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AL-GHAZALI'S THOUGHT ON ISLAMIC EDUCATION: INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY AND EDUCATIONAL CONCEPTS

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Abstract

*This article examines the thought of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450–505 AH/1058–1111 CE), a figure regarded as a renewer (*mujaddid*) of Islam, with a focus on his intellectual biography and his concept of education. Using qualitative library research with a historical and descriptive-analytical approach, the study draws on al-Ghazali's own works, especially* Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din *and* al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, and on secondary literature about his life and ideas, analysed through content analysis. The findings show that al-Ghazali lived amid the political fragmentation of the late Abbasid period and the sectarian and moral crises of Muslim society, which shaped his role as* hujjat al-Islam*. His intellectual journey moved from* fiqh*,* kalam*, and philosophy, through a period of doubt, to Sufism, which he regarded as the path to certain knowledge (*ma'rifah*). His concept of education is systematic and comprehensive: its aim is to draw closer to Allah; the curriculum covers physical, intellectual, and moral aspects; the ideal teacher is defined mainly by moral and personal qualities; and knowledge is classified through both* fiqh *and Sufi approaches. This concept remains relevant for contemporary Islamic education, particularly in character formation, although it needs to be complemented by professional and academic standards for teachers and adapted to local contexts.*
Keywords: *al-Ghazali, Islamic education, intellectual biography, curriculum, Sufism.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji pemikiran Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450–505 H/1058–1111 M), sosok yang dipandang sebagai pembaru (mujaddid) Islam, dengan berfokus pada biografi intelektual dan konsep pendidikannya. Dengan menggunakan penelitian kepustakaan kualitatif melalui pendekatan historis serta deskriptif-analitis, kajian ini bersumber pada karya-karya al-Ghazali sendiri, khususnya Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din dan al-Munqidh min al-Dalal, serta literatur sekunder mengenai kehidupan dan pemikirannya, yang kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa al-Ghazali hidup di tengah fragmentasi politik pada akhir periode Abbasiyah serta krisis sektarian dan moral masyarakat Muslim, yang turut membentuk perannya sebagai Hujjat al-Islam. Perjalanan intelektualnya bergerak dari fikih, kalam, dan filsafat, melewati fase keraguan, hingga bermuara pada tasawuf yang ia pandang sebagai jalan menuju pengetahuan yang meyakinkan (ma'rifah). Konsep pendidikannya bersifat sistematis dan komprehensif: tujuannya adalah mendekatkan diri kepada Allah; kurikulumnya mencakup aspek fisik, intelektual, dan moral; guru yang ideal terutama ditentukan oleh kualitas moral dan kepribadiannya; serta ilmu pengetahuan diklasifikasikan melalui pendekatan fikih dan tasawuf. Konsep ini tetap relevan bagi pendidikan Islam kontemporer, khususnya dalam pembentukan karakter, meskipun perlu dilengkapi dengan standar profesional dan akademik bagi para guru serta diadaptasi dengan konteks lokal.
Kata Kunci: *al-Ghazali, pendidikan Islam, biografi intelektual, kurikulum, tasawuf.*

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INTRODUCTION

The circulation of the universe is a *sunnatullah* (law of God) that gives rise to change and, at the same time, renewal in the dynamic life of humankind. Change occurs both within human beings and outside them, including in their environment. This is because time keeps moving forward, second by second, minute by minute, hour by hour, day and night, week, month, and year, creating dynamism in the patterns of human life, whether in behaviour, lifestyle, or ways of thinking.

In the Islamic world, renewal in the field of thought has existed since the early days of Islam (after the period of the Prophet Muhammad). This is indicated by a hadith whose meaning is that Allah sends a renewer (*mujaddid*) of the religion for His community at the turn of every hundred years (one century). Among Muslims there have been many people with brilliant ideas who are known as renewers, including al-Shafi'i and al-Ghazali.

This article discusses al-Ghazali in relation to his intellectual biography and an overview of his thought, especially in the field of education. It is hoped that this article can help readers know the figure of al-Ghazali more closely, along with the breadth and light of his learning, so as to motivate the spirit of seeking knowledge and broaden the horizon of scholarship, particularly in Islamic education (Islamic Studies).

