

ISLAMIC EDUCATION THINKING PERSPECTIVE OF IMAM AL-GHAZALI IN 'THE BOOK IHYA' ULUMUDDIN

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Info Artikel

Abstract

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The thought of Islamic education according to Imam Al-Ghazali as reflected in his monumental work, *Ihya' Ulumiddin*. Imam Al-Ghazali is one of the most influential Islamic intellectual figures, whose educational views emphasise the balance between spiritual and intellectual dimensions. Through a qualitative approach with a literature study of the text of *Ihya' Ulumiddin*, this research reveals that the primary purpose of education, according to Al-Ghazali, is the formation of *insan kamil*-individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have spiritual depth and noble morals. Al-Ghazali also emphasised the importance of sincere intention in learning, the role of the teacher as a spiritual guide, and teaching methods tailored to students' character. These findings are relevant in formulating a holistic and contextualised concept of Islamic education in the modern era.

Abstrak.

Pemikiran pendidikan Islam menurut Imam Al-Ghazali sebagaimana tercermin dalam karya monumentalnya, *Ihya' Ulumiddin*. Imam Al-Ghazali merupakan salah satu tokoh intelektual Islam paling berpengaruh, yang pandangannya tentang pendidikan menekankan keseimbangan antara dimensi spiritual dan intelektual. Melalui pendekatan kualitatif dengan studi pustaka terhadap teks *Ihya' Ulumiddin*, penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa tujuan utama pendidikan menurut Al-Ghazali adalah pembentukan *insan kamil*—individu yang tidak hanya cerdas secara intelektual, tetapi juga memiliki kedalaman spiritual dan akhlak mulia. Al-Ghazali juga menekankan pentingnya niat yang ikhlas dalam belajar, peran guru sebagai pembimbing ruhani, serta metode pengajaran yang sesuai dengan karakter peserta didik. Temuan ini relevan dalam merumuskan konsep pendidikan Islam yang holistik dan kontekstual pada era modern.

PENDAHULUAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Education in Islam has a very fundamental role in shaping human beings who are noble, knowledgeable, and devoted to Allah SWT. One of the significant figures in Islamic scholarship who paid

deep attention to education was Imam Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 AD)(Mukromin 2019; Zaini 2017), a prominent scholar, philosopher, and Sufi widely recognised in the Islamic world(Mariyo 2023). His monumental work, *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*, is not only an encyclopaedia of religious sciences, but also contains profound thoughts on the concept of education that covers intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects.

Imam Al-Ghazali emphasised the importance of purification of the heart and moral formation as the core of Islamic education.(Nurhayati and Roza 2023) He viewed knowledge as a means to get closer to God, not just a tool to gain social or material status. In *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*, Al-Ghazali outlines in detail the methods of teaching, the roles of teachers and students, and the ideal goals of education from an Islamic perspective. He also criticises educational practices only concerned with outward aspects and ignore the inner dimension.

The context of Al-Ghazali's thought is very relevant to the challenges of modern Islamic education, which is often trapped in the secularisation of science and loses its spiritual orientation. Therefore, studying Islamic education, according to Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*,(Mokhammad Ali Musyaffa 2022) is very important to re-exploring the values of holistic and transformative education. This study is expected to enrich the discourse of Islamic education based on the integration of knowledge, faith, and morals.

Islamic education can be understood as a learning process that refers to Islamic values and teachings. This includes the development of morals, knowledge, and skills in line with Islamic law. In this context, education aims not only to improve intellectual abilities but also to shape the character and morals of individuals.

As one of the influential Islamic thinkers, Imam al-Ghazali emphasised the importance of education in shaping individuals who are balanced between spiritual and intellectual aspects. He saw education as a tool to reach the truth and get closer to God.

Thus, it becomes essential in this article to discuss education from Imam al-Ghazali's perspective in the book *Ihya' Ulumuddin* because it serves as a guide that directs individuals to live a life that is in line with Islamic principles, while fortifying them from misguidance and negative influences in society.

