

Why students must know about IP rights

India's research output had an annual growth rate of 9% from 2013 to 2017. This was considered to be one of the most productive periods in the Indian research scenario. In 2019, India's position rose to 36 from 44 (2018) in the International Intellectual Property (IP) Index. Ironically, increased research did not amount to increase in IP applications, which continued to be limited. In 2017-18, 3,50,546 applications were received by the IP offices under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, which was slightly better than 2016-17, when the total applications were 3,50,467.

The annual review of the international patent system, administered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) claimed that only 6% of Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) applications originating from India were filed by universities in 2018. This implies that young researchers need to know more about IP rules and rights.

INCREASING NEED FOR IPRs

With the increasing focus on innovation, research and cross-border collaborations, students need to learn about intellectual property rights (IPRs) to safeguard their inventions. "As countries turn to innovation and creativity for sustainable development, the need to understand the importance of IPRs has increased, especially in developing countries," says a spokesperson from WIPO. In contemporary times, the research is translational and transforms into services or products. IPRs help in protecting as well as commercialising the inventions. "If the innovations are patented and taken up for commercialisation by the startups, it will give a competitive advantage to the inventors and entrepreneurs," says Nithin V George, TEO-CO chair associate professor, Electrical

Top 10 academic applicants for patents in 2017-18

Institute/University	Applications filed
Indian Institutes Of Technology (collectively)	540
Amity University	119
Saveetha Dental College And Hospitals, Saveetha University	118
SRM University	81
Bharath University	66
Shoolini University	62
Chandigarh Group of Colleges	58
Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore	58
GH Raison College of Engineering	56
GHR Labs and Research Centre	56
Sandip Institute of Engineering And Management	46
KCG College of Technology	40

In 2016-17
3,50,467
IPRs applications were received by the IP offices under the DPIIT

In 2017-18
a marginal increase was seen with

79
more applications

Source: Annual reports by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry

Filing for intellectual property rights not only helps innovators protect their invention, but also provides better collaboration and funding opportunities, reports **Sheetal Banchariya**

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INTEGRATING IPRs IN CURRICULUM

IPRs have various verticals including

patent, trademark, design and copyright, where some aspects are more talked about in the academic community than others. Experts believe that the foundational

awareness regarding the rights of a creator needs to be developed in students from the school level. Bengaluru-based Vikas Dhar, CEO and founder, TekIP Knowledge Consulting, a technology and patent consulting firm, calls for the need to have a culture of respecting the rights of a creator and giving due credit while using someone else's creation. "When students enter the professional world they will exercise IP rights with their inventions; hence it must be a part of the curriculum in schools and universities," he adds.

Echoing Dhar, Ashutosh Kumar Srivastava, who specialises in IPR laws and teaches at the DU's Faculty of Law, says that the UGC can introduce a compulsory 2-credit course on IPRs, similar to the Environmental Studies course in all the higher education institutions.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) continue to file maximum patents, with 540 applications in 2017-18, followed by Amity University with 119 applications. The IPR ecosystem in non-premier institutes across the country needs prolonged efforts to make students aware of the importance and filing procedures. Dhar adds that the leadership in the funding agencies are pushing innovators/entrepreneurs towards owning their technology before asking for funds. Hence, when an innovator chooses to file for an IPR, it provides other benefits beyond protection such as licensing, better collaboration and funding opportunities. "The academic community needs a higher level of sensitisation and exposure to patenting and technology commercialisation. All academic and research institutions should also develop in-house expertise for assessment and filing of provisional patent applications as well as commercialisation of patented technologies," adds George.

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