Times higher education's administrative influence on tertiary education in Thailand: A comparative content analytical study

Chimankpa Mbadike Innocent (iD)

Shinawatra University, Thailand.
Email: shobisi@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study comparatively investigates the impact of Times Higher Education (THE) rankings on tertiary education administration in Thailand, with a specific focus on the strategic management of higher education institutions. The research aims to understand THE's ranking criteria and their influence on administrative decisions, as well as the implications for university governance and leadership. Ten Thai universities were carefully selected and evaluated based on THE's World University Ranking and Impact Ranking criteria, which assess institutions' performance across teaching, research, industry collaboration, international outlook, and their contributions to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Data was collected from THE's official website. The findings of this research suggest that: Universities that prioritize research quality and international outlook tend to perform better in THE's World University Ranking; Institutions that focus on SDG-related research and outreach are more likely to excel in THE's Impact Ranking; Thai universities that adopt best practices in educational administration, such as strategic planning and resource allocation, are more likely to improve their THE rankings. By identifying effective administrative strategies, this research can inform policy decisions and support universities in achieving their goals, ultimately contributing to the development of a more competitive and sustainable higher education system in Thailand.

Keywords: Administrative influence, Impact ranking, THE, Times higher education, UN SDG, World university ranking.

Contents

Contribution of this paper to the literature:
This study's originality lies in its comparative content analysis of THE World University Ranking and Impact Ranking, focusing on Thai universities. The research provides a nuanced understanding of the administrative influence of THE rankings on tertiary education in Thailand, offering practical recommendations.

1. Introduction

This research explores the considerable factors used to assess and thereafter rank world universities on a global scale by Times Higher Education (2024). World universities are given due recognition by THE on five standard criteria with distinct indicators and weight, thus, teaching (the learning environment); research environment (volume, income and reputation); research quality (the outputs of research); industry (knowledge transfer) and international outlook (staff, students and research). These criteria are weighted as 29.5%, 29.0%, 30.0%, 4.0% and 7.5% respectively. This is relevant and contemporary considering a global clamor for best educational practices. Moving further, Times Higher Education has yet another category of ranking, best known as THE Impact Ranking which is a veritable tool for assessing and recognizing world universities that are committed to pushing forward the frontiers and advancing the course of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Times Higher Education (THE), formerly The Times Higher Education Supplement, is a British magazine specializing in higher education news and issues. In 2009, THE partnered with Thomson Reuters, a leading research-data specialist, to provide data for its annual World University Rankings. Thomson Reuters brought its expertise in bibliometric analysis to the partnership. THE published its first World University Rankings by subject area in 2010, and has continued to release rankings annually. According to Mroz (2009) THE's rankings have become highly influential, and the organization has committed to producing rigorous and transparent rankings, facilitated by its partnership with Thomson Reuters.

Thailand has over 170 universities and other higher education institutions, both public and private, that offer a diverse range of courses across various disciplines such as science, business, engineering, law, and the arts. However, this study is limited within a scope of top ten (10) universities in Thailand as acknowledged and published at Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2024. The universities emphasized here are in this particular order from first to tenth,

1. Chulalongkorn University.
2. Mahidol University.
3. Chiang Mai University.
4. King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi.
5. Mae Fah Luang University.
6. Khon Kaen University.
7. King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok.
8. Prince of Songkla University.
9. Suranaree University of Technology.
10. Thammasat University.

However, THE Impact Rankings 2024 published also names of Thailand universities that made it to THE Impact Rankings 2024. For the purpose of this study's objective, the list is as usual limited to the top ten (10) Thailand universities in this category. Such is listed in this particular order of first to tenth as given by THE Impact Ranking 2024.

1. Mahidol University.
2. Chulalongkorn University.
3. Chiang Mai University.
4. Thammasat University.
5. Asian Institute of Technology.
6. Kasetsart University.
7. Khon Kaen University.
8. King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi.
9. Walailak University.
10. Prince of Songkla University.

1.1. Indicators and Weight in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking

As implied at the introduction, Times Higher Education has maintained a commendable height of accuracy as a global performance table assessing research-intensive universities around the world. The assessment metrics cut across THE's core operational values, thus, teaching (the learning environment); research environment (volume, income and reputation); research quality (the outputs of research); industry (knowledge transfer) and international outlook (staff, students and research). Each of the performance indicators identified above are scored 29.5%, 29.0%, 30.0%, 4.0%, and 7.5% respectively. However, each indicator is further distributed for precision's sake. Hence, teaching is sub-weighted as.

