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**Revitalizing the Role of Educators Based on
Al-Ghazali's Thoughts Amidst the Global Moral Crisis**

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Abstract

This study looks at what it means to be an educator, as seen through the ideas of Imam Al-Ghazali, and places his thoughts in today's educational world. Al-Ghazali believed that educators are not just people who teach facts, but also spiritual leaders who help students grow morally and get closer to Allah. The research uses a review of Al-Ghazali's writings and modern Islamic education materials to find out what makes an ideal educator in his view. The results show that Al-Ghazali focused on qualities like good character, proper behavior, honest intentions, and patience as the key parts of being a professional educator. These ideas are still very important today, especially in dealing with moral issues, a loss of good values, and the gap between knowledge and spiritual beliefs. The study ends by saying that it is very important to bring back the role of educators as both teachers and moral guides in Islamic education to raise a generation that is both smart and good hearted.

Keywords: Educator, Ethics, Globalization, Imam Al-Ghazali, Islamic Education.

PRELIMINARY

Islamic education considers educators to be a key component in the success of the learning process. In addition to imparting knowledge, they also act as moral role models and spiritual guides for students. Studying this issue is increasingly important in the modern era, marked by a character crisis, a breakdown in values, and a trend toward separating knowledge from ethics.

Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), a leading figure in the Islamic intellectual tradition, put forward a comprehensive concept of education in his work, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, particularly regarding the teacher-student relationship, the goals of education, and the process of purifying the soul. Al-Ghazali described the ideal educator as someone with noble character, sincerity, patience, and compassion for his students. He also emphasized that the educator's ethos and spirituality are strongly relevant in determining the character of students.

This topic was chosen due to its relevance to the company's need to restore the moral and spiritual dimensions of education amidst the challenges of globalization. This research contributes through a conceptual analysis that connects Al-Ghazali's thoughts to contemporary educational issues. This article aims to explore Al-Ghazali's concept of the educator and demonstrate its significance in strengthening contemporary Islamic education. Overall, the discussion in this article is structured through theoretical presentation, relevance analysis, and research conclusions.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design with a literature review approach (Assingkiy, 2021). The study population encompassed all of Imam Al-Ghazali's works related to education, while the sample was limited to three main works: *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Ayyuha al-Walad*, and *Al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah*. Secondary data sources included various books, journal articles, and contemporary studies on Al-Ghazali's thought and modern educational issues. Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques and systematic recording of primary and secondary texts, then organized using

a thematic analysis sheet created by the researcher. In this process, the researcher acted as the primary instrument, tasked with reading, interpreting, and cross-verifying sources. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis methods in three stages: data reduction, data grouping, and data interpretation. This research was entirely literature-based, requiring no special tools or materials and no fieldwork.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A glimpse of Imam Al-Ghazali

Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111 AD), with the full name Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali al-Tusi, was one of the most influential figures in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Al-Ghazali is known by the nickname Hujjat al-Islam because of his great contribution to the development of Islamic epistemology, spiritual renewal, and the unification of sharia, morals and Sufism. Since his youth, al-Ghazali has mastered various fields of knowledge such as the Syafi'i school of jurisprudence, Ash'ariyyah theology, Greek philosophy, Aristotelian logic, and classical Sufi discourse (Al-Ghazali, 2005).

The pinnacle of his academic career was his appointment as a professor at the Nizamiyyah Madrasah in Baghdad, one of the leading centers of learning in the 11th century. There, al-Ghazali was known as a sharp thinker who was able to criticize rationalist philosophy, formulate scientific methodologies, and develop strong theological arguments to confront various schools of thought. (Madjid N., 2000) However, his academic success did not bring him inner peace. Al-Ghazali experienced a profound spiritual crisis to the point that, by his own admission, he lost the ability to speak and teach. This condition ultimately led him to resign from his position.

This spiritual crisis was not only psychological, but also an existential turning point that changed the course of his life. During his spiritual wanderings in Syria, Baghdad, and the Hijaz, al-Ghazali lived a life of asceticism, mujahadah, and deep contemplation. From this phase emerged the idea that true education is not merely an intellectual process, but a process of purifying the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and character formation that brings humans closer to God.

The inner transformation he experienced had an impact on the entire construction of his thoughts, as seen in his works such as *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, *Ayyuha al-Walad*, and *Misykat al-Anwar*. In *Ihya'*, al-Ghazali unites the dimensions of sharia, ethics, spiritual psychology and pedagogy, so that this work becomes one of the main references in Islamic education.

In addition, al-Ghazali emphasized that the ideal educator is not only a scholar, but also a *murabbi*, namely a guide who fosters the spiritual development, manners, and morals of students. For him, education is a holistic process that affects physical, intellectual, and spiritual aspects (Majid & Andayani, 2010) Thus, education not only produces individuals who are academically intelligent, but also morally and spiritually mature. This concept makes al-Ghazali's thoughts remain relevant in the 21st-century educational discourse.

The Concept of Teachers in Islamic Literature

The concept of an educator in Islam has a foundation encompassing deep theological, philosophical, and historical aspects. Classical scholars often expressed this meaning through three key terms: *murabbi* (leader), *mu'allim* (leader), and *muaddib* (leader). These three terms highlight the educator's role as a spiritual, intellectual, and moral guide within the Islamic education system.

First, *Murabbi*. *Murabbi* understands the role of educators as individuals tasked with developing the full potential of students, both physically, intellectually, and spiritually, in accordance with human nature. Al-Ghazali explained that *tarbiyah* is a process of purifying the soul and forming character through the example set by educators.

Second, *Mu'allim*. *Mu'allim* refers to a teacher who not only imparts knowledge but also fosters a culture of learning, the etiquette of seeking knowledge, and a sincere intention. Scholars such as Al-Zarnuji and Ibn Jama'ah positioned *mu'allim* as the guardian of the continuity of knowledge (*sanad al-'ilm*) so that mastery of knowledge remains correct, secure, and in accordance with Islamic law (Al-Zarnuji, 2008).

Third, *Muaddib*. *Muaddib* refers to educators who are tasked with instilling manners, moral values, and civilizational insight. This concept is based on QS. Al-Jumu'ah:2 which explains that the three

main tasks of Rasulullah SAW were to read the verses of Allah, purify the soul, and teach the book and wisdom. Thus, education in Islam aims to build noble morals and a civilized society.

Views of Contemporary Islamic Educational Thinkers

Modern Islamic educational figures such as Marimba, Zakiah Daradjat, and Ahmad Tafsir developed this classical concept using psychological, pedagogical, and philosophical approaches. They emphasized that educators in Islam must fulfill three primary roles in their entirety: spiritual mentors (murabbi), transmitters of knowledge (mu'allim), and educators of morality (muaddib) (Tafsir, 2012).

Thus, these three concepts complement each other and form the basis for building a comprehensive Islamic education. These concepts remain relevant in facing today's educational challenges, which demand not only academic intelligence but also moral integrity and spiritual maturity.

The Concept of Teacher from the Perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali

A study of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's works shows that the concept of an educator (al-mu'allim) plays a crucial role in all his ideas about education. According to Al-Ghazali, educators are not merely transmitters of learning materials, but also agents of change who shape the human personality as a whole, including intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and social aspects. The teacher's position is even considered equal to that of the prophets in providing guidance, albeit without the qualities of infallibility and revelation.

In his work *Ayyuha al-Walad*, Al-Ghazali emphasized the close relationship between knowledge and practice as the basis for an educator's scientific ethics. Al-Ghazali stated:

"Knowledge without practice is madness, while practice without knowledge is futility".

This statement not only critiques the mechanical nature of the learning process, but also emphasizes that educators must be a living embodiment of the knowledge they teach. Thus, a teacher's moral integrity is a key factor in educational success. Teachers must not only teach the truth but also be living proof of the values they impart.

Intellectual Dimension: Strengthening the Mind and Purifying Knowledge

In his work *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Al-Ghazali emphasized that the primary duty of an educator is to align his own and his students' intentions in acquiring knowledge. According to him, the ideal teacher must be able to: convey knowledge that is authentic, beneficial, and in accordance with human moral needs; direct the learning process so that it is not influenced by materialistic ambitions; help students overcome intellectual confusion and correct misunderstandings. According to Al-Ghazali, knowledge is likened to light (nur), and the teacher is the intermediary who transmits that light. Therefore, a teacher's intellectual competence must be supported by scientific honesty, breadth of insight, and the ability to connect knowledge with reality.

Spiritual Moral Dimension: Tazkiyat al-Nafs as the Axis of Education

The second aspect that received significant attention from Al-Ghazali was the moral and spiritual dimensions. Educators are not only mu'allim (leaders), but must also be murabbi (leaders). In this role, teachers are tasked with helping students purify their souls (tazkiyat al-nafs), guiding them toward spiritual closeness with God, instilling noble morals through role models, and fostering ethical sensitivity throughout the learning process. According to Al-Ghazali, the ideal educator is one who treats students like their own children. Therefore, love, patience, and sincerity are the foundation of educational interaction (Nata, 2010). Education will not produce spiritual transformation without role models, because morals are shaped more by examples than by verbal advice.

Social Dimension: Preparing Students as Ethical Caliphs

In Al-Ghazali's view, humans have two major functions: (1) as servants of Allah ('abd), and (2) as caliphs who prosper the earth. With this understanding, educators have a social duty to shape students to be able to: play an active role in society in a just and responsible manner, carry out social mandates with high integrity, and maintain harmony between personal interests, society, and religious values. Thus, the

role of teachers is not limited to the classroom alone, but becomes an important pillar in building a civilized, moral, and monotheistic society.

