

**A SUMMARY OF:
AL-GHAZALI'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
OF EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah SWT. May peace and blessings be upon our noble Prophet Muhammad SAW, his wives and family members, his Companions, and all those who follow his path until the Day of Judgment.

Indeed, knowledge in Islam is not merely a means to attain worldly success, but a path of *taqarrub* (drawing closer) to Allah SWT and a foundation for the formation of noble character and human personality. True knowledge gives rise to individuals who know their Creator, understand the purpose of their existence, and are able to navigate worldly life guided by revelation while preparing for the eternal Hereafter.

Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali is among the eminent Islamic scholars who contributed comprehensive and balanced educational thought, encompassing both outward and inward knowledge, moral development, the roles of teachers and students, as well as teaching methods founded upon compassion and wisdom. His views emphasize that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge, but a process of spiritual purification and the formation of individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and well-mannered.

This writing aims to elaborate on Imam al-Ghazali's educational thought so that it may serve as guidance and reference in efforts to nurture a balanced generation that is God-conscious and of noble character, for happiness in this world and well-being in the Hereafter.

Please make prayer for me so that i will be the chosen one by Allah swt to spread his deen until the day that He will call upon me to return to Him.

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CHAPTER 1

THE BIOGRAPHY OF IMAM AL-GHAZALI (BIRTH AND EDUCATION)

His full name was Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad, and his *nisbah* title was al-Ghazali al-Tusi. His *kunyah* was Abu Hamid. Among the honorific titles bestowed upon him were *Hujjat al-Islam*, *Siraj al-Mujtahidin*, and *Zayn al-'Abidin*.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was born in the year 450 Hijrah in the village of Ghazalah, on the outskirts of the city of Tus, which is located today in the northeastern part of Iran, near the city of Mashhad, the capital of the Khurasan region.

The family of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali was deeply religious. His father earned a living by weaving cloth from sheep's wool. He would bring the woven fabric from the village of Ghazalah to the city of Tus to sell. Although his father was a poor man, he was known for his honesty and kindness.

He enjoyed associating with scholars and Sufis, from whom he acquired religious knowledge, while also serving and assisting them. Through his close companionship with people of knowledge and his frequent attendance at their lectures, his father experienced positive spiritual effects. He then supplicated to Allah SWT to grant him a child who would be intelligent, knowledgeable, and righteous. Allah SWT answered his supplication.

Thus, a son was born and named Muhammad. In later life, Muhammad became not only a righteous man, but also a teacher to the righteous of his time. He became widely known as Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and was honored with the title *Hujjat al-Islam*.

The father of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali passed away when Abu Hamid was approximately six years old. After his father's death, he and his younger brother, Ahmad, were raised under the care of one of their father's close friends, a *mutasawwif* (a practitioner of Sufism).

After the inheritance left by their late father was exhausted, Imam al-Ghazali migrated to Tus and studied at a school established by the Prime Minister, Nizam al-Mulk, known as al-Madrasah al-Nizamiyyah. This institution provided its students with food, clothing, and the necessary books for their studies.

Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali studied *fiqh* under a scholar named Shaykh Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Radhakani. He also learned Arabic grammar (*nahw*) and arithmetic, and successfully memorized the Qur'an. He showed a stronger inclination toward the outward sciences, such as *fiqh*, whereas his younger brother Ahmad, from an early age, was more inclined toward the study of *tasawwuf*.

Later, in the year 465 Hijrah, Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali traveled to Jurjan (known in Persian as Gorgan, an ancient city located approximately 160 kilometers from Tus). There, he studied under a teacher named Abu Nasr al-Isma'ili and learned *tasawwuf* from Yusuf al-Nassaj, a renowned Sufi, as well as from many other teachers.

We conclude with a supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ ، وَمِنْ قَلْبٍ لَا يَخْشَعُ ، وَمِنْ نَفْسٍ لَا تَتَّبِعُ ، وَمِنْ دَعْوَةٍ لَا يُسْتَجَابُ لَهَا

“O Allah, indeed we seek refuge in You from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that does not humble itself, from a soul that is never satisfied, and from a supplication that is not answered.”

Indeed, Imam al-Ghazali authored many books on education and its related issues. However, among the most renowned is *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, in which he successfully articulated a comprehensive and holistic educational framework, clearly defined in its principles and boundaries.

