

GRADUATING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Private universities make a mark but India's public universities continue to rule the roost, revamping academic offerings to meet international standards

By Sonali Acharjee

A lopsided battle between quantity and quality has been the defining narrative of India's higher education sector over the past decade. India is home to a staggering 694 universities that produce five million graduates. Yet it wasn't until last year, when IIT-Guwahati became the first Indian institution to be ranked in the Times Higher Education Survey's top 100 universities under 50 years old, that any could truly be rated as world class.

There are signs that things are slowly improving. Seventeen Indian universities made it to the Asia Top 300 list of QS World University Rankings published this year while in the first ever QS ranking of the top 100 universities in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, India is represented by 16 institutions, five of them in the top 20. Increased investment in research infrastructure, skill development initiatives and foreign partnerships are some of the ways in which the country's oldest universities are revamping their academic offerings to meet international standards. But there's still a long way to go.

"Global rankings place a great deal

Top 10 UNIVERSITIES

The public universities retain the top slots this year

| 2014 | 2013 | |
|------|------|-----------------------------|
| > 1 | 1 | University of Delhi |
| > 2 | 2 | University of Calcutta |
| ^ 3 | 4 | Banaras Hindu University |
| v 4 | 3 | Jawaharlal Nehru University |
| ^ 5 | 6 | University of Hyderabad |
| ^ 6 | 8 | Aligarh Muslim University |
| > 7 | 7 | Osmania University |
| ^ 8 | 9 | Jamia Millia Islamia |
| ^ 9 | 11 | Mysore University |
| ^ 10 | 12 | Andhra University |

The overall rank is based on the overall score comprising perceptual and factual scores, not on perceptual and factual ranks. Therefore, the overall rank of a university may be different from its individual perceptual and factual ranks.
 > Same as 2013 ^ Up v Down * New entrant.

of emphasis on research, especially interdisciplinary research. Compared to our foreign counterparts, we are still far behind in terms of the number of research papers, journals and projects published each year," says Sudhir Sopory, vice-chancellor, JNU. A study published by the Department of Science and Technology in 2010 shows that India accounted for a paltry 3.5 per cent of the global research output. China, on the other hand, accounted for 19 per cent. "To develop a research culture, we need better funding, industry participation, infrastructure and cross-department cooperation. Personally, it has taken me almost four years to get faculty from different streams to cooperate with joint research work," adds the JNU vice-chancellor.

Funding remains a major problem at university research departments across the country. University of Delhi received an estimated Rs 90 crore through various funding channels in 2013 and a total of 4,437 research papers were published by its faculty. Compared to the roughly 21,000 research papers published and Rs 773 crore spent in the same year on research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology