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Issues and Challenges facing Islamic Universities: A Case Study of Nigeria

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Abstract
Higher education is the most influential stage of learning and human development in all educational systems of civilised society. In Islam, higher education is associated with overwhelming benefits far beyond any other educational system as it is a training ground that produces inclusive religious teachers and scholars who continuously undertake the spiritual services of Islamic teaching, preaching and propagation. Islamic university is an organised environment intentionally created for moulding and preparing the potential Muslim youth for positive reforms in the educational and social aspects of life in order to contribute to the moral standards and spiritual development in Muslim societies. The emergence of an Islamic university can be traced back from the beginnings of the oldest university of Alkarouine in Morocco (859 AD) and al-Azhar University in Egypt (975 AD). The curriculum of these Islamic universities primarily includes religious education because the most important characteristic of the Islamic university is Islamization and moral reform based on Islam. In Nigeria, Muslim individuals and organisations began establishing private universities in 2005, when three private Islamic universities were granted operating licences. The paper investigates certain challenges facing Islamic universities in Nigeria. The paper is library-based research that uses a qualitative research method. The data used are secondary and include books, journals, websites, etc. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data obtained from the sources. It was found that there are various challenges facing Islamic universities in Nigeria, such as private nature of the universities, lack of a model for an Islamized higher education system, staff challenge, challenge of financing etc. Some recommendations were made on how to overcome these or some of the challenges.

Keywords: University, Islamic university, challenges, Islamisation, Nigeria.

Introduction
Higher education is the most influential stage of learning and human development in all educational systems of civilised society. However, the current modernization of Muslim higher education institutions has brought many challenges to the quality of character and identity, as the current educational system has confined the affairs of Islam to a specific department in the modern Western colleges and universities of Muslim societies (Hussain, 1996). In Islam, higher education is associated with overwhelming benefits far beyond any other educational system as it is a training ground that produces inclusive religious teachers and scholars who continuously undertake the spiritual services of Islamic teaching, preaching and propagation. However, Islam is the most intellectual religion that places a high value on progress and continuous learning, as adult individuals have greater responsibilities in Muslim societies (Shafie, 2004). Therefore, Islamic university is an organised environment intentionally created for moulding and preparing the potential Muslim youth for positive reforms in the educational and social aspects of life in order to contribute to the moral standards and spiritual development in Muslim societies. The emergence of an Islamic university can be traced back from the beginnings of the oldest university of Alkarouine in Morocco (859 AD) and al-Azhar University in Egypt (975 AD). The curriculum of these Islamic universities primarily includes religious education because the most important characteristic of the Islamic university is Islamization and moral reform based on Islam

(Banitaleb et al., 2012).

In Nigeria, Muslim individuals and organisations began establishing private universities in 2005, when three private Islamic universities were granted operating licences, and in 2007, the Nasrullahil Fathi Organisation's Fountain University was added, bringing the total to four and the number is still increasing. It is not an exaggeration to say that the main focus of these private universities is to vigorously pursue the programme of Islamization of knowledge (Abebayo, 2016). This paper will therefore shed light on the challenges facing Islamic universities in Nigeria and put forward certain recommendations on how to solve them.

Methodology

This is library-based research that uses a qualitative research method. The data used are secondary and include books, journals, websites, etc. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data obtained from the sources.

Philosophy of Islamic University

Islamic university is an Islamic philosophical institution that exists with specific purposes and objectives. These purposes, goals, objectives, visions, missions, and principles make up the philosophy of the Islamic university. However, the main reason for establishing an Islamic university is integration, Islamization, and morally oriented learning, so the main goal of this type of university is to restore the goodness and fear of Allah in people so that social justice can be realised (Sharif, 1996). The main goal of the Islamic university is to revive the significant aspects of madrasa education in contemporary Muslim society in order to Islamize contemporary secular views of knowledge in Muslim colleges and universities, because adult Muslims are the target of the Western de-Islamization agenda and anti-Islamic activities in the modern institutions of the Muslim world (Al-Faruqi, 1981).

