

Leverhulme Lecture

Pedagogical Capabilities in Islam to Create, Maintain and Develop Justice-oriented Learning Cities

Presenter: Nematollah Azizi, University of Kurdistan, Iran and Visiting

Leverhulme Professor, University of Glasgow

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Location: Glyndwr D, Simpleton Campus

(building 11.1 on the campus map: <http://pyweb.swan.ac.uk/~aarts/CampusPlan.pdf>)

Swansea University, SA1 8EN.

Abstract

Learning cities by their nature and in pursuit of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), align with the global commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Therefore, creating, maintaining, and developing justice-oriented learning cities is a multifaceted endeavour that requires collaboration between governments, educational institutions, community organizations, and individuals on the one hand and dedication, adaptability, and a long-term commitment to social justice and education equity on the other hand. As a result, these cities prioritize social justice, equity, and access to education for all residents. For this, it's essential to involve all stakeholders, including Muslim communities and integrating their value-driven and educational capabilities in a learning cities framework to ensure that the vision of a just and inclusive learning city is realized.

Pedagogy in Islam encompasses a rich tradition of teaching and learning that has evolved over centuries. Islamic pedagogical capabilities are rooted in the Quran, the Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad), and the broader Islamic tradition. Islamic pedagogical capabilities reflect the deep connection between faith, knowledge, and moral character development. They provide a framework for a holistic and values-driven approach to educate well-rounded individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also morally upright, compassionate, and socially responsible, contributing to the betterment of both the Muslim community and humanity as a whole.

Therefore, incorporating Islamic pedagogical principles into the educational framework of the learning cities is a valuable step which ensures that the educational system respects the values and principles of a culturally diversified community, and fosters an inclusive and equitable learning environment that is sensitive to cultural and religious diversity.

Furthermore, the emphasis on moral character development and social responsibility within Islamic pedagogy aligns well with the goals of justice-oriented learning cities in which they seek to nurture and to empower individuals who not only possess knowledge and skills but also exhibit ethical conduct and a commitment to social justice. Consequently, by integrating Islamic pedagogical principles alongside other educational approaches, justice-oriented learning cities can become more inclusive and diverse, promoting an environment where individuals from all backgrounds can thrive and contribute to the betterment of society.

In this lecture, I will try to highlight the importance of integrating Islamic educational perspective into the template of the learning city and explain how the combination of Islamic pedagogical principles with the concept of learning cities lead to the emergence of a new paradigm. It seems that this paradigm shift will foster the development of inclusive, accessible, and justice-oriented learning cities. This convergence has the potential to create educational environments that are not only responsive to the diverse needs of their populations but also rooted in values of social justice and equity.

Keywords: Islamic Pedagogical Principles, Learning Cities, Interfaith Collaboration, Cultural Diversities, Paradigm Shift

Biography

Nematollah Azizi is Professor of Educational Planning at the University of Kurdistan, VicePresident 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.