Accordingly, this article aims to (1) describe the intellectual biography of al-Ghazali and the socio-political setting of his time; (2) trace his intellectual journey in *fiqh*, psychology, philosophy, *kalam*, and Sufism; and (3) analyse his concept of education, including its aims, the teacher, the student, and the curriculum, as well as its relevance to Islamic education today.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is qualitative library research with a historical and descriptive-analytical approach. Its primary sources are al-Ghazali's own works, particularly *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, *Ma'arij al-Quds*, and *Mi'yar al-'Ilm*. Its secondary sources are books and studies on al-Ghazali's life, thought, and educational ideas, such as the works of M. Amin Abdullah, Harun Nasution, Abuddin Nata, H. M. Arifin, and Ali al-Jumbulati. Data were collected through documentation, namely by reading, recording, and classifying relevant passages from these sources. The data were then analysed using content analysis: al-Ghazali's ideas were described in their historical context, grouped by theme (biography, intellectual development, and

educational concepts), and interpreted to draw conclusions about their relevance to contemporary Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography of al-Ghazali

His full name is Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ta'us al-Tusi al-Shafi'i al-Ghazali. He is called al-Ghazali or Abu Hamid al-Ghazali for short.[1] He was called al-Ghazali because he was born in the village of Ghazalah, a town in Khurasan, Iran.[2] He was born in 450 AH/1058 CE, three years after the Seljuks took over power in Baghdad.[3]

Al-Ghazali's father was a wool spinner and seller of sheep's wool, yet he was devout, loved the scholars, and often attended *fiqh* study circles and gatherings of learning.[4] Al-Ghazali had one brother named Ahmad, whose full name was Abu al-Futuh Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tusi al-Ghazali, nicknamed "Majd al-Din".[5] Before his death, his father entrusted al-Ghazali and his younger brother Ahmad to a Sufi. He gave the Sufi a little wealth and said in his will: "I deeply regret that I did not learn to write. I hope to obtain what I did not obtain through my two sons."[6]

The Sufi carried out the will by educating and teaching the two boys. One day, when the entrusted wealth ran out and the Sufi could no longer feed them, he advised the two boys to study at a madrasah while also making a living by helping to run it.

At the madrasah, al-Ghazali studied *fiqh* under Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Radhkani. He then entered the Nizamiyah college in Nishapur, where he studied under Imam al-Haramayn (al-Juwayni, d. 478 AH/1086 CE) until he mastered logic (*mantiq*), *kalam*, *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*, philosophy, Sufism, and the art of debate.[7]

In al-Ghazali's time (450 AH/1058 CE – 505 AH/1111 CE), the Muslim community was divided into various schools and sects whose views contradicted one another, partly as a result of the entry of Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, and other cultures into Muslim society. Some groups

[1] He was called Abu Hamid because he had a son named Hamid, who died in childhood before al-Ghazali himself passed away; see Sa'id Baqil, *Manhaj al-Bahth al-Ma'rifah 'inda al-Ghazali* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, n.d.), 16.

[2] T. J. de Boer, *The History of Philosophy in Islam* (New York: Dover Publications, n.d.), 155.

[3] Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), 93.

[4] Muhammad ibn Muhammad Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ahram li al-Tarjamah wa al-Nashr, 1998), 19.

[5] Muhammad ibn Muhammad Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din li al-Imam al-Ghazali*, vol. 1 (Egypt: 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, n.d.), 8.

[6] Al-Subki, *Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyyah al-Kubra*, vol. 4 (Egypt: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi, n.d.), 112.

[7] M. M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), 584–85.

claimed that only certain infallible (*ma'sum*) imams possessed special knowledge, and voices also arose that doubted the truth and tended to lead to deviation and corruption.[8]

Al-Ghazali lived during the Abbasid dynasty with its capital in Baghdad, but its influence had weakened; its power was merely nominal, and almost nothing remained in the hands of the caliph. The caliph was no more than a spiritual symbol of Sunni leadership. At that time political turmoil arose, causing divisions among Muslims, and religious and moral corruption was rampant in Muslim society. It was this situation that made him a defender and advocate of Islam (*hujjat al-Islam*), out of a sense of responsibility to remedy the confusion of thought and action that shook the life of the Muslim community.[9]

At the age of 15, al-Ghazali went to Jurjan to study under Abu Nasr al-Isma'ili. At the age of 19 or 20 he went to Nishapur and studied under al-Juwayni until he was 28. While in this city, al-Ghazali studied theology, law, philosophy, and Sufism. After al-Juwayni's death, he went to Mu'askar, which at that time was a "storehouse" of scholars, and stayed there until the age of 34, befriending Nizam al-Mulk. Al-Ghazali was warmly received because of the depth and excellence of his knowledge and was made Imam of the Khurasan region. He was appointed professor of theology and rector of the Nizamiyah in 484 AH (1091 CE) at the age of 34. During his stay in Baghdad, several leaders of the Hanbali school, such as Ibn 'Aqil and Abu al-Khattab, became his students. At that time al-Ghazali also studied philosophy (on his own) and wrote several books on it. In less than two years he had mastered Greek philosophy, especially as developed by Muslim philosophers such as al-Farabi (870–950 CE), Ibn Sina (980–1037 CE), Ibn Miskawayh (936–1030 CE), and the Ikhwan al-Safa.[10]

