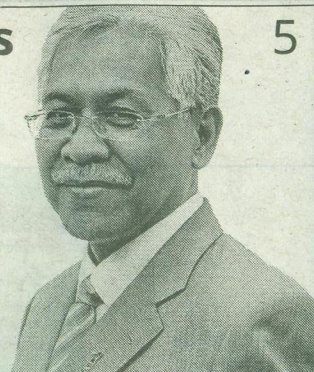


Idris Jusoh mainstream insights

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In an insightful report titled *An Avalanche is Coming: Higher Education and the Revolution Ahead* published in 2013, it mentions that the future of higher education will be about the 'niche university'.

This is where focusing on specific areas of knowledge and skills, as opposed to spreading too widely, will be key towards remaining relevant and competitive in the global higher education landscape.

The report, published by a United Kingdom think tank, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in collaboration with the Pearson group, also mentions that the survival of universities and its ability to attract students will depend on making the most of comparative advantages and this is influenced by geography, environment and the strength of localised content.

In this regard, I believe that we are on the right path and will need to maintain our focus as we move forward.

In early April, a Thai newspaper, *The Nation*, reported that Malaysian academics

'surprisingly' beat Thais and Singaporeans in research papers.

The report stated that Malaysian researchers produced 47,000 articles or nearly twice their Thai counterparts. Singapore on the other hand produced 34,000 articles.

According to the report, "the sharp growth in the number of researchers was because the Malaysian government dramatically boosted funding compared to the Thai government."

As mentioned earlier, this coincided with the Malaysian Research University Project in 2006. It is starting to bear fruit and this is an encouraging sign.

Many have pointed out to me that quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality. I agree.

Quality is an ongoing process and usually indicated by the number of citations a publication receives (it shows faith

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On the right track

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and confidence in the work produced).

In 2014, Thomson Reuters released a list of the world's best and brightest scientific minds. The report, entitled *The World's Most Influential Scientific Minds: 2014*, analysed data from the last 11 years using the Web of Science and InCites platforms to determine which researchers around the globe have produced work that is most frequently cited by peers.

Among the 3,200 notable individuals were three Malaysian researchers: Prof Dr Saidur Rahman Abdul Hakim from UM's Department of Mechanical Engineering, Prof Dr Ishak Hashim from UKM's School of

Mathematical Sciences and Prof Dr Abdul Latif Ahmad from USM's Department of Chemical Engineering.

In my view, we have the quality. Undoubtedly, this needs to be ramped up.

There are many ways to measure the success of Malaysia's higher education system. Above, I've highlighted a few – by way of national ranking, subject ranking and enhancing publications.

These certainly aren't the be all and end all. Perception, of employers, parents and society, as well as the reality of our graduates' performance in industry is vital too.

But let's not stray away from the message here. Our education system is improving. And as I've said in the past, we are soaring upwards.

We have many reasons to be proud of what we've achieved, but we are aware there's still effort to be made. With the recently launched Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025) and continued support of all stakeholders, we can continue to soar.

The writer, Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh is Second Education Minister. Connect with him via Twitter @idrisjusoh, www.facebook.com/datoseriidrisjusoh/datoseriidrisjusoh or e-mail idrisjusoh.moe@gmail.com. This is one in a series of articles for this column which appears every fortnight. It also sees the contributions of Deputy Education Ministers Datuk Mary Yap and P. Kamalanathan who share their views on various education-related issues.