

Relevance and Challenges of Islamic University: Al-Qalam University, Katsina as a Model

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Abstract: Islamic University is a specialized and purposive institution that is brought to fruition after the first world conference on Muslim education of Mecca in order to respond to the devilling crisis inflicting the Muslim's education. The common philosophy of the Islamic institutions is the integration between the revealed and the rational sciences as well as the Islamization of the total educational processes. Therefore, the Islamic universities are presently facing the paining challenges of the insufficient resources which might affect its initial target and the cause of its implementation because these universities are mostly owned by the private Muslims individuals and Islamic organizations in a various Muslims societies particularly in Nigeria. However, the present study adopted case study, descriptive and documentary methods for collection and analysis of the data. Another significant instrument used in this investigation is a field interview with some officials of Al-Qalam University, Katsina. The study is also aimed to determine the educational philosophy, significant relevance and the militating challenges of the Islamic university from the case of Al-Qalam University Katsina in Nigeria. The finding of this study has released some positive contribution of Islamic University to the character building and the spiritual development of the Muslim community. Therefore, the paper has proposed some beneficial suggestion as a solution for continuous existence and future improvement of the Islamic Universities.

Keywords: Islamic University, Relevance, Challenges, Al-Qalam University.

1. INTRODUCTION

Higher education is the most influential stage of learning and human development in all systems of education in the civilized society. It is the significant level that produces and shapes the needed leaders, scholars and professionals, as well as the required manpower in any sector and organization of human service but the present modernization in Muslim's higher institutions has advances many challenges for the quality of character and identity, because the present educational system has limited the affairs of Islam in a particular department in the modern western colleges and universities of the Muslim's societies [1]. In Islam, higher education is recorded with the overwhelming advantages far beyond any system of education because it is a training ground that produces the integrative religious teachers and scholars that will continually undertake the spiritual services of the Islamic teaching, preaching and propagation. However, Islam is the most intellectual religion that gives a prior importance for the advancement and continuous learning, since the adult individuals owed a larger responsibility in the Muslim's societies [2]. Therefore, the Islamic University is an organized setting that purposely created for the moulding and preparing the potentials Muslim's youth for positive reform in educational and social aspects of life in order to contribute to the moral standard and spiritual development in Muslim's societies. The emanation of an Islamic university can be traced right from the inception of the oldest University of Alkarouine in (859 C. E.) of Morocco and al-Azhar University of Egypt in the year (975 C.E.). The curriculum for these Islamic Universities has covered within the religious education as the priority because the important feature of the Islamic university is the Islamization and moral reform according to the basis of Islam [3]. Similarly, Al-Qalam University

Katsina is come into existence after the establishment ceremony of the Islamic University of Niger Republic that is established by the Organization of Islamic Conference. A number of concerned Nigerian Muslim's scholars, philanthropists, academics under the umbrella of Katsina Islamic Foundation came up with the overall plan and development for the introduction of such university in Nigeria. Hence, Al-Qalam University Katsina was successfully established in January 2005 as a purely community owned university in northern Nigeria with a special purpose and aim. The university began operation with only two faculties of humanities and natural applied sciences with a total of four academic programs, namely: Islamic Studies, Arabic, English and computer science. The university has currently developed to four faculties with twenty-three programs and a total of four thousand five hundred students in the university.

2. PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

Islamic university is an Islamic philosophical institution that exists with special purposes and objectives. These purposes, aims, objectives, visions, missions, and principles are what constitute the philosophy of the Islamic university. However, the significant reason for the establishment of Islamic university is the integration, Islamization, and the morally oriented learning, that is why the main object of this type of university is to re-generate goodness and fear of Allah in the individuals, so that social justice could be realized [4]. The primary aim of Islamic university is to revive the significant aspects of *Madrasah* education into the present Muslim's society for the Islamization of the contemporary secular views of knowledge in the Muslim's colleges and universities because the adults Muslims are the target of the western de-Islamization agenda and anti-Islamic activities in the modern institutions of the Muslim's world [5]. Therefore, the character is the sole objectives of an Islamic university, that is why, it is intended to prepare human minds with both epistemological and ontological understanding with a view of producing *al-insan al-kamil* (complete man) in the Islamic sense who can fully serve his purpose as an *abd* (worshipper) and his natural role as caliph (Allah's vicegerent) on earth. Consequently, "the University of Islam must reflect the holy Prophet in terms of knowledge and right action, its function is to produce men and women of *adab* (morality) that are resembling Him in quality and character" [6]. An Islamic university is saddled with the producing of scholars that thoroughly devoted to the dissemination of integrated knowledge to the modern minds. This would ensure the distinguished personalities in all possible and conceivable disciplines from religious to scientific fields, who are masters in their specializations and at the same time equipped with the fundamental values and ethics of Islam [7]. In addition, this type of institution is meant to produce society with the adequate experiences and making them aware of their purpose of being in the present world and clarify to them a guidelines for the success in the Hereafter.

