

Al Ghazālī's Thoughts on Islamic Education Curriculum

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Abstract

Al Ghazali lived in the Islamic golden age when all the fields of education flourished. There have been many studies of al-Ghazali's thoughts, yet, further and deeper examination from various perspective is needed to get objective and actual thoughts of Al-Ghazali. In al Ghazali's time, there was no term of curriculum, however, the concept emerged as an accumulation of previous thoughts about the curriculum. The objective of this research is to study about al Ghazali's thoughts on the curriculum of Islamic education based on the series of curricula before al-Ghazali which eventually distinguish this study from others. This library research relies on written materials from the works of al Ghazali and others related to this topic. The data were collected using documentary technique and analyzed using content analysis method. In conclusion, Al-Ghazali's curriculum is similar to the concept of holistic education which is characterized by intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual developments. The curriculum also covers the dimension of development and it is beneficial for individual and society to make people closer to Allah SWT.

Keywords: Al-Ghazali, curriculum, Islamic education

A. Introduction

The Curriculum is one of the important elements in the educational system which determines the success of learning for the students. Ramayulis (2001) stated that the curriculum is the subjects given to students to cultivate knowledge to be able to adapt to their environment. In the context of Islamic education curriculum, the name of Al Ghazali is unquestionable. Al Ghazali's thoughts on education have been widely expressed, such as by ' Abd al-Amir Syams al Din in his book *Al Fiker al Tarbawiy 'inda al Ghazali*, Fatiyah Hasan Sulaiman in his book *al Mazhab al Tarbawiy' inda al Ghazali*, Hasan Asari in his book *The Educational Thoughts of al Ghazali*.

Al Ghazālī's thoughts on curriculum can be learned from his thoughts on dividing sciences into three broad categories: (1) unworthy sciences, (2) worthy sciences, and (3) sciences which are commendable to a certain degree but are not recommended to be studied in depth. Nata (1998b) explained the categories further. First, Worthy sciences. According to al-Ghazālī, the science in this category is a science that has no benefit both in the world and the hereafter and only brings harm to those who have it, as well as to others. Witchcraft, for example, can break friendships, revenge, enmity and bad things. Another example is astrology. al-Ghazālī divide astrology into two; calculations based astrology (reckoning), and *istidlaly* based astrology. However, in some cases, he stated that astrology is not totally unworthy because it can be used to know the direction of Qibla. Second, the worthy sciences. Al-Ghazālī explained that these sciences are those closely related to worship. He divided this into two parts, namely *fardlu' ain*, that is the true science of religion with its types, starting from the book of Allah, the primary worship, to the science of shari'a by which he will understand what to be abandoned and what to be done. The *fardlu kifayah* is all sciences that cannot be ignored to support life, such as medical science, arithmetic, and others. According to Al-Ghazali, if no one learns the fardhu kifayah science, everybody will be burden with sin. However, if someone has mastered it and practiced it, other people will be released from the responsibility. Third, sciences which are commendable to a certain degree but are not recommended to be studied in depth such as philosophy and logic episteme. It is because this kind of sciences can lead to chaos and confusion between beliefs and doubts. This will eventually lead to disbelief (Ghazālī, 2013).

There are a lot of books about Al Ghazali's thoughts, including Sabda (2008) *The Concept of Islamic Education Curriculum Reflection of Al Ghazali's thoughts*. in this book, the concept of curriculum highlighted from the concept of curriculum development perspectives, (philosophical, psychological, and sociological), and its curriculum design ideas (objectives, materials, organizations, and systems of implementation of Islamic education curriculum). The basis and ideas of Islamic education curriculum according to al Ghazali is reflected from various thoughts in various fields. However, this book did not discuss the relationship between al-Ghazali's thoughts with the concept of previous education, especially with the curriculum in the times before al Ghazali.

There are several articles that also discussed al Ghazali thoughts on curriculum, such as the article Kurnanto (2011), discusses al Ghazali's thoughts on the concept of education of al Ghazali which includes discussion about students, human nature, and learning ethics. According to Edi the concept of education of al Ghazali is closely related to the concept of human, so this paper is derived from the concept of human according to al Ghazali.

The article Alwizar (2015), "Educational Thoughts of al- Ghazali", explained about the role of education, education goals, educators, learners, education methods and curriculum. According to Alwizar, the concept of curriculum from al Ghazali starts from the concept of al Ghazali about science, from the division of Syariah and ghairu syar'iyah science then discussion of the law of science (fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah). The gap between Alwizar study and this paper is in the concept of curriculum. Alwizar mentioned that the concept of curriculum from al Ghazali is empirical, while, according to the writers of this study, the concept of curriculum from al Ghazali is holistic and complete.