In 1095, al-Ghazali left Baghdad for Damascus to live the life of a Sufi detached from the world (*zuhd*). For two years (1095–1097 CE) he stayed in one of the minarets of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and then moved to Jerusalem, to the Mosque of 'Umar. After visiting the tomb of the Prophet Ibrahim in Hebron, he performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. Other places he visited were Cairo and Alexandria. After a long absence from academic life, at the age of 49 (499 AH/1106 CE) al-Ghazali returned to teach at the Nizamiyah. This was because of the moral decadence in society, which had even penetrated the ranks of the scholars, and at the request of the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk (son of Nizam al-Mulk). Not long after, he returned to his birthplace, Tus. There al-Ghazali built a madrasah to teach Sufism and theology, as well as a *khanqah* next to his house as a place of practice for Sufis.[11]

[8] Ali al-Jumbulati and Abu al-Futuh al-Tuwanisi, *Dirasah Muqaranah fi al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah* [Perbandingan Pendidikan Islam] (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2002), 128.

[9] Al-Jumbulati and al-Tuwanisi, *Dirasah Muqaranah*, 133.

[10] Sibawaihi, *Eskatologi Al-Ghazali dan Fazlur Rahman* (Yogyakarta: Islamika, 2004), 37.

[11] Sibawaihi, *Eskatologi Al-Ghazali*, 39.

Al-Ghazali died at the age of 55 on Monday after the dawn prayer, 14 Jumada al-Akhirah 505 AH, coinciding with 18 December 1111 CE, and was buried in Tabiran, part of the city of Tus, next to the tomb of Harun al-Rashid. Al-Ghazali had several daughters, none of whom is recorded in history, and he left behind many writings.[12]

The written works al-Ghazali left behind show his distinction as an author who was productive throughout his life. Whether as an adviser to the court or as a professor in Baghdad, whether during his period of scepticism in Nishapur or after reaching firm conviction, he kept on writing.[13]

Al-Ghazali's Intellectual Journey

Al-Ghazali is regarded as a renewer (*mujaddid*) in the Islamic world, as Imam al-Shafi'i was in his own time. This is supported by the year of al-Ghazali's birth, namely 450 AH. Al-Ghazali mastered various fields of knowledge, including *fiqh*, *kalam*, *aqidah*, psychology (*al-'ulum al-nafsiyyah*), philosophy, and Sufism.[14]

In *fiqh*, he was known as *al-faqih* (an expert in *fiqh*). His juristic studies covered three areas, namely *usul al-fiqh*, *al-furu' al-fiqhiyyah*, and *asrar al-tashri'* or *hikmat al-tashri'*. Among his books in these fields is *al-Mustasfa* (on *usul al-fiqh*), in which he sets out, among other things, the concepts of *tahsin* and *taqbih*, *al-maslahah*, and *ijtihad*.[15]

In psychology, al-Ghazali explains that the human soul has three sources of power, namely nutrition (*ghadhiyah*), estimation (*mutawahhimah*), and reason (*natiqah*). This shows that human beings consist of body, soul, and intellect. On this basis, human beings, according to their abilities, can acquire knowledge through the senses, assumption (conjecture), and reason (intellect). Of the three, knowledge based on reason is the true one.[16] According to al-Ghazali, God created the intellect perfect and noble, so that it raises human beings to a high rank. Thanks to the intellect, all creatures submit to human beings, even those physically stronger than humans.[17]

In his *Ma'arij al-Quds*, al-Ghazali views the intellect as a rational soul with two faculties, the practical faculty (*al-'amilah*) and the theoretical faculty (*al-'alimah*). The theoretical and practical intellects are not two entirely separate faculties but two sides of the same intellect. The