Therefore, character is the sole aim of an Islamic university, and therefore it is to prepare the human mind with both epistemological and ontological understanding to produce *al-insan al-kamil* (complete man) in the Islamic sense, who can fully fulfil his role as *abd* (worshipper) and his natural role as caliph (Allah's representative) on earth. Consequently, "the university of Islam must reflect the Holy Prophet in terms of knowledge and right action; its task is to produce men and women of *adab* (morality) who resemble him in quality and character" (Wan Mohd Nor, 1998). An Islamic university has the task of producing scholars who are intensively engaged in disseminating integrated knowledge to modern minds. This would provide for outstanding individuals in all possible and conceivable disciplines, from the religious to the scientific, who are masters in their fields and at the same time are endowed with the fundamental values and ethics of Islam (Wan Mohd Nor, 2003). In addition, this type of institution aims to equip society with appropriate experiences, make them aware of the purpose of their existence in the present world, and provide them with a guide for success in the hereafter (Abubakar et al. 2015).

The Development of Private Islamic Universities in Nigeria

The civilian government of Olusegun Obasanjo ushered in a new era in the history of higher education in Nigeria in 1999 when three private universities were granted accreditation. Igbinedion University in Okada, Edo State, Babcock University in Ilisan Remo, Ogun State, and Madonna University in Okija, Anambra State, thus became the first accredited private universities in Nigeria. In 2001, they were joined by Bowen University in Iwo, Osun State. The third group of accredited private universities was released in 2002. They are Benson Idahosa University, Benin; Pan-African University, Lagos; and Covenant University, Ota. ABTI-American University, Yola, was added a year later. In 2005, the National Universities Commission (NUC) approved fifteen private universities. In 2006, Joseph Ayo Babalola University received approval. The following year (2007), ten more universities received licences to operate (Adebayo, 2016).

The Katsina Islamic Foundation can be considered the first Muslim organisation in Nigeria to establish a private community-based Islamic university. Their efforts were backed by the support of the state government, which provided the institution with a 246-acre plot of land. Eventually, the federal government officially registered the university as Katsina University and admitted 400 candidates in the faculties of Natural and Applied Sciences, Social and Management Sciences, and Humanities. Recently, the university changed its name to Al-Qalam University (Adebayo, 2016).

Al-Hikmah University in Ilorin was established by the Abdur-Rahim Oladimeji Islamic Foundation. The university received its accreditation in January 2005 with an initial undergraduate enrollment of 350 students and an eventual total population of 5,000. The faculties of Science, Engineering and Technology, Humanities and Management Sciences were established in the first phase of the university (National (Adebayo, 2016).

Crescent University Abeokuta is the first Islamic university in southwestern Nigeria and was founded by Prince Bola Ajibola following the establishment of the Islamic Movement for Africa (IMA) in 1996. The goal of the Islamic Movement for Africa is to reform the spread of Islam and establish a citadel of learning that combines Islamic moral education with Western education to serve as a foundation for the moral revival and rejuvenation of society. The National Universities Commission (NUC) approved the establishment of the university in June 2005, and it began its academic programmes in December 2005, with three colleges, namely the College of Information and Communication Technology, the College of Natural and Applied Sciences, and the College of Social and Management Sciences (Adebayo, 2016).

Fountain University, Osogbo, was founded by a renowned Islamic prayer group - Nasrullahil-Fathi Society of Nigeria, popularly referred to by the acronym NASFAT. In its early stages, the organisation focused mainly on prayers, but later established kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Kaduna and Niger states. In January 2004, the National Executive Council of the Association, the Council of Trustees and the Council of Elders set up an Academic Letter Review Committee to work harmoniously with the University Project Committee headed by a former Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Abeokuta (UNAAB) and some notable academics from Nigerian universities. The outcome of the meeting was the decision to establish a university which was approved by the Federal Government on May 17, 2007, under the name of Fountain

University in Osogbo, the Osun State capital under the first Vice Chancellor, Professor Hussein O.B. Oloyede. Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Board was Professor Nurudeen O. Adedipe, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. The university commenced operations with only two colleges, the College of Applied and Natural Sciences and the College of Social and Management Sciences (Adebayo, 2016).