B. The Education Curriculum

The curriculum is a principal thing in education. The purpose of education will be achieved, if there is a guidance, in the form of a series of materials and the way to deliver it and curriculum covers all these things. Therefore, the curriculum is a tool to achieve the educational purpose. According to Nasution (1991), Soetopo & Soemanto (1982) curriculum is literally interpreted as a teaching material, derived from the Latin "*curriculum*". Some say that the word comes from the French "*courier*" which means running. In the future, this word is used as a reference to teaching materials that are structured to support the purpose of education, a series of lessons to be accomplished at one educational level.

Crow & Crow (1990) stated that a curriculum is a teaching design that contains a number of subjects arranged systematically, which is necessary as a condition for completing a certain education program., Langgulong (2000) and Hamid (2012) wrote that the curriculum is an educational, cultural, social, sports and art experience, both inside and outside the classroom managed by the school. It can be restated that a curriculum is a tool that is designed systematically, directed and measurable to achieve a goal. Its existence is very flexible and adjusting to the goal. This flexibility makes it possible for some parties to put their intentions or interests into the curriculum.

In its development, the curriculum is not only a lesson plan but also everything that happens in the educational process at school. It is something that is real and actual in school. The coverage of the curriculum is now more extensive and complex.

Langgulong (2000) and Hamdan (2014) tried to establish a basic benchmark to standardize a curriculum. There are four main points to be considered in the preparation of the curriculum, including a) The objectives to be achieved by education, firmly talked about what kind of person we want to form through the curriculum; b) Knowledge, information, data, activities, and experiences from which the curriculum is formed; this is what is usually called the subject and part of the syllabus; c) Methods and ways of teaching used by teachers to teach and encourage students to learn and bring them to the direction expected by the curriculum; d) The methods and means of assessment used in measuring and assessing the curriculum and outcome of the planned education process in the curriculum such as quarterly exam, final exam and others.

In the writer's view, Langgulong's phrase is an elaboration of the four basic questions raised by Ralph W. Tyler in his book "Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction" (1949), which is the formula of the initial assumptions used to construct the curriculum: a) what aim that should be reached by the school?; b) How to choose lesson material to achieve that goal ?; c) How is the material effectively presented and taught ?; d) How can the effectiveness of learning effectively be assessed?

A basic benchmark in the preparation of curriculum is should be formulated. It consists of objectives, contents, methods of learning and evaluation. All of them must be mutually related, harmonious, balanced and leveled. Therefore, a curriculum designed is expected to produce output with integrated knowledge.

C. Islamic Education Curriculum

Omar Muhammad al-Toumy al-Syaibani cited in Nata (1998a) revealed that the characteristics of Islamic education curriculum are as follows: a) Highlights religious and moral goals on the various purposes and content, methods, religious tools and techniques; b) Extends the scope and thoroughness of its content that is the curriculum that truly reflects the spirit, thoughts, and comprehensive teaching. The curriculum should also pay attention to the development and guidance of all aspects of the student's intellectual, psychological, social and spiritual life; c) Being balanced among the various sciences contained in the curriculum. In addition, it is also balanced between useful knowledge for individual and social development; d) be thorough in organizing all subjects needed by the students; e) The curriculum is always tailored to the interests and talents of students.

Islamic Education principles must be met in the formulation of the curriculum to maintain the relationship between the subject matter and the religion. Basically, everything comes from Allah. It is the interpretation that makes it look different.

Al-Syaibani as cited in Nata (1998a) mentioned 7 principles of Islamic curriculum as follows: (1) Perfect linkage with religion, including its teachings and values. Each part contained in the curriculum, starting from the purpose, content, teaching methods, ways of treatment and so on should be based on religion and Islamic values. The curriculum must have the spirit of Islamic religion. The virtue of the goals and concerns must be based on Islamic teachings; (2) Universal purposes and content of the curriculum, which includes the purpose of developing *aqidah*, minds, and other things beneficial to society in spiritual, cultural, social, economic, political development; including the sciences of religion, language, humanity, physical, practical, professional, art and so on; (3) a relative balance between goals and content; (4) Associating the talents, interests, abilities, and the needs of the learners as well as between the natural surroundings, both physical, and social where the students live and interact; (5) Maintaining individual differences among students, both in terms of interest and talent; (6) Accepting the development changes in accordance with the development of the times and places; (7) Relating the various subjects with the experiences and activities contained in the curriculum.

