

# Developing State Islamic University As a World-Class Center for Studying Islam

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## ABSTRACT

State Islamic University (UIN) is set to become a world-class center for Islamic studies in accordance with the policy of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia to make Indonesia a "center of world Islamic education". Indonesian Islam is hoped to be a trade-mark for the Indonesian people, and an attraction for other nations to learn about Islam. But the reality shows the quality of Islamic Religious Higher Education (PTKI) is very alarming, compared to that of the secular universities in Indonesia. Based on *webometrics* 2019, only 8 Islamic universities are in the top 100 of the best tertiary institutions in Indonesia, and their ranking is of the lower level. This paper aims to analyze the development strategy of UIN as a center for world-class Islamic studies. The analytical method used in this study is a descriptive-analytical method, combined with a concept study approach and interpretive analysis in the form of a critical thinking pattern for later synthesis to produce a conclusion. Based on the results of the analysis and conceptual study and the potential of UIN, there are several strategic steps that can be used as a consideration for developing UIN to become a center of world-class Islamic studies. They are: diplomacy in international academic lines, sending lecturers abroad (east middle), international-based academic policy, improvement of foreign language competence, communication services and international standard administration.

**Keywords:** *The development of UIN, a world-class center for Islamic studies*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, public and private campuses have been struggling to become a world class university (WCU). It can even be said that some campuses in Indonesia have been oriented to become a world class university. The excitement is increasingly high as the government allocated some budgets for certain campuses to help them realize their plan of becoming a world-class university.

The government fully supports the existence of international class universities. Since 2009 it has been stated that 17 tertiary institutions will be fully assisted by the government, especially leading universities in Indonesia such as the University of Indonesia (UI), Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB), Airlangga University, Diponegoro University, Brawijaya University, and others. Fasli Jalal, by then the Director General of Higher Education, gave an example of UGM, which got 70 billion to support the program to become a world class university.[1]

In 2014, the National Higher Education Accreditation Board (BAN-PT) in collaboration with Jakarta State Islamic University and Malang State Islamic University, held an International Conference with the title (Towards World Class Islamic Higher Education Institutions

Towards World Class Islamic Higher Education Institutions). The theme of world class became a warm discussion among the universities. In recent years, public and private campuses have sought to become world class universities (WCU). [2]

State Islamic University, too, has the opportunity to become a world class in the development of Indonesian-style Islamic scholarship. Indonesia as one of the countries in the world which is expected to play an important role of mediation over various turmoil that engulfs the Islamic world today, such as in Syria, Yemen, tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and never ending conflicts between Israel-Palestina. The Islamic world seems to be an uncomfortable place to live. Indonesia's potential and position as an alternative to the only relatively stable Muslim-majority state.

Based on the problems outlined above, it is necessary to take advantage of this opportunity to make Indonesia the center of world Islamic studies Thus, a careful planning is needed to develop a strategy for the State Islamic University to become a center of world-class Islamic studies. This paper is aimed to do that.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses literature study with a qualitative approach. Researchers examined from various sources of books and journals that discussed the development of Islamic tertiary institutions, before combining these theoretical data with real events (real) of the readiness of UIN to become a center for world-class Islamic studies.

The method used in this study is conceptual, so the analytical method used is descriptive-analytical, combined with a conceptual study approach and interpretive analysis in the form of critical thinking patterns.[3] Then the writer synthesizes the concept analysis to produce a new thought or conclusions, relating to the strategy of developing the State Islamic University as a center for world-class Islamic studies.

## 3. DISCUSSION

A support system and a band of policy are needed in order to realize the State Islamic University (UIN) as a center of world-class Islamic studies. According to Azyumardi Azra, almost all Muslim countries have no *policies* in the field of education, science and technology, that are clear, comprehensive, integrated and nationally oriented. In fact, in many cases, this field is the most neglected one, as most of the national policies of these countries are focused on economic growth. This starkly contrasts with the situation in the developed countries which give special attention to educational policies in the broadest sense, even exceeding foreign or military policies. Because, failure on the development of national education can broadly hamper the overall development in the future.[4]

Government support will be a supplement to the State Islamic University for becoming internationally based tertiary institutions. Strategic development of human resources and other infrastructure on an international basis. Some characteristics of international-based tertiary institutions according to Levin and Jeong are:[5] *First*, the excellence in research. It is shown by the quality of research, namely productivity and research creativity, publication of research results, the large number of donor agencies willing to support the research, the existence of patents, and soon. *Second*, academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement. *Third*, strong self-management. *Fourth*, adequate facilities and funding, including collaborating with international institutions.

