

**THOUGHTS****SPREADING AWARENESS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:  
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA (IIUM) AS A MODEL**

IIUM Gombak. Photo credit Alumni Relations Divisions IIUM.

10/07/2024 11:16 AM

***By: Dr Mohammed R. M. Elshobake***

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015, serve as a blueprint for achieving a better and more sustainable future for all. With 17 interconnected goals addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation, the SDGs provide a framework for collective action at local, national and international levels.

In the global pursuit of sustainable development, educational institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the minds of future leaders and change-makers. Among these institutions, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) stands out as a model for spreading awareness and fostering understanding of sustainable development goals (SDGs). Through its curriculum, research initiatives and community engagement efforts, IIUM exemplifies the significance of teaching SDGs courses in higher education.

International Islamic University Malaysia is a distinguished model in the pursuit of implementing the sustainable development goals using Maqasid Syariah as its foundation. It is an international award-winning institution for sustainability. In translating its agenda into a concrete action plan, IIUM has introduced sustainable development courses, the most important course being SCSH 1201: Sustainable Development Issues, Principles and Practices. It aims to set a foundation for students to understand the concept and principles of sustainable development.

***Crucial to integrate SDGs into educational curricula***



Integrating SDGs into educational curricula is crucial for several reasons as it helps raise awareness among students about pressing global issues and the interconnectedness of various socio-economic and environmental challenges. It fosters a deeper understanding of the root causes of these issues and the importance of collective action to address them.

In addition, teaching SDGs course from traditional and Islamic perspectives empowers students to become agents of change in their communities and beyond and it will result in producing better quality intellectuals, professionals and scholars by integrating the qualities of faith (iman), knowledge (ilm), and good character (akhlaq) to serve as agents of comprehensive and balanced progress as well as sustainable development in Malaysia and in the Muslim world, which is one of the missions of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

Since joining the International Islamic University Malaysia as a doctoral student in 2016, I have developed a keen interest in sustainable development, which encompasses various fields and specialisations, including legal aspects.

Therefore, upon assuming my duties as an Assistant Professor at the Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws (AIKOL), I submitted a request to the Sejahtera Centre for Sustainability and Humanity to teach SDGs course: "SCSH 1201: Sustainable Development Issues, Principles and Practices". I have been teaching it to students from different faculties for the third consecutive semester.

At the start of the first semester, I observed a lack of interest among students in studying this course. They perceived it as an additional burden without tangible benefits in their specialisations. Their understanding of the SDGs concept was vague, viewing sustainable development solely through the lens of the 3Rs (REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE) and environmental protection, particularly for animals and plants. Additionally, they believed that the government was exclusively responsible for addressing environmental issues and ensuring sustainability.

### **Transformation in students' understanding of SDGs**

However, by the end of each semester, I witnessed a significant transformation in students' understanding of SDGs. Through lectures, discussions, and various expert-led videos highlighting the significance of SDGs, students came to realise that SDGs encompassed a broad spectrum of global issues. They learned about the interconnectedness of poverty, hunger, climate change, inequality, peace and effective governance, and how each goal influenced the others. They also recognised that sustainable development requires collective action and that every individual has a role to play.

For example, one student remarked, "This course taught me that SDGs encompass a wide range of global issues. I learned about the interconnectedness of poverty, hunger, climate change, inequality, peace and effective governance, and how each goal affects the others. Moreover, this course didn't just provide me with knowledge but instilled in me a sense of agency. It showed me that sustainable development is not the responsibility of one entity but requires collective action, where every individual contributes. I realised that even our small contributions can benefit society."

My teaching of the sustainable development course has significantly raised students' awareness of the importance of sustainable development and the need to balance economic, social and environmental perspectives while integrating Islamic dimensions.

Students demonstrated this understanding through the diverse sustainable development projects they presented during the course, such as digitalising food banks within the International Islamic University Malaysia, improving pedestrian walkways around the Gombak campus, fostering community-led sustainable energy initiatives, awareness and accessibility of e-waste disposal bins among IIUM Gombak campus students and hygiene harmony: prayer mats cleaning for good health in Masjids and Musallas.

At the end of the first semester of session 2023-2024, students recognised their role in contributing to achieving the sustainable development goals.

One student reflected, "After completing this course, I fully understand the comprehensive meaning of sustainable development and its goals. By understanding the link between SDGs and Islamic principles, my concerns regarding sustainability issues have intensified.

"Therefore, I am committed to practising actions related to sustainable development in my daily life, as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) mentioned in the Hadith: 'There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, person, or animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him' (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 513)."

### **IIUM model for fostering understanding of SDGs**

In conclusion, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) serves as a model for spreading awareness and fostering understanding of sustainable development goals (SDGs) through its curriculum, research initiatives and community engagement efforts.

By teaching SDGs courses, IIUM equips students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become effective agents of change in a rapidly changing world.

As we strive towards a more sustainable future, educational institutions have a crucial role to play in shaping the next generation of global citizens and leaders committed to realising the vision of the SDGs.

-- BERNAMA

Dr Mohammed R. M. Elshobake is Assistant Professor at the Civil Law Department, Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws, International Islamic University Malaysia.

*(The views expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not reflect the official policy or position of BERNAMA)*

## Keywords

sustainable development goals (sdgs)

international islamic university malaysia (iium)

as a model

educational curricula

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