The Importance of Knowledge and Teaching

According to Imam al-Ghazali, true teaching is a path that brings a person closer to Allah SWT and leads to happiness in both this world and the Hereafter. He consistently emphasized the status of scholars as the heirs of the Prophets.

The hearts of scholars are opened by Allah SWT to receive knowledge, which is among His most distinguished attributes. A scholar is a trustee who safeguards and manages the most precious treasure of Allah SWT—knowledge.

In the book *Fatih al-'Ulum* (p. 15), it is stated:

“The perfection of a human being in drawing closer (*taqarrub*) to Allah SWT is in fact determined by knowledge. The more abundant and more perfect one's knowledge is, the closer one becomes to Allah and the more one resembles the angels.”

All of mankind will perish except those who possess knowledge. Those who possess knowledge will perish except those who act upon their knowledge. Those who act upon their knowledge will perish except those who are sincere.

In *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Vol. 1, p. 52), Imam al-Ghazali states:

“Whoever possesses knowledge and acts upon it is regarded as great in the kingdom of the heavens. He is like the sun: it illuminates itself and also illuminates others. He is like musk oil: fragrant in itself and spreading its fragrance to those around it. Whoever devotes himself to teaching has indeed attained something noble; therefore, a teacher must be mindful of his responsibility.”

The Purpose of Education According to Imam al-Ghazali

1. The purpose of education is the attainment of human perfection, the ultimate aim of which is *taqarrub*—drawing closer to Allah SWT.
2. Education also seeks to realize human happiness in both this world and the Hereafter.

In summary, the foundation of happiness in this world and the Hereafter is knowledge. Therefore, knowledge is the most virtuous and noble form of action.

CHAPTER 2

THE EDUCATIONAL PATTERN ACCORDING TO IMAM AL-GHAZALI

In formulating a curriculum that aligns with the objectives of education, Imam al-Ghazali classified knowledge into three fundamental categories of disciplines:

First: Knowledge that is **blameworthy** (*madhmum*), whether studied in small or large amounts.

Second: Knowledge that is **praiseworthy** (*mahmud*), whether studied in small or large amounts.

Third: Knowledge that is praiseworthy to a certain extent, but blameworthy if pursued in excessive depth.

Knowledge that brings harm to its possessor or to others—such as magic and the use of amulets—is considered blameworthy, as it provides no benefit in either worldly life or the Hereafter.

Knowledge that is absolutely **praiseworthy is that which is related to religious matters and acts of worship**. Such knowledge purifies the soul and enables a person to be more obedient to Allah SWT and His Messenger. It also prepares human beings for the eternal life of the Hereafter.

The category of knowledge that is beneficial only to a limited extent includes fields such as philosophy. **If such knowledge confuses the mind, leads to doubt, or invites disbelief, then it should not be studied in depth.**

According to Imam al-Ghazali, the blameworthiness of certain types of knowledge is due to several reasons:

First: Knowledge that causes harm either to its possessor or to others, as it may be used as a tool to spread wrongdoing.

Second: Knowledge that harms only its possessor, such as astrology and divination, which are condemned by Islamic law, as they may lead to doubt regarding the absolute power of Allah SWT.

Third: Knowledge that brings no benefit at all; if such knowledge is pursued continuously, it may lead to a form of disbelief in Allah SWT.

Knowledge that is obligatory to be learned is divided into two types:

***Fard 'ain* and *fard kifayah*.**

Fard 'ain knowledge, according to Imam al-Ghazali, refers to knowledge that is obligatory upon every individual Muslim, such as *fiqh*, learning the

Qur'an, and the fundamentals of worship, including prayer, fasting, zakat, and other acts of worship.

Fard kifayah knowledge refers to knowledge that is required to uphold worldly affairs, such as medicine and mathematics. Medicine is necessary for the preservation of life, while mathematics is needed for matters of transactions (*mu'amalat*), the distribution of wills, inheritance, and other related matters.

Imam al-Ghazali states:

“Knowledge concerning the fundamentals of practical skills falls under the category of *fard kifayah*, such as agriculture, military strategy, tailoring, and cupping (medical treatment).”
(*Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Vol. 1, p. 14)

The status of knowledge is divided into two categories:

Shar'i and Non-Shar'i Knowledge

Shar'i knowledge is divided into four categories: **fundamentals (*usul*)**, **branches (*furu'*)**, **introductory sciences (*muqaddimah*)**, and **complementary sciences (*mutammimah*)**.