- Teaching reputation: 15%.
- Staff-to-student ratio: 4.5%.
- Doctorate-to-bachelor's ratio: 2%.
- Doctorates-awarded-to-academic-staff ratio: 5.5%.
- Institutional income: 2.5%.

Furthermore, research environment with 29.0% as one of the ranking criteria has itself sub-weighted as.

- Research reputation: 18%.
- Research income: 5.5%.
- Research productivity: 5.5%.

Research Quality with 30.0%, making the most of the ranking criteria is sub-weighted as.
- Citation impact: 15%.
- Research strength: 5%.
- Research excellence: 5%.
- Research influence: 5%.

The least ranking criteria is Industry with 4.0%, and sub-weighed thus.
- Industry income: 2%.
- Patents: 2%.

Lastly is the International Outlook indicator with 7.5%, and sub-weighed as.
- Proportion of international students: 2.5%.
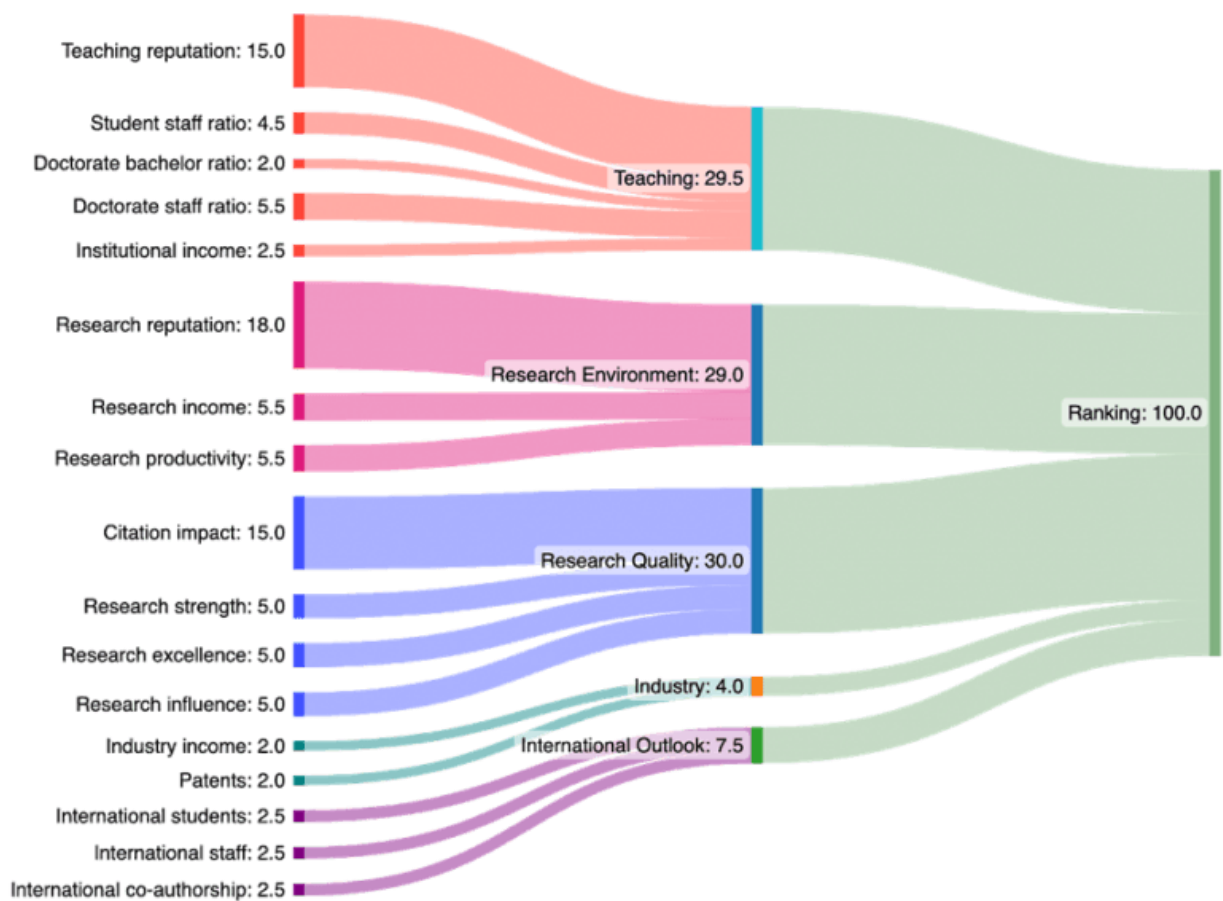- Proportion of international staff: 2.5%.
- International collaboration: 2.5%.

