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The Concept of Learning According to Imam Al-Ghazali in Ihya' Ulumuddin: Its Relevance to Contemporary Islamic Education

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Abstract: *This study examines Imam Al-Ghazali's conception of learning in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, particularly Kitab al-'Ilm, and its relevance to contemporary Islamic education. It identifies the epistemological and ethical foundations of his thought, examines challenges including pragmatic learning, the dichotomy of knowledge, and the erosion of adab in digital environments and reconstructs his principles for contemporary practice. This qualitative library research employs a historical-philosophical approach and content analysis. Primary data are drawn from Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, while secondary data comprise scholarly literature on Islamic educational philosophy and contemporary educational issues. Data are collected through documentation and examined through interpretative analysis. The findings show that learning, according to Al-Ghazali, is an integrated process of intellectual, spiritual, and moral transformation grounded in sincere intention (niyyah), ethical conduct (adab), spiritual purification (tazkiyat al-nafs), and the unity of knowledge and action ('ilm wa al-'amal). His classification of knowledge into fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah provides a basis for balancing individual religious obligations with collective needs. This study proposes a framework for contemporary Islamic education through reorienting learning motivation, incorporating spiritual and ethical values into curricula, revitalizing teachers as murabbi, and connecting knowledge with responsible practice. The framework emphasizes intellectual competence, spiritual consciousness, moral integrity, and social responsibility.*

Keywords: *Imam Al-Ghazali, Concept of Learning, Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din, Islamic Education*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Islamic education is experiencing significant transformations in response to the accelerating developments of modernization, globalization, and digital technology (Hastasari et al., 2022). These developments have substantially reshaped educational structures, learning environments, knowledge acquisition, and pedagogical practices across Islamic educational institutions. The increasing integration of digital platforms, artificial intelligence, and technology-assisted instructional methods has expanded opportunities for accessing information, facilitating communication, and developing students' intellectual competencies (Amin, 2024). Nevertheless, these transformations have also generated fundamental questions concerning the philosophical

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orientation, epistemological foundations, and ultimate purposes of Islamic education. In particular, the growing emphasis on academic performance, institutional competitiveness, standardized assessment, and professional qualifications has raised concerns about the extent to which contemporary educational practices continue to reflect the fundamental objectives of Islamic education. Educational achievement is increasingly evaluated through measurable indicators, including examination results, learning outcomes, graduation rates, and employment prospects (Nuraeni et al., 2024). Although these indicators provide important information about educational effectiveness, they do not necessarily reflect the moral integrity, spiritual awareness, and ethical responsibility developed through the learning process. An educational system that prioritizes measurable performance without adequately considering the formation of the whole person risks reducing learning to an instrumental activity oriented toward academic achievement and socioeconomic advancement. Such an orientation creates a fundamental tension between education as a process of acquiring competencies and education as a comprehensive endeavor to cultivate individuals who demonstrate intellectual maturity, moral responsibility, spiritual consciousness, and meaningful contributions to society (Fitriani, 2023). This tension is particularly significant for Islamic education because its philosophical foundations extend beyond the transmission of knowledge and the development of practical skills to include the formation of human beings who understand their responsibilities toward Allah, themselves, other people, and the broader creation.

The relationship between intellectual development and moral formation represents one of the most persistent challenges in contemporary educational practice (Najah et al., 2022). The increasing visibility of academic misconduct, including plagiarism, contract cheating, manipulation of academic results, and the inappropriate use of technological resources, demonstrates that academic competence does not automatically produce ethical responsibility. These challenges indicate that the development of knowledge and skills must be accompanied by the cultivation of moral judgment, personal discipline, and awareness of the ethical consequences of individual actions (Daud, 2023). Within contemporary learning environments, the expansion of artificial intelligence applications and digital information systems has further complicated this relationship. Students can access extensive information, generate academic content, and complete various learning activities through technological assistance with unprecedented convenience (Hanif, 2023). However, the availability of information does not necessarily ensure its accurate interpretation, responsible utilization, or meaningful integration into personal understanding. The distinction between possessing information and genuinely understanding knowledge therefore becomes increasingly important. Learning should not be understood merely as the ability to collect, reproduce, or manipulate information, but as an intellectual and formative process through which individuals develop the capacity to evaluate knowledge, recognize its ethical implications, and translate understanding into responsible conduct (Ulfat, 2020). From the perspective of Islamic

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https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

education, this challenge requires a reconsideration of educational practices that integrate cognitive development with moral awareness and spiritual responsibility. The quality of learning should consequently be evaluated not only through what students know and how effectively they perform academic tasks, but also through how their knowledge influences their attitudes, decisions, behavior, and relationships with others.

Another important issue concerns the epistemological fragmentation of knowledge within contemporary educational systems (Feriska & Dewi, 2026). Despite various initiatives to integrate Islamic knowledge with modern scientific disciplines, the relationship between religious understanding and general knowledge remains insufficiently integrated in many educational contexts (Karim et al., 2024). Religious subjects are frequently organized within separate curricular structures, while scientific, technological, and professional disciplines are predominantly associated with intellectual specialization, economic development, and practical applications (Muhaemin et al., 2023). This separation may create the impression that religious knowledge and scientific inquiry operate within unrelated intellectual domains, each possessing different purposes and standards of relevance. Such compartmentalization presents a significant philosophical challenge for Islamic education, whose understanding of knowledge is fundamentally connected to the unity of human existence and the relationship between humanity and divine creation (Mardatillah et al., 2025). From an Islamic epistemological perspective, knowledge should not be evaluated exclusively according to its immediate practical utility or professional application, but also according to its capacity to develop human understanding, strengthen moral responsibility, and guide individuals toward the recognition of divine wisdom (Sabarudin et al., 2024). Consequently, the integration of knowledge requires more than combining religious and scientific subjects within a single curriculum. It involves establishing an educational orientation in which intellectual inquiry, ethical reflection, spiritual awareness, and practical responsibility reinforce one another (R. Bahri et al., 2025). This perspective also requires educational institutions to reconsider the relationship between what is taught, how knowledge is acquired, and why individuals pursue learning. Therefore, the central challenge of contemporary Islamic education is not simply to improve instructional efficiency or incorporate technological innovations, but to develop an integrated conception of learning that preserves the relationship between intellectual advancement, religious values, moral development, and responsible human action.

