

Al-Ghazali's Concept of Qolbu Education Thought and Its Relevance to the Character Education System in Indonesia

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Abstrak

Pemikiran pendidikan kalbu menurut Al-Ghazali merupakan pendekatan yang mengintegrasikan aspek spiritual dan moral dalam proses pendidikan. Al-Ghazali menekankan bahwa pendidikan tidak hanya bertujuan untuk mengembangkan aspek intelektual, tetapi juga untuk membentuk karakter dan spiritualitas individu. Dalam pandangannya, kalbu memiliki peranan penting dalam pengambilan keputusan dan mempengaruhi perilaku individu. Tujuan pendidikan kalbu adalah mendekatkan diri kepada Allah, mencapai kesempurnaan moral, dan menghasilkan pengetahuan yang bermanfaat. Metode pendidikan yang diusulkan mencakup pembelajaran melalui teladan, refleksi, diskusi, dan praktik spiritual. Pemikiran Al-Ghazali tentang pendidikan kalbu sangat relevan dalam konteks pendidikan kontemporer, terutama dalam pengembangan karakter dan integritas individu. Makalah ini juga membahas tentang tujuan dan implementasi pemikiran kalbu dalam pendidikan.

Kata kunci : Pendidikan, Pemikiran Kalbu, Moral

Abstract

The thought of heart education according to Al-Ghazali is an approach that integrates spiritual and moral aspects in the educational process. Al-Ghazali emphasized that education does not only aim to develop intellectual aspects, but also to shape individual character and spirituality. In his view, the heart has an important role in decision-making and influencing individual behavior. The goal of education of the heart is to draw closer to Allah, achieve moral perfection, and produce useful knowledge. The proposed educational methods include learning through example, reflection, discussion, and spiritual practices. Al-Ghazali's thoughts on education of the heart are highly relevant in the context of contemporary education, especially in the development of character and individual integrity. The paper also discusses the purpose and implementation of the heart's thoughts in education.

Keywords: Education, Heart Thinking, Morals

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INTRODUCTION

According to Al-Ghazali, the empiricists have limited knowledge to sensory perception, thereby restricting the vast mercy of Allah (SWT). This limitation makes the pursuit of truth difficult to achieve. Similarly, the rationalists rely heavily on reason, even though reason itself operates within a limited scope¹. As Ibn Khaldun stated, reason does not possess the capacity to fully comprehend matters related to divinity, emotions, the afterlife, and similar issues. If forced beyond its limits, it would be like using a gold scale to weigh a mountain². Education, as a process, involves several key components. According to Al-Ghazali, these components include educational objectives, students, the curriculum, teaching methodologies, and educational evaluation. Education can be seen as an application of philosophical thought, while a philosopher operates based on their own reasoning and principles. Al-Ghazali broadly defines the goal of education as the perfection of human beings developing individuals who attain happiness both in this world and the hereafter³.

According to psychologists, as quoted by Yusuf al-Qaradawi in his book *The Existence of Allah*, the denial of Allah's truth by some intellectuals is merely a deceptive tactic to justify their deviations and uphold ethical corruption. Moreover, it serves as a means to conceal their weakness and inability to resist their desires⁴. Because of this, prophets were not primarily concerned with proving the existence of Allah (SWT), as it was already known and accepted by all Muslims. Instead, their duty was to purify faith from the traces of polytheism and to enjoin righteousness in shaping human character. Based on the explanation above, Al-Ghazali's thoughts on *qalb* (the heart) are considered essential for further study. This is particularly relevant today, as many Muslims have become dominated by their desires,

¹ Dedi Andrianto and Wakib Kurniawan, "The Character of Early Childhood Education: Perspectives of Ki Hajar Dewantara and Maria Montessori," *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* 9, no. 1 (2025): 117–29, <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v9i1.6316>.

² CLAIRE-MARIE HEFNER, "Morality, Religious Authority, and the Digital Edge," *American Ethnologist* 49, no. 3 (August 1, 2022): 359–73, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13088>.

³ Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Gazali and Muhammad Al, "Ihya Ulumuddin Juz 1," *Kairo: Daru Ihya Al-Kitab Asabiyah*, Nd, n.d.

⁴ K. Munawir et al., "Character Building Training Model for Young People to Strengthen Religious Moderation," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8552>.

attachment to worldly materialism, moral degradation, and spiritual emptiness⁵.