*Fifth*, the diversity. The campus must be inclusive of various different social domains of students, including the diversity of scientific fields. *Sixth*, the internationalization program. Example of the internationalization programs is as follows: increasing student exchanges, the entry of international or foreign students, curriculum internationalization, international connections with other institutions (campuses and companies around the world) to establish world-class programs. *Seventh*, the democratic leadership. It is characterized by open competition between faculties and students, as well as collaboration

with external constituents. *Eighth*, the talented students. *Ninth*, the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). *Tenth*, the quality of learning in lectures. *Eleventh*, the connection with the community or community needs. *Twelfth*, the internal campus collaboration.

In order to realize the State Islamic University as a center of world-class studies, Indonesian President Joko Widodo has launched a 5000 Doctoral program. The President hopes that this program can become a breakthrough, one that enhance intelligence and innovation in Indonesian universities. With this program, Indonesia will be able to become the center of world Islamic civilization.

The Ministry of Religion has long formulated steps to internationalize Islamic higher education. Partnership with the Canadian Government is one example. The large-scale sending of Indonesian Muslim intellectuals to study postgraduate programs is one step that has been pioneered since the 90s. This program is also supported on an ongoing basis in various forms.

The 5000 Doctoral program has received a broad appreciation from the public. The people in the university flock to register in the program. Recorded until the end of May 2015, the application of the 5000 Doctoral program reached more than 5000 applicants. Quite a spectacular number. Some of the "smart" programs mentioned above provide optimism for the realization of the State Islamic University as the center of world-class Islamic studies will be stronger.

Most State Islamic Universities in Indonesia have gained recognition, or are widely known by the international community, so the next step that must be taken is creating an international reputation. This can be seen from two sides. *First*, graduates of state Islamic universities, with an international reputation. Academically the competencies of graduates of the State Islamic University can be accepted by the public or international institutions. For example, because currently ASEAN countries have bound themselves to enter a new life system called the Asean Economic Community where the flow of goods and services becomes free and open throughout ASEAN countries starting in early 2016, graduates of the State Islamic University must be able to compete and be able to work in international institutions. Of course, to be able to obtain that opportunity requires adequate competence to be able to compete with alumni of tertiary institutions throughout ASEAN countries.[6]

*Second*, the competence of lecturers at the State Islamic University is at least in line with the competencies of lecturers at the world college level. UIN lecturers must be able to be accepted to be guest lecturers or to be speakers at academic forums in universities in the world. Likewise, their scientific work can be used as a reference for students and academicians in universities in the world. Of course, for this last particular competency is needed to communicate both oral and written in international languages, including English. Because, although Malay is the language with the largest number of speakers in ASEAN which includes the people of Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore, and Southern Thailand, but

English remains the official language of Asean. It seems that with a very large number of speakers, Malay does not yet have enough rigidity to become an Asean language, with various reasons and reasons.[7]

At present, the development of the State Islamic University is very rapid. The Ministry of Religion has planned to make Indonesia a "center for world Islamic education". If during this time there is an impression that the center of Islamic education is centered in Middle Eastern countries that use Arabic, it is time for Indonesia to become the center of Islamic education for international citizens. Aside from Indonesia having many Islamic thinkers, there are also various and distinctive forms of Islamic education in Indonesia. Having sufficient readiness to host other citizens studying Islam in Indonesia.

*First*, Indonesia is the largest democratic country in the world with a majority Muslim population. At a time when Islamic countries in the Middle East, especially in the Arab region, were plagued by political problems that led to an atmosphere of conflict, the Indonesian nation with a majority Muslim population became a new magnet for other nations as examples of democracy, harmonious interfaith relations, pluralism, economic progress, and the compatibility of Islam and human rights.

*Second*, Indonesia is trusted by Islamic countries to hold international events about Islam. *Third*, the performance of Indonesian pilgrims in the eyes of the world is also very positive. The Indonesian pilgrimage has a very high level of international trust. In addition to the large number of Indonesian pilgrims, the hajj can be used as an excellent promotional event about Indonesian Islam.