Figure 1. World university rankings 2024: Methodology.

Figure 1 illustrates a global performance table assessing research-intensive universities around the world, according to Times Higher Education. That represents THE's metrics for assessing the progress of the concerned universities. Recall that The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings use a set of performance metrics to assess research-intensive universities worldwide. THE's methodology evaluates universities based on 13 performance indicators grouped into five pillars. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 evaluates universities based on 18 performance indicators across five areas, including teaching, research environment, research quality, international outlook, and industry. The indicators assess various aspects, such as teaching reputation, research income, citation impact, international collaboration, and industry income. Each area has a specific weightage, with teaching accounting for 29.5%, research environment for 29%, research quality for 30%, international outlook for 7.5%, and industry for 4%.

1.2. Times Higher Education Impact Rankings

This is another category of THE rankings which is contemporary and committed to expanding a horizon, i.e., global expectation of education as a system. Education is a macrocosm which is never to be left out of any 'messianic' equation looked up to as effective tool or solution to world's contemporary problem. Education is the most important tool to reshape worldviews and values and has enormous potential to address the sustainability challenges facing humanity (Vasiliki & Nikolaos, 2019). Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda of the United Nations adopted by world leaders in 2015 acknowledges Quality Education (SDG 4) as a means for achieving the remaining SDGs, with sustainability as a goal for education in target 4.7 (Steffen, 2015).

Based on the foregoing, the university, otherwise classified under tertiary education has become a veritable platform for harnessing the potential strengths in the education system and achieving United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Times Higher Education's Impact Ranking assesses universities' contributions to society through four key areas: research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching. Research is a critical component, as it enables universities to promote SDG-themed research among scholars and staff.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) (2014) defines "impact" as an effect or benefit to the economy, society, culture, or environment, beyond academia. Impact is evaluated alongside research outputs and environment to assess the value of research within an institution. Research outputs, such as knowledge generated and publications, can be translated into outcomes, like new products and services, and impacts or added value.

As mathematician and philosopher Whitehead (1929) emphasized, universities should preserve the connection between knowledge and the zest of life. They should impart information imaginatively, uniting the young and old in the consideration of learning. Research has a profound impact on society, and its socioeconomic values cannot be overstated.

Donovan (2011) noted that impact is a powerful tool for making evidence-based cases for research support. Penfield, Baker, Scoble, and Wykes (2014) added that evaluating research's contribution to society and the economy can inform future funding decisions. By recognizing the significance of research, universities can prioritize initiatives that drive positive change and maximize their impact on the world. Furthermore, for effective stewardship, universities are assessed based on their ability to effectively manage the resources at their disposal, such resources include physical objects, students, employees, and faculty. Effective management of available resources in the university environment is key, as we are faced with threats of extinction, dilapidation, destruction, and loss of certain resources of nature. Stewardship in relation to nature in the university environment is of high importance and connects strongly to the stewardship of students and employees in the environment, i.e., human-nature relationship. According to Krasny and Delia (2015) Here's a rewritten version of the text in 400 words:

A study on a university student organization highlights the benefits of nature-based stewardship, including enhanced students' sense of place and improved mental well-being. This underscores the significance of stewardship in achieving sustainability. Research emphasizes the importance of time spent in nature for human development and environmental awareness (Louv, 2006; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2009; Wells & Lekies, 2006).

Student participation in stewardship initiatives provides opportunities for integrating sustainability into educational activities (Müller, Lude, & Hancock, 2020; Togo & Lotz-Sisitka, 2009). Universities can impact sustainability through their interactions with local, regional, national, and international communities, which is reflected in THE Impact Ranking's Outreach area.

Higher education institutions are shifting towards systemic change by adopting trans- and interdisciplinary learning approaches, social learning, and community outreach (Peters & Wals, 2013; Wals, 2014). Sustainable campus landscapes also contribute to learning, mental and physical health, and foster outdoor leisure activities (Walton & Sweeney, 2013).

Outdoor sustainability initiatives, such as bioswales and tree plantings, serve as a catalyst for larger sustainability endeavors. As Denison University's sustainability coordinator notes, these initiatives allow the campus community to experience sustainability firsthand (Walton & Sweeney, 2013).

