

## Relevance of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's Thoughts to the Reformation of Learning in Nigeria

**Saheed Badmus Suraju**

Al-Hikmah University Ilorin

*e-mail: ibnsirooj1431@gmail.com*

**Yunus Ibikunle Adebayo**

Al-Hikmah University Ilorin

*e-mail: adedayokunle16@gmail.com*

**DOI: 10.22373/tadabbur.v6i2.385**

### Abstract

The Islamic perspective of education is the harmonization between sense, mind and religious faith to build a complete and an ideal personality in an Islamic environment. However, the contemporary learners in Nigeria are not only reducing in moral but also religious teachings which are the core values in personality development. Series of questions could be raised as per the reason behind the reduction of Nigeria system of learning in achieving its core objective in the learners especially among the Muslims. By this, the teacher, the learners and the system are needed to be scrutinized for possible response in rebuilding the Nigerian learning system. It is therefore the aim of this paper to investigate the philosophical thoughts of Abu Hāmid Al-Ghazālī and their relevance to reformation of learning in Nigerian. In achieving this, the paper adopts historical and analytical methods of research. The historical method has assisted in accounting for the biography of Al-Ghazālī while analytical method has been used to explain the philosophical thoughts of Al-Ghazālī in relation to how they can be used to reform learning system in Nigerian society. This will assist in reclaiming the early Muslim identity in learning. The paper reveals that the Nigerian learning system is suffering a taste of spirituality by focusing more on materialism. The paper concludes that spirituality is needed in ensuring better change in the life of the learners. The paper, therefore, recommends the incorporation of Imam Al-Ghazālī's thoughts into the learning curriculum of the Muslim Youths across all levels of education.

**Keywords:** *Al-Ghazālī; Reformation; Learning; Nigeria*

## A. Introduction

Acquisition of knowledge is emphasized in Islam as an important activity besides its dissemination. It is compulsory upon its adherents, regardless of gender, to learn and disseminate knowledge.<sup>1</sup> The Qur'an as the first rule to be followed encourages Muslims to learn as Allah says to the Prophet (ﷺ) in (Q96:1) "Read". Thus, it can be said that Allah Himself taught man that which he knew not and He did this by the use of Pen. In this sense, Islam from its very beginning expressly prioritizes the imparting and acquisition of knowledge, learning and education while the Supreme Teacher is the Creator undisputedly and the role model is His Messenger as he listened to the revelation and its explanation.<sup>2</sup> Also, there are verses of the Qur'an such as (Q2:282) and (Q3:79) which establish education as a legal matter and explicitly refer to the people who are able to write, the significance of written documents and practice of writing and dictation.

In line with the above verses, the Prophet (ﷺ) made it known that Islam gave high esteem to knowledge as he says: "*To acquire knowledge is an obligation on every Muslims.*"<sup>3</sup> Thus, both Qur'an and *Hadith* owe much of its vital educational potential to model characters and this could be traced down to the successors (*Sahabah*) and those that followed them. It is important to note that the great Muslim men of the past have contributed enormously in the fields of knowledge, such as; Mathematics, Physics, Architect, Astronomy, Medicine, Economics and Education combined with religion and ethics which are beneficial to the humanities till today.<sup>4</sup> One of the early modern thinker Michel de Montaigne (d.1592) used Aristotelian insight to argue that "*education should aim not at filling students with information but rather at cultivating persons holistically from an intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical point of view*".<sup>5</sup>

Education in Nigeria has passed through two significant stages; the colonial and post-independence eras. Based on the national policy, the philosophy of Nigerian education has to be geared towards, self-realization, better human relationship,

---

<sup>1</sup> Tijani Ahmad Ashimi, Islam and the Acquisition of Knowledge, *Journal of Islam in Asia*, 3, 12, (312), 312.

<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia, Islamic Education, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/islamic-education>

<sup>3</sup> M. Y. Ibn Majah, *Sunnan Ibn Majah*, (Cairo: Sharkatul Al-Quds), 1519.

