

Creativity in Architecture Design Education From Islamic Perspective: A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Creativity is a fundamental aspect of architecture design education, shaping innovation and problem-solving. Islamic, as a holistic worldview, promotes creativity as a means of knowledge acquisition and human potential realisation. This study presents a narrative review of creativity in architectural education from an Islamic perspective, synthesising insights from Islamic scholarship, design education theories, and contemporary research. It explores theoretical foundations, historical contributions, and pedagogical applications, highlighting the relevance of Islamic epistemology in modern architecture education. The study demonstrates how Islamic methodologies align with critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and community-oriented design, offering a balanced paradigm between innovation and spiritual-social values. Furthermore, it underscores the significance of integrating Islamic creativity into architectural curricula to cultivate ethically conscious and socially responsible architects. Future research should empirically evaluate the impact of Islamic creativity in design studios, its role in sustainable architecture, and its application in contemporary pedagogical frameworks. This review contributes to the ongoing discourse on architecture education by presenting an alternative approach that enriches creative processes with ethical, philosophical, and cultural dimensions.

Keywords: architectural design pedagogy, architecture design education, creativity, Islamic perspectives.

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Kreativiti Dalam Pendidikan Reka Bentuk Senibina Dari Perspektif Islam: Suatu Ulasan Naratif

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Abstrak

Kreativiti adalah aspek asas dalam pendidikan reka bentuk seni bina yang membentuk inovasi dan penyelesaian masalah. Islam, sebagai satu pandangan dunia yang holistic, menggalakkan kreativiti sebagai salah satu cara untuk memperoleh ilmu dan merealisasikan potensi manusia. Kajian ini membentangkan ulasan naratif mengenai kreativiti dalam pendidikan seni bina dari perspektif Islam dengan mensintesis pandangan daripada keserjanaan Islam, teori pendidikan reka bentuk, dan penyelidikan kontemporari. Ia meneroka asas teori, sumbangan sejarah, dan aplikasi pedagogi, serta bagaimana kaedah kreativiti Islam sejajar dengan pemikiran kritikal, tanggungjawab etika, dan reka bentuk berorientasikan komuniti, menawarkan paradigma yang seimbang antara inovasi dengan nilai kerohanian dan sosial. Selain itu, kajian ini menekankan kepentingan integrasi kreativiti Islam dalam kurikulum seni bina bagi melahirkan arkitek yang beretika dan bertanggungjawab secara sosial. Kajian masa hadapan perlu menilai secara empirikal berkenaan kesan kreativiti Islam dalam studio reka bentuk, peranannya dalam seni bina lestari, serta aplikasinya dalam kerangka pedagogi kontemporari. Ulasan ini menyumbang kepada wacana pendidikan seni bina dengan memperkenalkan pendekatan alternatif yang memperkayakan proses kreatif melalui dimensi etika, falsafah, dan budaya.

Kata Kunci: pedagogi reka bentuk seni bina, pendidikan reka bentuk seni bina, kreativiti, perspektif Islam.



1.0 Introduction

Creativity has long been recognised as essential component of architectural education, shaping design thinking and innovation (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2019). The Council of Architectural Accreditation and Education Malaysia (2013) underscore creativity as a core competency, integral to fostering problem-solving and critical thinking. While contemporary pedagogy emphasises experiential learning and interdisciplinary approaches, there is a need to explore creativity through Islamic epistemological frameworks, offering a value-driven approach to architecture design.

Islamic perspectives on creativity emphasise reflection, observation, and ethical responsibility as key methodologies (Sulaiman et al., 2015). These methodologies align with Quranic questioning techniques that stimulate cognitive development and problem-solving (Badi et al., 2017). Additionally, Islamic scholarship provides rich historical contributions to architecture, innovation, and design theory, offering insight that can inform contemporary pedagogy (Abdelgalil, 2023).

The concept of creativity in architecture has been widely explored in Western theories. (Runco & Jaeger, 2012) define creativity as the ability to generate novel and useful ideas, which aligns with Guilford's (1950) emphasis on divergent thinking as a core component of creative cognition. In architectural education, (Schön, 2017) reflective practice theory suggests that creativity is cultivated through iterative design processes and critical self-reflection, paralleling the Islamic approach of tafakur (deep contemplation) in design thinking.