In this case, religious nuance is very obvious. The series of subjects contained in the curriculum, all leading to the One. This was also applied to the Prophet's education, to the time of the dynastic era. In general, educational curriculum principles contain three main things; continuous, sequential and experience integrity. Thus, besides the curriculum is a series of interconnected materials, it must also be arranged in sequence and leveled, systematically directed to obtain educational objectives.

D. Islamic Education Curriculum before Al-Ghazālī

This discussion is at the heart of seeking the form of al-Ghazālī curriculum. Indeed, it is still a big question for the writers whether or not al-Ghazālī had a form of curriculum or he was just an accommodator of sciences that should be included in the curriculum.

So far, al-Ghazālī's followers consider al-Ghazālī's division of knowledge as a form of curriculum. However, the writer of this study has his own opinion. According to Jalaluddin & Said (1999) the goal of education to be achieved by the curriculum in Islamic education is the same as the goal of Islamic education itself, which is to form noble character in relation with the nature of human creation. As for the core of the curriculum material of Islamic education itself is the materials, activities, and experiences that contain the unity of God.

In line with that statement, the purpose of education according to al-Ghazālī is to get closer to God, which leads to the formation of noble character, thus, the teaching materials should emphasis more on religious elements that lead to unity of God. Later, the purpose of education and the curriculum will be appropriate.

To see more about al-Ghazālī curriculum, it is necessary to mention the various forms of curriculum and enforced in the Islamic education, from the period of the Prophet to the period of al-Ghazālī coherently. The curriculum before al-Ghazālī began when Muhammad was appointed as a prophet. It began when Muhammad was in Makkah, so the form and scope of the material was very simple and not constructed systematically.

1. Curriculum in Makkah Period

According to Tafsir (2001) Curriculum at that time was only in the form of al-Qur'an which contained faith, prayer, and morals. Muhammad at this time was in a very difficult time; his environment was occupied by ignorant people to Islam. To introduce the Islam, it was initially done in secret, until Muhammad found a way to do it in public. Furthermore, the revelation received at that time was limited to monotheism, upholding the ultimate obligation, such as praying and set good examples.

2. Curriculum in Madinah Period

Curriculum in this period has been developed, due to the increasing number of revelations received by Muhammad, many things needed to be regulated more and more. According to Nata (1998a) in this period the form was reciting al-Qur'an Faith (pillars of faith), worship (pillars of Islam), morals, economic and political base, sports and health, as well as reading and writing.

3. Curriculum in Khulafaurrasyidin and Bani Umayyah Periods

At this time, the curriculum changed, however, the scope was extended covering the subject matter of school, called Kuttab. The wider area of Islamic power and the more influence of the culture of the conquered territories emerged a variety of new knowledge that needed to be developed and taught in school. The curriculum included reading and writing, reciting the Qur'an and memorizing it, faith, worship, and morals.

According to Nata (1998a) and Tafsir (2004) during Umar bin Khattab period, he instructed people to teach their children swimming, horseback riding, archery, reading and memorizing easy verses and proverbs. High school and college taught the Qur'an and its interpretation, hadith and its collection, and *Fiqh*. According to Usman & Lubna (2010), in period of Bani Umayyah the form was al-Qur'an, hadis, dan *syair*.

4. Curriculum in Bani Abbasiyah Period

The Curriculum of Bani Abbasiyah Period became increasingly complex, due to the expansion of Islamic territory and the growing influence of the wider local culture. Islam is growing with more diverse communities and this influenced the mindset of Al-Ghazālī. In Kuttāb, schools taught reciting and memorizing the Qur'an, the main basis of religion (Faith, worship, and morals), the story of the great people (characters) of Islam, reading and memorizing the poetry and natsar (Prose), mathematics, and the principles of *nahwu* and *sharf*.

Al-Qabisi as cited in Nata (1998a) sorted it into compulsory subjects and elective subjects. Compulsory subjects consisted of al-Qur'an prayers, some *nahwu*, and Arabic, reading and writing. While, elective subjects consisted of numeracy, all *nahwu* and Arabic, poetry, history / Arabic texts.

Generally, subjects taught in secondary schools are al-Qur'an Arabic and literature, *fiqh*, *Tafseer*, hadith, *nahwu*, *sharf*, *balaghob*, sciences, *mantiq*, astronomy, history, chemistry, medicine, and music. For vocational high school of clerks, the subjects are language, correspondence, speeches, discussions, debate, and arts.

