
THE CONTRIBUTION AND ROLE OF LANGUAGE CENTERS IN ACTUALIZING WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITY

M. Abdul Hamid¹, Siti Fatimah², M. Abdullah Charis³

^{1,2,3}UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

^{1,2,3}Jl. Gajayana 50 Malang

Email: hamidabdul@uin-malang.ac.id¹, siti.fatimah@uin-malang.ac.id²,
mabdullahcharis@uin-malang.ac.id³

Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the contribution and role of Language Centers in actualizing World-Class University within the State Islamic Higher Education (PTKIN). This research was a case study using qualitative approach. The subjects were two Language Centers located at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. In collecting data, researchers conducted interviews and documentation. The data collected were analyzed through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The results showed that the contribution and role of the Language Centers were very significant in supporting the actualization of World-Class University. Both Language Centers have contributed to a) improve/increase foreign language skills, b) detect language skills, c) archive important translated documents, and d) organizing language-related training or workshops. They had a role in building a global university brand through international cooperation, seminars or conferences, and sending lecturers to Al-Azhar University in Egypt to introduce the Indonesian language and culture.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kontribusi dan peran Pusat Pengembangan Bahasa dalam mewujudkan World Class University di lingkungan PTKIN. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kasus dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Ada dua Pusat Bahasa yang menjadi subjek penelitian yaitu yang berlokasi di UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta dan Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dalam pengumpulan data, peneliti melakukan wawancara dan dokumentasi. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan cara reduksi data, sajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kontribusi dan peran Pusat Pengembangan Bahasa sangat signifikan dalam mendukung terwujudnya WCU. Kedua Pusat Bahasa telah memberikan kontribusi dalam: a) peningkatan kemampuan berbahasa asing, b) mendeteksi kemampuan berbahasa, c) mendokumentasikan dokumen-dokumen terjemahan penting, dan d) menyelenggarakan pelatihan atau workshop terkait bahasa. Sedangkan peran keduanya di antaranya membangun global brand universitas melalui kerja sama internasional, seminar atau konferensi, dan pengiriman dosen ke Universitas Al-Azhar di Mesir untuk memperkenalkan bahasa dan budaya Indonesia.

Keywords:

Contribution, Role, Language Centers, World-Class University

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INTRODUCTION

Along with the changes and developments in the economy, society, culture, science, and technology, World-Class University (WCU) has become a common topic among private, state, and Islamic universities for the last few years. World-Class University becomes the competitiveness of a nation and affects the quality of a citizen, both quality of life and standard of living (Bejinaru & Prelipcean, 2017). To achieve this recognition, universities must continue to improve their qualities in various fields such as education or teaching, research, publication, and community service (Rahardjo, 2014). Policy direction, decision-making and strategic planning that focus on World-Class University are aspects that are of concern to universities (Usuh, Ratu, Manongko, Taroreh, & Preston, 2018). Universities are challenged to create graduates who can compete with other well-known institutions domestically and abroad because the global world is full of various competitions that cannot be avoided.

The transformation agenda for a university to become a world-class university can be perceived as the internationalization of education aiming to a) improve the quality of education so that it is equal to the quality of international education, b) improve the quality of research so that its results can be recognized internationally, c) increase the competence and capacity of the academic staff, researchers, and graduates, d) improving the reputation of the university in the international community, e) getting financial benefits from the admission of international students, f) responding to the market that demands qualified workers in the international world, who are expected not only to work in their country, but are also expected to work and compete with others abroad (Tindaon, 2015).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has stated that it is time for State Islamic Higher Education (PTAIN), which has changed its status into a State Islamic University (UIN), to be transformed into a world-class university. At that time, two State Islamic Universities were projected to become World-Class Universities, namely UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. These two universities have institutionally achieved "A" accreditation from the National Board of Accreditation for Higher Education (BAN-PT), which is a crucial asset in the institutional transformation process. Of course, it did not only give a sense of pride for both State Islamic Higher Educations, which received the trust from the Minister of Religious Affairs, but this was also a challenge and a test that must be faced seriously. It happens because being acknowledged as a World-Class University requires maximum and comprehensive requirements in various aspects (Zainuddin, 2015). The government should strive to improve the quality of education in higher education (Alsawaha, Al-Alawi, & Al-Jayyousi, 2021; Salmi, 2016). In addition, the university also continues to strive towards a World Class University (Ros & Sol, 2021). In supporting the success of higher education transformation, there are three prerequisite components, namely the main prerequisites, important prerequisites, and supporting prerequisites (Sukmawati, Fauzi, & Wijayanto, 2021).

World-Class University can be seen as the category for the best university in the

world (Al-Alawi, Abdulmohsen, Al-Malki, & Mehrotra, 2018; Alhazmi & Yahmed, 2017) decided by several trusted institutions globally recognized as the boards of accreditation for the world-class university. Some of the boards of accreditation are THES (The Times Higher Education Supplement), which can be looked up through their website at: <http://www.thes.co.uk/>; ARWU (Academic Ranking of World Universities), which can be seen on the website: <http://www.arwu.org/>; and Webometric that can be visited in the website: <http://www.webometrics.info/>. Each of these accreditation boards has different criteria and assessment methodologies (Purbani, 2018).

