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**Conference Report: International Symposium on Creativity, Values
& Sustainability**
(9 September 2020, IIUM)

Iylia Marsya Binti Iskandar*

The urgency of sustainability stressed by the United Nations under the Sustainable Development 2030 Agenda has prompted the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies (FIDS) of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRKHS), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) to organise an international colloquium centering on creativity, education, values and sustainable development. However, with the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19, the symposium was held online on Google Meet platform on Wednesday, 9 September 2020 where academicians shared insights on the cruciality of sustainability and creativity.

The one day symposium brought together scholars not only from Malaysia but all around the Muslim world. It alerted the attendees on the role that higher education institutions play in sustainable development. It addresses the necessity to revise the methods of teaching creativity through research and revisit educational aims to be in line with the Islamic concept as there are multiple barriers of creativity in the Muslim world, however, creativity plays a vital part in our role as a *khalifah* (vicegerent). In critically examining the subject of sustainable development, the scholars deduced that Islamic worldview is the answer to sustainable development which is supported by a value system and ethics and supported by creativity. Sustainable development should be viewed in a broader picture and the Western perspective through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) only addresses the issues partially, thus, the Islamic Worldview is the pillar to a sustainable future. As Prof. Dr. Alparslan Açıkgenç pointed out, the dynamism and sustainability of Is-

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lam can be seen in the early years of Islam where Islam grew and expanded from China until Spain all the while maintaining its worldview.

The Inauguration

The keynote speech was delivered by the Dean of KIRKHS, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shukran Abdul Rahman, who spoke on “Higher Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Nurturing Community-orientated Holistic Scholars and Students for Sustainable Futures.” Dr. Shukran highlighted that the establishment of higher education is to produce, reproduce, preserve, systematise, organise and transmit knowledge to support and substantiate the development of the society and nation and to ensure that the knowledge is relevant and be of use to the society. In addition, “education is central to the SDG, and has been acknowledged as one of the most effective mechanisms to cultivate sustainable development. In supporting this agenda, academic activities should involve the extension of services to the community, all must be to the perpetual benefit of the current and future society.” In summing up, Dr. Shukran pointed out that universities should serve as the reference centre that addresses the solutions to social issues. He also called for the need to deeply educate academicians and students on the real role of universities and the real functions of academic members.

Conference Themes and Papers

The symposium exhibit 12 paper presentations by 12 renowned academicians with over 60 attendees. The papers were presented under three main themes with three sessions with a Question and Answer session at the end of each session:

Creativity, Thinking and Education

Papers discussed under this theme underlined the necessity to teach thinking especially creative thinking. Creativity is considered as a crucial element for humans in fulfilling our *amanah* to be a *khalifah* on earth. Not only that creativity can facilitate *ijtihad*, creativity also contribute greatly to the establishment of Islamic Civilization in the sense of exploring, discovering and applying divine laws in all areas. Therefore, there is a need to revise educational aims in universities to be in line with the Islamic concepts (eg: *Tawheedic* concept) instead of the Western concepts such as Bloom’s Taxonomy. Furthermore, creative thinking education has proven to have its many paradoxes, therefore extensive re-

search is needed to be made on the methods of teaching and learning of creative thinking that will be the most effective and will bear fruit for both students and teachers.

In addressing the necessity of teaching thinking, there is a misconception saying that there is no reasoning in religion or Islam specifically. However, there are several qur'anic verse that highlights on the *aql*' and thinking. But most importantly, creative thinking is needed in understanding the signs mentioned in the Qur'an. More efforts should be made in teaching and learning creative thinking based on the Islamic concepts not only to understand the teachings in the Qur'an but for the understanding and the development of the Islamic Civilization.

Values, Ethics and Sustainable Development

In this session, scholars inferred that in normal circumstances, it is effortless to be ethical but it is not the same in the face of conflicts. It is only when the normative ethics is internalised as part of one's culture that it will have a solid impact on our daily lives. However, there is a lack in the case studies that scrutinize the direct impacts of normative ethics.

In the discussion about ethics and conflicts, conflicts can easily be solved by turning back to the revelation of *hikmah* and wisdom. The lessons, words and values in the revelation can be used as a tool to mitigate conflicts. Mediation, as one of the methods mentioned/pointed out in the revelation, can be used in this diverse and multi-religious world as an effective tool to resolve conflict. Even so, it is the duty of the scholars to develop mediation and other tools appropriate in today's world, therefore creativity is essential. Therefore, it is time to revive the Islamic culture that has been ignored in order to mitigate the crisis and further develop the Islamic worldview.

The crux of the problem however lies in the Muslim society itself. There is a strong correlation between creativity, freedom and morality. There is no Muslim country that lies in the Top 50 countries ranked on creativity or even Top 10 in democracy. In order to grow, there is a need for a proper environment to make creativity work. Even though there are several barriers to creativity, what is actually stifling creativity is society itself. The culture, mindset and the whole system does not leave a path for creativity to thrive and grow to further develop new technologies.

Islamic Worldview and Sustainable Development

This theme highlights the Islamic Worldview as the pillar for the sustainable future. Worldview which includes the whole knowledge of a person is a natural, divine process (*fitrah*).

If properly understood, the Islamic worldview leads to holistic development. In the issue of sustainability, one needs to look at it in the broader sense and not as individual problems. The modern initiatives to embark on sustainable development are conceptually flawed as they offer partial solutions and not lasting effects. However, the Islamic Worldview guarantees the success in this world and in the hereafter that is well-defined in the revelation. In order to bridge the gap to find the balance for success in both worlds, a value system must be implemented as values are the driving force in life, guided by the worldview. Creativity is also needed in the sense that it is part and parcel of all civilizational activities. Furthermore, sustainable development should be the means of bridging the gap for success in both worlds. What is lacking in the Western approach to sustainable development is religiosity.

This goes to show that values, ethics, creativity and sustainable development are all needed in the Islamic Worldview that comprises of success in this world and the hereafter. In order for this world to be fully sustainable, the adoption of the Islamic Worldview is urged.

Conclusion

After a series of presentations, the symposium has proven to highlight that the answer to sustainable development is the Islamic Worldview. The Islamic Worldview must be supported by a value system and ethics that will drive the society. For societies to thrive, creative thinking is constitutional in our daily lives. Therefore, there is an urgent need to revise teaching creative thinking to find the most appropriate manner and incorporate Islamic components to overcome the barriers of creativity.