Challenges Facing Islamic Universities
Below are some of the challenges facing Islamic universities:

1.   Islamic universities are private.
Despite the high percentage of Muslims in Nigeria, the country has few specialized Islamic universities, and none are established or sponsored by the Nigerian government but are owned by private Muslims and community organizations (Abubakar et al., 2015).

2.   Divergent strategies in the curriculum
It can be observed that the strategies of private Islamic universities differ as far as the Islamization of the knowledge programme is concerned. While some prefer pure Islamic Studies departments, some combine this with Islam-related courses as general courses in the universities that can be taken by all students regardless of their major. This is true of the three Islamic universities in southwestern Nigeria. Crescent University, Abeokuta, is a little different. It has a Department of General and Islamic Religious Studies and offers programmes leading to the B.Sc. in Islamic Studies with Banking and Finance and the B.Sc. in Islamic Studies with Insurance. We see this combination as a step in the right direction. This seems to meet the needs of some parents who do not want to finance the study of Islamic Studies for their children, as the fees at private universities are exorbitantly high. Apart from this, combining vocational courses with Islamic Studies would help Islamic Studies graduates to be self-reliant and independent after graduation. Crescent University, Abeokuta, also has some general courses based on Islam that must be taken by all students of the university regardless of their major. In particular, the university's College of Social and Management Sciences offers some Islam-related courses that are mandatory to pass. The Department of Accounting offers Islam-related courses such as BFN 210 - Introduction to Islamic Banking, BFN 309 - Islamic Financial System, BFN 304 - Regulatory Framework of Islamic Banking and Finance, and a one-unit seminar in Islamic Banking. In addition, the University's Department of Economics and Insurance offers ECO 206 - Introduction to Islamic Economics and BFN 307 - Islamic Financial System. Similarly, the University's Banking and Finance programme offers BFN 210 - Introduction to Islamic Banking, BFN 307 - Islamic Financial System, and BFN 403 - Seminar in Islamic Banking. This is also true for Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin (Adebayo, 2016).
Looking at the general curricula of the existing private Islamic universities in Nigeria, Adebayo (2010) notes that:
The curriculum of some of these universities is as secular as other contemporary universities. The most pathetic of it all is that for a period of four academic sessions, students from departments other than Islamic Studies Department, if any, may offer only four Islamic-related courses throughout

their tenure in the university. In short, some of these universities will remain Islamic by virtue of their names, while their products will lack the much-cherished flavour of Islamic education. Another sad point is that some of these private Islamic universities do not mount Islamic Studies and Arabic as courses to be offered. Where there is any at all, few students offer it. This is because most parents are not ready to pay or that they cannot afford the exorbitant school fees charged by these institutions.