Research on Imam Al-Ghazali's Islamic education thought has been conducted by many scholars, especially those who refer to his monumental work *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*. However, each study has a different focus and approach. Previous studies generally only discuss certain aspects of Al-Ghazali's educational thought, such as the purpose of education or the role of the teacher, without thoroughly and contextually examining the contents of *Ihya 'Ulumuddin* as the primary source of integral Islamic education.

For example, research by Muhammad Zainuddin (2017) in his thesis entitled "Imam Al-Ghazali's Concept of Moral Education in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*" focuses more on moral education and character building(Harits 2021). Meanwhile, another study by Nurhayati (2020) in the journal *Tadrib: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* highlights learning methods according to Al-Ghazali, but does not discuss in depth the spiritual dimension and epistemology of education according to *Ihya 'Ulumuddin*.(Rusli.S, Muhammad Tang 2016).

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In contrast to these studies, this research seeks to comprehensively examine Imam Al-Ghazali's educational thought with an integrative approach. This research not only partially discusses the moral aspects or methods of education, but also analyzes the relationship between science, manners, Sufism, and the formation of *insan kamil* (complete human being) as described in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*. In addition, this research contextualises Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the challenges of Islamic education in the era of changing times, thus producing an analysis that is more relevant to the needs of the times.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This work uses the literature review (Fatimah, Hani, and Vionita 2023) method to analyse Imam Al-Ghazali's perspective on the importance of Islamic education. The literature review method involves searching and analysing relevant literature sources, such as books, articles, journals, and other writings that discuss Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts and views on Islamic education. The steps in this research include searching for literature through libraries, online databases, and other relevant sources. The selected sources are books, articles, journals, and other writings discussing Imam Al-Ghazali's views on the importance of Islamic education.

C. RESULT

1. Biography of Imam Al-Ghazali

Imam Ghazali, full name Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali (Fazillah 2024), is an important figure in the history of Islamic thought. He was born in Ghazale, a small town in Tus, Khurasan region, in 450 AH (1058 AD), and died in 505 AH (1111 AD) (Abudin Nata, 2022). He is one of the great Islamic thinkers, and he was awarded the titles *Hujjatul Islam* (proof of the truth of Islam) and *Zain ad-Din* (jewellery of religion).

Imam al-Ghazali began his education in childhood by studying with Ahwad bin Muhammad ar-Radzikani in Tus. He then continued his studies with Abi Nashr al-Isma'ili in Jurjani, before finally returning to Tus, to the extent that al-Juwaini gave the title as a person who had an extensive knowledge like 'a deep and drowning sea' (Sanuhung et al. 2021).

In 484 AH, at age 34, Imam al-Ghazali received a summons from Nizhamul Mulk to head the Nizhamiyah Madrasah in Baghdad. He was appointed *Shaykh al-Islam*, who was responsible for leading the *Shaykhs* (*Masyaikh*) of the madrasa, which covered levels of education from primary to tertiary. After four years, he decided to stop teaching in Baghdad and left the city to live the life of a Sufi in 488 AH, while performing the pilgrimage. At that time, he began to doubt himself after studying Kalam's science, which he had received from Al-Juwaini. He wanted to find the ultimate truth and began to distrust the knowledge he gained through the five senses, because he thought the five senses were often unreliable.

It was Sufism that finally dispelled his doubts. After that, he travelled to Sham and lived there as a zahid, living a worshipful life. He also travelled to various deserts to train himself, delve into spiritual matters, and live religious teachings more deeply.

In Sham, he wrote *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, before moving to Bait al-Maqdis. He then returned to Baghdad and travelled to his native Khurosan. In Khurosan, he taught at the Al-Nidzamiyah Madrasah in Naisabur and the Al-Fuqoha Madrasah. In addition, he became an Imam for religious scholars, guided the congregation in studying Sufism, and acted as an expert advisor in the field of religion.

2. Islamic Education Perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali

Islamic education fosters and develops human potential based on Islamic teachings from the Qur'an and Sunnah. The main goal is to form a person who has faith, piety, and noble character, and can live in the world with helpful knowledge. In Islamic education, spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social aspects are integrated, creating a balance between the world and the hereafter. In addition, Islamic education also emphasises the importance of manners and morals as the primary foundation in seeking knowledge and interacting with others.