According to Al-Ghazali, the concept of education is a holistic educational model that carries three main missions: (1) intellectual enlightenment, (2) moral and spiritual development, and (3) strengthening social character. This idea not only reflects the idealism of classical Islamic education but also serves as a critical reference for addressing the ethical, professional, and exemplary challenges facing today's world of education.

The Relevance of Al-Ghazali's Thought in the Era of Globalization

Globalization is characterized by the acceleration of technology, the unlimited flow of information, and the spread of global culture, which has profoundly altered society's value systems. These changes have led to a crisis of identity, a weakening of character, and an increasingly permissive culture that erodes the moral stability of the younger generation. In such conditions, the educational ideas advocated by Imam Al-Ghazali have again gained attention as a philosophical framework capable of balancing intellectual sophistication with the spiritual depth of modern humanity.

The relevance of this can be understood through the following four main dimensions. First, the Revitalization of Moral Education in the Digital Ecosystem. The current of globalization expands digital culture, which is often full of hedonism, instant oriented, and individualistic tendencies. Al-Ghazali emphasized that moral formation is not sufficient through the mere delivery of information, but needs to be done through observation and exploration of moral meaning. Moral education, according to Al-Ghazali, not only involves moral teaching (*ma'rifah*), but also requires a process of inner purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and continuous spiritual practice (*riyāḍah al-nafs*). This view aligns with the findings of modern character education experts who emphasize that moral habits need to be strengthened to mitigate the negative impact of digital culture on adolescent behavior (Lickona, 1991).

Second, the Integration of Science and Religion as a Response to the Dichotomy of Modern Science. In the modern view, science is often considered a value-free entity, while religion is considered separate from rational and empirical processes. Al-Ghazali rejected this separation and argued that every discipline must be directed towards the welfare of humanity and devotion to God. This idea aligns with the growing efforts to integrate and interconnect knowledge in contemporary Islamic universities, namely efforts to unite modern science with Islamic ethics and spiritual values (Azra, 2012).

Third, Exemplary Behavior as the Foundation for Character Building. According to Al-Ghazali, educators are not merely transmitters of material, but also role models (*qudwah*) who internalize moral values through behavior, speech, and personal integrity. Al-Ghazali emphasized that character building is more effective through concrete examples than through verbal instruction alone. This view aligns with Lickona's theory, which emphasizes the importance of moral modeling and a moral environment in shaping students' character.

Fourth, Reformulating Educational Goals Toward the Concept of the Perfect Man. Modern education systems are often trapped in a material, utilitarian, and competitive orientation influenced by the demands of the global market. Al-Ghazali offers a more substantial educational goal, namely, to form a perfect man: a human being who is harmonious between intellectual intelligence, moral maturity, and spiritual awareness, and able to balance life in this world and the afterlife. This concept rejects the reductionism of education as a labor-producing machine and restores education to a process of human refinement and holistic self-transformation.

CONCLUSION

Imam Al-Ghazali's thoughts on the role of an educator have made a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education, particularly in shaping human beings holistically across various aspects, namely intellectual, moral, and spiritual. According to Al-Ghazali, educators are not merely transmitters of knowledge, but also spiritual guides and moral molders. He believes educators have three primary roles: *mu'allim* (leader) who teaches beneficial knowledge, *murabbi* (leader) who shapes the students' personalities and purifies their souls, and *muaddib* (leader) who instills etiquette and moral values. These three functions demonstrate that education, in Al-Ghazali's view, is the process of developing a perfect individual (*insan kamil*), one whose mind, heart, and behavior are in harmony.

In the era of globalization, Al-Ghazali's views remain relevant in addressing various modern challenges such as moral crisis, hedonism, secularization, and the weakening of character. The concept of integrating knowledge and spiritual values, as well as education through role models and the strengthening of morals, is a crucial direction for a more humanistic education system based on transcendental values. His thinking emphasizes that educational success is measured not only by academic achievement but also by the educator's ability to instill faith, morality, and social responsibility.

Based on the results of this study, several recommendations can be put forward. First, educators need to improve the integration of spiritual and moral values into the learning process through exemplary behavior and approaches that foster students' moral awareness. Second, Islamic educational institutions need to revise their educational objectives to focus not only on cognitive aspects but also on character development based on Islamic teachings as expressed by Al-Ghazali. Third, further research can focus on the implementation of the concepts of mu'allim, murabbi, and muaddib in modern educational curricula, or evaluate the effectiveness of their application at various levels of education. These efforts are crucial to ensure that Islamic educational values remain relevant, adaptive, and do not lose their spiritual and moral orientation amidst global dynamics.

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