Al-Qalam University is envisioned to impart meaningful knowledge with a high moral standard and fear of Allah (SWT) in its students and the Nigerian Muslims in general. The university also meant to provide the academic excellence in Islamic morally sound and conducive learning atmosphere as well as promotion of research and community service. Al-Qalam University has further aimed to ensure balanced education for its students with a view to inculcate Islamic values and character in all disciplines of study. Therefore, "the university shall be to promote the fear of Allah (SWT) through education and knowledge dissemination, it shall also to promote sound moral principles, ethics, national unity, excellence and human service" [8]. The main philosophy for the creation of Alqalam University is to develop well-behaved professionals in divergent fields of life who are God-conscious that will revive the society's morality. The respondents also testified the idea of the university is nothing than inculcating modern knowledge in line with the fundamental principles of the Holy Quran and *Sunnah* (sayings and practices of the holy Prophet) or the Islamic law in its entirety. The university has planned to produce graduates that have the disciplines of Islam in all aspects of their life and to use the wisdom in all their personal dealings and their relations with others. Therefore, another view articulated the university mission of developing a generation of higher intellect and character that are well-versed and fully equipped with the fear of Allah (SWT), with the hope of overcoming the social and intellectual challenges militating against the moral standard and education of Muslim society. Additionally, Alqalam University came to revive the missing intellectual heritage of Muslims and to contribute to the development of Islamic civilization in the world {9}.

3. RELEVANCE OF ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY TO MUSLIM'S SOCIETY

Islamic University owe a great benefit to a Muslim's society because Islam is the dominant culture in its practice and affiliations. The Islamic university has strongly adapted the study of Islamic revealed knowledge as its core program in

order to build the intellectual minds that can be able to guide and stimulate the modern sciences within the Islamic worldview. Therefore, the curriculum of the Islamic university composed of the necessary study of the holy Quran, Hadith, Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh), Islamic history and civilization. These series of subjects are significantly acquainting the Muslim's students with the true spirit and practice of Islam from a real teaching of the holy Prophet (Pbuh), His companions, and other predecessors. The holy Quran has clearly mentioned about this connotation, as Allah (SWT) says:

“You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conducts) for any whose hope is in Allah and the last final day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah” (Surah Al-Ahzab: 21) [10].

The study in an Islamic university has provided the students rather than those studying Islam the opportunity of advancing their religious knowledge and awareness through various Islamic orientation programs offered and thought in the university environment. Therefore, the significant role of an Islamic university is spiritual development because the university is not only concentrating on the learning instruction but presenting many spiritual services as *Da'awah* (Islamic propagation) and *tahdhib* (moral lessons) as well as seasonal lectures on the fundamental principles of Islam which in turn are drawing the Muslims closer to their Lord (Allah) [11]. Additionally, the Islamic university has strictly distinguished itself with the discipline of individuals and the larger Muslim's community because the students' freedoms in the western model universities are highly restricted in such university. This university has set students in a code of Islamic laws and limited them to the rights provided to them by the holy Quran for the development of mankind. Hence, such university has discouraged gender indifference, indecency, romantic activities and many of these unaccredited attitudes as racism, conflicts, smoking, stealing and social intolerance among the university members. Islamic university is indeed worked to ensure the natural unity of Muslims, since the majority of its members are Muslims and its routine functions are Islamic target, the education in this type of institution is a shaping of the intellectual personality with the spiritual qualities. In Malaysia, the International Islamic University had significantly achieved the Islamization of knowledge agenda in adoption the Islamic revealed knowledge as its fundamental studies from its establishment in 1983, the Islamic studies have become a principal guide for all the rational modern sciences in order to be seen and understood in line with the principles of *Shari'ah* (Islamic Law) [12].