<sup>4</sup> S.L Salim Al-Hassani, ed., *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in our World* (Turkey: Mega BAsim, Istanbul, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Tal Gilead, *A History of Western Philosophy of Education in the Age of Enlightenment*, 3, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351711359>

## Relevance of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's Thoughts to the Reformation of Learning in Nigeria

individual and national efficiency, effective citizenship, national consciousness, and national unity as well as towards, social, cultural, economic, political scientific and technological progress.<sup>6</sup> Also, the policy reiterated the government's stance in providing secular education but with opportunities for religious instruction according to the faith of pupils' parents. However, the issue of giving basic education to children who are itinerant pupils attending local Qur'anic schools was not directly addressed by the government.<sup>7</sup> This means that the outcome of Nigeria education philosophy are; pursuit of wealth, social standing or power, and even the love of knowledge, are illusory, since they relate to the transient world.

Abū Ḥāmid Al-Ghazālī (d 1111 C.E) was one of the thinkers on education in Islamic history. His biography —as a student in search of knowledge, as a teacher propagating knowledge and as a scholar exploring knowledge— provides a good illustration of the way of life of students, teachers and scholars in the Islamic world especially in the Middle Ages. He was a philosopher of religion and ethics and when he completed the outlines of his great philosophical edifice, and begun to put it into practice, Al-Ghazālī found himself turning to education and teaching, in the same way as the great philosophers before him had done. His philosophy was more of an expression of the spirit of the age in which he lived than a response to its challenges; his thinking on education, as well as his philosophy.<sup>8</sup> His philosophy of education represents the high point of Islamic thinking on education, in which his inclination towards reconciliation and the integration of various intellectual schools is apparent as he stresses the importance of childhood in character formation. It is against this backdrop that Al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy will be examined to repositioning the Nigeria education.

### B. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using historical and analytical methods. The historical method is used to trace the biography of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazālī and the development of his thoughts on education. Primary and secondary sources are analyzed to understand the historical and philosophical context of his ideas.

---

<sup>6</sup> Tijani Yakubu, "Philosophy of Nigeria Education its Implementation and Results in Nigeria", *Journal of Development Economics*, Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, (2020) 3 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339933717>

<sup>7</sup> Tijani, "Philosophy of Nigeria Education its Implementation and Results in Nigeria", ...

<sup>8</sup> Nabil Nofal, "Al-Ghazali's Theory of Education"; <https://muslimheritage.com/al-ghazalis-theory-of-education/>

Meanwhile, the analytical method is applied to explore the relevance of Al-Ghazālī's thoughts to the reformation of the education system in Nigeria. The analysis examines key concepts in Al-Ghazālī's educational philosophy, such as the purpose of education, the role of teachers, and the relationship between religious and worldly knowledge, and then connects them to the current educational challenges in Nigeria. The data for this study are derived from various sources, including Al-Ghazālī's works, studies on his thoughts, and literature on Nigeria's education system. Through this approach, the research aims to provide insights into how Al-Ghazālī's educational values can be implemented in the modern Nigerian educational context.

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. Brief Biography of Al-Imām Al-Ghazālī

His name is Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Ahmad.<sup>9</sup> His agnomen (*kunyah*) is Abū Ḥāmid which was given to him because he had a son who died in infancy.<sup>10</sup> The name Al-Ghazālī was given to him, according to historians, in affiliation to Ghazalah which was the name of the area of his birth. He was born in 1058 CE (450 A.H.) in or near the city of Tus in Khurasan now called Persia or Iran during Saljuk dynasty in 11<sup>th</sup> century. He was born to a family whose members had a reputation for learning and an inclination towards Sufism.<sup>10</sup> His father died when he was young, having entrusted one of his Sufi friends with the education of his two son under whom Al-Ghazālī started his education at the age of 7. The friend undertook the task until the money bequeathed by the father ran out, whereupon he advised the two brothers to enter a *madrāsah* in Jurjan.<sup>11</sup>

Towards the age of fifteen, al- Ghazālī moved to Jurjan, which was a flourishing centre of learning at that time, some 160 kilometers distant from Tus, to study *fiqh* under Imam al-Isma‘ili. Such ‘travel in search of learning’ to study under famous masters was traditional in Islamic education. The following year, he returned to Tus, where he remained for three years, memorizing and endeavoring to understand what he had taken down from the masters, and continuing the study of *fiqh*. He then

---

<sup>9</sup> Ismail H. Abdullah, “The Influence of Imam Juwayni on the Theology of Imam Al-Ghazali”, (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Religious, University of St. Andrews, 1996) 41.

