Building Collaboration in Islamic Higher Education: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT: For centuries, Islamic higher education has played an important role in nurturing individuals by constructing a deep knowledge and understanding of the Islamic faith, its principles and its application in society. This research aims to investigate the issues and the challenges of the international collaboration in Islamic higher education in the effort to build global competitiveness of State

Islamic Religious Higher Education (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri – PTKIN). The approach used in this study is qualitative descriptive based on theoretical and literature reviews. This research covers concepts, thoughts, and principles related to the issues and the challenges faced by Islamic higher education in the context of international collaboration. Based on the theoretical reviews, it was revealed that there were four important aspects in international collaboration of the universities: student exchanges; scientific collaboration in the form of research and publications; curriculum development; and jointtraining of lecturers and educational staff. This literature research is expected to provide new insights about how international collaboration of the Islamic higher education could deliver effective, productive and competitive Islamic education.

KEY WORDS: international collaboration; Islamic higher education; scientific integration

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, Islamic higher education has played an important role in nurturing individuals. Constructing a deep knowledge and understanding of the Islamic faith, its principles and its application in society, Islamic higher education continues to play its role and has contributed so much to the world civilization to this day. Islamic higher education prepares students with various competencies needed to navigate the increasingly complex modern world while maintaining and upholding Islamic values and teachings. Grounded in academic rigor, spiritual development, and ethical behavior, Islamic higher education serves as an important platform to foster intellectual growth, promote social harmony, and contribute to the betterment of humanity.

Islamic education has a rich history since the early days of Islam. In the Islamic tradition, seeking knowledge has always been a top priority. The establishment of institutions dedicated to Islamic learning is an integral part of the growth and dissemination of Islamic knowledge and scholarship. Since hundreds of years ago, well-known centers of Islamic studies, such as AlQarawiyyin University in Morocco and Al-Azhar University in Egypt, have served as beacons of Islamic knowledge and scholarship. The two universities has continuously attracted the attention of western scholars and students from all over the world. Although it must be admitted that the orientation of science and civilization has shifted to the West after the collapse of the very famous Islamic civilization in Cordoba.

In recent years, the stretching of Islamic higher education has seen a significant development. This was triggered by the needs of the growing Muslim community in various parts of the world. Islamic higher education institutions respond to the needs of the Muslim world and beyond by combining traditional Islamic sciences with contemporary academic disciplines. This allows students to be directly involved in criticizing Islamic teaching practices and exploring their relevance to the challenges of contemporary society. The curriculum was then designed to cover a wide range of subjects, including the study of the Qur'an, Hadith (prophetic tradition), Islamic jurisprudence, theology, philosophy, history, and Arabic, and courses outside of Islamic studies in order to build the integration of knowledge. The aim of the knowledge integration is to answer the challenges of life in the Era of Society 5.0 where a person can no longer be separated from technology.

In addition, today's Islamic higher education institutions have adopted a modern pedagogical approach to enhance students' experiences in the teaching and learning process. Lecturers are required to be able to utilize the latest technology and its diverse platforms, interactive learning platforms, and research-based methodologies in order to encourage a dynamic, conducive and attractive educational environment. The integration of traditional and modern Islamic tertiary education is designed to empower

students so that they are able to become individuals who are knowledgeable, moderate and inclusive. The estuary of this integration is the formation of individuals who can bridge the gap between Islamic scholarship and the demands of the contemporary world.

Furthermore Islamic higher education institutions have recognized the importance of nurturing a sense of social responsibility and ethical behavior among students. In the context of UIN Datokarama Palu, the integration of knowledge based on Islamic spirituality, moderate Islam and local wisdom is a pillar for building Islamic civilization that promotes a moderate and inclusive attitude. Here, Islamic higher education institutions such as UIN Datokarama Palu and other Islamic religious colleges in the republic emphasize the values of compassion, justice, tolerance and respect for diversity, encouraging students to contribute positively to their society and promote peace and harmony. Islamic educational institutions also continue to encourage interfaith dialogues and encourage students to be involved in activities that are inclusive of all religious groups. Involving students in activities that involve participants from different backgrounds will foster mutual understanding and harmonious cooperation.