[12] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 28.
[13] Zainal Abidin Ahmad, *Riwayat Hidup Imam Al-Ghazali* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1975), 57.
[14] Mahrajan al-Ghazali, *Abu Hamid al-Ghazali* (Damascus: al-Majlis al-A'la li Ri'ayat al-Funun wa al-Adab wa al-'Ulum al-Ijtima'iyyah, 1961), 527.
[15] Mahrajan al-Ghazali, *Abu Hamid al-Ghazali*, 528.
[16] Muhammad Bashir Sharaf, *Wasa'il al-Iqna' 'inda al-Ghazali: Dirasah Tahliliyyah Naqdiyyah*, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Dar al-Wathbah, 1982), 41.
[17] M. Sholihin, *Tokoh-Tokoh Sufi Lintas Zaman* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2003), 125.

side facing downward (towards the body) is the practical intellect, and the side facing upward (towards the active intellect) is the theoretical intellect.[18]

For al-Ghazali, the intellect (reason) is a means of attaining happiness in this world and the world to come. Human beings are obliged to be grateful to God for having been given reason (*'aql*), good character, and knowledge. *'Aql* or reason is used in more than one sense; it has four important meanings:

1. Reason is the quality that distinguishes human beings from animals and inclines them to receive theoretical knowledge (*al-'ulum al-nazariyyah*).
2. Reason is the knowledge that enables a child to distinguish the possible from the impossible and to see "axiomatic" facts, such as that two is more than one.
3. Reason is also the knowledge produced by experience.
4. A person who possesses *'aql* is one who is aware of the consequences of actions and who controls his emotional impulses with a view to the future. Here lies the ethical tendency that characterises theological inquiry into *'aql*.[19]

In his books on philosophy and logic, al-Ghazali views the intellect as an innate power (*fitri*), the power that distinguishes good from bad and the beneficial from the harmful. The intellect is also understood as knowledge of things (*tasawwur*) and knowledge of the relations between things as affirmation (*tasdiq*), which the soul produces innately.[20]

In philosophy and *kalam*, al-Ghazali reached a point of doubt. This was because several schools of *kalam* contradicted one another, raising in him the question of which school was right. Just as he doubted *kalam*, al-Ghazali also doubted that the opinions of the philosophers were true. In his view, the arguments they offered were weak and some contradicted the teachings of Islam. This is what led al-Ghazali to oppose philosophy. Along with this, he wrote *Maqasid al-Falasifah* (The Aims of the Philosophers), which was translated into Latin in 1145 CE by Dominicus Gundissalinus in Toledo under the title *Logica et Philosophia Algazelis Arabis*. He then wrote *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*). His dissatisfaction with *kalam* and philosophy led al-Ghazali to turn to Sufism. It was there that he found the certainty he had been seeking and was able to remove the doubt (*shakk*) that had long troubled him.[21]

According to al-Ghazali's system of thought as quoted by M. Amin Abdullah, there are several stages. In the first stage, he began by criticising the rational, emanationist metaphysics of

[18] Al-Ghazali, *Ma'arij al-Quds fi Madarij Ma'rifat al-Nafs*, ed. Muhammad Mustafa Abu al-'Ala (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jundi, 1968), 58.

[19] M. Amin Abdullah, *Antara Al-Ghazali dan Kant: Filsafat Etika Islam*, trans. Hamzah (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), 115. Originally published as *The Idea of Universality of Ethical Norms in Ghazali and Kant*.

[20] Al-Ghazali, *Mi'yar al-'Ilm*, ed. Sulayman Dunya (Cairo: n.p., 1961), 67.

[21] Harun Nasution, *Filsafat dan Mistisisme dalam Islam*, 9th ed. (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1995), 43.

his time. In *Tahafut al-Falasifah* he opposed almost all the doctrines of Aristotle and Plotinus and of the Muslim philosophers who supported them, such as al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. In the second stage, he built an original mystical ethics in his works *Mizan al-'Amal* and *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*. This system of thought can be clearly understood from al-Ghazali's autobiography, *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*. Al-Ghazali found that, among the groups of seekers of truth, the most mistaken were the philosophers who engaged in theology and metaphysics.[22]

Some circles regard al-Ghazali's sharp criticism of philosophy in *Tahafut al-Falasifah* as a cause of the decline of free thought in the classical period of Islam. Nurcholish Madjid even states that al-Ghazali's thought had the effect of imprisoning Islamic intellectual creativity.[23]

This accusation against al-Ghazali, however, is not quite accurate, because in fact he did not criticise all philosophical thought, but only certain points (ten points) of it, three of which can lead a person into unbelief. Moreover, al-Ghazali's concern for the advancement of knowledge was shown by his service in developing the al-Nizamiyah college in Nishapur. Throughout his life he also made a very great contribution to the development and progress of knowledge through his thought and his dozens of works. His criticism of philosophy was solely for the salvation of human beings, in the hope that through knowledge and thought they could attain happiness and joy, not only in this worldly life but also in the life that follows after it (the hereafter).