However, Al-Qalam University has also been identified with many valuable services and development to the Muslims society in Nigeria. It has initiated a number of Islamic programs for practice and realization of its visions. The core subjects in Al-Qalam University are comprised of the comprehensive study of the Holy Quran and Hadith, Islam and modern society, Islamic law, and Islamic history. Therefore, the study of these subjects are in line with the university view of developing the spirit of Islam and Islamic values in its students, that is why these courses have been made necessary for all students to all programs. Other views also ensures university's commitment to the cause of character and moral development, the university has placed a regulation between two sexes and condemn any seductive appearance that might cause damage to the expected tenants of Islamic society. The university has become a beckon of Islamic propagation and preaching as it was recorded with the high attraction of many influential scholars in Nigeria particularly in the Kano and Katsina axis of northern Nigeria. Al-Qalam University in collaboration with the branches of National Association of Islamic Studies and Muslim's Students Society of Nigeria have created programs for *Da'awah* for the spread of Islam to non-Muslims societies and presented various public lectures for Islamic values and social morality. In a nutshell, from the establishment of Al-Qalam University Katsina to the present time, it has been identified with the complete concentration of training Muslim's individuals in Nigeria which graduated more than three thousands solely Muslim's youth of Nigeria. Therefore, the University has advanced the significant number of Muslim's intellectuals and man power in a different service sector in the government, industries and many independent organizations in Nigeria. Another response also stated the university success in increasing the number of religious leaders as *Imams* and teachers who are variously acknowledged by many institutions and organizations.

4. CHALLENGES FACING ISLAMIC UNIVERSITIES

University is a place for spiritual and character development but despite this significant role, the Islamic universities are presently faced with the inflicting challenges of inadequate resources that might have crushed upon their needed functions and achievements in many parts of Muslim's society including Nigeria. The First World Conference on Muslim's Education in 1977 at Mecca has marked the point for the generation of the modern type of the Islamic university in the Muslim's world. The Conference recommended the establishment of a specialized Islamic University whose philosophy,

structure, and operation are directed towards the total obedience to Allah (SWT) in the individuals and the larger Muslim's society [13]. The World League of Islamic Countries and Organization of Islamic Conference are common founders and supporters of many present Islamic universities in the Muslim's world. The roles and functions of the Islamic universities are to launch and activate a positive reform of the educational system that can build up the balanced personality in the Islamic sense [7]. Therefore, this type of institution is needed with the complete accreditation, resources, and all support as adequate buildings, learning and teaching facilities, staff and academic development fund for its proper operation and achievements, since the societal failure is proportional to the failure of its universities. The university is seen as an elite system that give birth the leaders in politics, education, economy, health and social welfare [14]. The Islamic university is not just a traditional institute, but a well-organized setting that needed holistic support equally with these governments owned universities that are completely funded for their manpower and academic development. The secular pattern of government and education in many Muslim's societies today has unjustly hinged itself away from the establishment and funding of such Islamic Institutes needed by the majority of its members for their believe and practice. Hence, the Islamic universities are mostly owned and controlled by the conscious Muslim individuals and organization as initially non-profit institutions, because the Islamic university comes as Muslim's salvaging institution for social morality and education.