3.   Lack of a model for an Islamized higher education system
It must be emphasised that despite the fact that many institutions are emerging for the purpose of Islamizing knowledge, and despite the establishment of some Islamic universities to implement the decisions of the various conferences on Islamic education, most Muslim countries do not yet have a model curriculum based on the various conferences. For example, the Islamic University in Bangladesh was established with the aim of Islamizing modern knowledge, but instead it offers the same old courses in political science, commerce, Islamic history, and some others (Naqi, 1987). This is also the situation in Pakistan where the problem of dichotomy in education still exists. The lack of a model Islamic institution for the Islamization of knowledge has led to the design of different curricula tailored to each environment. This has also led to a lack of vision and clarity about the concept of Islamic education. In some cases, teaching the fundamentals of religion has been misconstrued as Islamization of knowledge. This obstacle to a programme of Islamization of knowledge is observed by Al-Faruqi (1988), who laments:
It is most regrettable that the Muslim world is still devoid of a centre where thinking on this high level takes place. What is needed is a university, which acts as headquarters for Islamic thought, where the disciplines undergo Islamization and the process gets tested in the class and seminar rooms of the undergraduate and graduate programs of study. Until Islamic University of Islamabad entered into collaboration with the International Institute of Islamic Thought, not one educational institution in the Muslim world had moved a finger to Islamize knowledge, to produce Islamic textbooks for college use in the disciplines, or the tools of research necessary for the writing of these textbooks. And yet, everywhere in the Muslim world one hears of the need to Islamize education, its men and institutions, its curricula and textbooks. On the official level where the power to decide rests, one finds little more than lip-service, either made by the ignorant or designed otherwise to mislead the masses. The curriculum of some of these universities is as secular as other contemporary universities. The most pathetic of it all is that for a period of four academic sessions, students from departments other than Islamic Studies Department, if any, may offer only four Islamic-related courses throughout their tenure in the university. In short, some of these universities will remain Islamic by virtue of their names, while their products will lack the much-cherished flavour of Islamic education. Another sad point is that some of these private Islamic universities do not mount Islamic Studies and Arabic as courses to be offered. Where there is any at all, few students offer it. This is because most parents are not ready to pay or that they cannot afford the exorbitant school fees

charged by these institutions.

However, the multi-religious nature of Nigerian society is perhaps largely responsible for the inability of the country's Islamic universities to pursue the Islamization project with any seriousness. This is not unique to Nigeria; even in Malaysia, where Islam has been declared the official religion, a kind of cautious Islamization is underway so as not to hurt the feelings of followers of other religions. This prompted Malaysia's first prime minister to remark that "too much emphasis on religion would lead to misunderstanding, as Malaysia is a country of mixed population and mixed religions, and this would not be conducive to the happy relations that exist among the people today" (Wan Daud, 1989). Regardless, the International Islamic University Malaysia has made efforts to make the institution a model of an Islamic university for others to emulate. Not only does it have its own kulliyyah for Islamic revelatory knowledge and humanities, but it has also published a whole series of textbooks that address current issues and concepts from the perspective of Islam. The university has also hosted a number of international and national conferences on the Islamization of knowledge and other Islam-related topics (Adebayo, 2016).

4. The staff challenge.

In general, many of the nation's private universities have taken their staff from existing public universities. Many of them have few full-time academic staff and rely only on part-time staff or visiting scholars on leave from their universities. Most of the staff at the private universities are graduates who are still in the doctoral phase and are ready to move to public universities where working conditions are attractive. One university owner told us that he was planning to send an employee abroad for research when he suddenly quit his job at the university because he received a better offer at a public university (Adebayo, 2016).

5. The challenge of financing

Another major challenge for private higher education institutions is obtaining funding from the owners of these institutions. Sijuwola (2010) underscores this fact and highlights some of the expenditure profiles for which funds are spent at a university. These include Salaries, research, vehicles, staff quarters, hostels, power and water supply, sanitation and other maintenance. Others are: Public Relations, Capital Projects, Security, Libraries and Laboratories, Retirement Contributions, Environmental Improvement, Insurance, Conferences, Staff Training and Development, Committee Services, and Gaming. It should be noted that funding for public universities is primarily provided by the government - state or federal. In addition to other government financial commitments to public universities, for example, six public universities recently received N5.5 billion each from the Education Trust Fund Special Intervention Fund. The Vice Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, Prof. Is-haq Oloyede, recently disclosed that "the university has invested several million naira in the provision of hardware and online library resources for staff, while a whopping sum of over $500 million is available in STEP -B for researcher access" (Adebayo, 2016).