Al-Ghazali stated that seekers of truth fall into four groups: first, *al-mutakallimun* (those who claim to be experts in reasoning and theory); second, *al-batiniyyah* (those who regard themselves as possessors of *al-ta'lim*, special instruction derived from an infallible imam); third, *al-falasifah*, the philosophers (those who see themselves as experts in logic and demonstration, *burhan*); and fourth, *al-sufiyyah* (those who declare themselves a special group able to see what is explicit and unveil what is hidden).[24]

Al-Ghazali stated that the only knowledge that produces certainty of truth is knowledge obtained directly from God through Sufism. Therefore, there are several views of the philosophers that he criticised in *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, namely:

1. God has no attributes.
2. God has a simple (*basit*) substance and has no quiddity (*mahiyyah*).
3. God does not know particulars (*juz'iyyat*).
4. God cannot be described by genus (*al-jins*) and differentia (*al-fasl*).
5. The planets are celestial bodies that move by will.
6. The souls of the planets know all particulars (*juz'iyyat*).
7. The laws of nature cannot change.

[22] Abdullah, *Antara Al-Ghazali dan Kant*, 39–40.
[23] Nurcholish Madjid, *Khazanah Intelektual Islam* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984), 35.
[24] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 18.

8. There is no bodily resurrection.
9. The world has no beginning.
10. The world is eternal.

According to al-Ghazali, three of these ten views can lead to unbelief, namely:

1. God does not know the particulars (*juz'iyyat*) that occur in the world.
2. There is no bodily resurrection.
3. The world is eternal in the sense of having no beginning.

Al-Ghazali divides human thinking, from the standpoint of the way of dialogue, into three levels:

1. The common people, whose way of thinking is very simple, are approached with advice and guidance.
2. The elect (*al-khawass*), whose intellect is sharp and who think deeply, are approached with explanations of wisdom.
3. The disputants (*ahl al-jadal*) are approached by refuting their arguments.

From the standpoint of the capacity to grasp knowledge, al-Ghazali divides human beings into two major groups, namely the common people (*'awamm*) and the elect (*khawass*). The common people read what is explicit, while the elect read what is implicit.[25]

Al-Ghazali was one of the defenders of the Sunni theological school (of Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari), so he is also called the one who laid down the principles and rules of Sunni Sufism (as opposed to *bid'i* Sufism).

Al-Ghazali developed a Sufism characterised by a synthesis of *shari'ah* and *haqiqah*. *Shari'ah* here refers to everything related to the outward aspect of human beings, while *haqiqah* concerns their inner activity. This synthesis can be seen, among others, in his *magnum opus*, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, which consists of four thick volumes. The first and second volumes discuss in depth the performance of religious obligations and the principles of Islamic creed related to *shari'ah*. The third volume begins the discussion of *tariqah* and *ma'rifah*, or Sufi teachings. The fourth volume then discusses matters related to the cultivation of noble character (*akhlaq al-karimah*).

The structure of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* generally reflects the main ideas of al-Ghazali in his strenuous effort to reconcile the teachings of theology, *fiqh*, and Sufism. It can also be understood from this that *shari'ah* is the first step towards Sufism, which must have a strong foundation in theology and *fiqh* so as not to lose its footing.

According to al-Ghazali, the journey towards Sufism begins with the purification of the heart (*tathir al-qalb*) and the release of oneself from dependence on anything other than Allah.

[25] Nasution, *Filsafat dan Mistisisme*, 44–46.

For al-Ghazali, this effort is the opening key, like the *takbirat al-ihram* of the prayer. It is followed by immersion in remembrance (*dhikr*) of Him and ends in annihilation (*fana'*).[26]

According to al-Ghazali, the heart (*qalb*) indeed needs to be purified because it is the medium for obtaining knowledge. The heart, he continues, has two doors, one facing outward and the other facing inward. The door facing outward captures knowledge through the five senses, while the door facing inward captures knowledge that comes from the unseen world.[27] Knowledge from the unseen world is Divine Light (*Nur Ilahi*). The heart is like a mirror: when it is successfully purified of worldly impurities, it captures the Divine Light, so that the reflection of God becomes immanent in the heart itself. On this basis al-Ghazali put forward the statement: *man 'arafa qalbah faqad 'arafa nafsah, wa man 'arafa nafsah faqad 'arafa rabbah* (whoever knows his heart knows himself, and whoever knows himself knows his Lord).[28]