All world-class universities' accreditation boards attached the research and international publications components as the assessment criteria (Dipojono, 2018; Pujiati, Melati, Purasani, & Nuryana, 2019). For that, human resources must be improved, not only in research but also in foreign languages (Fauzi, 2016). However, it turns out that there are still many academicians, especially lecturers, who encounter difficulties because they are confined by their mastery of foreign languages, such as Arabic and English. Apart from research and international publications, there are other criteria in ranking, namely the high mobility of students and lecturers coming to and from abroad. Indonesian students or teaching staff who take the programs conducted abroad must master the standard foreign language skills used in that country, both spoken and written. Likewise, the students and teaching staff or experts coming from abroad must learn and master the standard Indonesian, both oral and written forms, at the Language Center, under which BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) is running. It points out the urgency to have Language Center provide foreign language programs or training for them for special purposes, such as active communication, academic writing, etc. Agung and Santosa (2017) also stated that to get to a World-Class University, it is necessary to have facilities and infrastructure that support the strengthening of foreign languages so that they can become facilities in improving human resources.

Researches on World Class University (WCU) have been done before. However, as far as the authors search, there has been no research that specifically discusses the contribution and role of the Language Center in actualizing World Class University within PTKIN (the State Islamic Higher Education) environment. Therefore, to obtain an overview of the position of this research, the authors need to describe the relevant previous studies.

The first research conducted by Hasanah (2017) entitled *Strategi Membangun Global Brand Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN) Menuju World Class University*. Hasanah focuses on two things, i.e., the strategic plans used by the Rector of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim to build a global brand towards a World Class University and manage foreign students. Meanwhile, the authors focus on the contribution and role of the language centers in improving foreign language skills for the academic community through several programs and in building global branding as an effort to achieve WCU.

The second research held by Santosa and Agung (2017) entitled *Dinamika LPTK (Lembaga Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan) Menuju Perguruan Tinggi Kelas Dunia (WCU)*. This research and the research conducted by Agung and Santosa (2017) are

different. However, there are some similarities in the aspects of the obstacles or challenges faced by universities. They found obstacles in actualizing World Class University such as: the lack of teaching academic staff qualifications (overseas graduates), the lack of lecturer foreign language skills, the dependence on the Directorate General of Higher Education in sending lecturers abroad, and limited financial support, which does not provide the flexibility to invite guest lecturers from abroad (Santosa & Agung, 2017). Some of these things are also faced by the Language Centers of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. We can say that there is mutual support between these two studies to provide solutions for improving foreign language skills as one of the main tools in welcoming World-Class universities.

The last research did by Susanto (2014) entitled *Strategi Menuju World Class University (WCU) pada Universitas Semarang*. Susanto, in his research, found that the strategy to increase the predicate of world-class universities according to webometrics can be achieved by: a) well-prepared planning, hard work, and high commitment of all academics at the University of Semarang, and b) making research activities and writing scientific papers the main priority since they are concerned much by WCU assessors (Susanto, 2014). This research complements Susanto's findings that well-prepared planning, hard work, commitment from all parties, and increased research, especially international publications, can be reached through increasing foreign language skills and doing global branding.

Based on the description above, the writers considered it necessary and important to examine further the contribution and role of the Language Centers in the two universities, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, in actualizing World-Class University in the PTKIN (the State Islamic Higher Education) environment. Hopefully, the research findings can be one of the bases for determining the direction of higher education policies in the future.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was a case study research using a qualitative approach. Researchers acted as the main instrument, namely as data collectors. Data collection was carried out by: a) interviewing the head of the Language Center, the head of the Arabic, English, Mandarin, BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) language divisions, and related parties at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, b) collecting the required documents such as notes, academic guidelines, documents of program and activities of the Language Development Centers, and other supporting documents. The data were then analyzed using an interactive analysis model in which there were three components, namely: 1) data reduction, 2) data presentation, and 3) conclusion or verification, which was carried out with the data collection process in an interactive form through a cyclical process. The data obtained from the field was quite a lot. Therefore, it needed to be recorded carefully and in detail. Then, the data were summarized, selected, and focused on the essential things to find the themes and patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before discussing the contribution and role of Language Centers at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in actualizing World Class University, we would briefly mention each definition of contribution and role. Contribution is assistance in the form of energy, thought, or material that can help the success of activities that have been previously planned to achieve common goals. Contribution is not merely interpreted as a person's participation, but it requires evidence or concrete action of person or group's assistance to succeed particular activity. Thus, according to Koziar (2008), a role is a set of behaviors others expect towards someone based on their position in a system. A role is influenced by social conditions both from within and outside and is stable. It is a behavior expected of a person in certain social situations. A role becomes meaningful when they are associated or related to others.