<sup>10</sup> Abidah Sulaiman, Ezad A. Jamsari and Noorsafuan C. Noh, “Islamic Environment in Child Development According to the views of Imam al-Ghazali”, *Mediterranean Journal of Sciences*, 5, 29, (2014) 36.

<sup>11</sup> Nabil Nofal, “Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)”, *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, 32, (2000) 1.

## Relevance of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's Thoughts to the Reformation of Learning in Nigeria

moved to Nishapur, where he studied *fiqh*, *kalam* (scholastic theology), logic and, possibly, some philosophy under Imam al-Juwayni, the most illustrious Shafi'ite (one of the four Sunnite Schools of Law) *faqīh* (jurist) of the day and at that time, al-Ghazālī was twenty-three years of age. He continued to study for five years under Imam al-Juwayni and also assisted him with his teachings. He also began to write and to study Sufism under another *Shaykh*, al-Farmadhi.<sup>12</sup>

Al-Ghazālī's period of apprenticeship ended with the death of Imam al-Juwayni when he was about 28 years old and then he involved in politics and mingled with the ruling circles.<sup>13</sup> He travelled to meet Nizam ul-Mulk, the Seljuq minister, and remained with him in his 'camp' for six years, during which time he lived the life of a 'court jurist'. He took part in political and learned disputes and wrote books until he was appointed as a professor to the *Nizamiya madrasa* at Baghdad, the most celebrated and important centre of science and teaching in the *Mashriq* (Islamic East) at that time. He worked there for four years, and composed a number of works on *fiqh*, which he also taught, together with logic and *kalam*; the most important of those works were the *Al-Mustazhiri* (The Exotericist) and *Al-Iqtisad fi-l-I'tiqad* (The Golden Mean in Belief).<sup>14</sup>

During this time, he was also busy refuting heresies and responding to questions from all segments of the community. In the political confusion following the assassination of Nizam al-Mulk and the subsequent violent death of Sultan Malikshah, al-Ghazālī himself fell into a serious spiritual crisis and finally left Baghdad, renouncing his career and the world.<sup>15</sup> After ten years of absence, al-Ghazālī went back to teaching at the *Nizamiya madrasa* at Nishapur in 1104 CE (498 AH), at the request of the Seljuq minister Fakhr ul-Mulk.<sup>16</sup> However, he continued to live as a Sufi and write until 1109 CE (503 AH), when he left Nishapur to return to his birthplace, Tus, to devote himself to the life of an ascetic Sufi and teaching. Near his house, he built a *khanqāh* (Sufi hermitage) and it was in this period that he wrote *Minhaj al-'Abidin* (The Path of the Worshippers), which appears to be a description of his way of life and that of his pupils focusing on the renunciation of this world, seclusion and

---

<sup>12</sup> Nofal, "Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)", *Prospects ...*

<sup>13</sup> Nofal, "Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)", *Prospects ...*

<sup>14</sup> Nofal, "Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)", *Prospects ...*

<sup>15</sup> Abdullah, *The Influence of Imam Juwayni on the Theology of Imam Ghazali*,

<sup>16</sup> Nofal, "Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)", *Prospects ...*

cultivation of the innermost self. And so he continued until his death in 1111 CE (505 AH).<sup>17</sup>

## 2. Al-Ghazālī's Thoughts on Education

According to Alavi, Al-Ghazālī's perspective on education is an interaction between a teacher and a student, which proceeds gradually, developmentally and continuously throughout the student's life. The purpose of which is to cultivate harmoniously and conclusively all that Allah has created in the student for his or her happiness and spiritual benefit.<sup>18</sup> Thus, Al-Ghazālī sees education as a skill or technique, instead of a science in itself. He rejected the imitation way to acquire knowledge without criticism; He tries to purify the epistemological heritage acquired by imitation of the parents and teachers of errors and ignorance. He does not attempt to nullify or negate it, but to examine and try it by using instruments of correct thinking, where correct knowledge is accepted.<sup>19</sup> Sobhi Royan does quote Al-Ghazali to have define the role of doubt by saying: Doubts are the things that lead to right; he who does not doubt had not looked, and he who does not look did not see, and he who does not see remains all his life in blindness and ignorance.<sup>20</sup>

Al-Ghazālī warns against the negative outcomes that occur from not using this approach, and these outcomes include being in blindness and ignorance, because he is not happy with describing the function of doubt as a method that leads to truth.<sup>21</sup> He argues that there is no religious merit in blindly following tradition. He opposed to what he says is *taqlīd* in an ordinary thought. There is only a point in following tradition if one understands why one is doing it. In just way as no merit in following tradition unthinking, Al- Ghazālī argues that there is nothing to be said for accepting the rules of language without question.<sup>22</sup> So, there is no subjected issue in life or religion that is out of rethinking, it is a cross borders approach that aspires to extend thinking and language limits, because language cannot surround the meaning.