Fundamental knowledge (*usul*) consists of the Book of Allah (the Qur'an), the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah SAW, *ijma'* (the consensus of scholars), and the *athar* (narrations and practices) of the Companions.

Branch knowledge (*furu'*) refers to knowledge concerning the states of the heart and moral character (*akhlaq*), including both praiseworthy and blameworthy traits.

Introductory knowledge (*muqaddimah*) includes the sciences required to study the fundamental sources, such as *lughah* (linguistics) and *nahw* (grammar). Both are essential for the proper understanding and study of the Qur'an.

Complementary knowledge (*mutammimah*) comprises sciences related to the Qur'an, such as the study of letters, articulation points (*makharij*), *qira'at* (modes of recitation), *tafsir* (exegesis), and legal rulings derived from the Qur'an, whether general or specific. The study of *asbab al-nuzul* (occasions of revelation) and the accounts of the Companions is also necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'an.

Fard Kifayah Knowledge

Imam al-Ghazali gave examples of this category of knowledge as those necessary for producing professionals such as doctors, accountants, and specialists in craftsmanship and various industries, among others.

Imam al-Ghazali stated:

“Worldly affairs cannot be properly organized except through human effort. As for occupations, they are divided into three categories:”

1. **Occupations that are essential**, such as agriculture for food production; weaving for clothing; construction-related fields such as architecture and engineering for building homes; as well as political science and social sciences for the organization of societal life.
2. **Occupations involving skilled crafts**, such as blacksmithing and machinery work, which support the construction industry, agriculture, textiles, and other sectors.
3. **Supporting occupations**, such as the production of rice, flour, and sugar to sustain the agricultural industry, and tailoring, which serves as a supporting element of the textile industry.

4. Criteria for Evaluating Knowledge

The evaluation of knowledge is based on the following considerations:

First: Its benefit to humanity in regulating their lives. This refers to knowledge that enables people to live happily in this world and in the Hereafter through the purification of the heart and soul, the cultivation of noble character, knowledge that discusses *taqarrub* (drawing closer) to Allah SWT, and preparation for eternal life.

Second: Its benefit to humanity in terms of supporting and serving religious knowledge, such as *lughah* (linguistics) and *nahw* (grammar).

Third: Its benefit to humanity in worldly life, such as medicine, mathematics, and various other professional fields.

Fourth: The benefit of knowledge from the perspective of culture and scholarship, as well as its contribution to social life, such as history, politics, and literature.

The following is the systematic **curriculum structure** arranged by Imam al-Ghazali according to levels of priority:

- **First:** The Qur'an and the Sunnah, along with the sciences of *fiqh*, *'aqidah*, and *tafsir*.
- **Second:** Arabic language sciences, *nahw*, as well as the sciences of articulation points (*makharij*) and pronunciation (*lafz*), all of which are studied to support the learning of religious sciences.
- **Third:** The group of sciences classified under *fard kifayah*.

Imam al-Ghazali advised that in selecting fields of study for students, attention should be given to the students' abilities, their interests, and individual differences.

The curriculum should be structured progressively according to students' capacities and should not overwhelm their minds to the extent that it hinders their ability to benefit from the learning provided.

Imam al-Ghazali stated:

“All of mankind will be ruined except those who possess knowledge. Those who possess knowledge will be ruined except those who act upon it. And those who act upon it will be ruined except those who are sincere.”

(*Fatih al-'Ulum*, p. 15)

CHAPTER 3

3.1 TEACHING METHODS ACCORDING TO IMAM AL-GHAZALI

The educational process requires reciprocal communication between two human beings, namely the teacher and the student, with strong emphasis on the emotional and spiritual bond between them. This relationship ensures that students feel safe and at ease in the presence of their teacher, so that they do not fear the teacher nor distance themselves from the knowledge being taught.

Imam al-Ghazali viewed the profession of teaching as the most noble and exalted of all professions. In many of his writings, he emphasized the lofty status of the teacher. He stated:

“The noblest of all creatures on the face of the earth is the human being, and the noblest part of the human being is the heart. The teacher is constantly engaged in perfecting, honoring, and purifying the heart, and guiding it to draw closer to Allah SWT.”

