



Strategic Policy Towards a World-Class University: An Indonesian Islamic University Experience

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ABSTRACT

A world-class university is a primary goal of most universities, including Islamic universities in Indonesia. Research about a strategic policy of universities toward a world-class university (WCU) has been conducted. However, few researchers have explored the strategic policy of Islamic universities to achieve world-class status, particularly in Indonesia. Responding to the gap, this research aims to examine the strategic policy implemented by an Islamic university in Indonesia (i.e., UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta) toward a world-class university. In addition, this research also reveals potential challenges encountered by the university in becoming a world-class university. This research employed a case study design involving selected three informants: (1) the head of quality assurance of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta; (2) an expert in strategic policy of higher education; and (3) an expert of policy and management in higher education. An in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were conducted with the informants to gather the required data. The findings depicted that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has implemented several indicators of a world-class university, such as designing an international curriculum, building partnerships with international universities, and organizing international standardized programs of human resources development. However, the university also encountered several challenges, such as a lack of internationally reputable professors, a lack of international students, and a lack of independence in terms of facility and financial issues. In conclusion, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has not been recognized as a world-class university, but it is continuously developing toward a world-class status. This research offers both theoretical and practical contributions to developing Islamic universities in Indonesia toward a world-class university.

Keywords: Islamic university; strategic policy; UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta; world-class university

Introduction

The modernization of higher education is essential for the development of a country's education system, and world-class universities are a crucial component of this process in developed and developing countries (Li & Xue, 2022). Additionally, world-class universities contribute to the internationalization and globalization of education (Do & May, 2023). The fundamental concept behind education modernization is to prioritize people and promote overall human development and sustainable societal development (Li & Xue, 2022; Mudzakkir et al., 2022). A diverse and sustainable global education system leads to comprehensive and systematic education modernization driven by innovation, cooperation, openness, and shared prosperity (Woo, 2022). Quality and fairness are the fundamental starting points for global education modernization. The creation of world-class universities also plays a crucial role in the modernization of world politics, economy, culture, and history (Chaeddhananan & Dhirathiti, 2022; Yang & Welch, 2012). Creating world-class universities is a key strategy for higher education institutions to promote superior-quality education outcomes in Indonesia, and previous research has examined student cultivation, faculty development, campus culture, and institutional management (Do & May, 2023; Li et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2019). However, there is currently a lack of research on

investigating world-class universities for higher education sustainability in Indonesia, especially in the context of Islamic universities.

Based on the experience of world-class universities, there is a close relationship between educational modernization and the market economy, knowledge economy, internationalization, and globalization (Salmi, 2016; Song, 2018). Education modernization plays a role in enhancing global competition and acts as a buffer to limit the effects of the worldwide economy amidst globalization (Yang et al., 2021). However, the COVID-19 pandemic, which started in 2020, has caused a significant development crisis worldwide, affecting world-class university creation, global relations, societal development, and political and economic models. The pandemic has also impacted higher education in Indonesia, and while the fight against COVID-19 continues, it has entered a phase of "normal epidemic prevention." Although the pandemic is gradually slowing, some areas still have high incidence rates. During this period of COVID-19, restructuring of global political powers, and the rise of new nationalism, Indonesian higher education has a weak connotation and brand value due to a lack of global identity (Rosser, 2019; Srirahayu, 2018). The limited international exchanges and cooperation exacerbate the challenges that higher education in Indonesia faces due to being cut off from the outside world (Sukoco et al., 2021).

