

Creativity in Studio Based Architecture Learning from Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Creativity is a unique trait and attribute defining the higher level of educational taxonomy. In Architectural education, creativity is one of the main objectives of learning output and outcome. It is also a pre-requisite of enrolment that is required by all architectural schools in the world. Creativity becomes a major component in the framework of architecture education worldwide. It plays a crucial role in design education. Despite the growth of architecture schools offering design education particularly in studio-based architecture learning, there is lack of research and finding that can define creativity from Islamic perspective. In Islam, creativity is often understood as a reflection of human beings' innate ability to think, imagine, and innovate, which are perceived as gifts from Allah (God). This study aims to investigate and to construct a principle of creativity as underlined by the Quran for Architecture and design-based education. The research approach will mainly be focusing on experimentation of Islamic teachings with the aid of case study in architecture studio-based learning output. The comparison of theoretical finding with the actual case in teaching and learning output in the studio will be discussed through studio rubric and marking system with expert consolidation. The finding underscores the connection between the attribute of creativity in Islam with the teaching methodologies and student learning outcome in architectural studio. The finding suggests several alignments on conventional educational taxonomy by incorporating Islamic creativity principles that align with ethical and moral values, emphasizing that the outcome of creative endeavors should contribute to the betterment of human being and harmonize with nature.

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1. Introduction

Many studies have been done in defining the dimension of creativity in the realm of Islamic point of view (Adibah et. al, 2015; AL-Karasneh & Saleh, 2010; Al-Mazeidy, 1993; Mohd Azmir, Muhammad Mustaqim, Paimah & Hisham, 2013) but less narrative being written in reference to the first revelation of the Quran Surah Al-Alaq; verse 1-5 when the prophet has been thought in a systematic process of learning upon his bestowment as a last prophet to mankind. The first revelation embodied important message of learning process including the definition of creativity. (Hasan Langgulung, 1979). Historically, the prophet has been in seclusion during the first revelation from Allah. It indicates that clear mind is the main principle of learning process and it is as important as clear and calm environment and surrounding for knowledge transfer. This study will explore the

theoretical framework of creativity suggested by the scholar in general and comparison to the Islamic principle of creativity. The process of exploration will be based on the studio design based in architecture education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The notion of Creativity

In Islam, creativity is often understood as a reflection of human beings' innate ability to think, imagine, and innovate, which are seen as gifts from Allah (God). It is linked to the concept of "Tafakkur" (contemplation) and "Ijtihad" (independent reasoning), where individuals are encouraged to reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, thereby inspiring creativity, and innovation in various aspects of life. (Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 1987). Creativity in Islam is also aligned with ethical and moral values, emphasizing that the outcomes of creative endeavors should contribute to the betterment of society and be in harmony with Islamic principles. (Sardar, Ziauddin, 1988).

Scholars have proposed several definitions of creativity. According to Barron (1969) and Levitt (1974), creativity is the capacity to produce new, original, or novel ideas that are also practical (Mohd Azmir et al., 2015; Mahmoud, Kamel & Hamza, 2020). Creativity is also an act of coming up with solutions to issues that is new, inventive, fascinating, one-of-a-kind, outstanding, and distinctive. According to Torrance (1966), there are four principle of creativity process: abundance, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. However, Islamic scholar has outlined extended definition of creativity derived from the Islamic perspectives which are; 1. **Tawheed** (oneness of God) 2. **Ihsan** (excellence) 3. **Tafakkur** (contemplation) 4. **Ijtihad** (independent reasoning) 5. **Khilafah** (stewardship) 6. **Adl** (justice) and 7. **Mizan** (balance). Seven (7) attributes or Islamic principle of creativity has governed the way of thinking guided by the holy book of Al-Quran. (Sardar, Ziauddin, 1988).

2.2. Creativity in Architecture Studio Design-Based Education (ASDBE)

Studio design-based education focuses on inspiring the curiosity, independent learning, problem-solving, decision-making, teamwork, peer-learning, and communication skills, molded by skill-based knowledge to produce design solution holistically with the guidance of instructor (Doheim & Yusof, 2020). Creativity is embedded in all design-based education especially in the field of architecture, interior design, graphic design, landscape architecture and industrial design (Lawson, 1997; Portillo, 2002).

