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# Quality is key to world-class universities

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There is a lot to learn from the International Arts and Sciences (IAS) Conference that was held in Gottenheim, Freiburg, Germany on Dec. 2-7, to establish world-class universities in Indonesia.

It is too naive to claim that our universities are world-class, without international recognition.

International events such as the IAS conference may be used as a tool to obtain global acknowledgment. However, there is a lot to do before obtaining international respect. Actions to do so can be broken into three categories: product quality, media promotion and international collaboration.

The product quality of a world-class university must be internationally acceptable. Students and lecturers must have qualified English proficiency, a qualified understanding of their fields and must be able to communicate their ideas orally as well as in writing.

The English proficiency of students and lecturers can be improved in two ways: through intensive and continuous training and setting a high standard of English for students and academic staff recruitment. It is considered a positive thing to dedicate one day a week as an English day, when everyone on campus speaks English as much as they can.

The quality of understanding the field may be achieved by sending academic staff to study overseas, providing an international media standard and source of education, setting library networking and pro-

viding sufficient research facilities. Communication skills may be improved by providing more interactions via discussions, seminars, conferences and publications.

To ensure the quality of university research, the government should provide an international standard of research facilities and sufficient research fund. A research institute may be established in each province to help academic staff and post graduate students in the area. The research fund should be distributed based on merit and research facilities should be accessible to academic staff and students from different universities.

Above all, an international standard of curriculum should be set up in all study programs. This curriculum could be set up through benchmarking with several high-quality universities across the world.

Last but not least, to ensure the security and comfort of international students, the university should adopt international rules and ethics. This set of rules and ethics is very important for ensuring that people respect human rights in their interactions so that they may live in harmony.

High quality products will not be recognized internationally without promotion. Therefore, promotion should be integrated into university activities throughout the year. This can be done through websites, radio and television and to introduce the general profile of the university and update academic staff activities.

To promote more scientific products, lecturers should be encouraged to present their research results at international conferences. The

Education and Culture Ministry has been supporting this for years with a competitive budget. Many state universities have also set up some funds for the same purpose.

However, some universities only provide funds for registration fees and transportation. In fact, accommodation and living costs for one week in the US, Europe and Japan may be equivalent to a member of staff's monthly salary. Besides sending staff to international conferences, a university may hold sustainable international conferences in collaboration with international institutions.

Another way to promote a university is to publish its products in international journals. However, for some reason there is little Indonesian research published in international journals.

At the "Sixth International Conference on Physics and Its Application" on Nov. 3 in Surakarta, Agus Subekti, the director for research and community service at the Education and Culture Ministry, said the ratio of lecturers publishing their work in international journals to the total number of Indonesian lecturers reached only 0.7 percent. This number raises a lot of concerns, since billions of rupiah have been spent by the ministry on supporting university research projects and some of these funds should be used to publish university work at the international level.

In the short-term, this number may be boosted by giving generous financial rewards to those who publish their work in international journals. Some universities offer a reward as much as Rp 1 million

(US\$104) before tax for international publications. However, this is not sufficient to cover publication costs. A published paper in an international journal may cost the author Rp 3-4 million.

There is no doubt that government-to-government and university-to-university collaboration may result in mutual recognition. Joint research and joint publishing international recognition. The Indonesian government has provided a competitive fund for conducting research overseas via the recharging program. Other activities that may help Indonesia reach that goal are student and staff exchanges to broaden their minds and to raise their self-confidence. However, there are many agreements between universities that have been left untended to. This should not happen in any world-class university.

Another way of building confidence is to encourage students and staff to join international competitions in science, sports as well as the arts. If necessary, the university should host its own international competitions.

The road map for the establishment of the world-class university is clear. It is left to the university itself to step up to the plate. Only those focusing their potential on achieving their goals may survive as world-class universities. The rest will be left behind.

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...disproportionate share of contracts through informal tying techniques. Two culprits commonly cited are the exclusive use of Japanese consultants to conduct feasibility studies and to provide engineering services, and "on request" basis for loans project identification.

The use of consulting firms for feasibility studies and engineering services, resulted an informal tying, as connections between consulting firms and suppliers created an incentive for project designs to specify materials and equipment that can be supplied only by friendly firms.

Japanese consulting firms have lobbied to maintain the generally tied arrangements for these activities. According to official statements, the stipulation that Japanese loans will fund only projects requested by potential recipients promotes self-assistance; specifically, it helps ensure that loans will fund projects with a high priority in the recipient country's own development plan.

Although Japan is not the only country to use loans to promote the commercial interests of its private businesses, a common impression in business circles as well as in the international development community is that Japan is systematic and aggressive in promoting exports through loans.

However, given the above facts, we should not stop development of the MRT. The MRT will have the capacity to transport 412,000 passengers a day, a huge figure if we compare it to the proposed monorail that would only be able to serve 39,400 passengers per day. The city is also bound by an agreement made between the JICA, the central government and the Jakarta administration.

The best option is to renegotiate the project while establishing common ground between stakeholders.

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