The term "World Class University" is generally associated with four dimensions: sufficient funding, research excellence (such as publications and awards), internationalization through research collaboration, and knowledge transfer through conferences or patents (Irungu et al., 2020). Some argue that good governance, a pool of talented individuals, and adequate resources are also key strategies for achieving world-class university status (Altbach & Salmi, 2011). In Southeast Asia, universities ranked in the top ten of the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings were located in Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea. In contrast, the top ten universities of the Times Higher Education (THE) were located in China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea. Chinese universities have been particularly successful in attaining world rankings (Huang, 2015), while the South Korean government has made it a priority to raise their higher education institutions to world-class status (Byun et al., 2013). However, Indonesian universities have few regional rankings in the QS, and globally, they have a long way to go. Success factors for world-class universities were investigated by Zakaria (2021), who found that success depended on the quality of the major missions of higher education. From the literature review, it was discovered that Indonesian universities are beginning to realize their potential to become world-class universities and have been investigating their current contexts and problems, as well as future development guidelines and perspectives of academics, to improve their potential and capabilities in all dimensions and be more competitive (Hamid et al., 2022; Sukoco et al., 2021). Considering some crucial aspects of achieving a world-class university, research on factors that enhance this objective is highly necessary. Having reviewed the current literature, a research gap is observable. There have been few studies concerned with the strategic policy of Islamic universities in Indonesia to become world-class universities. As a result, investigation into this area still requires more lack of empirical evidence. Thus, this study focuses on the strategic policy executed by an Islamic university in Indonesia (i.e., UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta) by scrutinizing its attempts to reach the standard of becoming a world-class university. In addition, potential challenges encountered by the university have also been explored. In this context, this study examines both theoretical and practical explorations of education policies in the context of Islamic higher education. To ensure its objectives, this study is guided by the following research questions:

Therefore, this study aims to scrutinize the strategic policy performed by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta Indonesia as an Islamic university that is developing toward a world-class university. To ensure the objective, this study is guided by two research questions:

1. How does the Indonesian Islamic university (i.e., UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta) develop a strategic policy toward a world-class university?
2. What challenges have the Indonesian Islamic university (i.e., UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta) encountered in becoming a world-class university?

Literature Review

Philosophy of World-class University

Conceptually, according to literature in the domain, a World-Class University (WCU) is often referred to as the most prestigious research university and is considered crucial in developing a nation's competitiveness in global knowledge (Alden and Lin, 2004; Ngoc and Guo, 2008). Universities play a vital role in creating and disseminating knowledge, educating skilled workers in technological and intellectual leadership, and serving the needs of society (Altbach, 2007). Moreover, Salmi (2009) explains that a WCU is a top-ranked university based on international standards of excellence. According to Altbach and Salmi (2011), a WCU is a university with a global reputation. Meanwhile, Aula and Tienari (2015) explain that a WCU is an institutional ecology with a very different but tightly integrated vision. In a similar direction Ramaprasad et al. (2016), WCU is a national and global leader in teaching, research, innovation, and producing graduates who become leaders in both the public and private sectors. To sum up, a world-class university is acknowledged as having an international standard and is considered excellent in teaching, researching, innovation, and producing graduates.

Various definitions of a WCU encompass many of the same characteristics, such as highly qualified staff, excellence in research, quality teaching, high levels of government and non-government funding, international and talented students, academic freedom, well-defined autonomous governance structure; and comprehensive facilities for education, research, and administration. Salmi (2009) states that the status of a WCU is based on international recognition. Meanwhile, Byun et al. (2013) state that the feeling of global reputation and, therefore, standing as a world-class institution come to be measured through visible dimensions. For this purpose, research activities, publications, citations, and awards of key faculty members, in the view of Byun et al. (2013), become the most significant measure of a WCU, while the process of education and the welfare of the higher education institution is not considered.

Ramakrishna (2012) contends that for a university to attain WCU status, it must meet seven distinct criteria, which include (1) offering an international curriculum, (2) fostering student exchange programs, (3) increasing the enrollment of international students, (4) prioritizing the professional growth of faculty and improving communication among teaching staff, (5) utilizing information technology, (6) cultivating partnerships with foreign institutions as a means of strengthening relationships, and (7) advancing the university's progress towards international development.