Islamic higher education further serves as an important foundation for aspiring individuals to deepen their understanding of Islam and make a meaningful contribution to society. Combining rigorous academic study, spiritual development, and ethical teachings, these institutions equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the challenges of the modern world while upholding Islamic values and principles. Through their commitment to excellence, these educational institutions continue to shape generations of scholars and leaders who strive for intellectual growth, social harmony and advancement of humanity.

In an effort to build competitive Islamic higher education, international collaboration (International Collaboration) is very urgent. Altbach and Knight (2007) underlined the importance of higher education, including Islamic higher education, for internationalization. This is important because according to these experts, global demands require higher education and Islamic higher education to transform. This is in line with Kassim's view (2016) in the Malaysian context which is agreed upon by Suhadi et al (2019). In the view of Suhadi et al (2019), international collaboration fosters the competitiveness of Islamic higher education. In the Indonesian context, Salam and Salam (2020) revealed that international collaboration could be a catalyst for improving the quality of learning and scientific research. Nonetheless, there are a number of obstacles to Islamic higher education including UIN Datokarama Palu in the author's observation related to building effective and productive international collaborations. First, inspirational and leadership with solution is a very basic requirement in the efforts to build productive and effective international collaborations. This is in line with Siow's view (2019) where he places institutional leadership as an important pillar in building effective international collaborations.

Second, the work culture of faculty members and staff has not fully supported effective and productive international collaborations (Altbach, 2019). In fact, according to Dimond & Hadgraft (2016), international collaborations had a positive impact on the effectiveness of lecturers' learning. Third, the technological infrastructure is still being scrutinized in a number of Islamic tertiary institutions. UIN Datokarama Palu belongs to this category. It was observed that the technological infrastructures which allowed for an effective and productive collaboration has not yet been fully provided. One of the reasons as observed was the lack of financial provisions in this university. In fact, inadequate technological infrastructure has the potential to hinder an effective and productive international collaboration (Van Leeuwen and Tijssen, 2000; Marginson, 2014).

Based on the experience of Islamic higher education, this study aims to investigate issues and challenges of the international collaborations in Islamic higher education in an effort to build global competitiveness of State Islamic Higher Education (PTKIN). The approach used in this study is qualitative descriptive based on theoretical studies. The essence of this literature research is to provide new insights about how international collaborations in Islamic higher education could deliver effective, productive and competitive Islamic education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE
Definition and Role of International Collaboration

International collaboration (International Collaboration) in Islamic religious higher education can be defined as a work practice in which individuals in an institution work together for a common goal to achieve the desired target together (Kushnarenko, 2010). Collaboration allows individuals to work together to achieve the set goals. International collaboration in higher education leads to breakthroughs in knowledge, free exchange of ideas, and enduring bonds between institutions and nations. However, it starts with the connection between people in universities. In the language of business practitioners, Madabushi in Global Engage (2020) made mention that international collaboration awakens curiosity, perspective and learning. In his view, international collaboration makes it possible for an institution to receive the best talent.

Naretta and Dana (2019) provide a systematic review of the literature, examining the role of international collaboration in Islamic higher education. It explores various aspects, including challenges, benefits, and results of such collaborations. Although not specific to Islamic higher education, Hannan and Zain (2014) provide an extensive literature review discussing international collaboration in higher education, exploring models, challenges, and outcomes. This view presents some insights that can be applied to the context of Islamic higher education.

Altbach and Knight's (2007) article explores the motivations, drivers, and realities of internationalization in higher education, including Islamic institutions. It examines the impact of globalization on higher education and discusses collaboration as

a means of internationalization. Meanwhile, Kassim's (2016) study which focuses on Malaysian Islamic higher education provides insight into efforts to internationalize Islamic universities. This study examines the challenges and benefits of international collaboration, as well as an Islamic perspective on global engagement.

Suhadi et al's research (2019) focuses on collaborative engagement in Islamic tertiary institutions to develop competitiveness. This study investigates the collaborative engagement of Islamic higher education institutions as a means of enhancing competitiveness. This article examines collaboration strategies and models, emphasizing the importance of international engagement. Mahmud and Ali's (2012) article discusses efforts to internationalize Islamic higher education from the perspective of Muslim students. It explores the challenges, opportunities and motivations for international collaboration in Islamic higher education.