In addressing these challenges, the intellectual heritage of classical Islamic scholarship provides important philosophical resources for reconsidering the purposes and processes of contemporary education. Among the influential Muslim scholars whose contributions remain significant in educational philosophy is Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) (Maulana et al., 2021), whose intellectual legacy encompasses theology, jurisprudence, ethics, spirituality, and

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epistemology. His educational thought is particularly evident in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, a comprehensive work that examines the relationship between religious knowledge, human conduct, spiritual purification, and the attainment of moral excellence. Within this work, *Kitab al-'Ilm* (The Book of Knowledge) provides an essential foundation for understanding his conception of knowledge and learning (Arroisi et al., 2023). Al-Ghazali discusses the significance of knowledge, its classification, the responsibilities of scholars, the ethical obligations of students, and the proper orientation underlying the pursuit of knowledge. His perspective establishes that learning cannot be separated from the moral and spiritual condition of the individual. Knowledge is not simply an intellectual possession acquired through instruction or memorization, but a means of transforming human understanding and conduct (Huda et al., 2022). The pursuit of knowledge must therefore be directed toward meaningful purposes rather than becoming an instrument for obtaining social recognition, authority, prestige, or material advantages. This understanding establishes a fundamental distinction between the accumulation of information and the transformative function of genuine learning. In Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, the significance of knowledge is closely related to its capacity to guide individuals toward truth, strengthen their relationship with Allah, and encourage the development of virtuous character (Lubis & Azzahra, 2021). Accordingly, the educational process must consider not only the intellectual capacity of learners but also their intentions, ethical dispositions, spiritual conditions, and practical responsibilities.

A central component of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning is the relationship between knowledge and intention (*niyyah*) (Cinta et al., 2023). Intention provides the fundamental orientation that determines the moral and spiritual significance of learning. The pursuit of knowledge should be directed toward seeking divine pleasure, overcoming ignorance, improving personal conduct, and fulfilling responsibilities as human beings. Without an appropriate intention, intellectual achievement may become disconnected from its ethical and spiritual purposes. The acquisition of knowledge may instead be directed toward social status, personal superiority, professional recognition, or material interests. This distinction demonstrates that the educational value of learning cannot be determined solely by the quantity of information acquired or the level of intellectual achievement attained. It must also be examined in relation to the purposes that motivate the learner. Closely connected to intention is the concept of *adab*, which encompasses proper conduct, moral discipline, and ethical responsibility in the relationship between teachers, students, knowledge, and the learning environment. In this framework, teachers are not merely transmitters of information but also figures whose intellectual and moral conduct contributes to the development of learners. Similarly, students are expected to demonstrate humility, respect, discipline, perseverance, and an appropriate attitude toward knowledge and those who facilitate its acquisition. These principles indicate that learning is fundamentally relational and ethical rather than exclusively cognitive. The quality of educational interaction depends not only on instructional

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competence but also on the moral responsibilities and mutual respect established between educational participants. Thus, *niyyah* and *adab* constitute essential dimensions of learning because they establish both the internal orientation and the external ethical conditions through which knowledge can achieve its formative purposes.

Furthermore, Al-Ghazali's conception of learning emphasizes the importance of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) as an essential dimension of human development. This principle reflects the understanding that the acquisition of knowledge should contribute to the refinement of individual character, the control of negative inclinations, and the cultivation of spiritual awareness (Kirabaev & Chistyakova, 2023). Learning is therefore not limited to the development of intellectual capacities but also involves an ongoing process of self-examination and moral improvement. The transformation of the learner becomes an important indicator of educational achievement because genuine understanding should influence how individuals perceive themselves, regulate their behavior, and interact with others. This formative dimension is further reinforced through the relationship between knowledge and action (*'ilm wa al-'amal*). Knowledge that remains disconnected from practice has not fully achieved its educational purpose because its significance is realized through its application in individual and social life. The relationship between understanding and action demonstrates that learning should produce observable consequences in the form of responsible decisions, ethical behavior, and beneficial contributions to society (Sari & Marhaban, 2023). In this regard, the principles of *niyyah*, *adab*, *tazkiyat al-nafs*, and *'ilm wa al-'amal* should not be understood as independent educational recommendations. Rather, they represent interconnected dimensions of a comprehensive learning process. Intention establishes the purpose of learning, ethical conduct regulates its practice, spiritual purification supports the transformation of the learner, and the application of knowledge demonstrates its practical realization. Their interrelationship provides a foundation for understanding learning as an integrated process involving intellectual, moral, spiritual, and practical development. This holistic orientation distinguishes Al-Ghazali's educational thought from approaches that primarily conceptualize learning through cognitive achievement, instructional effectiveness, or the acquisition of competencies.

The relevance of this integrated conception becomes increasingly important when considered in relation to contemporary Islamic education. Modern educational institutions are expected to develop students who possess critical thinking abilities, scientific literacy, technological competencies, communication skills, and the capacity to respond to complex social challenges. These objectives are important and should not be disregarded. However, their implementation requires an educational philosophy capable of ensuring that intellectual and technological advancement remains connected to ethical judgment and human responsibility. Al-Ghazali's conception of learning offers a valuable perspective for addressing this concern because

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https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

it places the development of knowledge within a broader framework of moral and spiritual formation (Supriyanto, 2022). The principle of *niyyah*, for example, can inform the development of learning motivation that extends beyond grades, qualifications, and external recognition toward meaningful intellectual and social purposes. The principle of *adab* can provide an ethical foundation for teacher–student relationships, academic integrity, responsible communication, and appropriate conduct within digital learning environments. Similarly, *tazkiyat al-nafs* can contribute to educational approaches that emphasize self-discipline, emotional regulation, reflective learning, and the continuous improvement of personal character. Meanwhile, the relationship between knowledge and action can strengthen the connection between academic understanding and its application in addressing practical problems within society. These principles also offer a basis for examining the responsible use of artificial intelligence and digital technologies in education. Rather than rejecting technological advancement, an Al-Ghazalian perspective encourages its utilization within an ethical and value-oriented framework. Technology should function as a means of facilitating learning and expanding human capabilities, not as a substitute for intellectual responsibility, independent judgment, or moral accountability. Consequently, the contemporary relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational thought lies in its potential to complement modern educational competencies with a deeper understanding of the ethical and spiritual purposes of learning.

Despite the enduring significance of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy, a conceptual and practical distance remains between his classical conception of learning and the requirements of contemporary Islamic education (Hasib & Khasanah, 2025). His emphasis on spiritual purification, moral discipline, and the relationship between knowledge and religious practice is sometimes discussed primarily within the context of Islamic ethics or spirituality, rather than being examined as a comprehensive educational framework. This tendency may limit the understanding of his educational contribution to the cultivation of personal morality without sufficiently considering its implications for epistemology, learning processes, educational relationships, and the organization of contemporary learning environments. Furthermore, the application of classical educational principles within modern institutions requires careful interpretation because contemporary education operates within different institutional, technological, and sociocultural conditions. Current educational systems emphasize competency-based learning, scientific literacy, critical thinking, interdisciplinary knowledge, digital participation, and measurable learning outcomes. The challenge is therefore to establish a meaningful relationship between Al-Ghazali's philosophical principles and these contemporary educational requirements without reducing his thought to general moral recommendations or applying classical concepts without considering their original intellectual foundations (Budur, 2024). In particular, the principles of *niyyah*, *adab*, and *tazkiyat al-nafs* need to be examined in relation to the broader structure of learning, including

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https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

the nature of knowledge, the position of the learner, the responsibilities of educators, and the objectives of educational practice. Such an examination is necessary to clarify how spiritual and ethical formation can become an integral dimension of contemporary pedagogy rather than remaining an additional component separated from academic learning. Accordingly, the reconstruction of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning requires both a careful interpretation of his original educational thought and a critical examination of its possible implications for contemporary Islamic educational development.