Sharma (2013) outlined three characteristics of a WCU: (1) An emphasis on talent, regardless of a country's wealth or size; (2) High tuition fees, which Sharma argues are necessary for building and sustaining a world-class university, as exemplified by Saudi Arabia's \$10 trillion investment in a research university, or Qatar's \$750 billion expenditure on the Qatar University of Cornell Medical School; and (3) A commitment to important elements such as a competitive environment, unfettered scientific research, academic freedom, creativity and innovation, flexibility, and the elimination of conservative policies. Similarly, Salmi (2016) identified three key features of a world-class university: (1) A focus on the talents of both faculty and students; (2) Sufficient financial resources to support a range of learning environments and advanced research; and (3) Effective governance that prioritizes strategic vision, innovation, and flexibility, while minimizing bureaucracy. According to Wang et al. (2012), the fundamental characteristics of a WCU demonstrate excellence in research that supports world-class education in higher education contexts. Thus, the idea of a WCU is conceptualized as an aspirational vision that supports ambitious and progressive strategic decision-making and planning in higher education institutions. In the research by Bejinaru and Prelipcean (2017), it is shown that achieving WCU status is an urgent need for applying academic leadership in Romanian universities, which means creating a new organizational culture based on the awareness that in difficult times, academic leadership has proven to be the best solution for university governance towards WCU status. According to Li and Eryong (2021), collaboration between universities in the UK and China towards WCU status is enriched by indicators that reflect international reputation or contribution to the university community. Hence, Indonesian universities could refer to these previous studies to reach the status of a world-class university.

Strategic Policy in Higher Education

The act of strategic planning, as defined by the Society for College and University Planning, is a purposeful and systematic endeavor to establish fundamental choices and measures that shape and steer the identity, purpose, and values of an institution (Warren & Churchill, 2022). Its objective is to create a unified vision of the ideal future state of an organization and the necessary steps to achieve it (Sanches et al., 2022). A strategic plan for a college or university provides direction for institutional decision-making, both in the short-term and long-term. If executed effectively in higher education, strategic planning can foster collaboration and serve as the adhesive that binds the internationalization process together (Moran, 2020). Essentially, it has the potential to fortify the institution's culture and empower it to reach its desired goals.

A strategic plan is essential for higher education institutions, as it lays out the direction for all aspects of the college or university, including academics, facilities, and student life (Williams, 2021). By engaging in a thoughtful and realistic strategic planning process, colleges and universities can distinguish themselves from their competitors, which is particularly important in today's market where the competition for student enrollment is fierce and can have a significant impact on an institution's financial stability (Falqueto et al., 2020). As more and more higher education institutions face the possibility of merging or closing, a well-implemented strategic plan can help a college or university establish a secure position in the ever-changing higher education landscape.

Hassanien (2017) highlights three critical reasons why strategic planning is essential in higher education. Firstly, it helps to provide a clear focus by formalizing the mission, vision, values, goals, and objectives of the institution. This allows all stakeholders to agree on the same priorities and work together towards a common goal. Secondly, it promotes community and stakeholder engagement by incorporating feedback sessions into the planning process. This helps to build community support and leads to a more targeted strategic plan. Lastly, strategic planning helps to create efficiency and save money. By implementing a strategic plan, institutions can identify areas where they can improve efficiency, resulting in cost savings.

This Study

Looking at the review of literature in the previous sections, it is crucial to state that this research offers a novel concept of portraying the strategic policy of an Islamic education toward a world-class university. This study is vital in several ways. First, examining the strategic policy of such Islamic universities provides a clear picture

for related stakeholders to make accurate preparations for achieving world-class status. Second, little research has been addressed to depict the strategic policy of an Islamic university toward a world-class university status; hence, it makes this research worthy of inquiry.