Teaching is a vital aspect of THE Impact Ranking, as it enables students to learn about sustainability. Universities must ensure that they have skilled practitioners to deliver on the SDGs. The four areas of focus for THE Impact Rankings – research, stewardship, outreach, and teaching – are expected to reflect a reasonable weight of the 17 SDGs. By assessing universities' performance in these areas, THE Impact Rankings provide a comprehensive evaluation of their contributions to sustainability.

SDG 1 – No poverty.
SDG 2 – Zero hunger.
SDG 3 – Good health and well-being.
SDG 4 – Quality education.
SDG 5 – Gender equality.
SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation.
SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy.
SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth.
SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure.
SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities.
SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities.
SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production.
SDG 13 – Climate action.
SDG 14 – Life below water.
SDG 15 – Life on land.
SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions.
SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals.

Meanwhile, according to Times Higher Education (2024) any university that provides data on SDG 17 and at least three other SDGs is included in the overall ranking. A university's total score in a given year is calculated by combining its score in SDG 17 with its best three results on the remaining 16 SDGs. SDG 17 accounts for 22 per cent of the total score, while the other SDGs each carry a weighting of 26 per cent.

1.3. Administrative Influence of THE Ranking Indicators on the Universities

From the outset, a lot has been emphasized via Education for Sustainability, reflecting its contemporariness in shaping today and the future through sustainable measures. Every of world inhabitants and all other spheres of human endeavour has placed considerable hope and expectations on education as one escape route out of the global natural and socioeconomic crisis facing it. "Education is the key to unlocking the potential of individuals, communities, and societies. It is a fundamental human right and a crucial driver of sustainable development." (UNESCO, 2014). Recent moves have been undertaken by concerned international bodies to harness the potentials and resources available within the education sector, as veritable tools for global rescue. "Education is a vital investment for individuals, societies, and economies. It helps to develop the skills, knowledge, and competencies needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and interconnected world." (OECD, 2020). Every level of academic distinction is included in this approach, from the foundation (cradle) to the zenith (higher education). However, the

higher education has recently being receiving the most emphasis being the transitional phase into the wider pragmatic society. Whatever that could not be achieved at the foundation needs be achieved at the peak, with no reserved apology. Hence, this achievement cannot suffice without the administrative level of the higher education. This is because the administrative level of each school is the most central part of the institution, as sacrosanct as it is, decisions are taken, made, approved and disapproved there. The success or downfall of any tertiary institution is often attributed to the administrative sector of the institution. Even though, decisions taken to accelerate growth of the university and place it on the limelight of glory and prominence are often achieved through effective collaboration among relevant stakeholders within the school environment, i.e., the staff, students, immediate community, etc., such cannot suffice in achieving the most of its global expectation. This therefore is the place of THE Impact Ranking in helping the university leadership make better informed decisions that can accelerate it, pronounce it and make it profound indeed, a sustainable achievement university. Apart from elevating the glory of the university, it deliberately improves the students, staff, faculty, and the environment associated to it. Is this not a considerable part of world's expectations of the education sector? It is also part of the core missions, visions and goals of an educational institution. Yes, by considering, comparing and deliberately studying the achievements of the universities featured on THE Impact Ranking, the administration of other universities yet to make it to the THE Ranking is able to improve by learning, unlearning and relearning. A collective effort like this will not only save the world from its present crisis, but will create a sustainability for future generation.

Specifically, Time Higher Education Ranking indicators will bring about better educational leadership/administration, better education for students, improved work environment for staff, fostering academic research, integrate Sustainable Development Goals in teaching and learning, promote inclusivity and yield better informed decisions on human-nature relationship awareness, etc. Based on the foregoing, the administrative implications of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 methodology are significant, in that concerned universities must collect and manage large amounts of data across various indicators, requiring substantial administrative resources. They must also develop strategic plans to improve their performance, allocate resources effectively, and establish systems to monitor and evaluate performance. Additionally, universities must comply with reporting requirements, benchmark their performance, engage with stakeholders, ensure quality assurance and accreditation, manage international partnerships, and maintain their reputation. By understanding these administrative implications, universities can better navigate the rankings methodology and improve their overall performance.

