



Turkey performs strongly on list of top Asian universities

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Turkey has five universities in the top 100 universities in Asia according to a ranking released last week by the Times Higher Education magazine, which an expert has said is an "excellent result" for the country.

The Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings 2013 was released last week. The rankings are compiled in collaboration with Thomson Reuters and evaluate the performance of universities based on a variety of criteria such as teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook.

Turkey's Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) (22nd place), Bilkent University (28th place), Koç University (31st place), Bogaziçi University (37th) and İstanbul Technical University (38th) are all on the list of the 100 best Asian universities, where Japan's University of Tokyo holds the top spot.

But as Turkey has more than 170 universities, isn't it a bit of an embarrassment to have only five make the list? Editor of Times Higher Education Rankings Phil Batty told Sunday's Zaman in an e-mail interview that this is hardly so. Batty said: "When taken into the context of the broader Asian demographics, five universities in the top 100 is an excellent result for Turkey. Considering the size of the population, the number of universities and investment that nations like Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China are making in their higher education systems, Turkey is definitely punching above its weight. I think that Turkey should continue to be very proud of their excellent performance in the Times Higher Education Rankings." He also said the country's higher education system seemed to be consistent in terms of strengths and weaknesses. "A detailed analysis of the 13 indicators used in the rankings does not show any particular areas of strength or weakness. In fact, the performance is fairly consistent across the board," Batty said.

Japan, whose University of Tokyo leads the Asia University Rankings list, has more top 100 institutions than any other nation. Taiwan is the second most-represented country in the rankings with 17 institutions, followed by mainland China with 15. This is consistent with these nations' willingness "to invest generously in building world-class universities and to ensure that they are at the forefront of the knowledge and innovation economy," Batty said. These countries are also doing better than most Middle Eastern nations. In that region, Turkey and Israel are the exceptions with a medium or strong performance across all indicators.

Batty also commented that investment in higher education is investment well made, "as it brings abundant financial returns to the nation through an improved economy." He added, "But a world-class university needs more than just money -- freedom is also essential: academic freedom for scholars to pursue curiosity-driven research and to push forward the boundaries of our collective knowledge and institutional freedom to manage their own affairs free from too much government interference and to be dynamic and flexible in the face of a rapidly changing world."

He also shared his opinion on what makes a university a good one. "But the single most influential performance indicator is one of research impact: We look at how influential each university's research output has been in pushing the boundaries of knowledge in world class research journals. Each of our top three institutions in the tables does well there. In addition, the top three institutions in the tables also have a strong international reputation for their research, and enjoy a strong research income and productive research output."

Education opportunities in Asia

The rankings show that Asia has some very good universities. Batty agrees, saying, "In terms of higher education, Asia is currently the most exciting and dynamic continent on earth." He said the rankings served to provide students with more information on institutions that are close to making the world top 400, but have not quite made it, which in turn will enable students to make fully informed choices when choosing a place to study.

The Times Higher Education magazine published its inaugural Asia University Rankings, a top 100 list based on the trusted performance indicators used to create the prestigious Times Higher Education World University Rankings that are published each autumn. The rankings for Asia and global rankings are available on the institution's website at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/>.