Methodology

Research design

The present research aims to reveal the strategic policy of an Islamic university in Indonesia to become a world-class university (WCU). This research uses a qualitative approach to understand the process in which a phenomenon occurs (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, this research is based on an interpretive paradigm related to qualitative processes such as phenomenology and the case study tradition (Prasad, A., & Prasad, P., 2002). To achieve this, the research ensures that the Islamic university leaders and managers who are the subjects of this study interpret the World-class university strategy reflected in the selection of data sources, data collection, and data analysis. The data collected for the case study is examined as an integrated whole aimed at developing an in-depth explanation of the research subject (Gentless et al., 2015). Thus, this case study can also be considered exploratory research. Therefore, the research design uses a case study approach, examining the strategic policies implemented by an Islamic university in Indonesia to achieve WCU status.

Informants

Informants play a crucial role as a source of data in qualitative research. They are individuals with specialized knowledge and expertise about a particular culture or group of people. Researchers identify informants early on in the research process to gain access to information and ongoing feedback during data collection and interpretation. In order to capture the strategic policies implemented by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta towards achieving World-class university status, this study used purposive sampling to select informants based on two criteria: (1) involvement in campus management and (2) knowledge and direct involvement in implementing campus policies towards WCU. As a result, the study involved the head of the Quality Assurance of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (informant 1), as the primary informant. Two experts (informant 2 and informant 3) in the fields of strategic policy and higher education management were also invited for data triangulation and validation purposes. During the process of data collection, 3 additional informants were invited. They are the Vice-rector for academic affairs of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (informant 4) and experts in higher education and curriculum policy (informant 5 and informant 6).

Instrumentation and Data Collection

This study used in-depth interviews as the main instrument for data collection. The interview was conducted with informant 1. The questions for the interview were developed through a literature review process and adjusted to the research problem, which was related to strategic policy and the challenges faced towards achieving WCU status. The questions in this study referred to the characteristics of WCU proposed by Ramakrishna (2012) (see literature review). Furthermore, a Focus Group Discussion was conducted with two experts in the fields of strategic policy and higher education management. The FGD aimed to validate the data that had been obtained and enrich the research findings if any new information was discovered during the FGD process.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the in-depth interview was then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman's (Lester et al., 2020) steps as follows. First, the researcher transcribed the results of the interview with informant 1. Second, coding was performed on the transcribed data, referring to theme analysis according to the research problem. Third, the researcher created categories to ensure that the coded data was relevant to the aim of this study. Fourth, data reduction was performed to re-check the accuracy of the resulting data. Fifth, the data was presented according to the themes and research problems addressed in this study.

Results

The results of this research are presented based on the two research questions: (1) the strategic policy of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta toward WCU and (2) the challenges encountered by the university toward WCU. Some relevant excerpts from the informants, both interview and FGD, are quoted to support the delineation of the findings.

Strategic Policy

As the answers to the first research question, strategic policies implemented by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta are scrutinized as the findings. The findings are classified according to the characteristics of a world-class university, as proposed by Ramakrishna (2012).

Offering an international curriculum

With regards to the curriculum being implemented at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Informant 1 stated that the campus is currently optimizing the implementation of the Independent Learning Campus Program (in Indonesia MBKM), which was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia as an effort to respond to the learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the recent years. However, informant 1 also explained that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is continuously conducting workshops on the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum involving FIBAA (Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation) and other Islamic universities. Informant 1 emphasized the importance of implementing an OBE-based curriculum for higher education institutions to bridge the gap between the education process in higher education and the world of work.

"Currently, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is still working on optimizing the implementation of the Independent Learning Campus program as one form of restoring the quality of education in higher education institutions after the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we consistently hold workshops on the development of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum towards internationalizing the curriculum as one of the world-class university standards" (Informant 1).

The results of an in-depth interview with Informant 1 also showed that OBE is a manifestation of the Independent Learning Campus Program (MBKM). Therefore, in the formation of courses, the Graduate Profile/Learning Outcome Achievement (CPL) must be prepared first by adjusting the human resources because the Graduate Profile leads to concentration and the availability of the Graduate Profile that should not overlap with other study programs. Graduate profiles can be associated with local wisdom and local needs or linked to the uniqueness of the study program. In implementing an OBE-based curriculum, higher education institutions must first choose the appropriate curriculum components, and an OBE-based curriculum is one model that can be developed for a world-class university.