Furthermore, studies in cognitive science indicate that creativity is a learned skill that can be developed through structured learning experiences (Sawyer & Henriksen, 2023). Research in educational psychology, (Amabile, 2018) highlights the role of intrinsic motivation in fostering creative problem-solving, a concept that resonates with Islamic educational principles, where curiosity and intellectual exploration are highly encouraged.

From a socio-cultural perspective, (Vygotsky, 1980) argues that creativity is shaped by social interactions and cultural context, suggesting that architectural education should integrate collaborative learning experiences. This aligns with Islamic traditions of collective knowledge-sharing, where teacher-student relationships and peer discourse play crucial role in intellectual development.

As the architectural field embraces technological advancements, environmental sustainability, and interdisciplinary collaboration, it is imperative to reassess traditional creativity models and explore how Islamic perspectives on knowledge and innovation can contribute to contemporary design education. Salama (2016) argues that the integration of cultural heritage, sustainability, and ethical reasoning in architectural pedagogy can lead to more holistic and responsible design solution.

This narrative review explores the intersection of Islamic thought and architectural education, synthesising key themes from existing literature to build a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic creativity methodologies with design studio pedagogy. By examining historical precedents and contemporary applications, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic creativity in education, highlighting its potential for fostering holistic and socially responsible architects.

2.0 Methodology

This study employs a narrative review methodology, which systematically synthesises existing literature to identify key themes, theoretical perspectives, and practical applications of Islamic



creativity in architectural education. Unlike systematic literature reviews, which adhere to rigid inclusion criteria, narrative review allows for broader and more flexible exploration of interdisciplinary knowledge, integrating historical, theoretical, and contemporary insight.

A high-quality narrative review should critically evaluate material from past research, offering an integrated synthesis of current knowledge, inconsistencies and methodological gaps (Chaney, 2021). This methodology aims to reconcile and extend prior research, identifying key insight while proposing conceptual frameworks that enhance the understanding of Islamic creativity in architectural education.

The review process involved several steps:

1. Literature identification and selection: Relevant literature was sourced from academic journals, books, and conference proceeding related to Islamic creativity, architecture education, and pedagogical framework. Key databases including Scopus and Google Scholar were utilised.
2. Thematic Analysis: The selected studies were analysed using qualitative thematic analysis approach to identify recurring themes, including Islamic epistemology, design methodologies, and creativity in architectural pedagogy.
3. Conceptual synthesis: The findings were synthesised into coherent framework, mapping Islamic creativity methodologies onto contemporary architectural education theories.
4. Critical evaluation the review incorporated a comparative analysis between Islamic and Western creativity paradigm, highlighting convergences and distinctions in their pedagogical applications.

Narrative reviews differ from systematic reviews in that they track the development of scientific and educational concepts over time, offering interpretative insights rather than qualitative analysis (Chaney, 2021). This approach ensures a comprehensive yet flexible exploration of Islamic creativity in architectural education, contributing to the development of ethically conscious and socially responsible design frameworks.

3.0 Theoretical Framework: Islamic Creativity in Design Education

Islamic creativity is deeply rooted in Quranic principles, philosophical traditions, and pedagogical methodologies. Al-karasneh & Saleh (2010) propose an Islamic creativity model based on five core methodologies: reading, traveling, observing, listening, and thinking. These methodologies promote a comprehensive, ethically conscious approach to creativity, aligning with contemporary design thinking models (Supena, 2024). This suggest that creativity in architecture is not merely an instinctive or spontaneous process but a structured, reflective, and knowledge-driven approach that balances tradition with innovation. Similar framework in Western creativity theories, such as design thinking process by (Brown & Katz, 2009), also emphasise iterative learning, reinforcing the compatibility of Islamic and global methodologies.

Islamic creativity is characterised by comprehensiveness, originality, and responsibility, emphasising the balance between individual expression and societal well-being (Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2023). These characteristics reflect constructivist learning theories, which advocate experiential, reflective, and collaborative learning as essential components of architectural



education (Tsani et al., 2024). The constructivist approach, as highlighted by (Vygotsky, 1980), underscores the importance of social interaction and cultural context in learning, which aligns with Islamic traditions that emphasis collective learning through mentorship, community engagement, and real-world observation.