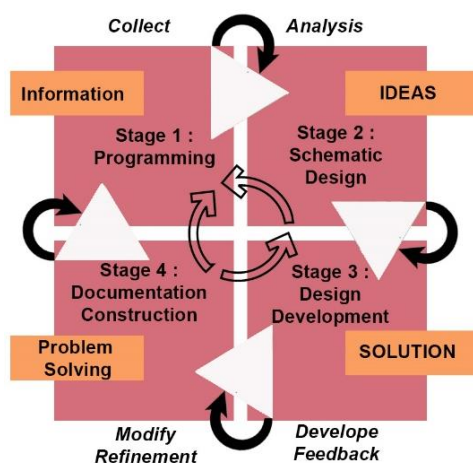


Figure 1: Design process phases ((Source: LBBA, 2012))

Fig. 1 shows the design process phases by London Bone Baker Architect in relation to architecture practice. While according to Soliman (2017), activities in architecture design studio in architectural school only involves three phases: (1) Programming Phase – Input lecture by instructor, case study, clients study; (2) Schematic Design Phase – site analysis, spatial study, design concept, plans, sections and elevations) and (3) Design Development Phase – detail drawings, models. All these design activities are driven by creativity as the main aspect of design process. As suggested by Islamic principle of creativity by Sardar & Ziauddin, (1988), the process of studio design-based education can be divided into seven (7) stages and matched with the design process phase which were described in Table 1.

Table 1: Relationship of Islamic principle of Creativity with design process and design phase.

No	Islamic Principle	Design Process	Design Stages
1	<i>Tawheed</i> (oneness of God)	Intention & believe	Programming
2	<i>Tafakkur</i> (contemplation)	Empathy	
3	<i>Ijtihad</i> (independent reasoning)	Ideation & Storming	Schematic design
4	<i>Adl</i> (justice)	Discussion	Design Development
5	<i>Mizan</i> (balance).	Decision (Design)	
6	<i>Ihsan</i> (excellence)	Refinement	Execution & Construction
7	<i>Khilafah</i> (stewardship)	Management	

2.3. Design Thinking from Islamic Perspectives

Creative design thinking from Islamic perspective involves the integration of seven (7) principles that turn into the design process, fostering a holistic approach that emphasizes not just aesthetic and functional considerations, but also spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. This approach encourages students to develop designs that are not only innovative and beautiful but also aligned with Islamic ideals of balance, harmony, and social responsibility. The seven (7) principles are suggested to be used as fundamental alignment in architecture design process and design assessment in establishing a comprehensive output of student learning outcome rooted in the notion of Islamic creativity. As proposed by AbdulMumini Inda, 2024, the seven (7) principles are governed by the fundamental design thinking as below;

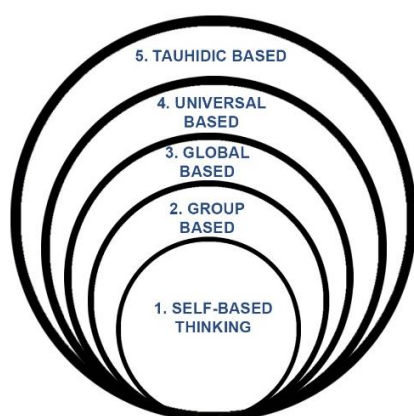


Figure 2: Fundamental of Design Thinking (Abdul Mumini Inda, 2024)

The design thinking method as proposed by AbdulMumini Inda, 2024 can be perceived in two dimensions either the individual self-based thinking should be guided and governed by the Tauhidic approach or the thinking should strive towards understanding the Tauhidic approach or verifying the greatness or oneness of God in producing creative output. Based on this diagram, the research is intended to explore both direction of creative thinking by examining the process and the output of the Architecture studio based. This research has selected a specific process of Islamic educational taxonomy, rooted in the Quran as a framework of learning in Architecture Studio Design Based Education (ASDBE).