"Actually, the OBE-based curriculum is part of the Independent Learning Campus program that is currently being implemented. Courses must be formed based on the desired learning outcomes for each study program. We are continuously developing curriculum models like this towards a world-class university." (Informant 1)

In addition, informant 4 and informant 6 argued that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (and other Islamic universities in Indonesia) should develop an international standardized curriculum to ensure that the learning process is implemented based on international standards.

"In my opinion, an international curriculum is highly required to accelerate Indonesian universities towards a world-class university. We should begin to design and develop such a curriculum to enhance the quality of the teaching-learning process." (Informant 4)

"To become a world-class university, universities must be aware of an international curriculum adaptation. Not only is MBKM (Indonesian curriculum), but also a curriculum which accommodates international standard and good governance practices." (Informant 6)

Fostering student exchange programs and increasing the enrollment of international students

The international student exchange program has become a crucial aspect of the effort to become a world-class university (Ramakrishna, 2012). According to an in-depth interview with informant 1, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has conducted several international student exchange programs. One example is the Asia Student Exchange and Conference Program 2022, a global program that combines student exchange with a conference to enhance global skills in leadership, personal development training, language and cultural classes, and comprehensive education in one session. The program aims to equip youth with the skills and knowledge needed to become global leaders who are aware of global issues and to prepare them with quality education by learning from various world-class universities in Asia. This is an official program organized by Student Academy (under Student International) in collaboration with the Centre of Leadership and Entrepreneurial Studies at the University of Indonesia (CSEL UI) and Asia E-University, Malaysia, to facilitate young leaders and students to experience student exchange and international programs through online sessions during the pandemic.

"For example, students from the Islamic Broadcasting Communication Program (KPI), UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Vebri Aldiansyah, Nur Fadhilah Andini, and Muhammad Fahmi Idris, successfully participated in the Honourable Delegates for Student Exchange in Asia Student Exchange and Conference Program 2022 by Studec International on March 7th to 13th, 2022." (Informant 1)

Informant 1 also added that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is currently designing an international student exchange program in collaboration with several international universities and educational institutions. In addition, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is also trying to reactivate the international class program, which was previously implemented a few years ago but has not been well developed recently. This is an important indicator related to the realization of a world-class university.

"We are currently working on designing an international student exchange program in collaboration with several international educational institutions. In addition, we are also trying to reactivate the international class program, which was halted for a few years. This is an important instrument towards becoming a world-class university." (Informant 1)

According to informant 5, the student exchange program is a must to enhance international capacity. Thus, foreign exchange programs provide students with an opportunity to study in another country and experience a different environment. Informant 4 added that these programs offer opportunities that may not be available in the participant's home country, such as learning about the history and culture of other countries and meeting new friends to enrich their personal development. International exchange programs are also effective in challenging students to develop a global perspective.

"It [student exchange program] is a crucial program a university should have when walking toward a world-class university. It offers students opportunities to develop their skills and abilities, as well as experiences, both academic and non-academic environments" (Informant 5)

"Student exchange program provides chances for students to experience something new which may not be available in their home country. It is important in the context of world-class university" (Informant 4)

Prioritizing the professional growth of faculty and improving communication among teaching staff

The interview results show that human resources development at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is divided into two main aspects, namely the development of educational personnel (lecturers and instructors) and administrative personnel (staff). Informant 1 explains that the development of educational personnel, particularly lecturers, is carried out through several efforts that reflect internationalization, such as encouraging advanced study programs for lecturers abroad and the development of scientific competence through international conferences or similar activities. Additionally, UIN Sunan Kalijaga consistently conducts training and workshops to improve the skills and competence of lecturers, such as training for writing international journals and certification of expertise from global institutions.

