

INTEGRATING ISLAMIC PEDAGOGY AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN PREPARING FUTURE EDUCATORS IN UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

The development of students' creative competence is a critical aspect of preparing future educators, particularly within the framework of Islamic education. This study investigates how the integration of Islamic religious education principles with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enhances students' professional and pedagogical readiness in higher education. Employing a qualitative approach, the research involved observing pedagogical practices, analysing the curriculum, and evaluating educational outcomes across selected Islamic universities. The results revealed that incorporating Islamic educational values into learning processes nurtured creativity while fostering ethical awareness and sustainability-oriented thinking. The SDGs served as a global reference to contextualize innovation in teaching, while Islamic values grounded the process in moral and spiritual development. Students showed notable improvement in critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability, skills essential for professional practice in dynamic educational environments. This study emphasizes the importance of holistic educational models that integrate Islamic ethical frameworks and global sustainability agendas to foster creative, responsible, and future-ready educators. The findings suggest that integrating spiritual, ethical, and sustainable perspectives into curriculum design can significantly contribute to the advancement of Islamic education in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Creative Competence, Higher Education, Islamic Education, SDGs, Teacher Preparation, Uzbekistan

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing world, education systems must prepare learners not only with knowledge and technical skills but also with creativity, ethical values, and awareness of sustainability. This imperative is increasingly underscored by SDG 4's call for transformative, inclusive, and quality education that promotes global citizenship and innovation (Nasrudin et al., 2025). Recent studies indicate that sustainable development mandates are closely aligned with creative pedagogy in higher education (Nasrudin et al., 2025). For Muslim-majority societies, this global challenge aligns with the traditional responsibility to foster moral and spiritual development through Islamic education (Nasrudin et al., 2025).

Integrating Islamic pedagogy with SDG frameworks presents both a challenge and a valuable opportunity. Islamic education, emphasizing *akhlak* (character), *tafakkur* (deep reflection), and *'amal* (practical action), offers fertile ground for nurturing ethical creativity

(Kurniasih et al., 2025). However, many Islamic education systems struggle with outdated, rote-based curricula that fail to promote critical and creative thinking (Kurniasih et al., 2025). Scholars argue that revitalizing higher education, especially teacher training, in Islamic universities is key to bridging this gap (Kurniasih et al., 2025).

Uzbekistan, a nation with a rich legacy of Islamic scholarship, is currently undergoing significant educational reforms aimed at modernizing curricula while aligning them with international standards. These reforms challenge higher education institutions to integrate Islamic values with 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, innovation, and sustainability. However, despite growing policy emphasis, a notable lack of empirical research remains on how Islamic education in Uzbekistan contributes to the development of creative competence and its alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly within teacher education programs (Khimmatalliev & Omonova, 2025).

Recent research has explored intersections of Islamic education, sustainability, and ethics. For example, Kurniasih et al. (2025) show how Indonesian higher education policy advances SDG-aligned Islamic curricula. Additionally, Nasrudin et al. (2025) find that embedding SDGs in Islamic teaching materials enhances social inclusion and ethical literacy among students. Scholarship focused on Uzbekistan has documented a resurgence of Islamic religious education in the post-Soviet era, yet the connection to creative competence and the global agenda remains underexplored.

The research addresses the existing research gaps by examining how the integration of Islamic educational principles with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can promote creative competence among prospective teachers within Uzbekistan's higher education landscape. Unlike conventional approaches that treat creativity primarily as a cognitive skill, this study emphasizes a holistic framework that views creativity as a product of spiritual, ethical, and intellectual development. The research offers novel insights by framing creative competence not only as an academic achievement, but also as a moral and socially responsible capacity, deeply rooted in Islamic pedagogical values. Through a comprehensive analysis of curriculum content, instructional strategies, and student learning outcomes, the study offers contextually grounded recommendations for advancing Islamic teacher education. It also seeks to enrich the global discourse on faith-based sustainable pedagogy by demonstrating how localized educational reforms in Muslim-majority contexts can align with international sustainability agendas while preserving spiritual integrity and cultural relevance.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to investigate how Islamic educational principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integrated into teacher education programs in Uzbekistan, aiming to foster creative competence among future educators. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with Islamic education faculty, English language lecturers, and student teachers, as well as classroom observations. These methods were chosen to capture how moral, creative, and professional competencies are embedded in teaching practices. Data triangulation strengthened the validity of the findings by ensuring a rich, context-sensitive understanding of pedagogical environments, consistent with qualitative research standards that emphasize depth and credibility (Zahraini et al., 2025; Khimmatalliev & Omonova, 2025).