<sup>17</sup> Nofal, "Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)", *Prospects ...*

<sup>18</sup> H. R. Alavi, "Al-Ghazali on Moral Education", *Journal of Moral Education*, 36 (3), (2007) 309-319.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Mizan al-'Amal*, Introduction by Ali Abu Milhem, Dar wa Maktabat al-Hilal, Beirut, (1995) 222.

<sup>20</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Mizan al-'Amal*, ...

<sup>21</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya'a 'Ulum al-Din*, 3, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1983).

<sup>22</sup> Oliver Leaman. *Islamic Philosophy*. Polity Press. Cambridge, U.K. 2009.

### 3. Al- Ghazālī and the Purpose of Education

The Qur'an present life issues as values and make the Muslims to be responsible for the implementation of these values. It means that implementation is not uniform and constant for every place and time. It is now depends on the ability of Muslims for progress and creativity to accomplish the values. For Al-Ghazālī, the purpose of society is to apply *Shari'a*, and the goal of man is to achieve happiness close to God. Therefore, the aim of education is to cultivate man so that he abides by the teachings of religion, and is hence assured of salvation and happiness in the eternal life.<sup>23</sup>

According to Nabil, Al-Ghazālī stresses that, Man is born as a *tabula rasa*, and children acquire personality, characteristics and behavior through living in society and interacting with the environment. The family teaches the children its language, customs and religious traditions, whose influence they cannot escape. Therefore, the main responsibility for children's education falls on the parents, who take credit for their probity and bear the burden of their errors; they are partners in everything the children do, and this responsibility is subsequently shared by the teachers.<sup>24</sup> According to Imam Al-Ghazālī, the aim of teaching and learning of the divine knowledge and sciences should be the study to bring humans closer to their creator by realizing their purpose of living which is to serve Him, be of benefit to others and themselves, otherwise the essence of living will is useless.<sup>25</sup>

The Qur'an talks about the importance of thinking which is an important tool in education, that it has used different terms such as: consider (*Ya<sup>c</sup>qilūn*), understand (*yafqahūn*), meditate (*yataffakarūn*), see (*yanzurūn*), foresight (*yubsirūn*), meditate (*ya<sup>c</sup>tabirūn*), ponder (*yata<sup>d</sup>abbarūn*), etc. In other instances it uses phrases such as: *ulu`l - albāb*, *ulu`l- absār*, or *ulu`n- nahā* in order to draw the attention to the functions of the mind,<sup>26</sup> which is also useful in education.

Thus, both the above and the following are the purpose of education according to Imam Al- Ghazālī in some of his works in order to reform the educational sector in Nigeria;

---

<sup>23</sup> A. H. Al-Ghazali, *The Beginning of Guidance: Bidayatul Hidayah*, (M. A Quasem, Trans.), National University of Malaysia, (1979), 98.

<sup>24</sup> Nofal, "Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)", *Prospects....*

<sup>25</sup> A. H. Al-Ghazali, *Letter to a Disciple: Ayyuhal-Walad*, T. Mayor, (Trans.) (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Societies, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> Sobhi Rayan, "Islamic Philosophy of Education", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2, 19 (2012) 151.