2.3. Alignment of Studio Design-Based Teaching with Islamic Principle of Creativity

In Architecture Education the most creative activities in architectural design studio occur at the earlier stages of design started with the formulation of project brief and planning as suggested by London Bone Baker Architect. The process followed by architectural site visits, that require creative methodologies of input such as observation, listening, and reflection. This process will stimulate the creative minds of architecture students while searching for the inspiration by reading and reflecting upon the natural environment and god's creation. This is the most fundamental creative method in Islam derived from the first revelation; reading Iqra'. Reading is not only from the books but also from the universe.

The design process started in the studio at schematic and design development stage. The 'thinking' method appears to be applied in all activities within the architectural design studio, as it forms the foundation of creativity and closely tied to critical thinking. This aligns with the visual-oriented nature of design, both in the learning process and the final outcomes of the studio. From an Islamic perspective, *Ijtihad* (independent

reasoning) which include studying nature, people, and the universe, making it a valuable method during the design stage as a source of justification in decision making (*Adl- Justice and Mizan-Balance*).

Studio-Design Based teaching is a close guided and mentoring that is commonly used in traditional method of Islamic teaching which is Talaqqi. It is generally means "receiving" or "taking directly." In Islamic and educational contexts, it specifically refers to the act of directly receiving knowledge or instruction from a teacher, mentor, or scholar. Thus, the teaching process always emphasis on feedback and critique in constructive way by the mentor. This method is very crucial in imparting the Tauhidic approach into the thinking process. It is also a significant component of communication during critique sessions and peer learning, as students gain insights by observing and listening to discussion and argument by their peers. The final design output will be presented to the public audience after the refinement (*Ihsan- excellence*) as the manifestation of knowledge throughout process.

3. Method

This study is a live experiment based on studio output learning, conducted in the teaching process for the final year Architecture student in University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). A project brief has been designed at the beginning of the semester requesting the student to design a housing scheme for ASNAF. The theme of the studio project derives from a brief understanding of empathy for the needy. The design statement has been crafted according to Surah At-Taubah Verse 60 as below: -

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَمِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةَ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغُرْمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ
 ۝ فَرِيضَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

Zakāh expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy it' and for those employed for and for bringing hearts together [for Islām] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allāh and for the [stranded] traveler – an obligation [imposed] by Allāh. And Allāh is Knowing and Wise.

As the issue is prevalent, affordable housing design in Malaysia faces several challenges and issues which are common in other countries as well. These challenges stem from a combination of many factors. The provision of shelter for the needy is crucial as they need a home for their family and dignity. Through the initiative of the Zakat system in Islam, there are several solutions to the design of the built environment. This project is calling for a creative solution for the needy. Based on the selected verse, students are required to design a housing scheme that fit with 6 characteristic which are affordability, sustainability, adaptability, community friendly, safety & security and Aesthetic.

There were 43 students including 3 non-Muslim participated in this 4-month design process that being mentored and evaluated through with 3 stages of process namely Pre-design or programming, Schematic Design and Design Development. The output of every stage will be evaluated on different level of creativity measures indirectly linked to the principal creativity from Islamic perspectives.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the observation from the studio output at the end of the semester, the score of the student were analyzed as below:

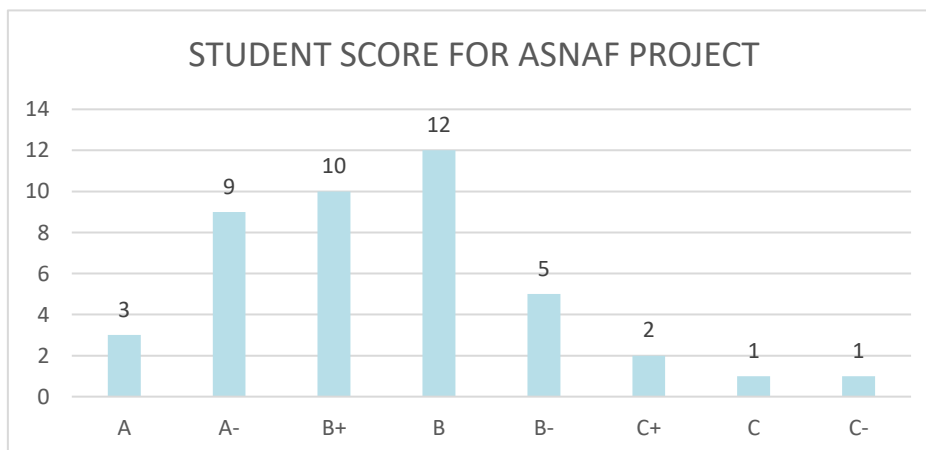


Figure 3: Student Score for Asnaf Project

The statistical graft in figure 3 shows only 3 students achieved the excellence level in completing the task according to the project requirements and twelve (12) students are within the good range of mark. Based on the selected 12 students, their rubric of evaluation was reviewed in finding the level creativity as per four stages of evaluation. The selected sample of work have been evaluated and analyzed on the adherence and adaptation of Islamic principle of creativity throughout the process based on the feedback from the interim critique session at different stage. The results of the analysis are as follow.

Table 2 : Student Score- Adherence and Adaptation of Islamic principle of creativity

No	Design Stage	Islamic Principle	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12
1	Programming Planning	<i>Tawheed</i> (Oneness of God)	/	/	/	x	x	x	/	/	/	/	/	/
2		<i>Tafakkur</i> (contemplation)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
3	Schematic Design	<i>Ijtihad</i> (independent reasoning)	/	/	/	/	/	/	x	x	/	x	x	x
4	Design Development	<i>Adl</i> (justice)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	x	/	x	/	x
5		<i>Mizan</i> (balance).	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	x	/	x	/	x

Based on the data distribution in Table 2, majority of the candidates can understand and demonstrate the Islamic principle of creativity in the design output according the feedback from the assessor. Three (3) students without the score of the first principle are the non-Muslim. Five (5) students did not show an indicator of adherence to the Islamic principle of creativity at the beginning of design process but three students manage to demonstrate the adaptation of the principle at the design development and final design output. Since the objective of the studio project does not primarily accessing the Islamic creativity output and the research was a pilot testing in association with fundamental principle of Islamic creativity, the result of individual student performance does not being examine and presented narratively. There might be underlying significant indicator and other perspective if the overall performance were examined by using comprehensive measurement tools of indicators.

The principle of creativity in Islam are rooted in the faith's spiritual, ethical, and intellectual framework that manifest from a systematic process of learning started from the basic methods of knowledge acquisition namely 1) Reading, 2) Observing, 3) Listening and 4) Deep thinking and reflection (Al-Karanesh and Salleh, 2010). Based on the analysis on Table 2 and thorough observation on the student output, the alignment of Studio Design-Based Education with the principle of creativity in Islam can be constructed as follow; -

1. The application of Islamic Creativity Principle is a universal principle (Fitrah) that can be adapted and accepted by the non-Muslim through proper alignment in the process of teaching and learning. It can be thought indirectly by guiding through appropriate methodology in construction self-based thinking that govern by the Tauhidic approach. It is not a indoctrinate process of Islamization on thinking but more toward democratic through independent reasoning.
2. Development of Islamic Creativity Principle in student design thinking lies on the process instead of the immediate outcome of the studio output. The finding shows that comprehensive understanding of the principle come with maturity when the student can be able to justify the knowledge that has been practically thought within the process. The application of appropriate methodology at different stage might give different impact to the output.

5. Conclusion

Creativity in architecture education from an Islamic perspective involves more than just the creation of visually appealing and functional buildings; it is about infusing the design process with spiritual depth, ethical responsibility, and a commitment to social and environmental stewardship. By grounding architectural creativity in Islamic values, educators can help students develop designs that are not only innovative but also

contribute positively to society and reflect the principles of their faith. This study is a progressive simulation to a specific type studio-based learning and limited to a specific group of students with similar background. The similar integrated process can be used for other discipline with similar parameter and framework to discover further implication an impact that can be used as a basis of drafting the teaching methodology infused with Islamic value and understanding. It is a fundamental pedagogy and andragogy in developing deep and critical thinking with the aid of Islamic teaching.

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