Previous studies have examined Al-Ghazali's educational thought from several related perspectives, demonstrating the continuing significance of his intellectual contributions to contemporary Islamic education. Some studies have investigated the epistemological dimensions of knowledge in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, particularly their implications for the integration of religious and general knowledge within Islamic educational institutions. This line of research provides important insights into the classification, hierarchy, and significance of knowledge in Al-Ghazali's intellectual framework. Other studies have concentrated on his ethical conception of teacher–student relationships, emphasizing the importance of moral conduct, respect, responsibility, and educational discipline in addressing character-related challenges, particularly within Islamic boarding schools. Research on spirituality-based character education has also explored the potential of Al-Ghazali's thought to strengthen students' moral awareness and spiritual development. These contributions establish an important foundation for understanding the contemporary relevance of classical Islamic educational philosophy. Nevertheless, the existing discussions, as reflected in these research orientations, tend to emphasize particular dimensions of Al-Ghazali's thought rather than examining their interrelationship within a comprehensive conception of learning. Epistemological studies, for instance, primarily address the nature and classification of knowledge, while research on educational ethics focuses more specifically on moral relationships and behavioral expectations. Similarly, studies on spirituality-based character education tend to emphasize the formative consequences of spiritual values without necessarily examining their connection to the epistemological foundations and processes of knowledge acquisition. As a result, the relationship between the learner's intention, the nature and purpose of knowledge, ethical conduct, spiritual purification, and the practical application of knowledge remains insufficiently integrated within a unified analytical framework. A more comprehensive examination is therefore necessary to understand how these dimensions collectively constitute Al-Ghazali's conception of learning and how their interconnection can contribute to the philosophical reconstruction of contemporary Islamic education.

The research gap addressed in this study concerns the limited development of an integrated conceptual framework that connects the epistemological, spiritual, ethical, and practical dimensions of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning with the philosophical and pedagogical

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https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

requirements of contemporary Islamic education. More specifically, insufficient attention has been directed toward examining how the relationship between intention, knowledge acquisition, ethical conduct, spiritual purification, and the application of knowledge can be understood as a continuous and interconnected educational process. This limitation becomes particularly significant in the context of contemporary challenges involving the instrumental orientation of academic achievement, the ethical implications of digital transformation, and the separation of intellectual development from moral and spiritual formation. Addressing these issues requires an analytical approach that moves beyond identifying the general relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational principles or describing their contribution to character development. Instead, it requires a systematic reconstruction of the underlying philosophical assumptions, educational relationships, and formative objectives that characterize his conception of learning. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to synthesize the fundamental components of Al-Ghazali's educational thought in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* into an integrated framework for understanding Islamic learning. Through this reconstruction, the study positions learning as a process in which the orientation of intention, the pursuit of meaningful knowledge, the cultivation of ethical conduct, the purification of the soul, and the practical realization of knowledge are mutually interconnected. Furthermore, it examines the implications of this framework for contemporary Islamic education, particularly in developing an educational orientation that accommodates intellectual and technological advancement while maintaining the centrality of moral responsibility and spiritual development. In this way, the study seeks to extend existing discussions from the identification of individual educational principles toward a more comprehensive understanding of the philosophical structure and contemporary applicability of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the concept of learning according to Imam Al-Ghazali as articulated in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and critically examine its relevance to contemporary Islamic education. Specifically, the study addresses three interconnected objectives. First, it examines the philosophical and epistemological foundations underlying Al-Ghazali's conception of learning, particularly his understanding of the nature, purpose, and significance of knowledge. Second, it identifies and analyzes the fundamental dimensions of learning in his educational thought, including intention (*niyyah*), ethical conduct (*adab*), spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and the relationship between knowledge and action (*'ilm wa al-'amal*), while considering their interrelationships in the formation of the learner. Third, it critically examines how these principles can inform contemporary Islamic educational practices in responding to challenges associated with academic achievement, moral development, knowledge integration, and digital transformation. Through these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to the philosophical and conceptual development of Islamic education by presenting learning as a holistic process that integrates intellectual advancement, spiritual awareness, ethical responsibility, and

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Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

practical engagement. Ultimately, the study argues that the continuing relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational thought does not merely reside in its historical significance or normative ethical teachings, but in its capacity to provide a comprehensive philosophical foundation for reorienting contemporary Islamic learning toward the development of intellectually competent, morally responsible, and spiritually conscious individuals.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design using library research to examine Imam Al-Ghazali's conception of learning as articulated in *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* and its relevance to contemporary Islamic education. Library research is appropriate for this study because its primary objective is to investigate, interpret, and reconstruct educational ideas through a systematic examination of written sources rather than through the collection of empirical data from research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This design enables an in-depth exploration of the philosophical assumptions, epistemological foundations, educational principles, and normative orientations underlying Al-Ghazali's understanding of learning. The qualitative orientation is particularly relevant because the subject of investigation involves conceptual meanings, intellectual relationships, and educational values that require contextual interpretation rather than statistical measurement. Accordingly, the study focuses on understanding learning as conceived within Al-Ghazali's intellectual framework, particularly its relationship with knowledge acquisition, moral development, spiritual purification, and the practical application of knowledge. The descriptive-analytical approach is employed to systematically present the ideas contained in the selected literature, examine their conceptual relationships, and formulate an integrated understanding of Al-Ghazali's educational thought. Rather than merely reproducing the author's statements, this approach involves interpreting the underlying meanings of educational concepts and examining their implications for contemporary Islamic educational practices.

Research Sources and Data Selection

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary sources selected according to their relevance to the research objectives. The primary source is *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* by Imam Al-Ghazali, particularly *Kitab al-'Ilm* (The Book of Knowledge), which provides the principal textual foundation for examining his conception of knowledge and learning. Attention is directed toward discussions concerning the nature and significance of knowledge, the classification and purposes of learning, the ethical responsibilities of teachers and students, the proper conduct of knowledge seekers, and the relationship between knowledge and practice. Relevant discussions in other sections of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* are also considered when they provide additional explanations concerning spiritual purification, moral refinement, and the development of virtuous character.

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

These sections are examined to establish a comprehensive understanding of learning within Al-Ghazali's broader educational and spiritual philosophy.