Imam al-Ghazali explained that

acquiring knowledge is similar to acquiring wealth through four stages:

1. **The stage of seeking and striving,**
2. **The stage of attainment,** meaning sufficiency according to one's needs,
3. **The stage of evaluation and reflection,** and how knowledge should be utilized,
4. **The stage of insight (*basirah*),** which is the highest and most noble stage.

The fourth stage is the most exalted, because whoever possesses knowledge, guides others, and benefits people through his knowledge is like the sun: it illuminates itself and also illuminates others. He is like musk oil, fragrant in itself and spreading its fragrance to those around him.

(*Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Vol. 1, p. 49)

3.2 The Specific Characteristics of a Teacher in Relation to His Duties and Roles

A teacher must be wise and possess noble character, as well as demonstrate wisdom in carrying out his responsibilities as an educator.

First: The role of the teacher as an instructor and guide

In this role, a teacher should embody gentleness and compassion. Students will begin to feel confident and secure with their teacher, and this sense of safety will facilitate the acquisition of knowledge.

A teacher should treat students as a parent treats a child. According to Imam al-Ghazali, the rights of a teacher over a student are greater than the rights of parents over their child, because:

“...Parents are merely the cause of a child’s existence in this transient world, whereas the teacher is the cause of eternal life.”
(*Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, Vol. 1, p. 49)

The teacher is the one who shows the path toward drawing closer to Allah SWT. Therefore, a teacher should devote his focus and energy to achieving this aim. The teacher’s intention and heart must be aligned with those of the student, and both should cooperate in striving toward this shared goal.

Second: The role of the teacher as a guardian of educational heritage

Al-Ghazali held that teaching is an obligation upon those who possess knowledge. Therefore, a teacher should not seek excessive wages, praise, expressions of gratitude, or recompense from students. A teacher should emulate the Messenger of Allah SAW by teaching knowledge solely for the sake of attaining the pleasure of Allah SWT. Through this sincerity, the teacher will draw closer to Allah and receive immense reward from Him.

Al-Ghazali also believed that a teacher should not restrain or control students excessively. Once a student has been properly educated, the teacher should be grateful. In his view, a teacher is like one who plants a good crop in another person’s field: the benefit is not only for the owner of the land but also for the one who planted it. This means that the reward for a teacher is immense and beyond material value. He rejected the notion that the purpose of education is to seek wealth or livelihood alone.

Third: The role of the teacher as a guide in the student's religious life

The teacher must himself remain on the straight path in order to guide students effectively. He should continually advise and guide students to purify their intentions in seeking knowledge—namely, to draw closer to Allah SWT—and not for arrogance, status, honor, or worldly position.

Fourth: The role of the teacher as a role model for students

Imam al-Ghazali reminded that teachers should not magnify students' mistakes, even with the intention of making them feel guilty. Teachers must avoid harshness when refining students' behavior. In guidance and discipline, teachers should employ compassion rather than reproach, and use gentle language and approaches when students display poor conduct.

Fifth: The role of the teacher as an example to be emulated

A teacher is someone whom students observe and imitate. Therefore, nobility of soul and the ability to understand others should be among his most prominent qualities.

A teacher should not disparage other teachers or fields of knowledge—for example, when scholars of Arabic criticize *fiqh*, or scholars of *fiqh* criticize *hadith* and *tafsir*.

Among the obligations of a teacher is to motivate students to seek knowledge from other teachers as well, without fanatic attachment to a single teacher. Teachers should be grounded in good character, mutual respect, appreciation, and tolerance toward one another.

Sixth: The role of the teacher in understanding individual differences

One of the most important principles emphasized by Imam al-Ghazali is the recognition of individual differences. Students differ in their developmental stages and intellectual abilities.

“A teacher must align his teaching with the level of the student’s understanding. He should not convey knowledge that may cause the student to turn away or suffer mental disturbance.”
(*Ihya’ ‘Ulum al-Din*, Vol. 1, p. 51)

Al-Ghazali also likened the teacher to a guardian and protector of knowledge. Among his duties is not to be stingy with knowledge, nor excessive in dispensing it—regardless of whether the student is intelligent or weak. Teaching must be adjusted to the student’s intellectual capacity. He advised teachers not to present knowledge indiscriminately to those unable to receive it, as this could foster arrogance among advanced students and discouragement among weaker ones.

Seventh: The role of the teacher in understanding the student’s personality

Al-Ghazali recognized the importance of examining the psychological life of students. He noted that one reason students may feel doubtful toward their teacher is when they perceive the teacher as withholding knowledge and not granting them their full right to learning.