Furthermore, in the term World Class University, Levin, Jeong, and Ou (2006) views it as a university with an international reputation in research, teaching and learning, and contribution to the wider community. There are many international reputable university ranking agencies. One of them is the *Times Higher Education-World University Ranking* (THE-WUR), which has five main indicators, namely: teaching (30%), research (30%), citation (30%), industry income (2.5%), and international outlook (7.5%).

To realize a world-class university requires many steps. One of them is increasing students' competence through mastery of foreign languages. The presence of a language center is the realization of an idea to improve foreign language skills and a supporting unit to meet the university's vision and mission. A language center's main function is as a language service center managed professionally to train language skills, especially foreign languages. In addition, the language center also meets the wider community's needs in translating and testing or testing language skills.

The Language Center of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta has contributed and has played a role in leading to World Class University with the following program of activities and efforts:

Table 1. Contributions and Role of Language Center of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

No.	Contribution	Valid Percent
1	Improving students' low Arabic and English proficiency through KURBAS (Foreign Language Course);	Building a global brand through: a) Cooperation with several domestic and foreign agencies (Institut Francais d'Indonesia Wijaya and McGill University Canada); b) International seminar or conferences.
2	Detecting students' Arabic and English proficiency through TOAFL certification and <i>English Test for Islamic Community</i>	

No.	Contribution	Valid Percent
	(ETIC);	
3	Documenting the scientific papers and other important and official documents;	
4	Organizing workshops on developing test materials (ETIC, TOAFL, and BIPA).	

Transformation to a world-class university is certainly not an easy thing. The following are the obstacles and challenges faced by the Language Center of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in actualizing World Class University:

Table 2. Obstacles and Challenge of Language Center of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta

No.	Contribution	Valid Percent
1	The support and policies of the university leaders have not been maximized, where the facilities and budget have not been appropriately met;	The foreign language proficiency of most new students is still low, especially in the Arabic language.
2	Lack number of human resources;	
3	The direction of the curriculum is still not clear.	

The Language Center of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang has also contributed and played a role in leading to a World-Class University with the following program of activities and efforts:

Table 3. Contributions and Roles of Language Center of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

No.	Contribution	Role
1	Improving the academic community's foreign language skills through: a) Arabic intensive learning program, namely PKPBA (Program Khusus Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab) for two semesters which must be followed by all students in the 1st and 2nd-semester learning; b) English intensive learning program, namely PKPBI (Program Khusus Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris) for two semesters as well, which must be followed by all students in 1st and 2nd semester; c) Arabic, English, Chinese, and Persian language courses for lecturers, education staff, students, and a wide community;	Building a global brand by: a) Sending lecturers to Al-Azhar University in Egypt to introduce, promote, and teach Indonesian language and culture; b) Cooperating with al-'Arabiyyah lil Jami' (Arabic for All), Saudi Arabia in Arabic teaching-learning for non-Arab speakers; c) Organizing international seminars or conferences related to languages.

No.	Contribution	Role
	d) English language training for lecturers and education staff at IALF (Indonesia-Australia Language Foundation) in Bali; e) Indonesian language and culture learning for foreign students (BIPA).	
2	Detecting Arabic and English language skills of students, lecturers, or community through international standardized Arabic and English tests, namely ILAA (Ikhtibar al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah al-Mi'yari) and TOEFL ITP;	
3	Documenting important translated documents, such as certificates, abstracts, articles, and website contents in Arabic, English, Chinese, Persian, and Indonesian languages;	
4	Organizing seminars, workshops, and training Arabic, English, and Chinese languages.	

To actualize contribution and role towards World-Class University, the Language Center of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang has the following obstacles and challenges:

Table 4. Obstacle and Challenges of Language Center of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

No.	Obstacle	Challenge
1	Facilities and infrastructure such as language laboratories, study rooms, and learning media limited are inadequate.	It is required to give lecturers real experience in foreign languages by sending them abroad. In 2020, the agenda was scheduled through the SFD (Saudi Fund for Development) program, but the Covid-19 pandemic still hampers it;
2		Some lecturers, students, and education staff have not completely realized the importance of mastering foreign languages well to support World-Class University;
3		It is necessary to create a language environment for students who have graduated from a university dormitory named ma'had (new students must live in ma'had for one year).

CONCLUSION

The contribution and role of the Language Centers at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang are very significant in terms of strengthening foreign languages and building a global brand, especially in welcoming World-Class University. Contributions given by both Language Centers are in the form of increasing foreign language skills for the academic community (lecturers, students, and

employees/education staff), as well as existing of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in the PTKIN (the State Islamic Higher Education) environment. Meanwhile, the role given by the two language centers is by being one of the supporting elements in the internationalization of universities in building global brands towards World-Class universities. The researchers realize that this research is still imperfect due to several limitations. Therefore, we, the researchers, hope and suggest that after this, there will be further studies or investigations related to world-class universities, especially those that discuss the obstacles faced by universities more deeply so that solutions can be found immediately. Hence, the realization of World-Class University becomes faster.

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