*Fourth*, several UINs have a large number of foreign students. There are hundreds of students from Australia, America, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, the Vatican, Russia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and so on. A number of State Islamic Universities have opened international classes, this number will increase in line with the increasingly high international interest and trust in Indonesia which is safe, peaceful, and is the most democratic Muslim country in the world. *Fifth*, the government has established the Indonesia International Islamic University (IIU). The plan is that IIU will start accepting new students in the 2019 school year and new students who will receive at least 50 percent of students from abroad.

Some strategic steps that can be considered in the development of the State Islamic University to become a center of world-class Islamic studies, namely:[7]

1. International Standard Academic Path Diplomacy: To optimize the image and role of the State Islamic University in the international world, it can be pursued through academic channels. The State Islamic University has academics or professors of Islamic studies who have a reputation and are internationally recognized. This is an opportunity to introduce Indonesian-style Islamic studies to the world community. It is time for us, the

Indonesian people to have their own views in the development of Islamic scholarship in Indonesia. It is time that we no longer understand the Islamic studies conducted by Europe and America. We must be able to become a model for the development of world-class Islamic scholarship. To realize all of this, so that academics from the UIN circle can play an active role in developing the design of developing international-level Islamic studies, particularly in developing curriculum at UIN. Sending Lecturers Abroad (Middle East). The Ministry of Religion program launched a 5000 Doctoral scholarship program, and part of the scholarships are education abroad, this is a strategic step in developing UIN in order to improve the quality of world-standard lecturers. With the facilities and financial support from the government, it is hoped that the interest of UIN lecturers to continue their studies abroad will increase. With the spread of UIN lecturers to study in various countries, they can open new networks to work across universities and even across countries. Research collaboration and in the development of Islamic higher education in the future.

2. International Based Academic Policy: Scale programs cannot work without a clear and flexible internationalization policy implemented at UIN. One of the main indicators of internationalization is to increase the mobility of international scale activities, both inward mobility and outgoing mobility. Therefore there needs to be a development policy that is flexible and international-minded to encourage or facilitate the occurrence of incoming mobility (mobility in) and outgoing mobility (mobility out) in the environment of state Islamic tertiary institutions.
3. Enhancing International Language Competencies: Policies and programs are not possible without international languages. Various international surveys reveal that most of the latest scientific publications in the form of books and articles are written in English, some in Arabic, and very few in other languages. English and Arabic have been transformed into international languages and languages of science. The two foreign languages should really get serious attention from the leaders of UIN in

Indonesia. With the ability of English and Arabic, it is expected that lecturers and students can develop communication networks and academic cooperation to various countries in the world. Efforts to improve the teaching of foreign languages are urgently needed, both in the aspects of teaching methods and facilities, so that the teaching of foreign languages for lecturers and students at UIN runs more effectively.

4. International Standard Communication and Administration Services: The programs developed at UIN are endeavored to be world class. In addition, international standard communication and administration services are required. Therefore, each UIN needs to develop an international service institution (*International Office*) that is supported by Human Resources who have the ability to communicate and provide administrative and academic services according to the values prevailing in the international world. Without *international office* a strong, international scale cooperation programs at UIN will be difficult to run and can even "wither before it develops."

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia has set out to make Indonesia a "center for world Islamic education". Indonesian Islam will be a trademark for the Indonesian people and an attraction for other nations to learn Islam. Indonesia with a Muslim majority population becomes a new magnet for other nations as an example of democracy, harmonious interfaith relations, pluralism, economic progress, and the compatibility of Islam and human rights.

In order to make UIN a center of world-class Islamic studies, several UINs have a large number of foreign students. There are hundreds of students from Australia, America, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, the Vatican, Russia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and so on. A number of State Islamic Universities have opened international classes, this number will increase along with the increasing international interest and trust in Indonesia, a country that is safe and peaceful and is the most democratic Muslim nation in the world. To make Indonesia the center of Islamic studies, the government has established the Indonesia International Islamic University (IIU), the plan is that IIU will start accepting new students in this 2019 school year and new students who receive at least 50 percent of students from abroad.

Some strategic steps that can be considered in the development of the State Islamic University as a center for

world-class Islamic studies. They are: diplomacy in international academic lines, sending lecturers abroad (middle east), international-based academic policies, enhancing foreign language competence, international standard communication and administration services.

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