He advised teachers not to confuse students’ minds by presenting conflicting views, particularly in religious matters, as this may create anxiety regarding faith—especially among students with limited intellectual capacity. Such students should be taught the fundamentals of religion and guided toward correct and trustworthy actions, particularly if they are inclined toward vocational or craft-based skills.

Eighth: The teacher as one who upholds fundamental principles

Al-Ghazali strongly emphasized that exemplary teachers must adhere firmly to foundational principles and embody them in their behavior. He stated:

“Indeed, the example of a guide in relation to the one being guided is like an engraving in clay, or a shadow cast by a staff. How can clay be shaped if the engraver is ineffective, and how can a shadow be straight if the staff itself is crooked?”

3.3 Ten Characteristics of Learning That Students Should Possess

These attitudes must be present in students to ensure that the benefits of learning are attained and that the true objectives sought through the pursuit of knowledge are fulfilled. These characteristics—also referred to as the duties of students—encompass several fundamental principles as follows:

First: Learning as an act of worship

Learning is an act of worship because its purpose is to draw closer to Allah SWT. Therefore, the foremost quality a student should possess is the purification of the soul, avoiding immoral behavior and reprehensible traits.

Second: A religious foundation in learning

Imam al-Ghazali's philosophy holds that the core and foundation of learning must be grounded in *tawhid* and religious principles. Students should not be confined solely to worldly concerns.

He states:

“A mind divided among many diverse matters is like a river whose water is dispersed—some absorbed by the soil and some evaporating into the air—so that the farmer gains no benefit from it.”

(Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 44)

Third: A Sufi attitude toward knowledge

Al-Ghazali emphasized the Sufi perspective in seeking knowledge, particularly the quality of humility. In his view, a student's obedience to the teacher is a form of nobility and should be cultivated. Allah SWT grants reward to students who obey their teachers, safeguard their teachers' dignity, do not belittle or malign them, but rather honor, respect, and appreciate them in accordance with their efforts, and forgive their shortcomings.

Al-Ghazali said:

“Toward the teacher, a student should be like barren land receiving abundant rain, absorbing it fully and accepting it with all its potential.”

(Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 45)

Fourth: The need for a sound foundational perspective before engaging in discussion

Imam al-Ghazali advised that students should be prevented from listening to various schools of thought or engaging in debates among scholars before their knowledge is sufficiently grounded.

If a teacher lacks a clear and firm perspective—merely conveying others' opinions without clarifying their correctness or errors—then such a person is unfit to serve as a guide or advisor.

Imam al-Ghazali stated:

“It is not fitting for a blind person to guide another blind person. Thus, the student would remain in a valley of confusion and ignorance.”

(Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 45)

Fifth: Interconnection among various fields of knowledge

Al-Ghazali advised students not to belittle the study of any praiseworthy discipline, whether religious or worldly, according to their capacity to understand its aims and scope.

This, he said, is an essential quality of every student. Students should not be fanatically attached to a single teacher but should learn from and respect teachers in other fields as well.

Sixth: Gradual learning

He advised that students should study knowledge progressively and not attempt to master multiple disciplines simultaneously.

He stated:

“If one's lifespan does not permit the pursuit of all forms of knowledge, then one should select the best among them, exerting full effort to acquire what is most accessible in order to perfect the most noble knowledge, namely the knowledge of the Hereafter.”

(Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 46)

Seventh: The importance of sequence in studying knowledge

Al-Ghazali viewed the sciences as hierarchical and sequential. Therefore, he advised:

“A student should not delve deeply into a discipline before mastering its fundamental principles. Knowledge has been arranged such that some parts serve as pathways to others.”

(Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 46)

Students should not hastily judge a discipline as flawed merely due to differences of opinion among scholars. Rather, they should respect the essence of knowledge itself, regardless of disputes or misunderstandings among those who study it.

Eighth: The relative value of different sciences

Students should recognize that some sciences are more valuable than others. For example, studying mathematics holds greater value than studying astronomy, and medicine—judged by its practical benefit—is more useful than mathematics.

(Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 47)

Al-Ghazali held that the nobility of the outcomes produced by a science is more significant than the nobility of the science itself.

Ninth: The purpose of learning

Religious knowledge should be the primary objective for students, rather than knowledge pursued solely for worldly purposes. Nevertheless, Al-Ghazali advised students not to neglect other praiseworthy sciences.