Despite the higher percentage of Muslims in Nigeria, the country possessed only four specialized Islamic universities, and none is established or sponsored by the National government of Nigeria, rather they belong to private Muslims and community organizations. The Islamic universities in Nigeria include the Al-Hikmah University at Kwara state founded in (2005) by the Abdul-Raheem Oladimeji Islamic Foundation with the support of the World Assembly of Muslim's Youth (WAMY), then Crescent University in (2005) founded by the Islamic Mission for Africa and Fountain University in (2007) that also established by the Nasrullah al-Fatih Society of Nigeria (NASFAT), as well as the Al-Qalam University Katsina which is operating as non-profit community university in Nigeria. Unfortunately, the university has been long facing insufficient human and material resources that are resulting to its slow motion. Therefore, these devastating challenges of Al-Qalam University are dimensional in nature, because they are not only creating ill to the university development but to the National development as a whole, since the education is the most vital tool for human development, and the university occupies the higher position in this agenda. In addition, the very nature of income in Al-Qalam University is student's tuition fees, donations and endowments (*Waqf*) which are also very rare in a Muslim's community like Nigeria. Moreover, despite the multi-mentioned contribution of Al-Qalam University in the Nigerian Muslim's, but the Nigerian government do not appreciate and support the university with the needed manpower, facilities, or even funding considering its valuable services that are rendered to the Nigerian society. This Islamic university in Nigeria is left to the effort of its proprietor, and the most challenging situation is the university's total dependence on generating all its resources from the student's fees which might not adequately provided the needed equipments and scholarships for maintaining and developing such university to better standard [15]. Al-Qalam University has many developmental programs for the Muslim's society and the entire national community of Nigeria that are not yet realized due to the shortage of human and material resources militating against the university.

5. CONCLUSION

Islam is the religion of education and services. It is the system that provided all human resources in the past, present and for the future generations, that is why the training in an Islamic institution is a holistic and comprehensive since it is not only concentrated on the physical and intellectual development of students but it is strongly concerned with the religious and moral standard of Muslim's society. Islamic university is working to ensure a generation far beyond the good citizen as indicated in the western model universities but integrative individuals with a sound Islamic values and sufficient experiences that can fully serve as representatives of Islam in their appearances and actions [6]. However, the shortage of these type of institutions are the shortage to the Muslim's *Ummah* (society) in general, since such institutions are working to protects the image of Islam and all aspects of Muslim's life. Similarly, the poor condition of learning can be proportional to the poor of the entire learning, and the poor learning system can necessitate to the poor service and outcome in general. Therefore, these challenges of Alqalam University can be consider to the problem of the entire Muslim's society, since Islam has positively encouraged unity and support between the believers, and education by its importance is a collective responsibility. The study in Islamic universities owes a prior significance, because such universities are not only developing the cognitive, affective, or psychomotor domains of human learning and development as limited by the model western universities but placed important on the spiritual domain as the essence of human

development according to Islamic system of education. Lastly, Al-Qalam University is seeking the support and contribution of conscious international organizations, all tiers of governments in Nigeria and influential Muslim's individuals for its continuous existence and achievements.

6. SUGGESTIONS

The present study is suggesting to the Islamic university proprietors, managements, lecturers, students, governments, local and international organizations as well as influential Muslim's individuals and the entire Muslim's society to the following:

- The proprietor of the Islamic university should re-strategize plan and identify other effective means for generating funds, maintaining and developing the Islamic university.
- The management of the Islamic university should double their effort and commitment to the realization of the university's mission of learning and character development.
- The management of the Islamic university must re-apply trust, sincerity and dedication in managing and spending the university resources to its stated means.
- The Islamic university should prioritize the character and religious values better than the qualification in admission and recruiting its students and staff in order to develop the required services needed by the Islamic community.
- The Islamic university should create more programs and advance technique in managing, teaching and research in order to compete with those modern universities in Europe and the western world.
- All staffs and the students of the Islamic university have to be oriented to the university philosophy of knowledge integration, Islamization, and morally learning system. Therefore, the university members must act and behave in Islamic accepted manners in order to safeguard the image of Islam and the relevance of the university.
- The governments of Nigeria and all Muslim's state are urged to provide support for funding and the needed resources to the Islamic university in their state for the universities well-being and future development.
- The local and international Muslim's support organizations should extend contributions for the effective implementation of such Islamic university.
- The Muslim's society should also earn the confidence and prioritize the enrolment in the Islamic type universities for its moral and spiritual development.
- The Alumni of such university should behave differently with the graduates produced from the secular universities since they were trained by an Islamic moral institution.
- The students of the Islamic university should develop competence and commitment in Islamic-oriented research and acquiring professional qualities in line with the Islamic worldview.

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