



# The tough road to academic excellence

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The winners of the “excellence contest” of the Institutions of Eminence (IoE) have been announced by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

- While 10 institutions were supposed to have been chosen, apparently only six were affordable — a telling reality, especially since only three will receive any government funds. And none of the winners is actually a public university — a multidisciplinary institution at the heart of any academic system.
- The three public institutions chosen (the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and two Indian Institutes of Technology, at Mumbai and Delhi) are all technologically-oriented institutions.

## Salient features of the contest and analysis

- While the public institutions will receive ₹1,000 crore (\$150 million) over five years, the private ones get none at all but will be provided significant freedom from government regulations and institutional autonomy.
- While ₹1,000 crore is “serious money”, it is by no means transformative.
- The increased funding will help the institutions with innovations or perhaps the ability to raise academic salaries to better compete internationally but will not permit fundamental changes.
- If the IoE institutions focus mainly on making the changes that will help them improve in the global rankings, they will be missing a huge opportunity for key reforms — and they are unlikely to achieve the result of a high ranking anyway.

## Positives and perspectives

- A positive element of the IoE programme is the high degree of autonomy and freedom from government policy and regulatory constraints.
- However, Jio (and the others chosen for IoE) need to have creative ideas for the organisation and governance of the institution.
- For example, to what degree would the decision-making process be collaborative with faculty involvement as compared to a top-down mandate? Traditional corporate management styles do not align with the governance expectations of a creative university.

Building world-class universities is a resource-intensive and highly creative endeavour which will be a test of patience and persistence. Indian higher education is in dire need of exemplars of excellence.

Source: [The Hindu](#)