Secondary sources comprise scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, research publications, and other relevant academic documents addressing Al-Ghazali's intellectual contributions, Islamic educational philosophy, educational epistemology, moral and spiritual development, and contemporary Islamic education. Additional literature concerning digital transformation, academic integrity, and the integration of knowledge is considered to establish the contemporary context within which Al-Ghazali's educational thought is examined. The selection of secondary literature is guided by its scholarly credibility, relevance to the research questions, conceptual contribution, and relationship with the primary source. Greater attention is given to peer-reviewed publications and recent academic studies, while classical scholarly works are retained when necessary to clarify the historical and philosophical foundations of the concepts under investigation. The selection of sources follows a purposive approach, meaning that materials are included based on their substantive contribution to understanding the research focus rather than through random selection. This procedure ensures that the analysis remains focused on the relationship between Al-Ghazali's conception of learning and the development of contemporary Islamic education.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection is conducted through documentation, involving the systematic identification, collection, examination, and recording of relevant information from written sources (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This technique is appropriate for library research because the research materials consist primarily of textual documents containing philosophical arguments, educational principles, and conceptual explanations. The collection process is undertaken through several interconnected stages. First, the primary source, particularly *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, is examined to identify passages directly related to the nature of knowledge, the purposes of learning, the responsibilities of teachers and students, and the ethical and spiritual dimensions of education. Particular attention is given to identifying statements that explain the relationship between knowledge acquisition and the transformation of individual character. Second, relevant secondary literature is collected through the examination of scholarly books, journal articles, and previous research addressing Al-Ghazali's educational thought and contemporary Islamic education. Third, the collected materials are classified according to their thematic relevance to the research objectives. The classification includes the epistemological foundations of learning, the orientation of learning intentions (*niyyah*), educational ethics (*adab*), spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and the relationship between knowledge and action (*'ilm wa al-'amal*). Fourth, relevant information is documented through systematic note-taking and the identification of important textual passages, conceptual arguments, and scholarly interpretations. Finally, the collected

Eduistiqomah
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Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

information is cross-checked across relevant sources to examine the consistency of interpretations, clarify conceptual distinctions, and minimize the possibility of inaccurate representation of Al-Ghazali's original ideas. Where necessary, the original text is examined in its broader textual context to avoid interpreting individual statements independently of the arguments developed throughout the work.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis employs qualitative content analysis combined with descriptive and interpretative analysis. Content analysis is used to systematically examine the meanings and educational ideas contained in the selected texts. The analysis is not limited to identifying the frequency of particular terms or concepts; rather, it focuses on interpreting their substantive meanings, philosophical foundations, and relationships within Al-Ghazali's conception of learning. The analytical process consists of several stages. First, the collected textual materials are subjected to data reduction by selecting passages that directly address the research focus and excluding information that does not substantially contribute to the analysis. Second, the selected data are organized into thematic categories based on the fundamental dimensions of learning identified in Al-Ghazali's educational thought. These categories include the nature and purpose of knowledge, the intention underlying learning (*niyyah*), ethical conduct in educational relationships (*adab*), spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and the practical application of knowledge (*'ilm wa al-'amal*). Third, each category is examined through descriptive analysis to explain the central arguments, meanings, and educational principles contained in the primary source. Fourth, interpretative analysis is conducted to identify the conceptual relationships among these dimensions and reconstruct their significance as an integrated conception of learning. This stage considers how intention provides direction to the pursuit of knowledge, how ethical conduct regulates the learning process, how spiritual purification contributes to personal transformation, and how the application of knowledge demonstrates the realization of learning outcomes in individual and social life.

The subsequent stage involves contextual and conceptual analysis to examine the relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational thought to contemporary Islamic education. At this stage, the reconstructed principles are critically examined in relation to current educational challenges, including the dominance of performance-oriented learning, the separation of intellectual and spiritual development, the cultivation of academic integrity, and the ethical implications of digital transformation. The analysis seeks to identify both the continuing significance and the contextual limitations of applying classical educational principles within modern educational institutions. Rather than assuming that Al-Ghazali's ideas can be transferred directly into contemporary educational settings, the study examines how their underlying philosophical principles can be interpreted and adapted to address current educational requirements. Through this process, the

Eduistiqomah
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Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

study develops a conceptual synthesis that explains the relationship between intellectual competence, spiritual awareness, ethical responsibility, and the practical application of knowledge. The final analytical results are presented descriptively and systematically to provide a comprehensive interpretation of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning and its potential contribution to contemporary Islamic education.

Data Credibility and Research Rigor

To maintain the credibility and rigor of the analysis, this study applies source verification, contextual examination, and cross-referencing among relevant primary and secondary materials. Source verification is conducted by identifying the bibliographic information and textual authenticity of the materials used, particularly the edition of *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* serving as the primary reference. Contextual examination involves reading relevant passages within their broader discussions to ensure that the interpretation reflects Al-Ghazali's original arguments and does not isolate particular statements from their intellectual context. Cross-referencing is undertaken by comparing relevant explanations in the primary text with scholarly interpretations presented in secondary literature. Differences in interpretation are examined critically rather than treated as interchangeable explanations. In addition, the consistency of thematic categorization is maintained throughout the analytical process so that the conclusions remain directly connected to the research questions and textual evidence. These procedures are intended to strengthen interpretative accuracy, analytical transparency, and the credibility of the conceptual reconstruction. Ultimately, the research rigor is established through the traceability of interpretations to the original sources, the consistency of the analytical categories, and the logical relationship between textual findings and the conclusions concerning contemporary Islamic education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

The Nature and Epistemological Foundations of Learning According to Imam Al-Ghazali

The analysis of Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din reveals that Imam Al-Ghazali conceptualizes learning as a comprehensive process involving intellectual development, spiritual awareness, and moral formation. Knowledge is not merely understood as information acquired through instruction, memorization, or intellectual reasoning, but as a means of understanding the reality of existence and developing awareness of the relationship between human beings and Allah. Within this perspective, learning constitutes an effort to overcome ignorance and develop the intellectual and spiritual capacities necessary for recognizing truth. The findings indicate that the transformative significance of learning lies in its ability to influence the learner's understanding, attitudes, and conduct. Consequently, the acquisition of knowledge is closely connected to the development of

ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

the human heart, the cultivation of moral awareness, and the orientation of individual life toward religious and ethical purposes.

A significant finding concerns Al-Ghazali's classification of knowledge into two principal categories: fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah. The former refers to knowledge that every individual must acquire to fulfill essential religious obligations, maintain sound belief, perform worship correctly, and establish appropriate moral conduct. The latter encompasses knowledge necessary for maintaining collective welfare and addressing the practical needs of society, including medicine, mathematics, engineering, and other scientific disciplines. This classification demonstrates that Al-Ghazali recognizes the importance of both individual religious responsibilities and collective intellectual development. Knowledge is therefore organized according to its functions, obligations, and contributions to human life. The distinction also indicates that the pursuit of worldly knowledge is not inherently separated from religious purposes, provided that its acquisition and application remain consistent with ethical and religious responsibilities.