Part of THE influence on the university administration is such that promotes collaboration, by ensuring the school leader/administrator organizes a participative process of school development, emphasize sustainability and ESD in the daily life of the school, support teaching staff in the application of ESD, and offer students opportunities to launch their own initiatives (Müller et al., 2020). This whole course similarly yields better school leadership, hence, "Transforming learning and training environments concerns not only managing physical facilities but also changing the ethos and governance structure of the whole institution" (UNESCO, 2014). As such there is a guarantee of school finance management, material cycles and resource management, structural design, and equipment as part of improved school administrative roles. It further breeds a transformational leader which according to Fuhrung (2006) give expression to their values and visions. They try to introduce differentiated values into the leadership process and always reflect on their visions and develop them further in the face of changing environmental conditions. They recognize the motives and needs of their employees and try to influence them by transforming existing motives in order to achieve new goals with other motivations. They try to increase the attractiveness of goals and tasks. They promote the identification of employees with their social system and the tasks to be addressed. They inspire employees to take up new challenges. They are interested as far as possible in the individual needs and expectations of their employees as individuals.

2. Methodology

Due to the nature of this research and need to ensure accuracy, documentary analysis and compared review were used as methods and data were analysed using content analysis.

Rank	Name Country/Region	Overall	Teaching	Research environment	Research quality	Industry	International outlook
601–800	Chulalongkorn university (/world-university-rankings/chulalongkorn-university) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS) Explore (/world-university-rankings/chulalongkorn-university)	37.0–41.8	36.7	32.2	50.2	76.6	44.1
601–800	Mahidol university (/world-university-rankings/mahidol-university) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	37.0–41.8	39.3	25.0	46.3	78.6	48.7
801–1000	Chiang Mai university (/world-university-rankings/chiang-mai-university) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	32.7–36.9	28.5	19.1	46.3	58.1	39.5
801–1000	King Mongkut's university of technology Thonburi (/world-university-rankings/king-mongkuts-university-technology-thonburi) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	32.7–36.9	21.5	22.1	59.5	71.0	43.3

Rank	Name Country/Region	Overall	Teaching	Research environment	Research quality	Industry	International outlook
1001–1200	**Mae Fah Luang university** (/world-university-rankings/mae-fah-luang-university) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	28.3–32.6	16.2	14.6	47.5	39.6	54.0
1201–1500	**Khon Kaen university** (/world-university-rankings/khon-kaen-university) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	22.8–28.2	23.3	15.7	35.5	36.1	35.4
1201–1500	**King Mongkut's university of Technology North Bangkok** (/world-university-rankings/king-mongkuts-university-technology-north-bangkok) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	22.8–28.2	16.2	12.7	50.9	25.9	28.7
1201–1500	**Prince of Songkla university** (/world-university-rankings/prince-songkla-university) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	22.8–28.2	23.4	14.8	32.6	43.5	37.7

Rank	Name Country/Region	Overall	Teaching	Research environment	Research quality	Industry	International outlook
1201–1500	Suranaree university of technology (/world-university-rankings/suranaree-university-technology) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	22.8–28.2	21.9	20.9	27.7	54.9	37.9
1201–1500	Thammasat university (/world-university-rankings/thammasat-university) Thailand (/location/a4zw0000000GnwYAAS)	22.8–28.2	26.3	19.1	25.7	30.1	38.1

Figure 2. Comparative analysis of THE ranking among the top ten (10) Thailand universities based on world university rankings.
Source: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2024/world-ranking#!/length/25/locations/THA/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/scores

Figure 2 illustrates THE ranking among the top ten (10) Thailand universities based on world university rankings 2024. Based on the chart, these are the top 10 universities in Thailand, according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024, hence, the top universities in Thailand, according to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2024, include Chulalongkorn University, ranked #1 in Thailand and #69 in Asia, known for its academic excellence and research opportunities. Mahidol University is ranked #2 in Thailand and #995 globally, with a strong focus on research and internationalization. Chiang Mai University ranks #3 in Thailand and #136 in Asia, recognized for its research output and international collaborations. Kasetsart University holds the #4 spot in Thailand and #194 in Asia, with a strong emphasis on agriculture, science, and technology. Khon Kaen University is ranked #5 in Thailand and #223 in Asia, known for its research excellence and international partnerships. Prince of Songkla University ranks #6 in Thailand and #224 in Asia, recognized for its academic programs and research opportunities. King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi is ranked #8 in Thailand, with a strong focus on science, technology, and innovation. Chulabhorn Royal Academy ranks #10 in Thailand, while Thammasat University and Asian Institute of Technology hold the #11 and #22 spots, respectively. However, another methodology employed in this comparative study is the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking. According to Bornmann (2013) societal impact of research refers to the benefits of research on society beyond academia, encompassing social benefits, economic benefits, cultural benefits, and environmental benefits. Bornmann's definition highlights that societal impact goes beyond academic outcomes, encompassing the broader positive effects of research on society. Based on the foregoing, THE attributes and acknowledges the place of UN SDGs as part of the criteria to assessing the universities, hence, their Impact Rankings. See the table below in Table 1.