To analyze how creative competence is developed, this study adopted a three-part analytical framework combining Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) 4C model of creativity, Islamic pedagogical values, and UNESCO's SDGs Competency Domains. The 4C model provided a lens for identifying varying levels of student creativity, while Islamic values, such as *tarbiyah* (holistic development), *ta'dib* (ethical discipline), and *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification), grounded

the interpretation of students' moral intentions. The SDG framework introduced a global dimension, emphasizing socio-emotional and behavioural competencies such as empathy, collaboration, and ethical responsibility. Thematic analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, supported by NVivo 12 software for efficient coding and pattern identification. This integrated approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of how classroom strategies and teacher-student interactions contribute to the development of ethical, creative, and socially engaged educators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Uzbekistan, a post-Soviet nation with a deep-rooted Islamic heritage, has recently undergone a significant transformation in its education sector, particularly within Islamic higher education. Efforts to balance traditional Islamic values with modern pedagogical and global competencies have become increasingly pronounced (Jamil & Mukhammadiev, 2025). In this context, teacher education institutions are positioned as key agents for fostering innovation, ethical reasoning, and sustainable development. However, challenges persist, including rigid curricula, underdeveloped creative pedagogies, and limited integration of global frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Leicht et.al., 2018). This study addresses these educational challenges by examining how Islamic moral values can be effectively integrated with creativity and sustainability education to foster ethically grounded and socially engaged teachers in Uzbekistan.

To analyze how creative competence is developed in Islamic teacher education, this study employed a three-part analytical framework that integrates Kaufman and Beghetto's (2009) 4C model of creativity, Islamic pedagogical values, and UNESCO's SDG Competency Domains. The 4C model provided a developmental lens for classifying student creativity, ranging from personal insight to domain-level expertise. Meanwhile, Islamic principles such as *tarbiyah* (holistic development), *ta'dib* (ethical discipline), and *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification) helped interpret the moral dimensions of creative learning. The SDG framework contributed a global perspective, focusing on socio-emotional and behavioral competencies like empathy, collaboration, and ethical responsibility. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis, supported by NVivo 12 software, the study generated a comprehensive understanding of how instructional practices nurture ethically grounded, socially responsive, and innovative future educators. The findings reveal key themes, including the integration of Islamic values in pedagogy, the cultivation of student creative competence, alignment with SDG 4 targets, and the impact of digital tools and active learning strategies. Moreover, the results highlight both the opportunities and challenges educators face in embedding creativity within moral and global frameworks, along with student and teacher recommendations for sustaining creative competence in Islamic teacher education.

Integration of Islamic Educational Values in Pedagogical Practice

Drawing from document analysis, classroom observations, and interviews with Islamic education faculty, English lecturers, and student-teachers, this study found that core Islamic values, such as *tarbiyah* (holistic development), *akhlaq* (ethics), *amanah* (trust), *shura* (consultation), and *adl* (justice), were consistently embedded in pedagogical design and practice. Course documents (syllabi, lesson plans, and teaching materials) emphasized character education alongside academic goals, particularly in language instruction and teacher training modules. Classroom observations confirmed that these values were enacted through reflective questioning, moral dilemmas, and collaborative tasks. For instance, one observed role-play asked students to resolve a classroom conflict using the principle of *adl*, demonstrating the integration of ethical reasoning into instructional practice. Interviewees reinforced this

alignment: lecturers described using Qur'anic stories and moral frameworks to guide their discussions, while student-teachers shared how they were encouraged to integrate virtues such as honesty and patience into their microteaching activities.

Despite these strengths, the data also revealed practical limitations in sustaining value-based education. Interviews exposed a gap between institutional aspirations and daily classroom realities, often constrained by rigid curricula and time pressures. One lecturer noted, *"There's little room for reflection when exams dominate the schedule, while student-teachers pointed out inconsistencies in value integration across departments"* (Personal Communication, March 2024). Classroom observations echoed this unevenness, with some instructors prioritizing ethical development and others focusing solely on linguistic skills. Document analysis further revealed inconsistencies between course objectives and actual content delivery. These findings underscore the need for more precise curriculum alignment, assessment strategies that include moral dimensions, and institutional support to ensure that Islamic educational values are not merely aspirational but deeply embedded in teacher education practice.

Findings from this study reveal that the integration of Islamic educational values in teacher education pedagogy is present, but it is inconsistently implemented. While course materials reflected principles such as *tarbiyah*, emphasizing intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development (Al-Attas, 1999; Zuraidah et al., 2024), the incorporation of ethical values, including *akhlak*, *amanah*, and *adl* was often limited to formal learning objectives or assessment-driven activities. Observations revealed that lecturers employed reflective tasks and group collaboration to instil shura and ethical responsibility, aligning with Sanni (2023) and Rahman et al. (2023), who argue that digital and moral pedagogy can work synergistically. Interviews further demonstrated that *adab*, patience, and honesty were modelled and encouraged, sometimes through Qur'anic narratives. However, systemic constraints, such as rigid curricula and performance-based evaluation systems, hindered deep moral engagement, echoing concerns raised by Felix and Clayton (2025) and Nandianti (2025). This underscores the urgent need for curriculum frameworks that explicitly support Islamic ethical formation within creative pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Jamil & Mukhammadiev, 2025).

