

Leverhulme Lecture

Higher Education for Sustainable development: What can be learnt from Islamic Academic Tradition?

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Location: Mazumdar-Shaw Advanced Research Centre, 11 Chapel Lane,
University of Glasgow, G11 6EW.

All are welcome and there is no fee for this lecture, which is scheduled as a keynote within the [17th Higher Education Reform Conference](#). There is, however, a fee to attend the conference as a whole.

Abstract

Unbalanced and rapid economic and industrial growth in all human societies has caused many harmful consequences to the environment and mankind. Such a harmful situation has caused the United Nations to pay attention to the strategic issue of sustainable development and the need to review and modify development policies and strategies in all countries, in the line with SDGs in the 2030 Agendas. Consequently, considering the influential role HEIs have had in the process of economic and social development of societies, higher education policymakers and practitioners around the world should purposefully be engaged and contribute to offering creative solutions for this crisis. By focusing on their third mission, HEIs can offer creative and innovative ways to get out of this environmental crisis and propose new ways to manage it sustainably. Therefore, it is urgent for steps to be taken towards a change in mentality and beliefs, as well as in institutional and individual values and actions. And such steps need to be led by our universities since they are responsible for training professionals who will be faced with solving the systemic problems that we are suffering.

Since universities innovatively play a unique role in addressing global challenges and helping decision-makers to revise public policy wisely, the SDGs can be only achieved when the contribution of higher education and research is assured.

What is very important in these circumstances, is opening the door to use all religious, values and cultural capacities among all nations to create sustainability in the process of development and protection of all manifestations of life on the planet. As a result, one of the platforms for effective implementation of SDGs is to pay attention to the religious, ethical and long-standing scientific traditions in Islamic countries. The Islamic assertion is based on fundamental principles of environmental conservation in Islam in which sustainability refers to Islam as a guide and rule that can affect the faith of Muslims and its consequences for environmental, social, and economic profits. In the light of these principles, concepts such as economic development, poverty alleviation as well as environmental policies issues must be reassessed critically. By referring to Islamic teachings, not only does ESD not contradict religious beliefs but also it provides solid support for all pillars of sustainability resulting from Islamic manifestations in which Islam's long-standing commitment to environment conservation through sustainability has been reaffirmed. Therefore, in this presentation the role of Islam in Sustainable Development (SD) as well as Islamic perspectives on higher education linking to SDGs will be discussed.

Biography

Nematollah Azizi is Professor of Educational Planning at the University of Kurdistan, Vice-President of the Iranian Association for Higher Education and President of the Iranian Association of Educational Management. He has been the UoK's Vice-Chancellor for Research, the Dean of Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Director of Students Affairs, and the Director of Research Students in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. He was founding convenor of the Department of Education and research and teaching group on Higher Education, Curriculum Studies within the department.

As a senior academic, having had opportunities to teach in multiple higher education systems including at the University of Kurdistan, the University of Jyväskylä in Finland and ICD Paris Business School, he has gained extensive experience in working with highly culturally diversified student groups at undergraduate and postgraduate level. He has been responsible for redeveloping the PhD programme in Higher Education and Educational Management as well as many relevant Masters degrees.

In recent years, his research focus has been on internationalization of higher education and universities' role in community engagement. He has been a principal investigator as well as collaborator in numerous internationally and nationally funded projects, including, recently, the British Academy Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)-funded project, Strengthening Urban Engagement of Universities in Asia and Africa.

During his period in senior administrative positions, he has demonstrated successful collaborative leadership and supervision skills, working with colleagues from diverse sociocultural backgrounds. In addition to his senior roles in the University of Kurdistan his international connectivity, rare amongst Iranian academics, has offered him some remarkable opportunities to enrich and deepen his professional proficiencies effectively, and to offer his expertise in higher education management and in strategies that enhance community engagement for diverse academic and student groups. He has been a visiting professor at

University of Bath, University of Jyväskylä, University of Gothenburg and University of Glasgow.

He has carried out a number of consultancies for regional, national and international agencies including the Ministry of Sciences, Research and Technology, National Organization for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and Kurdistan Council of Education. He has been an adviser and evaluator of programmes at ministerial level as well as within a number of universities. He has been a keynote speaker and chairperson at many international events. Finally, regarding the importance of serving local communities in order to help them to flourish and to be empowered, he has been engaged proactively in founding and directing a number of NGOs and charities in Kurdistan, including the Institute of Darolehshan, and the Students Fund. He also has offered numerous workshops and courses for disadvantaged groups and individuals particularly in informal settlement areas.