Table 1. Illustrates the rankings of the top 10 Thai universities based on times higher education impact ranking (2024).

Rank	University name	Overall score	SDG best score
1	Mahidol University	94.5	SDG 3 (94.9)
2	Chulalongkorn University	92.6	SDG 3 (99.5)
3	Chiang Mai University	90.5	SDG 9 (90.7)
4	Thammasat University	90.3	SDG 3 (86.3)
5	Asian Institute of Technology	84.0-89.1	SDG 2 (86.1)
6	Kasetsart University	84.0-89.1	SDG 2 (82.4)
7	Khon Kaen University	84.0-89.1	SDG 14 (92.7)
8	King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi	84.0-89.1	SDG 2 (90.3)
9	Walailak University	84.0-89.1	SDG 17 (90.9)
10	Burapha University	79.3-83.9	SDG 8 (77.0-90.2)

Source: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/hub/p/chula-ranks-no-1-thailand-3rd-consecutive-year-and-top-16-world-highest-impact-society
https://stang.sc.mahidol.ac.th/research/ranking_THE.php

Table 1 illustrates the top 10 Thailand universities according to Times Higher Education Impact Ranking, different from Indicators and Weight in the Times Higher Education World University Ranking. Note that Overall Score on the table indicates the university's overall impact score, which is a measure of their performance across the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Meanwhile, SDG Best Score in the table indicates the university's best score in a specific SDG category, i.e., the area where the university has performed exceptionally well. Here, emphasis is on the universities' contribution to UN SDG, beyond the academia. For a better understanding, each hexagon above has its colour represented by the chart below showing the related SDG area covered. Therefore, The Impact Ranking provided by Times Higher Education evaluates universities based on their contributions to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The ranking assesses universities' impact across multiple SDGs, recognizing institutions that excel in addressing global challenges such as environmental sustainability, social inclusion, economic growth, and partnerships.

The methodology used to calculate the Impact Ranking involves integrating scores across multiple SDGs, with SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) carrying a weight of 22%. The top three scores from other SDGs are also considered, each carrying a weight of 26%. This approach highlights universities' specialized strengths while rewarding well-rounded contributions to the global SDG agenda.

In this context which focuses on universities in Thailand, the Impact Ranking can be interpreted as a measure of these institutions' commitment to addressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development. The ranking provides insights into the impact of Thai universities on society, beyond their academic performance.

Some key aspects to consider when interpreting the Impact Ranking include:

SDG performance: Universities' scores across multiple SDGs, reflecting their strengths and weaknesses in addressing different global challenges.

Partnerships and collaborations: The extent to which universities foster robust international partnerships and cooperation to achieve the SDGs.

Societal impact: The broader benefits of universities' research and activities on society, including economic, social, and environmental impacts.

By considering these aspects, the Impact Ranking provides a comprehensive understanding of universities' contributions to sustainable development and their commitment to addressing global challenges. Therefore, here are the rankings of the first 10 Thai universities according to THE Impact Ranking: Mahidol University is ranked 1st in Thailand with an overall score of 94.5. Its best SDG score is in SDG 3, with a score of 94.9. Chulalongkorn University is ranked 2nd in Thailand with an overall score of 92.6. Its best SDG score is in SDG 3, with a score of 99.5. Chiang Mai University is ranked 3rd in Thailand with an overall score of 90.5. Its best SDG score is in SDG 9, with a score of 90.7. Thammasat University is ranked 4th in Thailand with an overall score of 90.3. Its best SDG score is in SDG 3, with a score of 86.3. Asian Institute of Technology is ranked 5th in Thailand with an overall score of 84.0-89.1. Its best SDG score is in SDG 2, with a score of 86.1. Kasetsart University is ranked 6th in Thailand with an overall score of 84.0-89.1. Its best SDG score is in SDG 2, with a score of 82.4. Khon Kaen University is ranked 7th in Thailand with an overall score of 84.0-89.1. Its best SDG score is in SDG 14, with a score of 92.7. King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi is ranked 8th in Thailand with an overall score of 84.0-89.1. Its best SDG score is in SDG 2, with a score of 90.3. Walailak University is ranked 9th in Thailand with an overall score of 84.0-89.1. Its best SDG score is in SDG 17, with a score of 90.9. Burapha University is ranked 10th in Thailand with an overall score of 79.3-83.9. Its best SDG score is in SDG 8, with a score of 77.0-90.2.