The work of Anuar and Samsuddin (2019), while focusing on international collaboration in Islamic higher education, summarizes the main findings of previous studies. It provides insight into the benefits, challenges and results of international collaboration in this particular context. In the context of Saudi Islamic Higher Education, Shaukat (2017) provides new insights into the opportunities and challenges of higher education in international collaboration. This article examines the opportunities and challenges of academic internationalization in Saudi Islamic higher education institutions. This article specifically discusses the impact of international collaboration on curriculum development, faculty mobility, and research collaboration. Here, Shaukat (2017) highlights the contributions of international collaboration to curriculum development, faculty member mobility, and research collaboration.

Salam and Salam (2020), focusing on Islamic tertiary institutions in Indonesia, explores the impact of international collaboration on the development of higher education. This research discusses the role of international collaboration in enhancing the teaching and research capabilities of Islamic universities. Like Shaukat (2017), Salam and Salam (2020) highlighted the importance of research collaboration. The two researchers agreed upon research collaborations because they believed that collaborative research would enrich the knowledge, experience, and information needed to develop the quality of higher education.

Al-Daihani's article (2014) investigates the relationship between international collaboration and the quality of higher education. Although not specifically for Islamic higher education, it provides insight into international collaboration mechanisms that can improve the quality of education.The arguments of a number of researchers in the field of international collaboration will provide a strong foundation for understanding international collaboration in Islamic higher education. The findings presented will provide further perspectives and insights on the topic of international collaboration in Islamic higher education.

Factors Influencing the Quality of Higher Education

In the era of fast-paced information where international collaboration is an urgent need for Islamic Higher Education, to improve the quality of education with well-planned educational services, several factors come into play. The following are some of the key aspects supported by relevant references: first, the development of faculty and staff is the first priority. Altbach's study (2019) shows that faculty and staff development plays an important role in developing the quality of higher education especially in the context of international collaboration. This argument is echoed by Dimond & Hadgraft (2016) who viewed that international collaboration helped lecturers develop effective teaching and learning processes. In the context of UIN Datokarama Palu, several efforts have been made to meet the demand for efficient and effective education services. Through international collaboration, a number of academics and speakers with various educational backgrounds and experiences from abroad such as Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Middle Eastern Countries, USA and UK have been invited to contribute to the development of university staff (lecturers and educational administration). staff). This program is continuously carried out to ensure that lecturers and staff can learn and transfer their knowledge and skills in the form of better educational services.

Similarly, the study of Wilkins et al (2017) showed that collaboration for quality assurance where curriculum development and improvement is placed at the center of the initiative plays a key role. This is in line with the findings of Nguyen and Tran (2019) in the context of Vietnamese higher education. They stated that one of the indicators of higher education quality assurance is the existence of a dynamic curriculum. This may mean that the curriculum as a road map for the implementation of teaching and learning in tertiary institutions must be reviewed periodically to meet the demands of the world of work and the labor market.

In addition, in a more specific context, lecturers (academicians) are encouraged to collaborate in research and exchange knowledge. This was noted by Van Leeuwen and Tijssen (2000) where they saw that interdisciplinary and international cooperation in science would enable research collaboration and effective exchange of knowledge. This idea was agreed upon by Marginson (2014) who identified that students with self-formation in international education would learn effectively.

Apart from the factors mentioned above, infrastructure and technology are two important factors that support universities to achieve their educational agenda. Here, the role of international collaboration is very important as it stimulates the effective and useful use of technology and its infrastructure to enable faculty and staff to share knowledge and information through online seminars and conferences. This idea is supported by the argument of Lo and Woo (2020) where contemporary technology enables academics to share knowledge and information around the world. Sharing knowledge and information allows faculty members to improve the quality of their teaching and learning.

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In addition, institutional management and governance cannot be underestimated in the whole process of achieving higher education goals. Siow (2019) stated that institutional leadership plays a key role in increasing the quality of international collaboration. Here, Siow (2019) places great emphasis on leadership. In the context of UIN Datokarama Palu, the placement of lecturers in management is based on the aspirations of other lecturers which are followed up with the considerations of the advisory body at the university. The process of placing teaching staff, especially managerial work, is carried out carefully to ensure the quality of education services. Although the process is taken with care, more needs to be done to enable institutional management and governance to be implemented effectively as suggested by Siow (2019) and De Wit and Altbach (2012). The key factors described by a number of authors will provide further insight into the factors that contribute to improving the quality of education through international collaboration.