At the international level, universities in the United States have outpaced their European counterparts due to the enormous sums of money the country spends on higher education. While the United States spends an average of $50,000 per student, Europe spends an average of $12,000 (Ajadi, 2010). Thus, the quality and standard of a university could be improved by adequate funding. Adequate funding paves the way for providing adequate facilities for teaching and research. It also plays an important role in attracting highly qualified academics (Adebayo, 2016).

6. The challenge of student enrollment

Student enrollment in most Islamic universities is not encouraging compared to their Christian counterparts. This is compounded by the fact that some Muslim parents prefer Christian universities because they believe they have a higher standard, possibly due to the gigantic structures in place, or else due to the wide disparity in tuition fees, with a university's rank being measured by how exorbitant its fees are. Moreover, the Islamic background of the students is another obstacle to the Islamization programme of these universities. Many of these candidates received their primary and secondary education in a purely secular educational environment where not a single iota of Islamization was offered. Some had never attended an Arabic or Islamic school and therefore could only view Islamized courses at Islamic universities as purely academic courses that they had to take and pass (Adebayo, 2016).

The admission of non-Muslims to Islamic universities also raises the issue of differences in student dress. While Islam considers a woman's entire body to be *"aurah,"* which must be fully covered, non-Muslims might consider this an imposition. Attempting to impose an Islamic dress code on non-Muslim students poses a major challenge to Islamic private universities, which must not compromise morality in the name of academic freedom. Although it has not yet come to the point where non-Muslim students are demanding freedom to worship on university campuses, as was the case at Bowen University in Iwo, Osun State, where Muslim students were denied the opportunity to pray on campus, Islamic universities must be prepared to deal with such a problem in the near future (Adebayo, 2016).

7. The challenge of the language of operation

In our previous work, we identified the use of appropriate language in the Islamization programme as one of the major problems facing the programme in Nigeria. English is the main language of communication in many parts of the world in which organisations and institutes such as the International Institute of Islamic Thought in Pennsylvania, the Islamic Academy in Cambridge, the Islamic Institute of Advanced Studies in Washington, the Islamic Cultural Centre in London, the Islamic Foundation in Leicester, and the Institute of Policy Studies in Islamabad disseminate their Islamization messages (Adebayo, 2004). On the other hand, Arabic is undoubtedly the original language of Islamization, as it is the language of the Quran and the Prophet. However, the question arises as to which language should be taught in the Islamic private universities. This is particularly the case at Al-Hikmah University, where some Arabic-trained faculty members have been promoting the idea of teaching some courses in Arabic, especially Islamic studies. As laudable as this proposal is, its success is doubtful, as many of the students have never attended an Arabic school and would therefore find it extremely difficult to understand the language (Adebayo, 2016).

The question of whether English or Arabic should be used as the language of instruction for Islamic studies has been a source of heated contention among Muslim scholars, especially between those educated in Western universities and those from Eastern universities. While scholars educated in Arab countries hold the view that no language other than the original language - Arabic - is suitable for teaching Islamic Studies, Muslim scholars educated in the West emphasise the mastery of English as an essential requirement since English is the official language of the nation (Adebayo, 2016). Shehu Sokoto (1991) pointed out some of the dangers associated with using English as a medium of instruction for Islamic studies. These include the difficulty of obtaining authentic translations from Arabic into English, misrepresentation of facts, excessive recourse to distorted, defamatory, and blasphemous texts written about Islam by Orientalists, and the writings of half-baked Islamic scholars who could not even read the Quran in its original language.

Abdul Rahman (2010), while defending the use of English as the language of instruction and research writing in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Ibadan, sees no reason why English should not be the medium for teaching Islamic studies, emphasising that it was possible for the crusaders during the crusading wars to gain acceptance in Arab and Muslim countries because the orientalists who studied Arabic and Islam published their findings on Arab and Muslim culture in their native language. He emphasises that modern Arabic literature today is the result of the adoption and adaptation of Western literary style into Arabic literature. He refuses to point to northern Nigerian Arabists as role models for Arabs in southwestern Nigeria because it is possible for Arab graduates in some parts of Nigeria to rise to the level of Permanent Secretary with little or no knowledge of English, while an Arabist from the southwest must go the extra mile to gain a foothold in the civil service.