The findings further identify niyyah (intention) as a fundamental element determining the orientation of learning. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the pursuit of knowledge should be directed toward sincere devotion to Allah, overcoming ignorance, improving personal conduct, and obtaining beneficial knowledge. Conversely, learning motivated primarily by social recognition, material interests, arrogance, or the desire for superiority may undermine its moral and spiritual purposes. The condition of the learner's heart is consequently regarded as an important factor influencing the reception and application of knowledge. A heart dominated by negative dispositions, excessive worldly attachment, and moral impurities may obstruct the transformative benefits of learning. Thus, the significance of knowledge is not determined exclusively by intellectual achievement but also by the intention and spiritual condition accompanying its acquisition.

Another finding concerns the relationship between human intellectual effort and divine guidance in the acquisition of knowledge. Al-Ghazali recognizes the importance of sensory experience, observation, rational reflection, and disciplined intellectual inquiry as essential means of learning. Nevertheless, human reason possesses limitations and requires appropriate guidance to distinguish between truth and falsehood. Reason functions as an important instrument for understanding reality, but it does not independently constitute an unrestricted source of ultimate truth. Its operation must remain connected to revelation and religious principles. This relationship establishes the complementary roles of intellectual reasoning and divine guidance within Al-Ghazali's epistemological framework. Accordingly, learning involves both active human intellectual engagement and recognition of the spiritual foundations that guide the pursuit of knowledge.

Eduistiqomah
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ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

The analysis also demonstrates that knowledge and action ('ilm wa al-'amal) constitute inseparable dimensions of genuine learning. Knowledge is expected to influence individual behavior, moral decisions, religious practices, and social responsibilities. Its significance is therefore not exhausted through theoretical understanding or the ability to reproduce information. Rather, knowledge achieves its educational purpose when it becomes the foundation for responsible action and virtuous conduct. Al-Ghazali criticizes the pursuit of knowledge when it is directed toward prestige, argumentative superiority, social recognition, or proximity to political authority without corresponding moral improvement. Such criticism demonstrates that intellectual achievement without ethical responsibility may contradict the fundamental purposes of learning. The relationship between knowledge and action consequently establishes practical conduct as an essential dimension of the educational process. Taken together, the findings identify several interconnected dimensions of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning: the nature and purpose of knowledge, the classification of knowledge, the importance of intention, the relationship between reason and divine guidance, and the unity of knowledge and action. These dimensions establish that learning is a process involving intellectual acquisition, spiritual orientation, ethical responsibility, and practical realization.

Dynamics and Challenges of Contemporary Islamic Education

The analysis of contemporary Islamic education identifies several major challenges concerning educational orientation, institutional development, and pedagogical implementation. One prominent issue is the increasing emphasis on measurable academic performance, institutional competitiveness, and economic outcomes. Educational institutions are increasingly evaluated through indicators such as graduation rates, institutional reputation, employment opportunities, and administrative achievements. Although these indicators contribute to institutional accountability, their dominance may reduce attention to the moral, spiritual, and ethical dimensions of educational development. The commercialization of educational institutions and the growing emphasis on institutional branding and competitive facilities further demonstrate the influence of economic considerations on educational management.

Another challenge concerns the instrumental orientation of students toward learning. Academic qualifications, grades, and employment opportunities may become the dominant motivations for pursuing education, while intellectual curiosity, sincere knowledge-seeking, and moral development receive insufficient attention. In certain educational environments, religious learning is also implemented primarily to fulfill curricular requirements rather than to cultivate deeper ethical and spiritual awareness. The expansion of digital communication and social media introduces additional challenges concerning students' moral development, particularly when access to information is not accompanied by adequate ethical guidance and self-discipline.

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

The findings also indicate that academic integrity constitutes an important challenge within contemporary educational environments. Plagiarism, unauthorized academic assistance, inappropriate use of artificial intelligence, and other forms of academic misconduct demonstrate the difficulties of maintaining intellectual honesty in increasingly technology-mediated learning processes. These practices reveal that access to information and technological resources does not automatically produce ethical responsibility. Students require not only the technical ability to utilize digital resources but also the moral awareness necessary to evaluate the accuracy, originality, and appropriateness of their academic activities.

A further challenge concerns the separation between religious and general knowledge. Despite various efforts to promote the integration of Islamic and scientific knowledge, these domains are frequently organized within separate curricular and institutional structures. Religious subjects are often associated with spiritual and moral development, whereas scientific and professional disciplines are primarily oriented toward technical competencies and practical applications. Such compartmentalization may weaken students' understanding of the relationship between knowledge, religious values, and social responsibilities. The implementation of knowledge integration also encounters methodological limitations, particularly when religious references are incorporated into scientific subjects without establishing meaningful epistemological connections between the two domains.

The position and responsibilities of teachers represent another important issue. Contemporary educational transformation increasingly emphasizes teachers as facilitators of learning, but this development may reduce recognition of their broader responsibilities as intellectual and moral guides. Transactional relationships between educational institutions, teachers, and parents may further weaken the ethical foundations of educational interaction. The declining recognition of teachers' moral authority and exemplary conduct creates difficulties in maintaining educational relationships based on mutual respect, responsibility, and character formation.

The analysis further identifies limitations in contemporary educational assessment. Learning outcomes are frequently evaluated through examinations, standardized scores, and administrative indicators, while moral development, intellectual honesty, spiritual awareness, and the practical application of knowledge receive less systematic attention. In addition, the dissemination of narrow religious interpretations, ideological polarization, and limited critical literacy create challenges for developing balanced religious understanding among students. These issues are compounded by institutional limitations, including inadequate management professionalism, limited teacher development, and difficulties in adapting to technological and educational changes. Overall, the findings indicate that contemporary Islamic education faces interconnected challenges

ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

involving instrumental learning orientations, moral development, academic integrity, knowledge integration, teacher responsibilities, assessment practices, and institutional governance.

The Relevance and Reconstruction of Al-Ghazali's Conception of Learning in Contemporary Islamic Education

The analysis identifies several areas in which Al-Ghazali's conception of learning can contribute to the development of contemporary Islamic education. The first concerns the reconstruction of learning motivation through the principle of niyyah. This principle establishes that learning should be directed toward sincere knowledge-seeking, personal improvement, religious responsibility, and social benefit. Its educational implications include developing learning environments that encourage intellectual perseverance, academic honesty, and meaningful engagement with knowledge rather than prioritizing grades, qualifications, or external recognition.

The second concerns the integration of tazkiyat al-nafs into educational practices. Spiritual purification provides a foundation for developing self-discipline, humility, sincerity, emotional regulation, and moral awareness. Within contemporary learning environments, these principles can be reflected through reflective learning activities, ethical discussions, personal evaluation, and the development of responsible behavior. The cultivation of spiritual awareness is particularly relevant to digital learning environments, where students encounter extensive information and various forms of interaction that require self-control and ethical judgment.