Creative Competence Development in Teaching and Learning

Classroom observations revealed that lecturers implemented diverse instructional strategies to foster creative competence rooted in Islamic values. Communicative, collaborative, and project-based learning approaches were widely employed, including role-plays, poster design, and visual media projects. Students were observed engaging in real-world problem-solving tasks framed around ethical dilemmas, such as drafting a proposal on neighborhood waste management tied to the Qur'anic concept of *khalifah* (stewardship). These activities not only encouraged linguistic development but also fostered creativity rooted in moral purpose.

Interview data from lecturers and student-teachers supported these findings. Educators shared that they often began lessons with moral prompts or parables to anchor content in Islamic values. Student-teachers explained that they were guided to integrate values such as *amanah* (trust) and *adl* (justice) into microteaching and role-play scenarios. Analysis of student artefacts, such as reflective journals, lesson plans, and digital campaigns, showed creativity at the Mini-C and Little-C levels (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009), combining personal insight with socially meaningful innovation. Outputs commonly address real-world themes such as environmental sustainability and workplace ethics, demonstrating students' ability to merge values with applied skills.

Despite these successes, data from interviews and observations also highlighted challenges. Structural barriers, such as curriculum rigidity, limited access to creative tools, and inadequate professional training, restricted opportunities for innovation. Student-teachers

expressed fear of failure and uncertainty due to assessment systems that rarely recognized creative or ethical development (Mamirjonovna, 2024). These constraints suggest that while creativity is being cultivated, more institutional support and culturally relevant pedagogical frameworks are needed to sustain creative, values-based education within Islamic higher education.

In terms of fostering creative competence, the integration of student-centered, active learning with Islamic moral values yielded meaningful pedagogical outcomes. Approaches such as project-based learning, collaborative discussion, and moral dilemma analysis enabled students to develop ethical reasoning alongside language and pedagogical skills (Almazroui, 2022; Zuraidah et al., 2024). These practices align with the Islamic conception of *khalifah* and *amanah*, reinforcing the idea that creativity in education must be anchored in social responsibility (Yazdani & Akbarilakeh, 2017). Students demonstrated Mini-C and Little-C creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009), particularly when engaging in SDG-themed activities that involved sustainability, environmental stewardship, and gender equity, real-world concerns relevant to Islamic teachings and global priorities (Ashraf et al., 2021; Dunlop et al., 2022). However, institutional limitations, such as exam-oriented instruction and underdeveloped evaluation tools, restricted broader implementation, confirming patterns seen in studies by Wals (2010) and Craft (2005). Building creative competence in Islamic education thus requires not only pedagogical innovation but also supportive policy and infrastructure reform (Leicht et al., 2018).

Student Self-Reported Growth in Creative Competence

Data from interviews, classroom observations, and student artefacts revealed that students experienced significant growth in creative competence, particularly in originality, flexibility, ethical reasoning, and collaborative problem-solving. Through reflective tasks, real-world projects, and role-plays, they developed the ability to generate innovative ideas and consider moral implications tied to sustainability and justice. Interviewed participants attributed this growth to pedagogical practices that emphasized teamwork, structured moral reflection, and formative assessment (Andersson & Palm, 2017). Teachers' encouragement of student-led inquiry and feedback loops further enhanced students' ability to integrate creativity with ethical awareness and social responsibility.

A document analysis of syllabi and course materials revealed a deliberate integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to equity, sustainability, and inclusion. Classroom observations supported this finding, with teachers connecting global challenges, such as water scarcity, climate change, and food insecurity, to local realities through Islamic ethical perspectives. Interviews with lecturers confirmed their intentional design of lessons that merged SDG themes with Islamic values, such as *amanah*, *adl*, and *rahmah*. These combined data sources underscore a strategic effort to develop creative, ethically grounded, and socially conscious learners through values-based instruction rooted in both faith and global citizenship.

Students' self-reported growth in creativity affirms the effectiveness of this integrative approach, particularly in enhancing originality, ethical reasoning, and problem-solving skills. Through structured reflection, teamwork, and real-world projects, students engaged in everyday innovation while deepening their spiritual and civic awareness, embodying the goals of value-based education (Chu et al., 2017; Halstead, 2007). They reported greater confidence in addressing global issues, such as social justice and environmental care, particularly when these topics were framed within Islamic ethical constructs like *rahmah* and *wasatiyyah* (moderation) (Ashraf et al., 2021; Sanni, 2023). This aligns with Al-Attas' (1999) vision of education as a transformative moral endeavor. Activities such as debates, role-plays, and reflective journaling foster both empathy and linguistic competence, positioning creative learning within a

framework of faith-driven civic engagement (Schoem, 2023; Mishra & Mehta, 2017). These findings support the argument that creativity in Islamic higher education is not simply skill-based, but deeply tied to moral and communal identity (Öhman & Östman, 2019; Nandianti, 2025).