- a. *Brightening the Heart.* According to Al- Ghazālī, the heart is a spiritual organ connected to the physical heart. It is the core of the human mind, which is capable of learning, understanding, and knowledge and education should purify the heart, which would then allow the "light of knowledge" to shine within man.<sup>27</sup>
- b. *Moral Development.* Al- Ghazālī ascertains that youngsters' moral development is one of the fundamental objectives of education. He gives an example of a garden to explain the processes of moral education; before planting flowers, the ground must be cleared of weeds. By this, he explains that the teachers must purify the students' soul by removing from it filthy thoughts and immoral deeds before teaching moral goodness and then all acts should be carried out for the sake of God.<sup>28</sup> Al- Ghazālī views the role of various people as important in influencing the moral development of a child, especially the parents, peers and teachers.<sup>29</sup>
- c. *Character Formation.* Al-Ghazālī realizes the significance of childhood age in character building. He elaborates that a good childhood will bring about a good character in youngsters and help them to carry on with an honorable life and a bad childhood will ruin their character.<sup>30</sup> Once character is lost it will be difficult to redevelop it. Education is not limited to training the minds only and pouring information into it, but it involves all aspects; religious, moral, intellectual and physical personality of the learner.
- d. *Earning a Livelihood.* In order to achieve the primary goal, human being has to fulfill all the obligations, which include feeding himself and his family, which is also a requirement of *Sharī'ah*.<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, man should learn certain art or get certain amount of knowledge which would help to earn a livelihood.
- e. *Societal Development.* Al-Ghazālī has also emphasized that apart from individual's responsibilities of self, Allah has entrusted him responsibilities pertaining to the society's development as well. He refers such responsibility as

---

<sup>27</sup> Al-Ghazali, *The book of knowledge*, N. A. Faris, (Trans.) (New Delhi: Islamic Book Services, 1962).

<sup>28</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Letter to a disciple: Ayyuhal-Walad*

<sup>29</sup> Al-Ghazali, *The book of knowledge*

<sup>30</sup> Sheikh and Ali, "Al-Ghazali's Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education", *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 6 (1), (2019). 115

<sup>31</sup> Sheikh and Ali, Al-Ghazali's Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education, ...



## Relevance of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's Thoughts to the Reformation of Learning in Nigeria

*Fardu Kifāyah*, for example, a society needs doctors to keep people healthy, who will be in a better position to fulfill their responsibilities towards Allah.

### 4. Islamic versus Western Learning System

It should be noted that in Arab and Islamic learning system, curricula were not rigidly defined, but were flexible and allowed students the freedom of choosing the subjects they wished to study and the masters they wished to study under. According to Nofal in his *Life of Al-Ghazali*, Al-Ghazālī distinguishes clearly between two types of curriculum: (a) Obligatory sciences which must be studied by everyone, including the religious sciences and related disciplines such as linguistics and literature. (b) Optional sciences, which are studied according to the wishes and capacities of the student.<sup>32</sup> He thus, encourages students to attain the ‘pearl’ or the ‘treasure’, which is knowledge of the hereafter, however, he does not discourage other branches of sciences, but then again, he deems them to be lower. He believes that the education of children should be of guidance, being on the right path, mannerism, being nurtured or being civilized and cultured, rather than correcting them.<sup>33</sup> and this pedagogical idea of education was repeated in many Islamic medieval writings.

According to Adebayo and Surajudeen, one of the shortcomings in the Western system of education which pushed Muslim scholars to preach against western education, is actually its failure to recognize Allah as the Source of all knowledge and its bifurcation of knowledge into *dini* (religious) and *duniyawi* (worldly).<sup>34</sup> To make it consumable to Muslims however, Mawdudi, called for its Islamization by observing this:

Reflection on the nature of modern education and customs immediately reveals their contradiction with the nature of Islamic education and customs. You teach young minds philosophy, which seeks to explain the universe without Allah. You teach them science, which is devoid of reason and slave of the senses. You teach them economics, law and sociology, which, in spirit and in substance differ from the teachings of Islam. And you still expect them to have an Islamic point of view? ... The entire blame for this sorry state of affairs rests on

---

<sup>32</sup> Nofal, “Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)”, *Prospects*, ...

<sup>33</sup> *Al-Ghazali, Ihya' 'Ulum ad-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), 4, (Cairo, Al-Matba‘a al-Azhariya, 1316 H-1898 CE).

<sup>34</sup> R. I Adebayo and A. T Surajudeen, “An Appraisal of Sheikh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori's Educational Philosophy: A Way of Reclaiming the Islamic Identity in Nigeria”, *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 2 (3), (2012) 192.

the separation of dini (spiritual) from duniyawi (worldly) education. As I have just pleaded, this separation is totally un-Islamic. In the new system of education, a new course on diniyat is not needed. Instead, all courses should be changed into courses of diniyat.<sup>35</sup>