The third concerns the revitalization of teachers' responsibilities. Al-Ghazali's educational thought emphasizes that teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge but also moral exemplars and intellectual guides. This perspective supports the development of educational relationships characterized by sincerity, responsibility, respect, and personal guidance. Contemporary student-centered pedagogies can be maintained while strengthening teachers' responsibilities for ethical development and intellectual formation. The relationship between empirical observation, rational reasoning, and spiritual awareness also provides a basis for developing learning practices that integrate critical inquiry with religious and ethical considerations.

The fourth concerns the integration of knowledge and action in educational assessment. The principle of 'ilm wa al-'amal indicates that learning outcomes should extend beyond cognitive achievement to include the practical application of knowledge, ethical behavior, and social contribution. Project-based learning, community engagement, collaborative problem-solving, and reflective assessment provide opportunities to connect theoretical understanding with practical responsibilities. In this context, the acquisition of scientific, social, and religious knowledge should be accompanied by the development of responsible conduct and beneficial action.

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

The fifth concerns the ethical utilization of digital technologies and artificial intelligence. The principles of niyyah, adab, and tazkiyat al-nafs provide a foundation for responsible engagement with digital learning resources. These principles encourage students to use technology for meaningful educational purposes, respect intellectual ownership, verify information, maintain academic honesty, and exercise self-control in digital interactions. Ethical literacy and spiritual awareness therefore become important components of digital education rather than being separated from technological competencies.

The sixth concerns curriculum reconstruction through the classification of knowledge into fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah. This framework provides a basis for maintaining essential religious knowledge while strengthening scientific, technological, and professional competencies. Its application requires meaningful connections between religious values and contemporary disciplines rather than merely adding religious references to scientific materials. Such integration can help students understand the ethical implications of scientific development and recognize the relationship between knowledge acquisition and collective welfare.

Finally, the findings identify the importance of collaboration among families, educational institutions, and communities in implementing Al-Ghazali's educational principles. Moral and spiritual formation requires consistent support across different social environments. Families contribute to the development of learning motivation and personal discipline, educational institutions facilitate intellectual and ethical development, and communities provide opportunities for applying knowledge in social life. Comprehensive educational assessment should consequently consider not only examination results but also character development, academic integrity, religious responsibility, and social participation. These findings establish that Al-Ghazali's conception of learning can be reconstructed into an integrated educational framework connecting learning motivation, educational ethics, spiritual development, knowledge integration, responsible technology utilization, and the practical application of knowledge.

DISCUSSION

Reinterpreting Learning as an Integrated Process of Intellectual, Spiritual, and Moral Formation

The findings concerning Al-Ghazali's conception of learning demonstrate that knowledge acquisition cannot be separated from the broader process of human formation. This perspective challenges educational orientations that primarily evaluate learning through cognitive achievement, information retention, and the development of technical competencies. Although these dimensions remain important, they do not sufficiently explain the broader purposes of Islamic education. Al-Ghazali's understanding places knowledge within a comprehensive framework in which intellectual development is expected to contribute to spiritual awareness and

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

moral improvement (Padil et al., 2021). This position suggests that educational excellence should be evaluated through the relationship between what individuals know, how they understand the purposes of knowledge, and how they translate their understanding into conduct. The significance of learning therefore lies not only in increasing intellectual capacity but also in developing individuals who can exercise their knowledge responsibly.

The classification of knowledge into fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah also offers an important perspective for reconsidering the organization of contemporary Islamic education (Malintang et al., 2025). The distinction demonstrates that knowledge has both individual religious obligations and collective social functions. In modern educational institutions, the development of scientific and professional competencies should not be understood as competing with religious education. Rather, both dimensions should be organized within an educational framework that recognizes their complementary contributions to human development. This classification provides a conceptual basis for establishing educational priorities that maintain the relationship between religious foundations and scientific advancement. However, its contemporary application should not be reduced to a rigid curricular hierarchy. Instead, the classification can serve as a philosophical basis for ensuring that essential religious knowledge and socially necessary scientific disciplines develop in a mutually supportive relationship. Such an interpretation is particularly important in educational environments that increasingly emphasize specialization and professional competencies.

The principle of niyyah further expands the understanding of learning by establishing the relationship between educational motivation and moral responsibility (Istiqomah et al., 2025). Contemporary educational systems often encourage achievement through grades, qualifications, institutional recognition, and employment opportunities. These motivations are not necessarily problematic because they may encourage perseverance and professional development. Nevertheless, they become insufficient when they dominate the purposes of learning and weaken the intrinsic value of knowledge. Al-Ghazali's conception of intention provides a basis for repositioning academic motivation within a broader framework of religious devotion, intellectual responsibility, and social benefit. This perspective suggests that the development of educational motivation should involve more than encouraging students to achieve higher academic performance (Triansyah et al., 2023). It should also cultivate sincerity, intellectual humility, and awareness of the consequences of knowledge acquisition. Consequently, niyyah can be interpreted as an ethical foundation that directs learning toward purposes extending beyond individual academic success.

The relationship between reason and divine guidance also deserves consideration in the context of contemporary epistemological debates. Al-Ghazali's recognition of rational inquiry demonstrates that intellectual reasoning occupies an important position in the acquisition of

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

knowledge. However, the recognition of reason's limitations indicates that intellectual activity requires ethical and epistemological orientation. This position should not be interpreted as an opposition to scientific reasoning or empirical investigation. Rather, it establishes the importance of considering the purposes, assumptions, and consequences of intellectual inquiry. Within contemporary Islamic education, this perspective can support the development of critical thinking that remains attentive to moral and spiritual considerations. Students should be encouraged to examine evidence, question assumptions, evaluate arguments, and develop scientific understanding while recognizing that intellectual competence also carries responsibilities concerning the application of knowledge (Asyibli et al., 2025). Thus, Al-Ghazali's epistemology provides a foundation for integrating rational inquiry with ethical and religious awareness.

The relationship between knowledge and action represents the practical dimension of this integrated conception. Learning becomes meaningful when intellectual understanding influences behavior and contributes to individual and collective welfare. This principle challenges educational practices that consider examinations and academic qualifications as sufficient indicators of learning success. Although these assessments are necessary, they do not fully demonstrate whether knowledge has been internalized or translated into responsible conduct. The emphasis on 'ilm wa al-'amal therefore supports a broader conception of educational achievement in which understanding, ethical decision-making, and practical application are interconnected. Al-Ghazali's criticism of knowledge pursued for prestige or personal superiority further demonstrates that intellectual accomplishment without moral responsibility may undermine the purposes of education. The central implication is that contemporary Islamic education should develop an assessment orientation that recognizes the practical and ethical consequences of learning alongside cognitive achievement.