Pedagogical Conditions and Technological Strategies Supporting Creativity

Based on classroom observations, document analysis, and interviews, this study identified a range of instructional strategies in English language pedagogy that supported students' creative competence. Data collection included direct classroom observations, content analysis of syllabi and instructional materials, and semi-structured interviews with faculty and student-teachers. Observations showed the use of classical, communicative, lingua-cultural, and intensive methods, each supporting specific aspects of creative development such as adaptability, learner autonomy, and ethical reflection. These strategies were often grounded in Islamic values, such as *amanah* (trust) and *adl* (justice), thereby enhancing students' critical engagement with the content. Course documents frequently presented themes related to social justice, environmental care, and community well-being, with project-based tasks that linked Qur'anic ethics to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, assignments like public service campaigns and peer-led discussions encouraged linguistic fluency while cultivating moral awareness.

Interview data reinforced the strategic integration of religious values into instructional planning. Teachers described using weekly ethical themes, such as compassion or integrity, to frame linguistic exploration and promote critical thinking. Student reflections echoed this design, noting how tasks like role-play and reflective writing prompted them to consider both creative language use and the ethical implications of communication. Observations further highlighted pedagogical conditions such as formative assessment, differentiated instruction, and interactive activities like journaling, group negotiation, and role-play as essential enablers of creative growth. A supportive classroom climate, marked by trust and emotional safety, was repeatedly cited by both teachers and students as vital for fostering originality and moral engagement. These findings confirm that when Islamic values and real-world relevance are deliberately integrated into English language instruction, it can foster deeper, more meaningful creative competence.

The findings on pedagogical conditions and technological strategies supporting creativity show that creative competence in English language pedagogy is strengthened when instructional strategies are purposefully integrated with moral values and real-world concerns. This supports Craft's (2005) view that creativity involves ethical, socially aware decision-making, not just novel ideas. The use of communicative, lingua-cultural, and intensive methods encouraged originality and flexibility, reflecting Cropley's (2001) emphasis on autonomy and problem-solving. Pairing these approaches with Islamic principles, such as *amanah* (trust) and *adl* (justice), reinforces the argument of Al-Karasneh et al. (2010) that creativity in Islamic education is both a skill and a moral trait. As students worked on projects linking Qur'anic ethics with SDGs, they engaged in culturally meaningful reflection, echoing Beghetto's (2016) call for contextually relevant creativity. Supportive classroom environments, where students engaged in reflective journaling, mind-mapping, and group tasks, affirmed the importance of psychological safety (Amabile, 1996; Charteris et al., 2021). Teachers' use of weekly value themes and ethical reflection aligns with Shaheen's (2010) idea that creative teaching fosters moral deliberation. Overall, creativity flourished where pedagogy, classroom climate, and Islamic identity intersected, positioning students as ethical, globally aware change-makers. When this happens, the quality of education in Islamic higher education is expected to improve (Hasbi et al., 2025).

Technology-Enhanced Learning Aligned with SDGs and Islamic Values

Across the observed classrooms, the integration of digital technology emerged as a significant enabler of creative competence, especially when aligned with Islamic ethics and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although access to technological resources varied between institutions, educators demonstrated innovative uses of tools such as Kahoot, Padlet, Canva, and digital storytelling platforms to foster student creativity and engagement. These tools supported peer collaboration, visually dynamic content delivery, and interactive learning environments. One notable example involved students creating multimedia campaigns on ethical consumption, integrating the Islamic value of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) with the principles of SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. A teacher remarked, “*Technology helps students communicate ideas that matter, and when it’s rooted in our values, it becomes a tool for da’wah and development.*” (Personal Communication, March 2024).

Interviews and student reflections confirmed that technology-enhanced instruction significantly improved learner motivation and originality. Participants described how the use of virtual learning environments and digital simulations encouraged experimentation and ethical problem-solving. In several classes, educators employed virtual reality (VR) and multimedia case studies to immerse students in ethically complex, culturally grounded scenarios. These experiences prompted learners to apply Islamic teachings and propose creative, socially responsible solutions, bridging religious values with global citizenship and sustainability awareness.