Figure 3 illustrates the specific UN SDGs by which the universities under discussion were assessed based on THE impact ranking.

1 No poverty	2 Zero hunger	3 Good health and well-being
End poverty in all its forms everywhere	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
4 Quality education	5 Gender equality	6 Clean water and sanitation
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7 Affordable and clean energy	8 Decent work and economic growth	9 Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
10 Reducing inequalities	11 Sustainable cities and communities	12 Responsible consumption and production
Reduce income inequality within and among countries	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
13 Climate action	14 Life below water	15 Life on land
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Figure 3. The specific UN SDGs by which the universities under discussion were assessed based on THE impact ranking.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a framework for evaluating universities' contributions to sustainable development and social responsibility.

SDG 1, No Poverty, involves reducing economic inequalities, promoting entrepreneurship, and providing financial aid to disadvantaged students. Universities can contribute to this goal by implementing these strategies.

SDG 2, Zero Hunger, involves conducting research on sustainable agriculture, reducing food waste, and promoting food security initiatives. Universities can make an impact by conducting research and promoting sustainability.

SDG 3, Good Health and Well-being, involves conducting medical research, providing healthcare services, and promoting healthy lifestyles among students and staff. Universities can contribute by providing these services and promoting well-being.

SDG 4, Quality Education, involves providing access to quality education, promoting lifelong learning, and reducing educational inequalities. Universities can make a significant impact by providing quality education and promoting learning.

SDG 5, Gender Equality, involves promoting gender equality, providing opportunities for women in STEM fields, and addressing gender-based violence. Universities can contribute by promoting equality and addressing violence.

SDG 6, Clean Water and Sanitation, involves conducting research on water conservation, reducing water waste, and promoting sustainable sanitation practices. Universities can make an impact by conducting research and promoting sustainability.

SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy, involves conducting research on renewable energy, reducing energy consumption, and promoting sustainable energy practices. Universities can contribute by conducting research and promoting sustainability.

SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, involves providing job opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting local economic development. Universities can make an impact by providing job opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship.

SDG 9, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, involves conducting research and development, promoting innovation, and supporting infrastructure development. Universities can contribute by conducting research and promoting innovation.

SDG 10, Reduced Inequalities, involves reducing economic and social inequalities, promoting diversity and inclusion, and addressing discrimination. Universities can contribute by reducing inequalities and promoting inclusion.

SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, involves promoting sustainable urban planning, reducing waste and pollution, and supporting community development. Universities can make an impact by promoting sustainability and supporting communities.

SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, involves promoting sustainable consumption and production practices, reducing waste and pollution, and supporting sustainable supply chains. Universities can contribute by promoting sustainability and reducing waste.

SDG 13, Climate Action, involves conducting research on climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and promoting sustainable climate practices. Universities can make an impact by conducting research and promoting sustainability.

SDG 14, Life Below Water, involves conducting research on marine conservation, reducing plastic waste, and promoting sustainable fishing practices. Universities can contribute by conducting research and promoting sustainability.

SDG 15, Life on Land, involves conducting research on biodiversity conservation, reducing deforestation, and promoting sustainable land use practices. Universities can make an impact by conducting research and promoting sustainability.

SDG 16, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, involves promoting peace and justice, supporting human rights, and strengthening institutions. Universities can contribute by promoting peace and justice.

SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, involves partnering with governments, businesses, and civil society to achieve the SDGs, sharing knowledge and expertise, and mobilizing resources. Universities can contribute by partnering with other organizations and sharing resources.

3. Discussion

On account of THE World University Ranking among the top ten (10) selected Thailand universities, it was ranked in this particular order from first to tenth, Chulalongkorn University, Mahidol University, Chiang Mai University, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Mae Fah Luang University, Khon Kaen University, King Mongkut's University of Technology North Bangkok, Prince of Songkla University, Suranaree University of Technology, Thammasat University.

On the other hand, considering THE Impact Ranking among the top ten (10) selected Thailand universities, it was ranked in this particular order from first to tenth, Mahidol University, Chulalongkorn University, Chiang Mai University, Thammasat University, Asian Institute of Technology, Kasetsart University, Khon Kaen University, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Walailak University, Burapha University.