Reconsidering Contemporary Islamic Education through the Perspective of Al-Ghazali's Educational Philosophy

The challenges identified in contemporary Islamic education indicate that educational transformation requires a reconsideration of its philosophical foundations rather than merely improving instructional techniques or institutional facilities (S. Bahri et al., 2023). The growing emphasis on performance indicators, institutional competition, and economic outcomes demonstrates the influence of instrumental orientations within educational management. Although institutional development and financial sustainability are necessary, they should not become the primary determinants of educational purposes. Al-Ghazali's conception of learning offers a critical perspective by emphasizing that knowledge should contribute to the development of human beings who possess intellectual competence, moral integrity, and spiritual awareness. This perspective does not reject professional qualifications or measurable educational outcomes but places them within a broader understanding of educational responsibility (Mau, 2024). Accordingly,

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

institutional success should be understood through the ability to develop knowledgeable and ethically responsible individuals rather than through administrative and economic indicators alone.

The instrumentalization of learning also reveals the importance of reconsidering students' motivation and understanding of educational achievement. When students perceive education primarily as a means of obtaining qualifications or securing employment, the intrinsic significance of knowledge may receive insufficient attention. Al-Ghazali's principle of niyyah provides an alternative orientation by emphasizing that the pursuit of knowledge should be directed toward meaningful intellectual, spiritual, and social purposes. This interpretation can contribute to educational practices that encourage students to understand learning as a continuous process of personal development rather than merely a sequence of academic requirements (Zarkasyi, 2021). In this regard, the relationship between academic achievement and spiritual responsibility becomes an important consideration for curriculum development, classroom interaction, and institutional culture. The objective is not to eliminate practical motivations but to ensure that they remain consistent with the broader ethical purposes of Islamic education.

The challenges of academic misconduct and digital misuse further demonstrate the importance of strengthening the ethical dimension of learning. The availability of artificial intelligence applications and digital resources has transformed academic practices by providing new opportunities for accessing and producing information. However, these developments also create difficulties concerning originality, intellectual ownership, accountability, and the responsible use of information. From Al-Ghazali's perspective, these challenges cannot be adequately addressed through institutional regulations alone. Rules concerning plagiarism and academic honesty remain important, but their effectiveness depends on the development of ethical awareness among learners. The principle of adab provides a foundation for understanding academic honesty as part of a broader moral responsibility, while niyyah emphasizes the importance of sincerity in completing academic activities. The development of these values can help students recognize that the use of technology must remain consistent with intellectual integrity and personal accountability.

The persistent separation between religious and general knowledge also requires a more integrated educational orientation (Ramadona et al., 2022). These challenges suggest that integration cannot be achieved merely by placing religious references alongside scientific concepts. It requires a deeper understanding of the epistemological relationship between knowledge, religious values, and human responsibilities. Al-Ghazali's classification of knowledge provides a conceptual basis for developing this relationship because it recognizes the significance of both individual religious obligations and collective intellectual needs. The contemporary implication is that scientific and professional disciplines should be developed alongside ethical and spiritual reflection. For example, technological education should include consideration of

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

human welfare, environmental studies should be connected with responsibilities toward creation, and economic education should incorporate moral considerations concerning justice and social benefit. Such an approach can help overcome artificial divisions between religious understanding and scientific inquiry without disregarding the methodological characteristics of individual disciplines.

The role of teachers also requires reconsideration in light of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy. Contemporary pedagogical approaches increasingly emphasize student autonomy and the teacher's function as a learning facilitator. These developments can improve student participation and encourage independent intellectual development. However, they should not eliminate the teacher's ethical and formative responsibilities. Al-Ghazali's conception of teachers as moral exemplars and intellectual guides offers a basis for addressing these challenges. The teacher's authority should emerge from professional competence, ethical credibility, sincerity, and the ability to guide students toward meaningful understanding. This interpretation also requires educational institutions to strengthen teacher development through pedagogical training, subject expertise, ethical preparation, and digital competencies (Murharyana et al., 2024). Thus, the revitalization of the teacher's role involves balancing contemporary pedagogical innovation with the enduring importance of educational ethics and exemplary conduct.

Another important implication concerns the limitations of cognitive-centered educational assessment. The dominance of examinations and numerical indicators may encourage superficial learning when students focus primarily on obtaining satisfactory results. Al-Ghazali's emphasis on the relationship between knowledge and action suggests that educational assessment should also consider the extent to which learning contributes to responsible conduct and practical competence. This does not imply that moral and spiritual development can be measured entirely through numerical indicators. Rather, educational institutions should develop complementary assessment practices that include reflective activities, behavioral observation, authentic learning tasks, and community-based projects. Such practices can provide a broader understanding of students' development while recognizing the limitations of evaluating complex moral and spiritual qualities through standardized instruments. The educational challenge is to establish a balanced assessment system that recognizes cognitive achievement without neglecting the formative purposes of learning.

Reconstructing an Integrated Learning Framework for Contemporary Islamic Education

The synthesis of Al-Ghazali's educational principles suggests the possibility of reconstructing learning as an integrated framework involving intention, ethics, spiritual development, and practical application. This reconstruction is important because the challenges of contemporary Islamic education cannot be addressed through isolated educational interventions. Improving academic integrity, for example, requires more than introducing regulations because it

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

also involves the development of sincere intentions and ethical awareness. Similarly, integrating religious and scientific knowledge requires more than curricular adjustments because it involves reconsidering the philosophical relationship between knowledge and human responsibilities. The proposed reconstruction therefore positions the dimensions of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning as mutually reinforcing elements within a comprehensive educational process.

The first dimension is niyyah, which establishes the orientation and purpose of learning. Within contemporary educational institutions, this principle can be developed through learning objectives that connect academic achievement with intellectual growth, religious responsibility, and social benefit. Students should understand that academic activities are not merely institutional requirements but opportunities to develop knowledge that can contribute to meaningful individual and collective purposes. The second dimension is adab, which regulates the ethical relationships involved in learning. It encompasses the responsibilities of students, teachers, and educational institutions in maintaining honesty, respect, discipline, and accountability. In digital learning environments, adab also provides an ethical foundation for appropriate communication, the responsible use of artificial intelligence, and respect for intellectual ownership.

The third dimension is tazkiyat al-nafs, which emphasizes the internal transformation of learners through self-discipline, reflection, humility, and spiritual awareness. Its contemporary relevance is particularly evident in the need to develop students' ability to regulate their behavior and make responsible decisions amid increasingly complex digital and social environments. Spiritual development should therefore be integrated into learning experiences through reflective practices, ethical discussions, and continuous character formation. The fourth dimension is 'ilm wa al-'amal, which connects intellectual understanding with practical responsibility. This principle encourages educational institutions to develop learning experiences that enable students to apply their knowledge in addressing individual, social, and environmental problems. The relationship between these four dimensions establishes learning as a continuous process in which appropriate intentions guide educational activities, ethical conduct regulates interaction, spiritual development supports personal transformation, and practical application demonstrates the realization of knowledge.