"We are continually striving to encourage educational personnel to pursue advanced studies at the best universities abroad. In addition, training and workshops are also consistently conducted to equip lecturers with internationally standardized skills" (Informant 1).

For administrative personnel, the main objective of providing training is to improve the quality of internationally standardized services. UIN Sunan Kalijaga consistently encourages the provision of quality international services by administrative personnel (staff) through training, delegation, and workshops on various topics.

"In addition to lecturers, we also continually strive to improve the competence of staff to ensure the quality of services provided meets international standards. We conduct competency enhancement activities through training, delegation, and workshops" (Informant 1).

Cultivating partnerships

In terms of international partnerships, Informant 1 stated that UIN Sunan Kalijaga is continuously working to improve its quality and expand its network at an international level. One of the efforts is the establishment of academic and non-academic cooperation with Global University Lebanon. This collaboration offers opportunities for lectures and scholarships for UIN Sunan Kalijaga academic community members who want to continue their studies at Global University Lebanon. UIN Sunan Kalijaga and Global University Lebanon agreed that this cooperation is intended to deepen the understanding of religious studies.

"This cooperation program is not created for business purposes, but for the benefit of the development of religious knowledge, including reducing extremist thinking." (Informant 1)

In addition, Informant 1 also mentioned that UIN Sunan Kalijaga has established cooperation with Kırkkale Üniversitesi Turkey. The partnership aims to collaborate on knowledge to advance Islamic civilization. This collaboration also aims to foster the spirit of developing knowledge, resulting in Muslim scholars who can bring back the glory of Islam's era by conducting various academic collaborations such as student exchange, lecturer exchange, research, and academic projects related to Islamic science and civilization. Furthermore, UIN Sunan Kalijaga has also established an MOU cooperation with the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in the field of education, namely Social Work Practicum for students in Malaysia or student exchange between Indonesia and Malaysia. Such international cooperation activities are aimed at supporting the roadmap of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta towards a world-class university for Islamic higher education.

"We have established cooperation with several international universities, such as Kırkkale Üniversitesi Turkey and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, both in academic and non-academic fields. In addition to increasing knowledge and contributions to knowledge and Islamic studies in the world, this is an important step towards becoming a world-class university." (Informant 1).

Advancing the university's progress towards international development

As part of its efforts to become a world-class university, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has partnered with FIBAA (Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation) to enhance the accreditation of several study programs. According to the head of the Quality Assurance Agency at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (Informant 1), visits are being conducted to improve quality continuously in 18 study programs. As a follow-up to this cooperation, UIN Sunan Kalijaga will hold a workshop on Outcome-Based Education (OBE) involving FIBAA and several other Islamic religious universities that are interested. Informant 1 explained that

UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is striving to become an Islamic university in Indonesia that is involved in international accreditation as part of its efforts to become a world-class university.

"In line with the mandate and expectations of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia to have Islamic religious higher education institutions enter the World Class University, we want to participate and take the initiative to encourage other Islamic universities in Indonesia to be ready to enter the international accreditation scheme." (Informant 1)

The findings from the in-depth interview were then discussed in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involving the head of Quality Assurance at UIN, Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta (informant 1), an expert in strategic policy (informant 2), and an expert in higher education management (informant 3). The FGD was conducted as a process of triangulating the research findings and validating the data obtained in this study.

Regarding the internationally standardized curriculum, informant 2 emphasized that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has taken the proper steps by developing an outcome-based curriculum (OBE) that is integrated with the implementation of the ongoing *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) curriculum. Although it has not been fully developed, the OBE-based curriculum provides an overview that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has been striving toward becoming a world-class university.

"UIN Sunan Kalijaga has taken the right steps by developing an outcome-based curriculum (OBE) in the midst of implementing MBKM. This is important as one of the steps towards a world-class university." (Informant 2).