The objectives of learning are:

- **Immediate objective:** education itself—refining character and cultivating moral conduct.
- **Ultimate objective:** drawing closer to Allah SWT and attaining a noble rank in His sight.

This implies that religious sciences that cultivate moral character should be regarded as the most important and most beneficial forms of knowledge for students.

Tenth: The highest benefit of knowledge

Al-Ghazali emphasized that knowledge should be evaluated based on its benefits. He regarded religious sciences as the most beneficial, as they lead to eternal happiness. He also advised students to prioritize learning the most important knowledge first.

3.4 Fundamental Teaching Methods

Al-Ghazali outlined **eight fundamental teaching methods**:

1. A relationship of love and compassion between teacher and student
2. The teacher as a role model for students
3. The exemplary characteristics of students
4. Broadness of perspective in knowledge
5. Learning in stages, step by step
6. Paying attention to students' intellectual differences
7. Strengthening understanding
8. Strengthening students' character and personality

One example of these fundamental teaching methods is the **relationship of love and compassion between teacher and student**. Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of forming a strong emotional bond between the teacher and the student. This relationship is based on mutual love, care, trust, and respect. When these foundations are established, the duties of both teacher and student become easier to carry out and are performed with sincerity and acceptance of the heart.

Al-Ghazali also explained that the **most important quality a teacher must possess is exemplary conduct**, which includes:

- Being trustworthy and diligent in one's work
- Being gentle and compassionate toward students
- Having understanding and openness when dealing with knowledge and those who teach it
- Not being greedy for material gain
- Possessing broad and deep knowledge
- Being consistent (istiqamah) and firmly holding to principles

There is no denying the necessity of possessing these qualities. Therefore, these traits must be embodied and exemplified by teachers in order to achieve success in fulfilling their responsibilities.

These represent two examples of the fundamental principles of Al-Ghazali's teaching methodology.

3.4. Religious Education and Its Teaching Methods

Imam Al-Ghazali advised that:

- Religious education should begin from early childhood.
- The internalization of religious understanding in a child's soul should start through guidance and imitation.
- Teaching children should be conducted gradually, in accordance with their stage of development.
- Teaching should utilize visual methods so that children can understand, believe in, and affirm what they learn.
- Instruction should begin with memorization, followed by understanding, conviction, and deeper comprehension.
- Education should be conveyed through storytelling and by allowing children to observe good conduct.
- Moral character (akhlaq) and proper manners (adab) should be cultivated and instilled.

Al-Ghazali likened the process of guidance to **planting seeds in education**, while the strengthening of belief through explanation he compared to **watering and nurturing** those seeds.

(Ihya' Ulum al-Din, Vol. 1, p. 83)

3.5. The Method of Moral (Akhlak) Education

In his writings, Imam Al-Ghazali frequently explains that the educational process is an interaction between a person's **fitrah** (natural disposition) and the surrounding environment.

First, Al-Ghazali firmly believed that human character can change. Certain natural inclinations, such as *shahwah* (desire), may sometimes be good and exist within a person from childhood. However, traits such as anger, laziness, and other negative tendencies can be transformed and corrected.

Second, moral character becomes stronger when it is continuously practiced, obeyed, and firmly believed to be good and pleasing to Allah. (*Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, Vol. 3, p. 49)

This means that training one's behavior and character should be carried out with the conviction that such traits are approved and beloved by Allah. This understanding must be strengthened within a person until it becomes part of their habit, deeply rooted in their nature and daily life.

Imam Al-Ghazali divides individuals into four categories:

1. **The ignorant and closed-minded person**

This is a person who is unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood, or between what is good and what is evil. According to Imam Al-Ghazali, such ignorant and unaware individuals are actually easier to guide in moral education.

2. **The ignorant and misguided person**

This person recognizes what is wrong and blameworthy, yet is not accustomed to practicing righteous deeds. Educating the morals of such a person is more difficult than educating the first type.

3. **The ignorant, misguided, and immoral (fasiq) person**

This individual believes that bad character is something good and even virtuous. People of this type are rarely able to be corrected or morally reformed.

4. **The ignorant, misguided, immoral, and evil person**

These are people who assume that excellence lies in committing greater evil and corrupting the soul. Such individuals, according to Al-Ghazali, cannot be reformed at all.