## **5. Relevance of Al-Ghazālī's Thoughts to Reformation of Learning in Nigeria**

### **a. Bullying and Beating**

Bullying is a serious issue that needs to be addressed in the contemporary institutions. It can take the form of verbal, physical and emotional suffering. There is need for individual who has anything to do with children, particularly parents and teachers to be aware of the signs and symptoms of those suffering from bullying. Thus, Muslims should be more aware and keen to inculcate in their children a sense of consideration, care and general respect and kindness to others. Also, it is no longer news in Nigeria where by a teacher will flog student mercilessly and cause harm to his or her body. A female teacher was arraigned at Ogba Magistrate Court, Ikeja, Lagos, for beating a nine-year old pupil who was allegedly making noise.<sup>36</sup> However, the teacher was pleaded not guilty to the charge and the defendant was granted a bail in the sum of Fifty thousand Naira with one surety. In line with Al-Ghazālī's submission, this kind of hitting is not only unwarranted but also prohibited.

### **b. Teaching Method**

According to Al-Ghazālī, every teacher should pay attention to individual differences in the selection of learning materials and the knowledge to be taught. He said people who are weak of will or who are still weak in their minds should not be taught the knowledge that results in doubts and chaos of his mind.<sup>37</sup> He also stresses that teachers should first teach simpler concepts and when the students are motivated towards lesson, then he can introduce complex concepts. This is a very important principle that needs to be inculcated in the contemporary educational system. Some teachers try to teach everything in the very start which can be dangerous to the student understanding, while some leave the learners to themselves to teach and guide. It is expected that teacher begins the lesson before the learners.

---

<sup>35</sup> Adebayo and Surajudeen, "An Appraisal of Sheikh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori's Educational Philosophy: A Way of Reclaiming the Islamic Identity in Nigeria" ... 192.

<sup>36</sup> Nigerian Tribune, beaten incident in lagos <https://www.tribuneonline.net/teacher-in-court-for-beating-a-nine-year-old-pupil>

<sup>37</sup> Aset Sugiana, "Islamic Education Perspective Imam Al-Ghazali and its Relevance with Education in Indonesia", *Jurnal Tarbiyah*, 26 1, (2019), 91.

## Relevance of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's Thoughts to the Reformation of Learning in Nigeria

### c. Curriculum

Imam Al-Ghazālī argued that religious education must be taught to children as early as possible. That is because, in those years, a child has the preparation to accept religious beliefs merely by believing in them and not be required to seek their arguments. When children are presented with any idea, they take it to be the truth. Thus, teaching the curriculum of Al-Ghazālī will be beneficial to the learners. Al-Ghazālī, under his discussion on curriculum, divides sciences into two; *fardu ʿayn* and *fardu kifāyah*.<sup>38</sup> The former is the true science of religion starting from the book of Allah, the primary worship, to the science of *Sharīʿah* by which the learner will understand what to be done and what to be abandoned. While the latter is the sciences that cannot be ignored to support life, such as medical science, arithmetic, and others. According to Al-Ghazālī, if no one learns the *fardu kifāyah* science, everybody will be burdened with sin. However, if someone has mastered it and practiced it, other people will be released from the responsibility. And lastly the sciences which are commendable to a certain degree but are not recommended to be studied in depth such as philosophy and logic epistemology. This is because these kinds of sciences can lead to chaos and confusion between beliefs and doubts. This will eventually lead to disbelief.

### d. Students Attitude

It is important for student to avoid involvement in learning disputes and controversies. This is particularly important for a beginner since controversies can confuse his mind and discourage him from carrying on his study. According to Al-Ghazālī, he suggests that the student should first restrict his study to the opinions of his own teacher. Only after he has mastered them may he turn to those of other scholars. The acceptance of the teacher's opinions, however, is under the condition that he is capable of reaching personal independent opinions.<sup>39</sup>

Also, student should greet his teacher first before the teacher greets him, and should not talk much in his presence. When in class, he should make sure that his

---

<sup>38</sup> Sugiana, "Islamic Education Perspective Imam Al-Ghazali and its Relevance with Education in Indonesia", ...