Higher education in Abbasiyah period had two majors; naqliyah and aqliyah sciences. The major of *Naqliyah* sciences consisted of *Tafseer*, hadith, *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh*, *nahwu* and *sharf*, *balaghob*, Arabic language and Arabic literature. The majors of aqliyah sciences consisted of *mantiq*, and chemistry, music, sciences, geometry, astronomy, divinity, animal science, plant science, and medicine.

E. Al-Ghazālī's Education Curriculum

To find out the curriculum of al-Ghazālī, we should better understand the division of knowledge according to al-Ghazālī, and also need to understand deeper about the social and political conditions surrounding his productive period. The power of Dinasti Abbasiyah Saljuk was acquired after the overthrow of the Syiaah Buwaihi Dynasty. Saljuk Dynasty conquered the city of Baghdad in 447 AH / 1055 AD led by the sunny Tughril Biq. This automatically made the sunny as the official beliefs of the country.

Buwaihi dynasty had been in power for a long time. This dynasty utilized the education media to introduce their beliefs in the community so the activity was very structured and planned. Sunny and Syiaah had different ideology and politics, Therefore, the Saljuk Dynasty strived with all power to eradicate the Syiaah belief that was already rooted in society and replaced it with Sunny.

Nekosteen (1996) said that Education propaganda became the main choice of Saljuk dynasty for this purpose. The dynasty used madrasah Nizamiyah that emerged during the reign of Vizier Nizam al-Mulk. The name of madrasah was attributed to the initiator of the Madrasah. In addition, the increasing number of people within the territory became another consideration. The state needed a place of mass education for its people. Madrasah Nizamiyah was established in almost all the Abbasiyah domains, such as Baghdad, Nishapur, Basrah, Asfahan, Mausil, and others. According to Suwito & Fauzan (2005) the government's dominance in the journey of madrasah was very obvious. Starting from the madrasah policies, determining the curriculum, and also the appointment of teachers. teachers should be from sunny. The government's dominance in madrasah also extended to the determination of the budget and the appointment of other staffs.

The confined political situation made madrasah become static. Thoughts and concepts about education became state monopolies; there is no chance for multiple interpretations for different education systems because such differences would be considered as opponents of the government. Such situation made it impossible for al-Ghazālī to impose his thoughts on educational curriculum, and this was the chance for some Islamic educational thinkers to say that al-Ghazālī has no curriculum design. The division of knowledge undertaken by al-Ghazālī was merely a critique of the existing education at the time, with religious materials dominated and did not provide enough space for non-religious materials.

In al-Ghazālī's point of view, the intelligent man is someone who can use the world as a means to reach happiness in heaven. Therefore, the sciences that can make the world a better place need to be given a balanced portion. The world is a shelter for humans before heading to the heavens. If the world can be used as a means to get closer to God, then efforts to make it better is needed. The division of knowledge is only an input for the government to not be comforted by the destruction of Syaiah using education propaganda which made education was full of religious nuanced and forgot other human's needs in the world. The dichotomy of education was already there. It is not something new.

According to Nata (1998a), there are three reasons to support this view. The first is the motive of the establishment of madrasah as an educational institution is not purely motivated by education. There was a political and ideological motive behind the establishment by the Saljuk Dynasty. It was as a counter-propaganda tool to eliminate the influence of political ideology at that time which could at any time jeopardize the continuity of the Saljuk's power. That ideology was a Syaiah ideology followed by Buwaihi dynasty which had just been conquered by the Saljuk dynasty and Fathimiyah dynasty in Egypt. Second, the curriculum or education program in the madrasah was influenced by dominant ideology, which is the Sunni ideology. The existing curriculum is also loaded with Sunny religious charges (fiqh, ushul fiqh, kalam, and Tafseer). It is very reasonable and logical because the educational curriculum is a mirror of the dominant ideology that is held by the society that exists at a given time. The ideology existed during the Saljuk period and coincidentally became the official ideology of government was Sunni. Third, Al Ghazālī was unable to persuade Nizam al-Mulk to further influence the planning of education, including the compilation of the curriculum based on his division of knowledge. At first Nizam al-Mulk was amazed at the knowledge and thoughts of al-Ghazālī, thus appointed him to be a professor at the Nizāmiyah madrasah.

Basically, Ghazālī (2013) pointed that science is gradual, both theory and practice. Its advantages are also stratified based on the high level of previous knowledge. The attempt of al-Ghazālī to classify the science of religion on his belief directed to the perspective that the science of religion is the most important because it can only be obtained with the perfection of reason and clarity of mind.