Al-Ghazali's demand upon educators is essentially to guide and nurture the natural disposition (*fitrah*) of a child in a balanced and proper way—neither excessively nor neglectfully. He explains that children are born with a pure, healthy, and well-balanced *fitrah*.

It is the parents who instill religion within them.

However, a child may be influenced by negative traits from their surroundings, lifestyle, and habitual practices.

Such shortcomings can be overcome through training and education that is supported and strengthened by religion.

Al-Ghazali states:

“If a teacher knows that a child is quick-tempered, then he should instruct him to constantly practice patience and silence. He should also place him in the service of someone with a harsh character, so that the child may train himself to become patient.”
(*Ihya' Ulumuddin, Vol. III, p. 53*)

According to Al-Ghazali, one method to prevent children from wasting their time in meaningless behavior is to occupy their free time with beneficial activities. Among the ways to fill leisure time is by habituating children to read—especially the Qur'an, Hadith, historical reports, stories, and accounts of righteous people—so that love for the pious may grow within their souls. In this way, they will be protected from becoming absorbed in romantic poetry and the influence of those who promote such distractions.

(*Ihya' Ulumuddin, Vol. III, p. 63*)

CHAPTER 4 REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

Al-Ghazali is of the view that when a child performs good deeds and displays praiseworthy character, the child should be honoured and praised.

He advises educators not to hastily impose punishment or criticism. A child may eventually take reprimands lightly if they are given too frequently. One should also avoid scolding a child in front of others, as this may cause shame, humiliation, and rebellion.

The method of giving rewards and punishments for educational purposes is considered a safe approach, but only within certain limits.

Too many prohibitions and harsh insults may lead to undesirable outcomes. Likewise, excessive praise and encouragement are not necessarily the cause of true improvement.

Children should not be frightened through their father or teacher, because the father is a respected figure in the household who deserves honour, not a symbol of fear.

Al-Ghazali also states:

“A child should be accustomed to humility towards everyone he associates with, to respect them, and to speak gently with them.

He should be trained not to spit in gatherings, not to blow his nose or yawn in front of others, not to turn his back on people, and not to sit cross-legged arrogantly. He should not rest his chin on his hand or lean his head upon it, for such behaviour gives the impression of laziness.

He should learn proper manners of sitting and should not speak excessively. Instead, he should listen to others, even if he is older than the speaker. When someone older than him arrives, he should stand out of respect and offer them a seat.

Furthermore, he should avoid useless and obscene speech, as well as insulting or mocking others.”

(Ihya' Ulumuddin, Vol. III, p. 62)

From the explanation above, it becomes clear that Al-Ghazali did not neglect to detail good manners, noble character, and proper conduct. He did not only advise that children be educated in personal morality, temperament, and discipline as individuals, but he also emphasized the importance of social education and behaviour within society.

Al-Ghazali emphasizes the importance of teachers understanding the nature of their students with empathy.

This is an essential requirement for every educator. Possessing empathy encourages a teacher to seek the most appropriate methods in dealing with children. A teacher cannot fulfil his or her responsibilities effectively unless he has adequately understood the psychology that reveals students' behaviour, their innate dispositions, natural tendencies, the development of their potential, and the proper ways to nurture their thinking.

Al-Ghazali also discussed the value of play for children. He stated that play has three essential functions that are important for a child's development:

First, play helps in physical training and strengthens the child's muscles, thus supporting healthy physical growth.

Second, play brings joy and pleasure to children, which they naturally need.

Third, play provides a sense of security for children and relieves the fatigue of learning, thereby enabling them to continue the learning process more effectively.

Children should feel happy and enjoy learning through play, rather than experiencing education in a strictly *teacher-centred* or adult-oriented manner. Furthermore, various pedagogical experiences and studies show that one of the reasons some students withdraw from learning is their failure to achieve satisfaction and happiness—something that can often be gained through play.

CONCLUSION

One of Al-Ghazali's truly remarkable views is that he did not only establish the foundations of moral education at the individual level, but also emphasized the importance of the environment and human social interaction. In other words, Al-Ghazali also laid down essential social principles as part of education.

In summary, Al-Ghazali was a prominent scholar who devoted great attention to building relationships among people based on compassion, mutual respect, and proper guidance within human interaction. This foundation is also affirmed and explained by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

As the Prophet ﷺ said: "There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab except through goodness and piety (taqwa)."