Observation data and document analysis further revealed that instructional practices grounded in thematic planning and pedagogical expediency were particularly effective in nurturing creativity. Lesson plans frequently addressed real-world challenges such as environmental degradation, poverty, and gender inequality, encouraging students to explore these issues through both an ethical and innovative lens. Teachers strategically framed content to stimulate active, creative actions, empowering students to develop original ideas relevant to both faith-based and global contexts. As one student shared, “*When we use technology to work on issues we care about, like protecting the environment, it makes our learning feel real and meaningful.*” (Personal Communication, March 2024).

Another key finding was the role of formative and continuous assessment in supporting creative growth. Educators emphasized iterative learning cycles where students received ongoing feedback on both the novelty and ethical dimensions of their ideas. This process fostered not only technical improvement but also reflective thinking and value-based decision-making. Students appreciated assessments that considered the clarity of their moral reasoning as much as their creative execution. These feedback practices reinforced the vision of future educators as ethical innovators, grounded in Islamic values and equipped to address contemporary global challenges with integrity and imagination (Juwairiyah, 2025).

Despite promising practices, educators also reported institutional challenges in aligning Islamic education with creativity and SDG competencies. Key barriers included rigid curricula, limited access to digital infrastructure, and a lack of localized, culturally relevant teaching resources (Leicht et al., 2018; Shaheen, 2010). Nevertheless, successful integration was observed in classrooms that embraced project-based learning infused with ethical and global themes. These examples demonstrate that creativity thrives when pedagogy bridges tradition and innovation, an insight echoed by Jamil and Mukhammadiev (2025) and Umar et al. (2025). Students were more motivated and ethically engaged when assignments linked spiritual concepts, such as *khalifah* or *rahmah*, with sustainability challenges (Yazdani & Akbarilakeh, 2017; Felix & Clayton, 2025). This highlights the importance of institutional support for teacher

capacity-building and curricular flexibility, ensuring that creative education remains both faith-based and future-oriented (Ashraf et al., 2021; Al-Attas, 1999).

Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Islamic Education, Creativity, and SDGs Purpose

Interviews, observations, and analysis of teaching materials revealed several recurring constraints that hinder the integration of Islamic education, creativity, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within pedagogical practice. A key limitation was the rigidity of institutional curricula, which often prioritize standardized language instruction over exploratory or value-oriented learning. Many lecturers described packed syllabi and tight schedules as barriers to implementing creative, reflective, and interdisciplinary approaches. One instructor noted, *“We’re expected to meet linguistic benchmarks, but there’s barely time for students to reflect or engage in meaningful moral discussions”* (Personal Communication, March 2024). Educators also highlighted a shortage of context-specific resources, especially teaching materials that simultaneously reflect global concerns and Islamic ethical frameworks. Additionally, uneven access to digital infrastructure and limited training in educational technology constrained the effective implementation of student-centered, innovation-enhancing methods.

Despite these challenges, educators across institutions shared compelling examples of pedagogical innovation that successfully bridged faith-based and global education goals. Several teachers introduced digital storytelling assignments in which students created videos rooted in Qur’anic or prophetic values, addressing local societal issues such as waste reduction or social justice (Muchtar et al., 2022). Other instructors structured learning modules around weekly value themes, such as *amanah* (trust), *rahmah* (compassion), and *adl* (justice), which were then explored through group discussions, problem-solving tasks, or community-based projects linked to SDG themes like climate action and gender equity. One lecturer explained, *“We found that aligning Islamic ethics with sustainability gave students both purpose and creativity”* (Personal Communication, March 2024). These approaches demonstrated how moral education and creative engagement can reinforce each other within meaningful learning experiences.

The findings reflect a dual reality: while structural and systemic limitations persist, grassroots efforts by committed educators are actively modeling integrative and transformative practices (Mardatillah et al., 2025). These innovations illustrate the potential of culturally grounded pedagogies to empower learners with both ethical direction and creative agency. Moving forward, addressing these tensions will require institutional reform, professional development opportunities, and the creation of adaptable teaching materials that connect Islamic principles with global competencies. Such steps are essential for Islamic higher education in Uzbekistan to fully realize its potential in cultivating morally grounded, creatively capable, and socially responsible educators.

Furthermore, the findings from interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of student work revealed a diverse range of projects that effectively combined creativity, ethical reasoning, and the values embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Students designed lesson plans grounded in Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship, created digital campaigns advocating for gender equity, and developed instructional materials to raise awareness on poverty reduction. Several projects used multimedia platforms to explore peacebuilding and inclusive education through culturally and religiously contextualized content. These outputs reflected not only originality and innovation but also a deep sense of moral commitment and social relevance. One teacher noted, *“When students align their creativity with ethical goals, the outcomes are more meaningful and rooted in their values”* (Personal Communication, March 2024). Document analysis of submitted projects confirmed this trend, showing that students thoughtfully infused Islamic ethics into their responses to contemporary global challenges.