The integration of these dimensions also provides a basis for reconsidering contemporary curriculum development (Al Ayyubi et al., 2024; Daud, 2023; Halimah, 2023; Hendawi et al., 2024; Rabbani et al., 2024). The distinction between fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah can guide educational institutions in maintaining the importance of essential religious knowledge while developing scientific, technological, and professional competencies. The integration of these domains should be established through meaningful relationships between disciplinary knowledge and ethical responsibilities. Scientific inquiry can be developed alongside reflection on its social implications, technological competencies can be accompanied by digital ethics, and professional

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

education can incorporate considerations of public welfare and moral accountability. In this way, the curriculum becomes a means of connecting intellectual specialization with the broader purposes of Islamic education rather than separating different forms of knowledge into unrelated domains.

The proposed reconstruction also has implications for educational leadership and institutional culture. The development of holistic learning requires consistency between educational objectives, teacher practices, assessment systems, and institutional policies. Educational institutions need to establish environments that support academic integrity, encourage meaningful intellectual inquiry, strengthen teacher professionalism, and provide opportunities for spiritual and moral development. Families and communities also play important roles because the formation of ethical conduct cannot be achieved through formal instruction alone. Collaboration among these educational environments can reinforce the values developed within schools and universities and provide opportunities for their practical application in everyday life.

Nevertheless, the reconstruction of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning should be undertaken through critical contextual interpretation rather than direct transplantation of classical educational practices into modern institutions. Contemporary education operates within different technological, institutional, and sociocultural conditions. Therefore, the application of Al-Ghazali's principles requires consideration of modern pedagogical methods, scientific developments, student diversity, and institutional requirements. His educational philosophy should function as a foundational ethical and epistemological orientation that informs contemporary educational innovation rather than as a substitute for all modern educational approaches. The central contribution of this reconstruction is its attempt to establish coherence between intellectual advancement, spiritual awareness, ethical responsibility, and practical engagement within a contemporary Islamic educational framework.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that Al-Ghazali's conception of learning provides a philosophical basis for reorienting contemporary Islamic education toward holistic human development. The integration of niyyah, adab, tazkiyat al-nafs, and 'ilm wa al-'amal offers a conceptual framework for addressing the limitations of instrumental learning, moral fragmentation, epistemological separation, and the ethical challenges of digital transformation. Its contemporary relevance lies not merely in preserving classical educational values but in critically interpreting their underlying principles to respond to the changing demands of modern education. Through this reconstruction, Islamic education can maintain its commitment to intellectual excellence while strengthening the spiritual and ethical foundations necessary for responsible human development.

Eduistiqomah
in Islamic Education Management
ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive analysis, the concept of learning according to Imam Al-Ghazali in Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din extends far beyond the cognitive acquisition of knowledge, the accumulation of information, or the achievement of intellectual competence. Learning constitutes an integrated process of intellectual, spiritual, and moral transformation through which human beings develop a deeper understanding of knowledge, themselves, and their relationship with Allah. Within this perspective, the ultimate purpose of learning is not merely to produce intellectually capable individuals but to cultivate human beings whose knowledge is guided by sincere intentions, spiritual consciousness, ethical conduct, and social responsibility. The epistemological foundation of Al-Ghazali's educational thought rests on the interconnectedness of niyyah (intention), adab (ethical conduct), tazkiyat al-nafs (spiritual purification), and 'ilm wa al-'amal (the unity of knowledge and action). These dimensions establish that the value of knowledge cannot be determined solely by its quantity, complexity, or practical usefulness, but must also be assessed through its moral orientation and transformative contribution to human life. Furthermore, the classification of knowledge into fardhu 'ain and fardhu kifayah demonstrates that learning must maintain a balance between individual religious obligations and collective intellectual and social needs. Consequently, Al-Ghazali's conception of learning provides an epistemological framework in which intellectual inquiry, divine guidance, spiritual development, and practical responsibility function as complementary dimensions of education.

The analysis also indicates that several challenges confronting contemporary Islamic education, including the instrumentalization of learning, the dominance of administrative and cognitive performance indicators, the separation of religious and scientific knowledge, the weakening of academic integrity, and the ethical implications of digital transformation, reflect a broader imbalance between intellectual achievement and human formation. Educational systems that prioritize measurable outcomes without adequately addressing spiritual awareness and moral responsibility risk producing individuals who possess technical competencies but lack sufficient ethical orientation in applying their knowledge. In this regard, the relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy lies in its capacity to provide a critical foundation for reconsidering the purposes, processes, and outcomes of contemporary Islamic education. Its contribution should not be understood as an attempt to reproduce classical educational practices without contextual adaptation, but rather as a philosophical reconstruction that translates enduring spiritual and ethical principles into contemporary educational realities. Such reconstruction requires the purification of learning motivation, the meaningful integration of spiritual and ethical values into modern curricula, the revitalization of teachers as murabbi who combine intellectual guidance with moral exemplarity, and the strengthening of educational practices that connect theoretical understanding with responsible action. It also requires the development of digital literacy grounded in academic

ISSN(Online): 3164-6891
Vol 1 No 2 (2026): November 2026
https://journal.eduistiqomah.or.id/index.php/EIEM

honesty, ethical awareness, and accountability, as well as educational assessment that recognizes intellectual competence alongside character development and social contribution.

The principal contribution of this study is the reconstruction of Al-Ghazali's conception of learning as an integrated framework for contemporary Islamic education, emphasizing the interdependence of epistemological orientation, ethical formation, spiritual purification, and practical realization. Through this framework, niyyah establishes the purpose of learning, adab regulates the ethical conduct of the learning process, tazkiyat al-nafs supports the transformation of the learner's inner disposition, and 'ilm wa al-'amal ensures that acquired knowledge is translated into beneficial action. These dimensions should not be regarded as isolated educational components but as mutually reinforcing elements of holistic human development. The study therefore underscores that the renewal of Islamic education requires more than curricular modernization, technological innovation, or institutional improvement; it requires a fundamental reorientation of educational purposes toward the formation of intellectually competent, spiritually conscious, ethically responsible, and socially engaged individuals. Nevertheless, as a qualitative library-based study, the proposed framework represents a conceptual reconstruction rather than an empirically tested pedagogical model. Future research may therefore examine its applicability through empirical investigations in Islamic educational institutions, particularly by exploring how its principles can be operationalized in curriculum development, teacher professional development, digital learning practices, and multidimensional educational assessment. Such investigations would help establish the practical feasibility of Al-Ghazali's educational philosophy while extending its contribution to the transformation of contemporary Islamic education.

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