<sup>39</sup> Hasan Asari, *The Educational Thought of Al-Ghazali: Theory and Practice*, (Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University Montreal, 1993).

attention is directed to what his teacher says. He should be seated politely, not turning right or left, and not having conversation with his colleagues. Thus, he must sit during a class the way he sits during the prayer.<sup>40</sup>

e. Teacher as a Role Model

Looking closely to Al-Ghazālī's thoughts on education is to eliminate bad morals and instill good morals. These require that teachers should be professional and always guard themselves against things that are forbidden by God, because the teacher becomes an example for his students.<sup>41</sup>

f. Female Education

The above submission of Al-Ghazālī which narrow down the female education husband and father need to be re-examined this is because it is against the practice of the early Muslims who went out to learn from the Prophet (ﷺ) who was neither their husband nor father. In the contemporary society, the women folks need more than religion knowledge to curb their society because of advanced knowledge, hence, limiting the education of women will not only limit their contribution to society but also making them to be irrelevant. There were early Muslim women who were good in religious education and other science such as Aishah bint Abubakr who is regarded as an expert in interpretation of Hadith and some other fields of sciences.<sup>42</sup> Nusaybah bint Ka'b who was a nurse treating the warriors in the battle field among others.<sup>43</sup> Example, in the contemporary society we have women professors in different fields Professor Rafat Saheed, Associate Professor Juwayriyah Badamasi and Professor Nimah Opeyemi (Law), which is an indication that female should be given privilege to learn which is the same to the claim of the contemporary in allowing the female to study more.

## D. Conclusion

This paper has discussed that the eventful life of Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad Al-Ghazālī can be divided into three major periods. The first is the period of learning, when he was in his home town of Tus in Persia, then in Gurgan and finally

---

<sup>40</sup> Asari, *The Educational Thought of Al-Ghazali: Theory and Practice*,

<sup>41</sup> Asari, *The Educational Thought of Al-Ghazali: Theory and Practice*,

<sup>42</sup> Islam Online, "A'ishah bint Abubakr Fields of Knowledge", Accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2023 <https://www.google.com/amp/s/islamonline.net/en/i-want-to-know-about-aishah-bint-abu-bakr/%3famp>

<sup>43</sup> Nuseibeh Family, "Nusybah bint Ka'b", Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2023, <https://www.nuseibehfamily.net/the-first-woman-warrior-in-islam/articles/12-articles/66>

## Relevance of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's Thoughts to the Reformation of Learning in Nigeria

in Nishapur. The second period of al-Ghazālī's life was his brilliant career as the highest-ranking orthodox 'doctor' of the Islamic community in Baghdad (484-488 A.H/1091-1095 A.D). The third period of his life is that of retirement (488-505 AH/1095-1111AD), which also included a short period of teaching at the Nizamiyyah College in Nishapur until his death.<sup>44</sup> It has also been discussed that Al-Ghazālī divided each branch of knowledge into three levels: elementary, intermediate and advanced (primary, secondary and higher), and education is not merely a process whereby the teacher impacts knowledge rather, it is an 'interaction' affecting and benefiting teacher and pupil equally, the former gaining merit for giving instruction and the latter cultivating himself through the acquisition of knowledge. Also, it was discussed that Al-Ghazālī distinguished between the two types of curriculum; obligatory sciences and optional sciences, which are in turn divided into; revealed sciences and non-revealed sciences.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Nofal, Theory of Education, ...

<sup>45</sup> Nofal, Theory of Education, ...