The word "Islam" is a masdar form of the root word *aslama*, *yuslimu*, *Islaman*, which means submitting and obeying, and being Muslim. Islam is a teaching that comes from the revelation of God, which is conveyed to all mankind through the Prophet Muhammad, with the aim of human welfare both in this world and in the hereafter.

Islamic Education is a learning process based on Islamic teachings, which aims to form individuals who have a comprehensive understanding and practice of Islamic teachings, both in aspects of faith, worship, morals, and muamalah. This education includes moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social education that is carried out by referring to the revelation of Allah, the sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad, and Islamic principles in everyday life. The main goal is to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also has good character and is responsible for religion, society, and the environment. According to Imam Al-Ghazali, Islamic education is a process that involves shaping an individual's morals, soul, and thinking to achieve perfection of life according to Islamic teachings. Al-Ghazali emphasised that education not only aims to provide knowledge, but also to educate the heart and improve morals so that a person can live according to God's guidance.

In his view, education plays a vital role in determining the direction of a nation's life and its way of thinking. Al-Ghazali's thinking in education tends to focus on empiricism, as he strongly emphasises the impact of education on the development of students. According to him, a child depends on parents and people who educate them in shaping their personality and understanding. To understand Al-Ghazali's thoughts in the field of education, we need to study his thoughts on various aspects of education, such as the role of education, educational goals, curriculum, methods, educators, and students:

- a. The Role of Education

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Imam Al-Ghazali emphasised that the purpose of Islamic education is to achieve perfection in religious and moral aspects. According to him, education must lead to realizing the goals of fadhilah (virtue) and taqarrub (self-approach) to Allah. Through knowledge and charity, humans can achieve perfection and happiness in this world and the hereafter. Imam Al-Ghazali's views on the importance of Islamic education remain relevant in modern times. They can be the basis for developing an education system oriented towards religious and moral values. The role of education is important because, with education, humans will regain their fundamental nature (Kartikasari 2019)

There are at least four important things that are obtained through education (Mukromin 2019):

1. Firstly, it introduces learners to Allah SWT, as the creator of nature and the one who created us, by whose grace humans can develop their potential.
 2. Introducing humans to their role among fellow creatures and responsibilities in this life.
 3. To introduce man to social interaction and responsibilities in the social order, with which we must live and work together.
 4. Introducing people to the natural world, inviting them to recognise the wisdom of its creation, and enabling them to benefit from it.
 5. The Purpose of Education According to Al Ghazali, education has three aspects.
 6. The cognitive aspect focuses on the development of reason, including intelligence, cleverness, and the ability to think.
 7. The affective aspect is concerned with the development of the heart, such as feelings, soul, and spirituality.
 8. The psychomotor aspect covers physical development, including body health and skills.
- b. Purpose of Education

According to Al Ghazali, education has three aspects.

1. The cognitive aspect focuses on the development of reason, including intelligence, cleverness, and thinking skills.
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3. The psychomotor aspect includes physical development, including body health and skills.

Furthermore, Imam Al-Ghazali believes that happiness in the hereafter is the most essential thing for humans. The happiness of the world and the hereafter has universal, eternal, and more substantial values. In al-Ghazali's view, human perfection in the world and the hereafter can only be achieved by mastering the nature of virtue through knowledge. The virtues that will make humans happy in the world and bring them closer to Allah SWT so that they will be happy in the hereafter. This educational orientation may be the fruit of Imam Al-Ghazali's realisation after experiencing a spiritual crisis, which is documented in the work *al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*.

c. Education Curriculum

According to Al-Ghazali, the method of religious education begins with memorisation and understanding, followed by strengthening belief and justification. Furthermore, the enforcement of arguments and explanations that strengthen faith is applied. Thus, Imam Al-Ghazali's teaching approach is not tied to a particular school, but is a model that results from thinking based on Islamic teachings.