METHOD

This research was designed as a literature-based research or better known as literaturebased research (literature review). Bryman (2004) and Creswell (2014) explained that research design basically provides an overview of priorities to be carried out in research. In other words, the research framework needs to be designed in order to determine the direction of research in a systematic manner so as to make it easier for researchers to map the stages of research in a good and directed manner. The study used a descriptive qualitative design (Licthman, 2010; Creswell, 2014; and Ruslin et al, 2022). Sugiono (2019) explains that qualitative research is a research approach that aims to find places where events that are the subject or object of research take place, so as to obtain direct and up-to-date information on relevant issues. Judging from the nature of the data, qualitative research is intended to understand this phenomenon through descriptions in narrative form.

Using a library research approach, this study aims to examine data that includes concepts, thoughts, and principles related to issues and challenges faced by Islamic higher education in the context of international collaboration. As a literature review, this study uses literature to collect data on issues, practices, and challenges of international collaboration within the scope of Islamic higher education (Zed, 2004: 2-3). The data was derived from various sources or references in the form of books, journals, proceedings, and handbooks that are relevant to the problem under study. Data collection was carried out through a process of conceptualizing and observing various phenomena in the context of Islamic higher education, especially those related to international collaboration. The data will be presented, described, compared, analyzed, and commented on proportionally according to the needs of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

International collaboration in Islamic higher education is collaboration between Islamic higher education institutions in various countries. The main objective of international collaboration is to improve the quality of Islamic education, in which the aspects of research, publication, sharing of knowledge and technology as well as innovation are both global and regional. In addition, the aim of this collaboration is to enrich student learning experiences, develop a comprehensive curriculum, and increase global understanding of Islam and Islamic religious practices globally.

Based on theoretical reviews of international collaboration in Islamic higher education, several aspects came into play. First, international student exchange programs allow students from Islamic higher education institutions in various countries to study abroad and experience acculturation of different cultures and educational systems. Altbach (2019) and Dimond & Hadgraft (2016) emphasized the importance of faculty members to share knowledge and skills in order to improve the quality of educational services. Meanwhile, the student exchange allows the transfer and transformation of knowledge and skills as well as innovation to run more quickly, bearing in mind that cultural curiosity and the perspectives of students with different cultural and traditional backgrounds allow this to happen. Through this exchange, students can increase their understanding of Islam in a global context, build international networks, and gain a broader understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Muslims around the world.

Second, research as a pillar of the three pillars *(tri dharma)* of higher education is a very important aspect to boost the quality of higher education. This is in line with the views of Van Leeuwen and Tijssen (2000) and Marginson (2014). Thus the aspect of international collaboration allows collaboration in research and development as a top priority. Through the dissemination of knowledge and new ideas through workshops, conferences and seminars both online and offline, research on Islam can be enriched and scientific innovations can be produced. It also allows researchers to share the resources and facilities needed to carry out research that contributes significantly to both institutions of higher education.

Third, what is no less important, according to experts, is curriculum development. In this context, Wilkins et al (2017) and Nguyen and Tran (2019) viewed that international collaboration plays an important role in the development of a comprehensive Islamic higher education curriculum. Within this framework, it is possible for Islamic higher education institutions to share experiences in developing curricula that are centered on Islamic values, but also reflect global needs. Here, the development of a holistic and inclusive curriculum is expected to prepare students to face the challenges of the Society 5.0 era.

Fourth, the joint training of lecturers and educational staff is one of the important aspects needed in international collaboration. This is important because education services, both academically and administratively, are urgently needed to continue

to improve the output quality of Islamic higher education. International collaboration allows lecturers and education staff to share experiences, knowledge, and skills related to educational services in each institution.

CONCLUSION

Through international collaboration in Islamic higher education, an environment that supports the growth of education, research and innovation in a global context can be created. However, the awareness of the academic community is needed to foster an effective, productive and competitive work culture including leadership that is inspirational and solutive. Equally important is building the awareness and the understanding of Islam globally so as to enable the promotion of inclusive intercultural dialogue to materialize. Thus the totality and the global understanding of Islam provides space for the creation of a harmonious life internationally.

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