Interviews with educators and student-teachers highlighted both obstacles and enabling conditions for implementing creative competence development strategies. A commonly reported challenge was the rigidity of the curriculum, which often limited opportunities for exploratory or interdisciplinary learning. Observations corroborated this, as several lessons were constrained by time and the need to meet specific linguistic benchmarks. Teachers also expressed concern about the lack of teaching materials that integrate Islamic values with SDG content, making it difficult to contextualize abstract global concepts in a meaningful way. Additionally, some students were initially hesitant to engage in open-ended, creative tasks, citing unfamiliarity and lack of confidence.

Nevertheless, enabling factors emerged that helped mitigate these challenges. Institutions that provided flexibility in lesson planning, access to digital tools, and peer collaboration platforms reported more successful integration of creative and ethical learning. Educators who had received training in creative and values-based pedagogy demonstrated greater confidence in designing and facilitating interdisciplinary activities (Scott and Ghinea, 2021). Many teachers framed their support through alignment with Islamic values, with one educator stating, *“When students see that creativity is part of their faith, through justice, compassion, or care for the environment, they are more motivated to engage”* (Personal Communication, March 2024). These insights demonstrate that, with appropriate institutional and pedagogical support, creative learning grounded in ethics and social responsibility can be effectively cultivated within Islamic higher education.

Student and educator perceptions further confirmed that creative pedagogical strategies enhance both ethical reflection and academic engagement. The integration of Islamic values with global competencies, through activities such as storytelling, inquiry-based learning, and community projects, fosters student agency, critical thinking, and moral sensitivity (Chu et al., 2017; Gay, 2018). Students emphasized how learning English became a platform for advocacy and spiritual reflection, aligning with Sanni’s (2023) and Khimmataliev’s (2018) findings on the ethical aspects of language learning. Teachers noted that integrating *adl*, *amanah*, and *rahmah* into their instruction made abstract SDG concepts tangible and personally relevant. These outcomes align with Rahman et al. (2023) and Dunlop et al. (2022), who advocate for context-sensitive pedagogies that connect identity, ethics, and global action. Ultimately, student-centered and spiritually anchored creative education not only equips learners for professional roles but also inspires transformative social engagement (Nandianti, 2025; Schoem, 2023).

Perceptions of Students and Educators on the Effectiveness of Creative Pedagogical Integration

Analysis of interviews, observations, and instructional documents revealed a range of positive outcomes associated with the implementation of creative pedagogical strategies in English language education. Educators reported that integrating problem-based learning, value-driven tasks, and interactive discussions significantly enhanced students’ problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and cultural sensitivity. These findings align with the study’s aim to embed Islamic values and SDG principles into pedagogical practices. One lecturer noted, *“When students are encouraged to link their tasks with social and ethical values, their learning becomes more purposeful”* (Personal Communication, March 2024). Observation of classroom activities supported this claim, as students demonstrated deeper moral reflection and greater initiative when engaged in open-ended tasks involving ethical dilemmas or sustainability topics.

Students consistently attributed their cognitive and ethical development to the creative nature of the instructional strategies used. In reflective interviews, they shared how incorporating Islamic teachings, such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion), helped guide their decision-making in classroom simulations. During an observed

group activity, students created a proposal for a school recycling campaign that integrated SDG 12 (responsible consumption) with Qur'anic teachings on moderation. This intersection of creativity and spiritual values not only fostered original thinking but also reinforced their sense of purpose as future educators. These findings affirm prior scholarship that emphasizes the value of spiritually grounded creativity in shaping ethical and engaged learners (Panggaribuan & Parulian, 2024; Al Husaeni & Al Husaeni, 2022).

The integration of SDG-related themes such as climate action, gender equity, and social justice significantly expanded students' perception of English language learning, shifting the focus beyond grammar and vocabulary toward ethical communication and global citizenship. Course syllabi revealed purposeful efforts to embed values-based education through modules like "English for Sustainable Societies" and "Ethical Communication," promoting the view that language can serve as a medium for advocacy and transformation. As one student reflected, *"Now I see English as a way to speak about the things I care about, our values, our environment, our responsibilities"* (Personal Communication, March 2024). This transformation indicates a pedagogical shift toward meaning-making, where English becomes not just a subject to master but a powerful tool for social engagement grounded in Islamic ethics and universal responsibility.

Student feedback and reflective interviews further revealed the effectiveness of communicative and lingua-cultural methods in fostering creativity. Approaches such as storytelling, simulation, and community-based projects enabled learners to engage deeply with content, apply Islamic moral values in authentic situations, and think innovatively. These interactive techniques encouraged ethical inquiry and broadened students' perspectives, contrasting sharply with more rigid, traditional approaches, such as grammar-translation or drills, which students felt limited their creativity and ethical reflection. Importantly, this environment also nurtured their growth as future educators. Students reported greater confidence in instructional design, ethical leadership, and adaptability, skills echoed by lecturers who observed their readiness to create value-driven, collaborative learning experiences. One lecturer aptly noted, *"Many of my students are no longer just learning to teach English, they are preparing to lead classrooms that shape character and contribute to society"* (Personal Communication, March 2024).