According to Sholeh (2004), in the material given to the students, al-Ghazālī explained the criteria of materials that is beneficial to human beings in the pursuit of a religious life such as ethics and others; Educational materials provided linguistics, grammar and others as supports to humans to learn the science of religion, Useful educational materials for life was like medicine; Educational materials that were used in building culture and civilization were like history, literature, politics, and others.

Sulaiman (1990) as translated by Hakim and Aziz argued that al-Ghazālī has made a hierarchical educational curriculum as follows: 'The first level is the Qur'an and the science of religion such as fiqh, science of hadith and others. The second level is linguistics and grammar, as well as tajwid. The third level is the science in the category of *fardlu kifayah* such as medicine, arithmetic, politics, and others. The fourth level is the science of culture such as literature, history and some branches of philosophy. If we want to keep seeing the curriculum of al-Ghazālī forced into the country's curriculum, then the answer is a form of collaboration between the educational curriculums imposed in the period of the Abbasiyah dynasty with al-Ghazālī's division of knowledge.

According to Mursyi, as quoted by Nata (1998a) al-Ghazālī proposed some knowledge to be learned in school. The sciences are Qur'anic science and religion, such as fiqh, hadith, and tafsir; A collection of languages, *nahwu and makbraj*, and its pronunciation because this science serves to help the science of religion; The *fardlu kifayah* sciences, included medical science, mathematics, various kinds of technology, political science, cultural sciences such as poetry, history and some branches of philosophy.

F. The Relevance of Al Ghazali's Curriculum in the Current Islamic Education

Al Ghazālī's thoughts on curriculum can be learned from his thoughts on dividing sciences into three broad categories: (1) unworthy sciences (al mazmūm), such as magic, astrology, divination, and so forth. (2) worthy sciences (al-mahmūd) which include the science of *fardlu 'ain* and *fardlu kifayah*. (3) sciences which are commendable to a certain degree but are not recommended to be studied in depth, such as logic episteme (the science of reasoning, philosophy, godliness, and others).

The opinions of al-Ghazālī related curriculum as subject to be taught in an institution are very relevant to Islamic education today. It is in line with the opinion of Al-Abrasyi (1396) that the ultimate goal of Islamic education, according to him, are forming morals, preparing the students to live in the world and in the hereafter, mastering the science, and preparing the skillful people in the society. The similar idea is also expressed by Al-Syaibani (1979) that the goal of Islamic education is related to individuals, communities, and the work field. In the context of character building of the nation, Sukardi (2011) explains that the dominant and main thing in the process of education is to improve the intellectual intelligence and education for life skills needed by the learners, the society, and the nation.

According to Sabda (2008), the concept of curriculum is highlighted from the point of view of the concept of curriculum development, which includes the basics of curriculum (philosophy, psychology, and sociology) and the idea of curriculum design (objectives, materials, organizations, and systems of Islamic education curriculum implementation). Curriculum base and the idea of Islamic education curriculum according to al Ghazali is reflected from his various thoughts in various fields. This book did not discuss the relationship of al-Ghazali's with the concept of previous education, especially about the curriculum in the times before al Ghazali and this is the focus of discussion of this paper.

An article Kurnanto (2011) entitled Education in Thoughts of al Ghazali discussed al Ghazali's thoughts on the concept of education of al Ghazali which includes discussion about students, human nature, and learning ethics. According to Kurnanto the concept

of education of al Ghazali is closely related to the concept of human, so this paper is derived from the concept of human according to al Ghazali.

The article written by Alwizar (2015), "Educational Thoughts of al- Ghazali", explained about the role of education, education goals, educators, learners, education methods and curriculum. According to Alwizar, the concept of curriculum from al Ghazali starts from the concept of al Ghazali about science, from the division of Syariah and ghairu syar'iyah science then discussion of the law of science (fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah). The gap between Alwizar study and this paper is in the concept of curriculum. Alwizar mentioned that the concept of curriculum from al Ghazali is empirical, while, according to the writers of this study, the concept of curriculum from al Ghazali is holistic and complete.

G. Conclusion

The thoughts of al-Ghazālī regarding educational curriculum have not yet reached the state official curriculum because at that time, in the political situation, the education is used as a propaganda tool. Thus, al Ghazālī curriculum was only the embryo, in the form of lesson materials that should be included in *madrasah* education.

According to the writers, based on the above concept of classification, it can be concluded that the concept of al Ghazālī curriculum has similar characteristics to the concept of holistic education which is characterized by intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual developments. The curriculum also covers the dimension of development and it is beneficial for individual and society to make people closer to Allah SWT.

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