Imam Al-Ghazali argued that religious education should begin to be taught to children as early as possible. In these years, a child is prepared to accept religious beliefs merely by believing in them and is not required to look for arguments. Meanwhile, regarding moral education, teaching must lead to the formation of noble morals (Fatimah et al. 2023). Imam Al Ghazali said that morals are an attitude rooted in the soul that will give birth to various good deeds efficiently and easily without needing thought and consideration. Furthermore, the principle of modern educational methodology always shows a dual aspect. One aspect shows the process of children learning, and the other shows the teacher teaching and educating.

d. Code of Ethics for Educators and Learners

Al-Ghazali's thinking on education places the heart at the centre of human essence. He argues that human substance does not lie in the physical aspect, but in the condition of the heart and soul. His theocentric approach directs education to the formation of noble morals. In this case, education is not only about the transfer of knowledge, but also about the guidance and purification of the heart. The goal is to get closer to Allah SWT, where this process involves improving morals and ethics in everyday life. Thus, education according to al-Ghazali focuses on character development and individual spirituality (Nakosteen, 1996). Educators need to maintain the ethics and code of ethics of their profession, namely:

1. Loving his learners;
2. Willing to sincerely follow the Prophet's guidance to seek the pleasure and get closer to Allah SWT;
3. Should not neglect the duty of advising his learners;
4. Prevent learners from falling into despicable morals;
5. Not underestimating educators who do not have the same knowledge as he;
6. When delivering learning materials, they must be adjusted to the level of understanding of students;
7. Must convey the material, concretely, and by the level of ability of the learners;
8. They want to practice their knowledge to create harmony between speech and action

Educators have a vital role in the educational process, and to carry out their role well, they must have special qualities and carry out specific tasks (Iqbal, 2015). among others:

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1. Compassion and Sympathy: Educators should be able to show affection and concern for learners, creating a comfortable and supportive environment.
 2. Sincerity and Sincerity: Teaching with sincere intentions, without expecting anything in return, so that learners feel valued.
 3. Honest and Trustworthy: Being a role model in honesty and building trust, so that learners feel safe to learn.
 4. Gentle: Dealing with learners with gentleness helps to create a positive atmosphere and reduce tension.
 5. Able to Chest: Accept learners' different characters and uniqueness with an open-minded attitude, and be willing to listen.
 6. Teaching Thoroughly: Committed to providing in-depth teaching, ensuring learners truly understand the material.
 7. Not Stingy with Knowledge: Willing to share knowledge and experience without hesitation, and encouraging learners to learn actively.
 8. Idealistic: Having ideals that inspire learners to pursue knowledge and goodness.
- e. The code of conduct for learners (wadlifah) is as follows:
1. Self-Purification: Prioritising self-purification from despicable morals to get closer to Allah.
 2. Avoiding Worldly Busyness: Keeping yourself from unproductive activities and staying away from things that interfere with the focus of learning.
 3. Humility: Not being arrogant to educators and recognising their position in the learning process.
 4. Concentration on Beginners: For those just starting, it is important to avoid diverse thoughts and figures to avoid confusion.
 5. Disciplines: Do not neglect the particular discipline being studied.
 6. Gradual Approach: Demanding knowledge should be done in stages by prioritising the most important.
 7. Master Before Switching: Do not move on to other sciences before truly mastering the knowledge learnt.
 8. Knowledge Factors: Knowing the factors that can help acquire the most honourable knowledge.
 9. Spiritual Goals: Aim for inner cleansing, approaching Allah, and raising the spiritual station.
 10. Knowledge Relationship: Knowing the relationship between the knowledge learnt and its intended orientation to identify and choose the knowledge that should be prioritised.

These principles create an educational framework focusing on intellectual, moral, and spiritual development.

f. Learning Methods

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, learning methods can be understood as a comprehensive approach, integrating cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects in the educational process. He emphasised the importance of not only teaching knowledge, but also shaping the character and morals of students. Imam Al-Ghazali emphasised the importance of several methods in the learning process.