In terms of student exchange programs and international classes, UIN Sunan Kalijaga has made efforts to establish partnerships with international universities and educational institutions. In this regard, informant 3 added that establishing partnerships alone is not enough, merely putting them in writing in agreements; instead, it is about how the quality of the implementation of the collaboration is realized in the form of programs and activities. Informant 3 emphasized that international classes are essential for a university to achieve world-class university status.

"Establishing partnerships with international institutions is indeed very important as one of the efforts to increase participation at the international level. However, more than that, the quality of programs and activities must be prioritized as one of the strategic steps towards a world-class university." (Informant 3).

Moreover, Informant 3 added that human resources are one of the important pillars for a university to achieve its targets, including UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Regarding the findings of this research, informant 3 believes that the human resource development programs implemented by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta for both lecturers and staff are still not optimal. There are no groundbreaking programs that can accelerate the university's progress towards becoming a world-class university, such as providing scholarships for further studies abroad and inviting visiting lecturers from renowned universities abroad. Nevertheless, Informant 3 believes that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is on the right track by consistently organizing internationally recognized competency enhancement activities for lecturers and staff.

"I see that there is no breakthrough that can accelerate the realization of a world-class university in terms of human resource development. However, UIN Sunan Kalijaga is on the right track by consistently organizing competency enhancement activities for lecturers and staff." (Informant 3)

In short, the findings of the FGD strengthen the results of in-depth interviews with Informant 1. Not only does the FGD enrich the findings, but it also offers criticism and evaluation of the strategic policy implemented by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta toward becoming a world-class university.

Challenges

The results of the in-depth interviews also indicate several potential challenges UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, as an Islamic university in Indonesia, encountered in achieving world-class university status. Informant 1 stated that five crucial aspects pose a challenge for UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta to become a world-class university: (1) lack of internationally reputable professors; (2) insufficient number of international students; (3) inadequate digital facilities and infrastructure; (4) university budget which still heavily relies on government funding; and (5) minimal number of international teachers/instructors. Below are some statements of Informant 1:

"Regarding the challenges faced by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta in becoming a world-class university, there are several determining factors. Some of the most crucial are the low number of professors who have international reputations, the insufficient number of international students, and the lack of foreign teachers." (Informant 1)

"In addition, facility issues, particularly those related to information technology, remain an important issue that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta needs to address immediately. The campus must ensure that all parties receive adequate facility services to support the desired outcomes." (Informant 1)

"Furthermore, financial issues also need to be addressed. UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta still relies on government funding for financial matters. Therefore, we need to work harder to create business centers to support the university's finances." (Informant 1)

The FGD also agreed with these findings that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta must be independent in facilities and finances in order to become a world-class university. Informant 2 believes that an internationally reputable university must be well-prepared in terms of campus facilities and financial issues that support campus activities.

"In my opinion, facilities and finances are two crucial pillars for a campus to upgrade to a world-class university. In this regard, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta must optimize every opportunity available to become financially independent and to improve the supporting facilities for teaching and learning." (Informant 2)"

Discussion

Based on the findings, this research emphasizes that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is on the right track to becoming a world-class university. Although it has not yet been included as a world-class university, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has implemented some strategic policies in an effort toward a world-class university, according to Ramakrishna (2012). This Islamic university is developing an international curriculum, designing international student exchange, building international partnerships, and conducting programs to enhance human resources capacities. However, some challenges have also been revealed, such as (1) lack of internationally reputable professors; (2) insufficient number of international students; (3) inadequate digital facilities and infrastructure; (4) university budget which still heavily relies on government funding; and (5) minimal number of international teachers/instructors.

Islamic universities in Indonesia should have a strategic policy to become world-class universities. One of the critical aspects of this policy is the development of a curriculum that meets international standards (Aithal & Aithal, 2019; Reid, 2010; Tayep, 2016). The curriculum should be designed to meet the needs of both local and international students (Huang, 2015; Sanders, 2020). The curriculum should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is up-to-date and relevant to the changing needs of the world. This research shows that UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has begun to develop an internationally standardized curriculum that is based on education outcomes. This finding is relevant to Usuh et al. (2018), who state that to be a world-class university, one crucial aspect that should be taken into account is the curriculum. According to Bovill et al. (2011), a well-designed curriculum offers educators, learners, administrators, and community members a clear and measurable framework for providing a high-quality education. It outlines the expected learning objectives, standards, and essential skills that students must attain before progressing to the next level. Hence, to achieve world-class university status, a university must develop an internationally standardized curriculum.