This is what al-Ghazali calls *ma'rifah*. He regards *ma'rifah* as the ultimate goal that human beings must achieve as well as the highest perfection, containing true happiness.[29] Al-Ghazali defines *ma'rifah* as knowledge that admits no doubt.[30] Elsewhere it is called *al-'ilm al-yaqini*, certain knowledge through which the secrets of Allah and His laws concerning all that exists can be known.[31] Attaining *ma'rifah* is not easy. To reach it, the aspiring Sufi must pass through stages, known in Sufi terminology as *al-maqamat*.[32] Al-Ghazali mentions six stations (*maqamat*) that a Sufi passes through before attaining *ma'rifah*, namely repentance, patience, certainty, asceticism, trust in God, and love.

Al-Ghazali's Concept of Education

Al-Ghazali was an intellectual figure and a thinker on Islamic education. He paid great attention to education, because it is education that determines the character of a nation's life and thought. According to al-Ghazali, education (the curriculum) must cover three aspects, namely the physical (*jasmaniyyah*), the intellectual (*'aqliyyah*), and the moral (*akhlaqiyyah*). Among these, the aims of education in the Islamic view are closely related to producing people of good character (*akhlaqiyyah*). Of the three aspects above, it is the moral one that matters most, because morality is the soul of Islamic education, and perfect character is the true aim of education.[33]

[26] Al-Ghazali, *Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Sha'biyyah, n.d.), 76.
[27] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 3 (Egypt: Dar al-Sha'b, 1974), 5.
[28] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, 3:7.
[29] Ibrahim Basyuni, *Nasy'at al-Tasawwuf al-Islami* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1969), 265.
[30] Ibrahim, *Rawdat al-Talibin* (Egypt: Dar al-Sha'b, n.d.), 12.
[31] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, vol. 4 (Egypt: Dar al-Sha'b, 1974), 300.
[32] Nasution, *Filsafat dan Mistisisme*, 62.
[33] Muhammad 'Athiyah al-Abrasyi, *Dasar-Dasar Pokok Pendidikan Islam*, trans. H. Bustami A. Gani and Djohar Bahry, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1974), 15. Originally published as *al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah*.

Regarding the concept of education, M. Arifin argues that, philosophically, al-Ghazali belongs to idealism, consistently taking religion as the basis of his views.[34] According to al-Ghazali, if a child receives good teaching and good habits, he will become good, and if a child receives bad teaching and bad habits, he will become bad. The concepts he offers in the field of education are as follows.

1. **Aims of education.** The aim of education is to draw closer to Allah, not to seek position and grandeur, nor to deceive others. If the aim of education is not to draw closer to Him, it will give rise to envy and hostility.[35] This formulation reflects al-Ghazali's attitude of *zuhd* and *qana'ah*: he regards the world as not essential, not eternal, and bound to perish, because the world is only a place of passage. The final aim is to attain happiness in the hereafter. Fortunate are those of sound mind who can use the world for the sake of the hereafter.
2. **The educator.** To achieve these educational aims, al-Ghazali sets out criteria for an educator, including the following.[36]
   a. The teacher must love his students as he loves his own children.
   b. The teacher should not expect wages (material reward) as the main aim of his work (teaching), because his reward lies in forming students who practise the knowledge he teaches.
   c. The teacher must always motivate his students to seek beneficial knowledge, namely knowledge that leads to a happy life in this world and the hereafter as the final aim.
   d. The teacher must teach lessons that suit the intellectual level, comprehension, and maturity of his students.
   e. The teacher must instil faith in his students, so that their minds are imbued with firm faith.
   f. The teacher must, above all, practise the knowledge he teaches and set a good example, such as being gentle, patient, polite, magnanimous, open, generous, kind, and of noble character.

   From the perspective of teaching as a profession, these criteria of the ideal teacher focus on the teacher's morality and personality. This is because the paradigm used to determine them is Sufism, which places the teacher as an idol, a central figure, and even a holder of spiritual power. In education in the modern era, by contrast, the teacher is no longer the only agent of knowledge and information, since knowledge and information can be obtained through technology, data storage, and other means; the teacher instead acts as a

[34] H. M. Arifin, *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1991), 87.
[35] Muhammad 'Athiyah al-Abrasyi, *al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah wa Falasifatuha*, 3rd ed. (Egypt: 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1975), 237.
[36] Arifin, *Filsafat Pendidikan Islam*, 103–4.

facilitator, guide, or resource person. Al-Ghazali's ideal requirements for teachers therefore remain relevant but need to be supplemented with professional and academic requirements.