1. exemplary method
2. memorization
3. positive habituation. In his book *Riyadlat al-Nafs*, he explains that if children are familiarised with good things and taught in a good way, they will grow in goodness and achieve happiness both in this world and in the hereafter.
4. Experience (*At-tajribah*) introduces the shortcomings of learners directly without going through theory in several ways, namely: befriending people with good character, taking lessons from opponents by knowing shortcomings for improvement, and learning directly from the community.
5. Learning Through Discussion Ghazali encouraged dialogue and discussion between teachers and students, as well as among students. This helps to deepen understanding and broaden perspectives.
6. Learning Through Reflection: The importance of reflecting on what is learnt. Ghazali emphasised that good understanding comes from deep reflection on the knowledge gained.
7. Moral-based Learning According to Ghazali, education should develop students' character and morals. Knowledge should be used for good, and education should be balanced with ethics.
8. Emotional Engagement Method Ghazali believes that students' emotionality and motivation are important in learning. Emotional engagement can increase interest and memory.

3. Imam al-Ghazali's Thought in *Ihya' Ulumiddin*

Imam al-Ghazali, a great scholar of the 5th century Hijri (11-12 CE), emphasised the importance of *nafi'*-beneficial knowledge-in shaping the character and spirituality of Muslims. Through his works such as *Ihya' Ulumiddin*, *Bidayatul Hidayah*, *Ayyuhal Walad*, *al-Munqidz min al-Dhalal*, and *Tahafut al-Falasifah*, he formulated the concept of *nafi'* science that includes moral and spiritual aspects.

In the book *Al-ilm al-nafi*, Al-Ghazali wrote that there are two types of Knowledge, namely, practical Knowledge and Knowledge that is not useful.

A. Useful Knowledge

Practical Knowledge brings a servant closer to Allah and helps improve his spiritual quality and morality. According to Al-Ghazali, *ukhrawi* Knowledge, namely the most useful religious Knowledge, includes:

1. Knowledge of morals and worship, namely, Knowledge that directs a person to increase devotion and awareness of Allah.
2. *Shari'i* sciences, such as *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh*, and *Sufism*, can guide a person to live according to Islamic teachings.
3. Sciences that improve intentions and motivation, such as the science of purifying the soul (*tazkiyah al-nafs*), which is important for getting closer to Allah.

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Al-Ghazali emphasised that practical knowledge increases knowledge and changes one's behaviour and character. Such knowledge will encourage people to act better in their daily lives, both in social and spiritual contexts.

B. Unbeneficial Knowledge:

Meanwhile, useless knowledge is only mastered for worldly purposes, such as gaining power and popularity, or simply for personal vanity. Al-Ghazali criticised knowledge used for this purpose, which does not benefit the soul or bring one closer to Allah. Knowledge that relies solely on the rational mind, without regard to the spiritual dimension, is considered misleading and useless.

Some of the characteristics of useless knowledge, according to Al-Ghazali, are:

1. Knowledge used for vanity and empty debate: Such as philosophy used only to show off intelligence or defeat opponents in arguments.
2. Knowledge that has no positive impact on morality: Knowledge that does not lead one to act better or draw closer to Allah.

D. CONCLUSION

According to Imam Al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulumuddin*, the thought of Islamic education significantly contributes to building a comprehensive and balanced education system between worldly and ukhrawi aspects. Al-Ghazali emphasises the important role of education as a means of forming a whole human being who is not only intellectually intelligent, but also clean in spirit and noble in morals. He saw education as purifying the heart, fostering morals, and strengthening faith to make humans accurate servants of Allah and responsible caliphs.

According to Al-Ghazali, education aims to achieve ultimate happiness, namely closeness to Allah SWT. To that end, he outlines important education components such as a curriculum that includes shar'i sciences and morals, a code of ethics between educators and students based on adab and sincerity, and learning methods that emphasise exemplary, repetitive, and spiritual approaches. Within this framework, Al-Ghazali also distinguishes between practical knowledge and useless knowledge. Useful knowledge brings one closer to Allah, while useless knowledge relies solely on the intellect without spiritual direction.

As a great figure with breadth of thought and spiritual depth, Imam Al-Ghazali has laid the foundations of relevant Islamic education throughout the ages. His teachings taught the importance of integrating knowledge and charity, manners and morals, and the world and the hereafter in the educational process. Therefore, learning and practising Al-Ghazali's educational thoughts provide benefits in worldly life and become provisions for happiness in the hereafter. According to Al-Ghazali, education is not just a transfer of knowledge, but a path to self-perfection as a servant of Allah.

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