Beyond these fundamental principles, Islamic creativity integrates ethical consciousness, spiritual fulfillment, and scientific reasoning. Ibn Khaldun's theory of knowledge emphasises the interconnectedness of creativity, civilisation, and ethical responsibility, proposing that creativity should serve both functional and moral purposes (Kirabaev, 2023). Similarly, Al-Farabi philosophy highlights the integration of artistic and rational thought in creative expression, reinforcing the role of architecture in harmonising aesthetics with societal needs. (Purwanto et al., 2023). This view aligns with Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom (phronesis), where knowledge is not only theoretical but also applied ethically and purposefully (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

The influence of geometry, mathematics, and proportionality in Islamic creativity is evident in architectural designs, where symmetry and balance reflect both divine harmony and scientific precision. This principle is parallel to Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, which emphasises human proportion as the key to design excellence. Islamic architecture, such as the Alhambra and the Great Mosque of Cordoba, employs mathematical precision, reinforcing (Lynch, 1960) theory of legibility and spatial cognition in urban design. These applications highlight that Islamic architectural creativity is not isolated from modern scientific paradigm but rather complements and enriches contemporary design methodologies.

Islamic educational philosophies also encourage multi-sensory engagement in learning, fostering observational learning, environmental sustainability, and holistic design thinking. This concept aligns with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (2011), where creativity is not a singular ability but a multi-dimensional process involving spatial, kinaesthetic, and existential intelligence. In this light, Islamic creativity models provide a broader cognitive toolkit, enabling architects to develop culturally responsive and ethically grounded designs.

Furthermore, the Islamic educational model advocates a cyclical approach to creativity, where knowledge acquisition, reflection, application, and ethical review form an iterative process. This aligns with (Kolb, 1984)'s (1984) experiential learning cycle, which emphasises concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. By integrating Islamic creativity methodologies, design educators can cultivate critical, socially engaged, and ethically responsible architects, reinforcing the necessity for value-based design education in contemporary curricular.

4.0 Historical Perspectives: Islamic Contribution to Architectural Creativity

Islamic civilisation has made pioneering contributions to architecture and design, integrating scientific advancements, artistic expression, and spiritual symbolism (Abdelgalil, 2023). The development of Islamic architecture has been significantly influenced by philosophical, scientific, and theology thought, shaping a unique creative paradigm that integrates functionality, aesthetics, and ethical consciousness (Necipoglu, 1995). This demonstrates that Islamic architecture is not merely a stylistic expression but a deeply intellectual and philosophical pursuit, embedding meaning and purpose into built environment.



4.1 The Role of Islamic Scholars in Architectural Creativity

Prominent scholar such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Khaldun emphasised the relationship between knowledge, creativity, and ethics, advocating for a holistic approach to architectural education (Kirabaev, 2023). Ibn Khaldun theory of civilisation (*Muqaddimah*) highlights the importance of craftsmanship, innovation, and socio-cultural influences in shaping creative expression (Khaldun, 2015). Similarly, Al-Farabi's integration of rational thought and artistic design underscores the necessity of philosophical inquiry in fostering architectural excellence (Mahdi, 2001). These insights suggest that architecture in Islamic thought was never confined to aesthetics but was a medium for advancing societal well-being and intellectual progress. This perspective challenges contemporary architectural education to incorporate ethical reasoning and interdisciplinary learning as fundamental components of creativity.

In addition, the work of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Al-Khindi illustrate the role of geometry, proportions and mathematical principles in shaping architectural creativity. Their contributions influenced Islamic geometric design, spatial configurations, and environmental adaptation strategies, which remain foundational in contemporary architecture (Hogendijk, 2012). This implies that Islamic architects employed a scientific approach, ensuring that every structure was not just beautiful but also functionally and mathematically sound, setting a precedent for modern computational design in architecture.