3. **The student.** To achieve harmony and balance, al-Ghazali also sets out several qualities that students should have, including the following.[37]
   a. Honouring the teacher and being humble, not arrogant.
   b. Feeling part of one building with fellow students, so that they help and care for one another.
   c. Keeping away from studying various schools (*madhhab*) that confuse the mind.
   d. Studying various beneficial sciences so as to achieve the aim of every science studied.
4. **The curriculum.** The curriculum is simply defined as the subjects given to students to instil knowledge so that they are able to adjust or adapt to their environment.

   According to al-Ghazali, the curriculum should cover three aspects, namely the physical (*jasmaniyyah*), the intellectual (*'aqliyyah*), and the moral (*akhlaqiyyah*), together with the foundations and principles used to educate children.[38]
5. **Reward and punishment.** On reward and punishment in education, al-Ghazali prefers a persuasive and familial approach. In his view, harsh reprimands provoke fear, give rise to the courage to attack others, and encourage the desire to keep violating rules. A persuasive approach, by contrast, makes children inclined to love goodness and to think creatively in understanding events, to benefit from the habit of reflecting on the meaning of every event, and even to love knowledge at all times.[39]
6. **Classification of knowledge.** In line with his concept of the curriculum, al-Ghazali divides knowledge, in terms of whether it may be studied, into three groups:
   a. praiseworthy knowledge, whether much or little, such as *tawhid* and the knowledge of Islam, which leads a person to a pure soul, free from baseness and evil, and brings him closer to Allah;
   b. blameworthy knowledge, whether much or little, which brings no benefit to people in this world or the hereafter and even causes harm, such as magic, astrology, divination, and the like; and
   c. knowledge that is praiseworthy up to a certain level but should not be pursued in depth when it shakes faith and leads to *ilhad* (denial of God), such as philosophy.
7. **Legal status of learning.** In terms of its importance (the legal status of studying it), knowledge is divided into two types:

[37] Al-Abrasyi, *al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah wa Falasifatuha*, 337.
[38] Al-Jumbulati and al-Tuwanisi, *Dirasah Muqaranah*, 148.
[39] Al-Jumbulati and al-Tuwanisi, *Dirasah Muqaranah*, 146.

a. knowledge that is obligatory (*fard 'ayn*) for everyone to know, namely religious knowledge sourced from the Qur'an; and
b. knowledge that is a collective obligation (*fard kifayah*), namely knowledge used to facilitate worldly affairs, such as medicine, agriculture, engineering, and so on.

In line with these various kinds of knowledge, al-Ghazali proposes several fields of knowledge that should be studied at school, namely:[40]

1. the sciences of the Qur'an and religious sciences such as *fiqh*, hadith, and *tafsir*;
2. language, grammar (*nahw*), and phonetics (*makharij*), because they support the religious sciences;
3. the sciences of *fard kifayah*, including political science; and
4. cultural sciences, such as poetry, history, and certain branches of philosophy.

Abuddin Nata notes that al-Ghazali's view rests on two approaches. The first is the *fiqh* approach, which gives rise to the division of knowledge into individual obligations (*fard 'ayn*) and collective obligations (*fard kifayah*). The second is the Sufi approach, which gives rise to the division of knowledge into the praiseworthy and the blameworthy. This becomes even clearer when linked to the aim of education, namely to draw closer to Allah. Al-Ghazali's concept of education appears systematic and comprehensive and is consistently in line with his attitude and personality as a Sufi. It was an application of, and a response to, the social problems of his time. If applied today, part of it still appears relevant, while other parts need refinement.

Thus, the concept of education presented (offered) by al-Ghazali is still significant to be brought forward and applied in the modern era. It certainly requires renewal (innovation) and refinement in line with the values and local wisdom of the places where education takes place.

The Works of al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali's written works show his distinction as a productive author. Throughout his life, whether as an adviser to the court or as a professor in Baghdad, and whether during his period of *scepticism* in Nishapur or after reaching firm conviction, he continued to write effectively.[41]

According to Sulayman Dunya's record, al-Ghazali's writings number 300. He began writing at the age of 25, while still in Nishapur, and continued for thirty years. By this calculation, he produced no fewer than ten major and minor works each year, covering several fields of

[40] Muhammad Munir Mursi, *al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyah: Usuluha wa Tatawwuruha fi al-Bilad al-'Arabiyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1977), 243.
[41] Ahmad, *Riwayat Hidup Imam Al-Ghazali*, 57.

knowledge, including philosophy and *kalam*, *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*, *tafsir*, Sufism, and ethics.[42] Al-Ghazali's works include the following.