Recommendations
According to Abubakar et al. (2015) & Adebayo (2016), the following are some recommendations to solve the challenges facing Islamic universities:

1. The owner of the Islamic university should revise the plan and identify other effective means for raising funds, maintaining and developing the Islamic university. In addition, it would be better for these private universities to look for projects that could bring them money.

2. The management of the Islamic university should redouble its efforts and commitment to realise the mission of the university, which is learning and personality development.

3. The Islamic university should prioritise character and religious values over qualifications in the admission and recruitment of its students and staff in order to develop the services needed by the Islamic community.

4. The Islamic university should develop more programmes and advanced techniques in administration, teaching and research to compete with modern universities in Europe and the Western world.

5. All the staff and students at the Islamic university must be guided by the university philosophy of knowledge integration, Islamization and moral learning system. Therefore, the members of the university must act and behave in an Islamically acceptable manner to maintain the image of Islam and the relevance of the university.

6. The government of Nigeria and all Muslim states are called upon to financially support the Islamic university in their states and provide it with the necessary resources to enable the university to develop well.

7. Muslim society should also gain confidence in Islamic universities and prefer enrollment in these universities for their moral and spiritual development.

8. The graduates of such universities should behave differently from the graduates of secular universities as they have been educated by an Islamic moral institution.

9. The international Islamic universities, lecturers and experts in the field should see fit to visit the universities in Nigeria to guide them through the Islamization curriculum. In this way, they would be spared the back and forth between the Western and Islamic curricula in the name of Islamization.

10. The Islamic universities should hire some lecturers from different disciplines who would go through a special programme to develop Islamic scholarship and promote teaching in different fields of knowledge from an Islamic perspective.

11. As for the working language, it is difficult to really understand Islam without knowing Arabic, while at the same time the official language of the country cannot be considered unimportant. Therefore, it is suggested that Islamic universities in Nigeria should become bilingual, like the International Islamic University in Pakistan. The IIUM acculturation process can also be enhanced by ensuring that the Arabic language permeates the university's lifestyle and programmes.

12. Various Muslim intellectual organisations such as the IIIT must not slacken in their efforts to educate existing Islamic universities about their responsibility for Islamization by organising seminars, conferences, and workshops.

Conclusion
Higher education is the most influential stage of learning and human development in all educational systems of civilised society. In Islam, higher education is associated with overwhelming benefits far beyond any other educational system as it is a training ground that produces inclusive religious teachers and scholars who continuously undertake the spiritual services of Islamic teaching, preaching and propagation. Islamic university is an organised environment intentionally created for moulding and preparing the potential Muslim youth for positive reforms in the educational and social aspects of life in order to contribute to the moral standards and spiritual development in Muslim societies. The emergence of an Islamic university can be traced back from the beginnings of the oldest university of Alkarouine in Morocco (859 AD) and al-Azhar University in Egypt (975 AD). The curriculum of these Islamic universities primarily includes religious education because the most important characteristic of the Islamic university is Islamization and moral reform based on Islam. In Nigeria, Muslim individuals and organisations began establishing private universities in 2005, when three private Islamic universities

were granted operating licences. The paper investigates certain challenges facing Islamic universities in Nigeria. It is library-based research that uses a qualitative research method. The data used are secondary and include books, journals, websites, etc. Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data obtained from the sources. It was found that there are various challenges facing Islamic universities in Nigeria, such as private nature of the universities, lack of a model for an Islamized higher education system, staff challenge, challenge of financing etc. i.e. Islamic universities are private, divergent strategies in the curriculum, lack of a model for an Islamized higher education system, staff challenge, challenge of financing, challenge of student enrollment, and challenge of the language of operation. The authors put forward Some recommendations on how to overcome these or some of the challenges.

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