Data from classroom observations and interviews revealed the significant role of scaffolded creative instruction in supporting students' development. Teachers who implemented a gradual shift from structured to more open-ended tasks were more effective in sustaining student engagement and minimizing cognitive overload. For instance, early-stage lessons often involved guided exercises with explicit moral frameworks, which later evolved into independent projects requiring ethical judgment and creativity. This phased approach enabled students to build both technical proficiency and moral confidence incrementally. Additionally, students expressed a preference for learning environments that offered a balance between autonomy and collaboration. Classrooms that combined individual reflection with group-based interaction provided safe, supportive spaces for experimentation, critical thinking, and ethical engagement, allowing creativity to thrive without compromising Islamic values or SDG-aligned goals.

The findings on students' and educators' perceptions of creative pedagogical integration affirm the broader scholarly consensus that spiritually grounded and contextually relevant approaches can enhance both cognitive and ethical dimensions of learning. As educators reported, the integration of problem-based tasks and value-driven learning significantly improved students' communication, problem-solving, and moral awareness, aligning with Shaheen's (2010) and Craft's (2005) emphasis on creativity as a culturally embedded and ethically responsive process. The infusion of Islamic values such as *amanah*, *adl*, and *rahmah* into classroom practices not only enriched students' moral reflection but also offered a purposeful

framework for engaging with global themes like sustainability, justice, and equity, mirroring Craft's (2005) and Davies et al.'s (2013) argument that creativity is best cultivated when linked to personal meaning and societal relevance. Moreover, students' recognition of English as a tool for advocacy and transformation reinforces the notion that language education grounded in ethical and global goals can foster agency and social responsibility (Khimmatalliev, 2018; Al Husaeni & Al Husaeni, 2022). The data also support Davies et al.'s (2013) findings that scaffolded, interactive strategies, ranging from storytelling to community-based projects, are essential for building learners' confidence, creativity, and readiness for future teaching. Overall, the study suggests that when Islamic moral principles, global competencies, and student-centered pedagogy are harmonized, creative education in Islamic higher education becomes both transformative and sustainable (Umar et al., 2025).

Systemic Supports and Challenges in Fostering Creative Competence

Interviews and syllabus analysis revealed that equitable access to digital tools, such as storytelling apps, interactive design platforms, and collaborative online workspaces, greatly enhanced students' capacity for innovation. Educators emphasized the importance of embedding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) holistically across the curriculum, rather than limiting them to isolated lessons. This approach encouraged learners to interpret global challenges through both creative and ethical lenses. Professional development emerged as a critical support factor, with trained instructors showing greater confidence in designing open-ended, interdisciplinary tasks that integrate Islamic ethical values into language and content instruction. Observational data further underscored that institutions that nurture professional learning communities among teachers are more successful in implementing diverse, reflective, and creative strategies.

Another key recommendation drawn from the interviews was the need to strengthen connections between educational institutions and local communities. When students participated in projects grounded in real-life social concerns, such as environmental conservation initiatives or lessons promoting gender equity, they displayed higher levels of originality and engagement. These community-anchored tasks also served as meaningful platforms for applying Islamic moral reasoning in practical ways. Furthermore, document reviews indicated that rigid syllabi often hindered the integration of creative practices, while more thematically flexible curricula promoted student agency and cross-disciplinary thinking. Thus, participants consistently advocated for adaptable curricular frameworks that support creative exploration without compromising essential educational goals.

Analysis across multiple data sources identified five interdependent components as foundational for fostering creative competence in Islamic teacher education. First, instructional strategies that emphasize collaboration, critical reflection, and real-world application are essential for cultivating student creativity. Second, the incorporation of ethical frameworks, especially those grounded in Qur'anic values such as *amanah* (trust), *adl* (justice), and *rahmah* (compassion), guided students to innovate with moral awareness. Third, aligning classroom content with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enabled students to relate their learning to contemporary global issues. Fourth, the use of formative and reflective assessment practices helped sustain creative growth by offering meaningful feedback and reinforcing ethical clarity. Finally, institutional enablers, such as consistent professional development, supportive administrative policies, and accessible digital infrastructure, proved crucial for maintaining creative pedagogical initiatives. Observations and interview data consistently confirmed that in environments where these supports were present, students displayed increased motivation, originality, and ethically grounded engagement.