4.2 Architectural Innovations in the Islamic Golden Age

During the Islamic Golden Age (8th – 14th centuries), architectural creativity flourished, marked by technological advancement, material innovations, and sustainable design approaches. Key developments included:

- The Introduction of Muqarnas (Honeycomb Vaulting): Used to create intricate, light-reflecting surfaces that enhance spatial perception and aesthetical appeal (Ettinghausen et al., 2003). This reveals that Islamic architects mastered light manipulation, using architecture to shape human experiences within sacred and secular spaces. The ability to create immersive experience through design remains a crucial skill in contemporary architecture.
- Advancement in Dome Construction: Seen in the Dome of the Rock (Jerusalem, 691 AD) and the Selimiye Mosque (Edirne, 1575), where structural innovation and mathematical precision contributed to ground breaking designs (Necipoglu, 1995). These advancements show that Islamic architects were pioneering in their approach to structural integrity, influencing modern dome engineering and spatial efficiency. Contemporary architects can draw from these historical practices to develop efficient yet aesthetically compelling structures.
- The Development of Wind Tower and Passive Cooling Techniques: Islamic architects pioneered climate-responsive design solutions, optimising natural ventilation and reducing energy consumption (El-Borombaly & Fernando Molina-Prieto, 2015). This underscores how Islamic architecture was ahead of its time in term of sustainability, embedding environment consciousness into urban design centuries before contemporary green architecture. The revival of these techniques in modern sustainable architecture highlights the continued relevance of Islamic architectural principles.
- Water Management System and Garden Design: Inspired by Quranic descriptions of paradise, Islamic architects integrated sustainable irrigation, courtyard planning, and fountains to create harmonious environments (Ruggles, 2022). This highlights how



spirituality and environmental harmony were interwoven in Islamic landscapes, reinforcing the principle that nature should coexist with human habitation.

4.3 Influence of Islamic Creativity on Global Architecture

Islamic architectural principles influenced Renaissance architecture, particularly in Spain, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. The Alhambra Palace (Granada, 13th century), for instance, exemplifies the integration of Islamic geometric patterns, calligraphy, and symmetrical compositions, inspiring later European architects (Irwin, 2012). This reflects how the Islamic world was not only a contributor but a catalyst for artistic and scientific advancements in Europe, bridging cultures through architectural exchange.

Similarly, Ottoman architect Mimar Sinan (16th century) incorporated structural efficiency, material advancements, and aesthetic refinement, influencing global architectural trends (Necipoglu, 1995). This demonstrates that Islamic architecture was adaptable, evolving to meet both regional and global needs while maintaining its core design philosophy of balance and harmony.

4.4 Preservation and Contemporary Adaptation

The preservation of historical Islamic architecture has become an important subject in contemporary design education. Efforts to document and restore Islamic heritage sites emphasize the continued relevance of Islamic geometric aesthetics, sustainability strategies, and ethical consciousness into contemporary urban design (Tabbaa, 2001). This highlights the lasting legacy of Islamic architecture, proving that its principles of sustainability, spirituality, and functionality remain valuable for future generations.

As Islamic architectural creativity continues to evolve, its fusion of tradition and innovation serves as guidance for modern architects, ensuring that architectural education remains culturally relevant, ethically responsible, and environmentally sustainable. The insights from historical Islamic creativity not only shape the present but also provide a robust foundation for future design methodologies that embrace both technological advancements and ethical considerations.

5.0 Conclusion

This narrative review highlights the relevance of Islamic creativity methodologies in architecture design education, demonstrating their alignment with critical thinking, ethical design, and sustainability. The integration of Islamic principles of creativity, including reflection, observation, and ethical responsibility, offers a comprehensive framework for fostering innovation in architectural pedagogy. The findings suggest that Islamic architectural thought, historically rooted in mathematics, philosophy, and spirituality, provides valuable insight that can enhance contemporary design education and practice.

Furthermore, the study underscores the interdisciplinary nature of creativity, emphasizing the role of social, cognitive, and cultural influences in shaping innovative design processes. The constructivist theories of learning, as proposed by Vygotsky (1980) and Kolb (1984), highlight the importance of experiential learning and reflection, both of which align with Islamic education



traditions that emphasize active engagement, critical thinking, and mentorship-based learning (Biggs & Tang, 2011). This supports the notion that architecture students benefit from an education that balances theoretical knowledge with hands-on, ethical, and culturally relevant design practice.

Future research should assess the effectiveness of Islamic creativity methodologies in architectural education through qualitative and quantitative studies, particularly in design thinking and problem solving. Comparative studies between Islamic and Western creativity models can provide insights into universal and culturally specific design processes. Additionally, research on sustainable Islamic architecture can inform climate-responsive urban planning. Finally, policy reforms should explore the institutionalisation of Islamic creativity methodologies in architectural curricula to ensure a culturally grounded yet globally relevant education system.

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