1. **Philosophy and *kalam*:** (1) *Maqasid al-Falasifah*, (2) *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, (3) *al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*, (4) *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, (5) *al-Maqsad al-Asna fi Ma'ani Asma' Allah al-Husna*, (6) *Faysal al-Tafriqah*, (7) *al-Qistas al-Mustaqim*, (8) *al-Mustazhiri*, (9) *Hujjat al-Haqq*, (10) *Mufassal al-Khilaf fi Usul al-Din*, (11) *al-Muntakhal fi 'Ilm al-Jadal*, (12) *al-Madnun bihi 'ala Ghayr Ahlihi*, (13) *Mihakk al-Nazar*, (14) *Asrar 'Ilm al-Din*, (15) *al-Arba'in fi Usul al-Din*, (16) *Iljam al-'Awamm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam*, (17) *Mi'yar al-'Ilm*, (18) *al-Intisar*, and (19) *Ithbat al-Nazar*.
2. **Fiqh and *usul al-fiqh*:** (1) *al-Basit*, (2) *al-Wasit*, (3) *al-Wajiz*, (4) *al-Khulasah*, (5) *al-Mukhtasar*, (6) *al-Mankhul*, (7) *Shifa' al-Ghalil fi al-Qiyas wa al-Ta'lil*, and (8) *al-Dhari'ah ila Makarim al-Shari'ah*.
3. **Tafsir:** (1) *Yaqut al-Ta'wil fi Tafsir al-Tanzil* and (2) *Jawahir al-Qur'an*.
4. **Sufism and ethics:** (1) *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, (2) *Mizan al-'Amal*, (3) *Kimiya' al-Sa'adah*, (4) *Mishkat al-Anwar*, (5) *Mukashafat al-Qulub*, (6) *Minhaj al-'Abidin*, (7) *al-Durrah al-Fakhirah fi Kashf 'Ulum al-Akhirah*, (8) *al-Anis fi al-Wahdah*, (9) *al-Qurbah ila Allah 'Azza wa Jalla*, (10) *Akhlaq al-Abrar wa al-Najat min al-Ashrar*, (11) *Bidayat al-Hidayah*, (12) *al-Mabadi' wa al-Ghayat*, (13) *Nasihat al-Muluk*, (14) *Talbis Iblis*, (15) *al-Risalah al-Laduniyyah*, (16) *al-Risalah al-Qudsiyyah*, (17) *al-Ma'khadh*, (18) *al-Amali*, and (19) *Ma'arij al-Quds*.

CONCLUSION

From this brief exposition, it can be seen that Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ta'us al-Tusi al-Shafi'i al-Ghazali was called al-Ghazali because he was born in the village of Ghazalah, a town in Khurasan, Iran, in 450 AH/1058 CE, three years after the Seljuks took over power in Baghdad. He had a brother named Abu al-Futuh Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tusi al-Ghazali, and his father was a spinner and seller of sheep's wool.

Al-Ghazali (450 AH/1058 CE – 505 AH/1111 CE) lived at a time when the Muslim community was divided into various schools (*madhhab*) as a result of the influence of Greek culture and thought among Muslims. This was the second Abbasid period. The widespread religious and moral corruption in Muslim society drove him to become a hero, defender, and advocate of Islam (*hujjat al-Islam*) out of a sense of responsibility to remedy the confusion of thought and action that shook the life of the Muslim community.

[42] Sholihin, *Tokoh-Tokoh Sufi*, 114.

Al-Ghazali's concept of education is not only systematic and comprehensive but also consistently in line with his attitude and personality as a Sufi. It was an application of, and a response to, the social problems (conditions) of his time. If applied today, part of it still appears relevant, while other parts still need refinement.

His educational curriculum emphasises three aspects, namely the physical (*jasmaniyyah*), the intellectual (*'aqliyyah*), and the moral (*akhlaqiyyah*), and is oriented towards two approaches, namely the *fiqh* approach and the Sufi approach. His criteria for teachers, meanwhile, focus on moral and personal aspects.

Al-Ghazali produced a great many works across the fields of knowledge, especially in philosophy and *kalam*, *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*, *tafsir*, and Sufism. He died on Monday after the dawn prayer, 14 Jumada al-Akhirah 505 AH, coinciding with 18 December 1111 CE, and was buried in Tabiran.

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