Despite these promising developments, the study also uncovered several systemic obstacles. Institutional resistance to pedagogical change was a recurring concern, as educators faced challenges in transitioning away from traditional, examination-centred approaches due to limited curricular flexibility and inadequate leadership support. Observations in more rigid settings revealed that creativity was often marginalized in favor of standardized learning outcomes. Moreover, disparities in educator preparedness and uneven access to digital or interdisciplinary resources contributed to inconsistent implementation of creative pedagogy across institutions. Some instructors lacked the training or confidence to integrate innovation effectively, and while policy documents often referenced creativity and ethics, actual execution was hindered by vague guidelines or fragmented institutional commitment. These findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive, context-sensitive reforms that address structural constraints, build professional capacity, and promote leadership anchored in Islamic ethical principles and the transformative ethos of the SDGs.

The findings on students' and educators' perceptions of creative pedagogical integration affirm the broader scholarly consensus that spiritually grounded and contextually relevant approaches can enhance both cognitive and ethical dimensions of learning. As educators reported, the integration of problem-based tasks and value-driven learning significantly improved students' communication, problem-solving, and moral awareness, aligning with Shaheen's (2010) and Craft's (2005) emphasis on creativity as a culturally embedded and ethically responsive process. The infusion of Islamic values such as *amanah*, *adl*, and *rahmah* into classroom practices not only enriched students' moral reflection but also offered a purposeful framework for engaging with global themes like sustainability, justice, and equity, mirroring Craft's (2005) and Davies et al.'s (2013) argument that creativity is best cultivated when linked to personal meaning and societal relevance. Moreover, students' recognition of English as a tool for advocacy and transformation reinforces the notion that language education grounded in ethical and global goals can foster agency and social responsibility (Khimmatiev, 2018; Al Husaeni & Al Husaeni, 2022). The data also support Davies et al.'s (2013) findings that scaffolded, interactive strategies, ranging from storytelling to community-based projects, are essential for building learners' confidence, creativity, and readiness for future teaching. Overall, the study suggests that when Islamic moral principles, global competencies, and student-centered pedagogy are harmonized, creative education in Islamic higher education becomes both transformative and sustainable.

This study shows that the integration of Islamic educational philosophy with creativity and SDG competencies provides a robust and holistic framework for cultivating future educators who are ethical, innovative, and socially responsible. Rooted in Islamic concepts such as *tarbiyah*, *ta'dib*, and *tazkiyah*, the pedagogical approaches observed in this study supported both moral development and creative problem-solving, in line with the goals of transformative learning (Al-Attas, 1999; Wals, 2010). Students' creativity flourished when content, pedagogy, and technology were harmonized with Qur'anic values and global challenges, exemplifying culturally responsive education (Gay, 2018; Sanni, 2023). The alignment of local religious principles with international development goals, particularly SDG 4, offers a compelling model for ethical innovation in Islamic higher education. Through a contextually grounded, faith-integrated lens, this research contributes new insights into how creativity can be nurtured as both a cognitive and spiritual practice.

The findings of this research contribute to the broader discourse on Islamic education by presenting a context-sensitive model for integrating faith-based values with contemporary

educational goals. In doing so, the study offers valuable insights for Muslim-majority societies striving to reconcile tradition with transformation. As echoed in recent global scholarship, education in Islamic contexts must evolve to equip learners with both ethical integrity and the creative competence necessary to engage with 21st-century challenges (Ashraf et al., 2021; Shalaby & Said, 2022). By situating the Uzbekistan experience within a global framework, this research not only addresses local educational reforms but also enriches international conversations on Islamic pedagogy, sustainability, and the future of teacher education in Muslim-majority nations.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that integrating Islamic educational values, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and creative competence provides a transformative framework for preparing educators who are morally grounded, socially responsible, and pedagogically innovative. In the context of Uzbekistan, a nation experiencing a revival of Islamic education after decades of Soviet secularization, this integration is particularly significant. As higher education institutions in Uzbekistan strive to modernize while preserving their religious heritage, this study offers a culturally responsive pedagogical model that aligns traditional values with contemporary global imperatives. By embedding Islamic principles such as *tarbiyah*, *ta'dib*, and *tazkiyah* into teacher education, the approach supports not only cognitive and technical skill development but also spiritual and ethical formation. This study demonstrates that creativity in Islamic education extends beyond innovation to include ethical decision-making, reflective inquiry, and socially engaged learning. The findings emphasize the importance of process-oriented, value-laden teaching strategies, such as thematic planning, scenario-based learning, and digital storytelling, that foster originality alongside empathy, collaboration, and a sense of global citizenship. The model developed through this research not only addresses the local educational reform agenda in Uzbekistan but also contributes to the global discourse on Islamic pedagogy by illustrating how religious education can be harmonized with the universal goals of sustainability and transformative education. Thus, this framework holds potential for broader application across Muslim-majority contexts seeking to align faith-based education with the demands of a rapidly changing world.

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