

'Poor QS ranking does not mirror education quality'

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's recent performance in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2019 is merely a reflection of the standards of its tertiary education and does not necessarily mean that Malaysian universities were doing badly, education experts say.

Parent Action Group for Education chairman Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim said the rankings were a yardstick to gauge the performances and competitiveness of local universities globally.

"We can't do without rankings, but it's not the end if an institution is not ranked," she said.

Azimah said rankings should only be used as a guide for potential employers, parents or students. "Overemphasis on ranking may put the quality of teaching at risk. There must be a balance."

The decline in rankings is reportedly attributed to employ-

ers' lack of satisfaction with local graduates.

National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general Harry Tan said the drop in ranking could mean that the universities were outperformed.

"What we need to do is look at all the criteria and parameters of the ranking to gauge if there was a drop or otherwise."

He said rankings should be scrutinised carefully as the subjects that showed a decline could proba-

bly be the institutions' niche subjects. "We need more information on this. As long as the universities are still ranked, there shouldn't be an issue."

Only four Malaysian depart-

ments were ranked among the top 50 in the world for their subjects, losing over half of its top-50 departments.

Out of the four, only Taylor's University rose in the Hospital & Leisure Management ranking and was placed 14th in the ranking list, rising seven spots from the last QS edition.

Its vice-chancellor and president Professor Michael Driscoll said their achievement was significant due to the addition of the component that gauged graduates in the employers' eyes. "This year, there is an increase in the weightage of how the institution is viewed by employers."

Universiti Malaya gained placings in 34 subjects. It ranked 31st for Library & Information Man-

agement (down seven places), 38th for Development Studies (down eight places) and 47th for Electrical and Electronic Engineering (down 17 places).

In total, 157 departments in Malaysian universities were ranked.

Besides UM, the other four most-ranked were Universiti Sains Malaysia (gaining a placing in 25 subjects), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (25), Universiti Putra Malaysia (22) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (14).

Employer Reputation, which looks at how highly employers worldwide regard a particular institution's graduates, is one of the four key indicators in the ranking methodology. The other three are Academic Reputation, Citations per Paper, and H-Index which evaluates the productivity and impact of the average scholar at a given faculty.



Professor Michael Driscoll