## REFERENCES

- Abidah Sulaiman, Ezad A. Jamsari and Noorsafuan C. Noh, "Islamic Environment in Child Development According to the views of Imam al-Ghazali", *Mediterranean Journal of Sciences*, 5, 29, (2014) 36
- Adebayo R. I and Surajudeen A. T, "An Appraisal of Sheikh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilori's Educational Philosophy: A Way of Reclaiming the Islamic Identity in Nigeria", *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, 2 (3), (2012) 192
- Alavi H. R., "Al-Ghazali on Moral Education", *Journal of Moral Education*, 36 (3), (2007) 309-319.
- Al-Ghazali A. H., *Letter to a disciple: Ayyuhal-Walad* (T. Mayor, Trans.) Cambridge: The Islamic Text Societies, (2005)
- Al-Ghazali M., "The Proper Conduct of Marriage in Islam (*Adab an-Nikkah*)", Book 12, *Ihya' u Ulumi-d-din*. M. Holland (Trans.), Al-Baz: Hollywood CA.
- Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum ad-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences), 4, Al-Matba'a al-Azhariya, Cairo, 1316 H-1898 CE.
- Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' a 'Ulum al-Din*, 3, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1983.
- Al-Ghazali, *Mizan al-'Amal*, Introduction by Ali Abu Milhem, Dar wa Maktabat al-Hilal, Beirut, (1995) 222
- Al-Ghazali, *The book of knowledge*, (N. A. Faris, Trans.) New Delhi: Islamic Book Services. 1962.
- Aset Sugiana, "Islamic Education Perspective Imam Al-Ghazali and its Relevance with Education in Indonesia", *Jurnal Tarbiyah*, 26 1, 2019 Council of Europe, "Corporal Punishment", Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2023: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/corporal-punishment>.
- Encyclopedia, Islamic Education, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/islamic-education> Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023 Get Qur'anic, "What Does the Qur'an Say about Daughters?", Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2023; <https://www.getquranic.com/what-does-the-quran-say-about-daughters/>.
- Hasan Asari, *The Educational Thought of Al-Ghazali: Theory and Practice*, (Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University Montreal, 1993.
- Ibn Majah, *Sunnan Ibn Majah*, 1, 1, 224 (Darussalam) <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:224>
- Islam Online, "A'ishah bint Abubakr Fields of Knowledge", Accessed on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2023 <https://www.google.com/amp/s/islamonline.net/en/i-want-to-know-about-aiyah-bint-abu-bakr/%3famp>
- Islamweb.net, "Corporal Punishment in Islam", Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2023; <https://www.islamweb.net/en/fatwa/92049/hitting-a-pupil-to-discipline-himher>
- Ismail H. Abdullah, *The Influence of Imam Juwayni on the Theology of Imam Ghazali*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Religious, University of St. Andrews, 1996.

## Relevance of Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's Thoughts to the Reformation of Learning in Nigeria

- Latefah Alkanderi, Al-Ghazali on the Education of women: An Investigation in terms of Conflict Theory, Functional Theory and Institution Theory, Accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2023; [https://latefah.net/artic3/AL\\_GHZALI\\_ON\\_THE\\_EDUCATION\\_OF\\_WOMEN.pdf](https://latefah.net/artic3/AL_GHZALI_ON_THE_EDUCATION_OF_WOMEN.pdf)
- Muslim Heritage, "Al-Ghazali's view on Elementary of Education" Accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2023; <https://muslimheritage.com/al-ghazalis-elementary-of-education>
- Nabil Nofal, "Al-Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111; A.H. 450-505)", *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, 32, 2000.
- Nabil Nofal, Al-Ghazali's Theory of Education, <https://muslimheritage.com/al-ghazalis-theory-of-education/> Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023
- Nigerian Tribune, <https://www.tribuneonline.net/teacher-in-court-for-beating-a-nine-year-old-pupil>
- Nuseibeh Family, "Nusybah bint Ka'b", Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> July, 2023, <https://www.nuseibehfamily.net/the-first-woman-warrior-in-islam/articles/12-articles/66>
- Oliver Leaman. Islamic Philosophy. Polity Press. Cambridge, U.K. 2009.
- Riyad as-Salihin "The Book of the Prohibited Actions", <https://sunnah.com/Riyad-as-salihin:1608>.
- Salim S.L Al-Hassani, ed., *1001 Inventions: Muslim Heritage in our World*, Turkey: Mega Basim, Istanbul, 2006.
- Sheikh and Ali, "Al-Ghazali's Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education", *Journal of Education and Educational Development*, 6 (1), (2019). 115
- Sobhi Rayan, "Islamic Philosophy of Education", *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2, 19 2012
- Study Lecture Notes, "Women Education in Islam", Accessed on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2023; <http://studylecturenates.com/importance-of-women-education-in-islam/>
- Ibn Majah, Sunnan [Sultan Muhammad Khan](https://www.research-education.edu.blogspot.com/2011/09/concept-of-education-of-imam-ghazali.html), "Corporal Punishment in Islamic Education", Accessed on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2023; <https://research-education.edu.blogspot.com/2011/09/concept-of-education-of-imam-ghazali.html>
- Tal Gilead, A History of Western Philosophy of Education in the Age of Enlightenment, vol 3, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351711359> Accessed on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, 2023
- Tijani A. A, "The Classification of Knowledge in Islam by Imam Al-Ghazali and Al-Farabi: A Comparative Study", *International Journal of Advanced Research in Islamic and Humanities*, 4, 3, 2022
- Tijani Yakubu, Philosophy of Nigeria Education its Implementation and Results in Nigeria, *Journal of Development Economics*, Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, (2020) 3. It can be accessed on <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339933717>