university ranking system, which tries to evaluate education, research, student support and social responsibility, is the Green Metric World University Ranking organized by University of Indonesia. It aims to rank universities, according to their current condition and policies related to green campus and sustainability activities, and provide opportunities of self-assessment to improve. As a result of an interview conducted in February 2018, we found out that further discussions and research were necessary to incorporate impacts on society into the Green Metric World University Ranking since it was difficult to identify quantitatively measurable indicator for all big/small universities in developed/developing countries which have different backgrounds and goals. It should be effective, as a first step, to develop measurable indicator applicable to a certain area in a nation.

3-2. Preparatory Self-Check

After the review of the 7 core subjects and the list of agendas for universities by Research Institute for University Social Responsibility, we prioritized and focused on 3 subjects “Stakeholder Issues”, “Community” and “Concerns for Environment” from the viewpoint of impacts on environment and society. Preparatory self-check for the 3 subjects based on interviews to related departments of our university revealed what agenda we had been addressing and we had not. Then we set goal, outcome, initial outcome and activities for each subject to be sustainable, competitive and pridedful university by using the method of “logic model” (Figure 2).

3-3. Study of SDGs and Identification of Goals closely related to 3 Core Subjects

Study of 17 goals of SDGs and identification of goals closely related to 3 core subjects (“Stakeholder Issues”, “Community” and “Concerns for Environment”) were conducted with students as an education program. After the review of several integrated reports issued by pioneering companies which disclosed the relations between their CSR activities and SDGs, we referred to the integrated report 2017 of ITOEN, Ltd (Japanese tea company) for the framework to analyze materiality of the 3 core subjects and marshal the relations to SDGs.

We examined and narrowed the list of agenda for universities down upward of 5 agendas for each subject, and defined them as materiality for USR. Then we marshaled the relations between materiality for USR and 17 goals of SDGs and found out strong relations with Goal 4 “Quality Education”, Goal 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”, Goal 9 “Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure”, Goal 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities” and Goal 17 “Partnership for Goals” as in Figure 3.

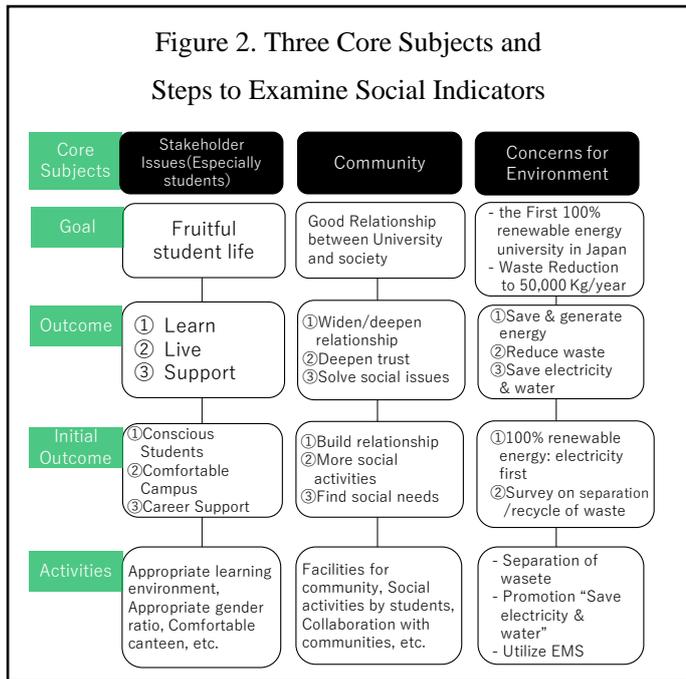


Figure 3. Materiality for USR and its relations to SDGs

Core Subjects	Materiality	Relations with SDGs																
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Stakeholder Issues (Especially students)	Appropriate leaning environment (Survey and proposal on PCs available)																	
	Appropriate gender ratio (Survey on ratio of female students, the trend and reasons)																	
	Improvement of campus environment and facilities (Survey and proposal on situations at canteen)																	
	Acquisition of qualification (Survey and proposal on system to support																	
	Student placement program (Evaluation of the system)																	
Community	Free access to university facilities (e.g. Canteen and library)																	
	Social activities by students (e.g. Volunteer activities)																	
	Collaboration with society (Schools, local governments and companies (e.g. events and development of products)																	
	Education programs (e.g. Extension lectures)																	
	The input by NPOs/NGOs (Invitation of experts and educational course)																	
Concerns for Environment	Separation and recycle of garbage (Reduce the 53,000 kg garbage in 2016)																	
	Reduce electrical usage (To be the First 100% renewable energy university in Japan)																	
	Reduce water waste																	
	Collaboration between staff and students (Visualization of environmental information, information sharing and promotion of awareness)																	

3-4. Questionnaire Research

We developed questions based on the materiality for USR and implemented questionnaire research at our school festival in November 3, 4 and 15, 2018 (university students 229 and others 388 out of 617 valid responses). The questionnaires included both of closed and open questions, and the responses are effective to explore Key Performance Indicators (KPI). For example, responses to questions regarding the materiality of “Community” clarified the ratio of students who had engaged in social activities (quantitative information) and partners that those students had collaborated with (qualitative information).

4. Further Research

Since our research purpose is to develop social indicators on USR activities, we continue to explore and examine KPIs (both quantitative and qualitative) by materiality for USR and 169 targets of SDGs. Thoughtful comments to our research have given us important idea that universities need to fulfil USR through their core activities – education and research - as companies fulfil CSR through their core business. Therefore, we add one more subject “education and research” to our 3 core subjects, and are going to develop KPIs for 4 core subjects (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Items to develop as social indicators

Core Subjects	Materiality	Key Performance Indicators (Quantitative/Qualitative)
Stakeholder Issues (Especially students)	Appropriate leaning environment (Survey and proposal on PCs available)	
	Appropriate gender ratio (Survey on ratio of female students, the trend and reasons)	
	Improvement of campus environment and facilities (Survey and proposal on situations at canteen)	
	Acquisition of qualification (Survey and proposal on system to support)	
	Student placement program (Evaluation of the system)	
Community	Free access to university facilities (e.g. Canteen and library)	
	Social activities by students (e.g. Volunteer activities)	
	Collaboration with society (Schools, local governments and companies (e.g. events and development of products)	
	Education programs (e.g. Extension lectures)	
	The input by NPOs/NGOs (Invitation of experts and educational course)	
Concerns for Environment	Separation and recycle of garbage (Reduce the 53,000 kg garbage in 2016)	
	Reduce electrical usage (To be the First 100% renewable energy university in Japan)	
	Reduce water waste	
	Collaboration between staff and students (Visualization of environmental information, information sharing and promotion of awareness)	
Research and Education		

After development of KPIs for 4 core subjects that is social indicators for USR activities, we are going to have a stakeholder meeting with our core stakeholders such as students, faculty and staff, community residents and local government by mid-2019. The discussion at the stakeholder meeting will give us a lot of hints to re-examine the social indicators and improve our USR Activities.

Acknowledgments

This work hadn't been possible without the financial and academic support of the Chiba University of Commerce President Project. We are grateful to all of those who provided us with fruitful comments and advices, opportunities of making presentations and writing papers, and cooperative environments for research activities.

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