From the analysis, these universities have achieved high scores in SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 4 (Quality Education), and 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). However, there are areas where these universities need to improve, such as SDGs 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The results of this study have several implications for university administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders. Firstly, the top 10 Thai universities need to prioritize SDGs that are not yet achieved, such as SDGs 11, 12, and 16. This requires a strategic approach to research, teaching, and community engagement. Secondly, universities need to strengthen their partnerships with industry, government, and civil society to achieve the SDGs. Finally, policymakers need to provide adequate funding and support for universities to achieve the SDGs.

4. Conclusion

At THE, universities are assessed at the global stage, making it possible for scholars and target audience to understand the idea behind a 'successful' higher education. As pointed above in this study, there are various stages and categories of success factors attributed to higher education, especially as it relates to Times Higher Education Ranking. Meanwhile, this study was limited within the scope of THE World University Ranking 2024 and THE Impact Ranking 2024. While we studied the top ten ranking Thailand universities, this article also presupposed that while there were other universities in Thailand that made it to THE World University Ranking 2024 and THE Impact Ranking 2024, some other Thailand universities did not make it to either of the list. Based on the foregoing, this study becomes relevant as to help universities in such category prepare for subsequent THE Rankings. This can boost the university's public image.

Meanwhile, students, staff and faculty of concerned universities will be privileged to enjoy a more friendly learning and work environment by reason of the university's administration engaging in a conscious effort to adopt the practices obtainable in the universities acknowledged on THE Ranking list.

References

Bornmann, L. (2013). What is societal impact of research and how can it be assessed? A literature survey. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 64*(2), 233–244.

Donovan, C. (2011). The role of research impact in securing funding for universities. *Higher Education Policy Review, 63*(2), 45-57.

Fuhrung, H. (2006). *Transformational leadership in educational settings.* Berlin: Springer.

Krasny, M. E., & Delia, J. (2015). Natural area stewardship as part of campus sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 106*, 87-96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2014.04.019

Louv, R. (2006). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder.* Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books.

Mroz, D. (2009). *The impact of rankings on higher education.* London: Times Higher Education.

Müller, U., Lude, A., & Hancock, D. R. (2020). Leading schools towards sustainability. Fields of action and management strategies for principals. *Sustainability, 12*(7), 3031. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12073031

Nisbet, E. K., Zelenski, J. M., & Murphy, S. A. (2009). The nature of everyday life: Implications for human well-being and environmental advocacy. *Environmental Behavior, 41*(5), 571-599.

OECD. (2020). *The future of education and skills: Education 2030.* Paris: OECD Publishing.

Penfield, T., Baker, M. J., Scoble, R., & Wykes, M. C. (2014). Assessment, evaluations, and definitions of research impact: A review. *Research Evaluation, 23*(1), 21-32. https://doi.org/10.1093/reseval/rvt021

Peters, M., & Wals, A. E. J. (2013). Education for sustainable development: A framework for policy development and action. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development, 7*(1), 67-80.

Research Excellence Framework (REF). (2014). *Assessment framework and guidance on submissions.* Bristol, UK: Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Steffen, W. (2015). *The role of education in achieving the sustainable development goals.* Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Times Higher Education. (2024). *THE WUR 2024 final rankings.* London: Times Higher Education.

Togo, M., & Lotz-Sisitka, H. (2009). Education for sustainable development in Africa: A review of practices and outcomes. *Journal of Education for Sustainable Development, 3*(2), 179-191.

UNESCO. (2014). *Roadmap for implementing the global action programme on education for sustainable development.* Paris: UNESCO.

Vasiliki, S., & Nikolaos, P. (2019). Education as a tool for addressing global sustainability challenges. *Journal of Global Education and Sustainability, 15*(2), 112-124.

Wals, A. E. J. (2014). Sustainability in higher education: Challenges and opportunities for institutional change. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education, 15*(4), 405-417.

Walton, J., & Sweeney, J. (2013). The role of sustainable landscapes in improving campus environments and student well-being. *Journal of Campus Sustainability, 10*(2), 19-25.

Wells, N. M., & Lekies, K. S. (2006). Nature and life satisfaction: Implications for environmental education. *Environmental Education Research, 12*(1), 6-21.

Whitehead, A. N. (1929). *The aims of education and other essays.* New York: Macmillan.