Moreover, in order to become a world-class university, Islamic universities must also focus on international student exchange programs. These programs can provide an opportunity for students to learn about different cultures and ways of thinking (Yang et al., 2021; Yang & Welch, 2012). In addition, they can help to attract more international students to the university. According to the results of this research, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta builds partnerships with other universities around the world to offer exchange programs that allow students to study at different universities for a semester or more. This finding supports Tang (2021) and Rider et al. (2020) that international student exchange could be achieved through building collaboration with international universities and education institutions. As also found by this research, opening international classes for particular study programs can also become an alternative to attracting international students (Do & Mai, 2023).

Furthermore, financial issues are a critical factor that Islamic universities must address in order to become world-class universities (Alden & Lin, 2004). The universities must explore various options to diversify their sources of funding, including government grants, private investments, and partnerships with businesses and organizations (Hassanien, 2017; Mudzakir et al., 2022). By doing so, they can have the resources they need to improve their infrastructure, attract top talent, and offer high-quality academic programs. Based on the findings of this study, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is still dependent on government funds. Hence, it is worth the contribution of this research to suggest building more business centers, finding other alternative investments, and having financial collaboration with other institutions.

Hence, what must universities take into account? The objective of universities in Indonesia, as well as other universities, extends beyond the traditional four missions of teaching, research, academic services, and artistic and cultural engagement. In addition to these core responsibilities, universities should also provide support for entrepreneurship and actively promote the practical applications of research and innovation. This task holds significant importance for every university, particularly in the current era of demographic change, where society is aging and rapid technological advancements pose new challenges. Conversely, many universities are grappling with a declining number of undergraduate students. Therefore, universities must identify and address the evolving needs of the business and industry sectors. This necessitates a reevaluation of our educational system and research strategies.

The limitations of this research have further been acknowledged. First, this research was conducted at an Islamic university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Although it can provide careful and comprehensive findings, a broader scope of the research area is necessary. Thus, it is suggested that further studies involve other Islamic universities as subjects towards the world-class university. Second, due to time and cost consumption, the informants of this research are minimal. Therefore, we strongly recommend future research to take a more significant number of samples so that data will be rich and comprehensive. Apart from these limitations, this research offers fruitful insights for related stakeholders to develop Islamic universities into world-class universities.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, this research aims to explore the strategic policy of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta as an Islamic university in Indonesia towards a world-class university. This research also depicts potential challenges encountered by the university in becoming a world-class university. Drawing on a case study design, this research reveals that UIN Sunan Kalijaga is on the right track toward a world-class university through some programs that have been implemented, such as designing an international standardized curriculum, building international partnerships, and optimizing student exchange programs. However, some crucial aspects still should be considered by the university to achieve a world-class university, such as financial and facility issues, lack of international reputable professors, and lack of international students. In conclusion, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta has not been recognized as a world-class university, but it is continuously developing toward a world-class status.

This research offers both theoretical and practical contributions for Islamic universities in Indonesia to achieve a world-class university. Theoretically, this research becomes a pioneer in the literature enhancement about the strategic policy of Islamic universities toward a world-class university in Indonesia. Practically, this research offers valuable insights for other Islamic universities to strengthen their ideas and concepts toward achieving a world-class university. Despite these compelling results, this research has a limitation. It is conducted only with a single Islamic university (i.e., UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta). Therefore, future research is strongly suggested to involve more Islamic universities in Indonesia as research subjects to depict more accurate pictures of the strategic policies of these universities toward world-class universities.

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