The concept of heart-based education according to Al-Ghazali has attracted significant attention from researchers in recent years. Azhari & Mustapa⁶ explore Al-Ghazali's concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes a balance between intellectual and spiritual aspects in shaping an individual's character. Meanwhile, Royani, Lubis, & Helmi examine the relevance of Al-Ghazali's thoughts on character education in Indonesia, including aspects such as educational objectives, curriculum, and value-based teaching methods⁷. Additionally, Sef & Abu Bakar highlight how the paradigm of Islamic education in Indonesia can be integrated with Al-Ghazali's educational concepts, particularly in developing moral character and balancing knowledge with spirituality⁸. Furthermore, Ulum & Fahmi delve deeper into Al-Ghazali's concept of heart-based education and its influence on individual moral decision-making⁹. Another study by Sumiarti et al. connects Al-Ghazali's educational objectives with the perspective of hadith, emphasizing that education should not only focus on cognitive aspects but also on moral perfection and spiritual closeness to Allah¹⁰. The findings from these various studies indicate that Al-Ghazali's thoughts remain relevant in modern education, particularly in shaping students' character and moral values.

Although previous studies have extensively discussed Al-Ghazali's concept of qalb education from various perspectives, several gaps remain unexplored. One of the primary gaps is the lack of focus on the implementation of qalb education within

⁵ N Y Haque and N H M Nor, "The Role of Islamic Education in Strengthening Students' Character in the Digital Age," *Journal of Islamic Education Perspectives* 7, no. 1 (2020): 42–56.

⁶ Devi Syukri Azhari and Mustapa Mustapa, "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran* 4, no. 2 (2021): 271–78, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v4i2.2865>.

⁷ Royani Royani, Amroh Lubis, and Taufik Helmi, "Konsep Pendidikan Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Dengan Sistem Pendidikan Karakter Di Indonesia," *Baitul Hikmah: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman* 1, no. 1 (2023): 39–51, https://doi.org/10.46781/baitul_hikmah.v1i1.750.

⁸ Widad Sef, M Yunus, and Abu Bakar, "THE RELEVANCE OF AL-GHAZALI'S PERSPECTIVE EDUCATION TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION PARADIGM IN INDONESIA," *Relevansi Pendidikan Perspektif Al-Ghazali Terhadap Paradigma Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia* 21, no. 1 (2024): 94.

⁹ M. Alfanny Fahmil Ulum and Muhammad Fahmi, "The Concept of Qalbu Education According to Imam Ghazali," *Maharot: Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 2 (2023): 190, <https://doi.org/10.28944/maharot.v7i2.1405>.

¹⁰ Sumiarti Sumiarti et al., "Tujuan Pendidikan Islam Menurut Al-Ghazali Ditinjau Dari Perspektif Hadis," *El-Sunnah: Jurnal Kajian Hadis Dan Integrasi Ilmu* 2, no. 1 (2021): 148–61.

contemporary educational systems. Most prior research, such as that conducted by Azhari & Mustapa and Royani et al., has primarily emphasized philosophical aspects without linking them to specific teaching methods in digital-based curricula or blended learning systems. Additionally, previous studies have yet to explore the relevance of qalb education within a global and multicultural context. The studies by Sef & Abu Bakar and Sumiarti et al., for instance, remain focused on the relevance of Al-Ghazali's educational concepts in Indonesia, while comparative research on the implementation of qalb education within Islamic education systems across different countries remains scarce. Moreover, another underexplored aspect is the integration of qalb education with technology and digital learning. Most existing research has not considered how this concept can be applied in the digital era, including the utilization of e-learning, artificial intelligence (AI), or gamification in ethics education. While Ulum & Fahmi discuss the concept of qalb in education, they do not highlight its adaptation to digital learning models. Furthermore, prior research has been largely conceptual and literature-based, as seen in studies by Royani et al., and Sumiarti et al. However, there is still a lack of empirical studies using quantitative methods or case studies to assess the effectiveness of qalb education in shaping students' morality within modern educational settings. To bridge these gaps, this study aims to introduce several novel contributions.

First, it will develop an implementation model for qalb education in digital curricula, such as AI-based applications for character development or value-based gamification inspired by Al-Ghazali's moral teachings. Second, this research will conduct a comparative analysis of how qalb education is applied within Islamic education systems in different countries, offering a broader perspective on the effectiveness of this educational model in a global context. Third, in addition to theoretical approaches, this study will employ empirical research using both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the impact of qalb education on students' character formation in the modern era. Fourth, this research will explore how AI and big data analytics can be utilized to personalize moral education based on qalb principles, making spiritual values-based education more structured and data-driven. By offering new perspectives and practical solutions for implementing Al-Ghazali's concept of qalb education in the digital and global era, this study is

expected to make a significant contribution to academic literature and contemporary educational practices.

According to Al-Ghazali, heart-based education is a concept that emphasizes the balance between intellectuality, morality, and spirituality in the educational process. However, in the reality of modern education, there has been a decline in moral values and a lack of integration of spiritual principles within formal education systems. Many contemporary educational systems focus primarily on cognitive aspects, while character and spiritual development are often neglected. Furthermore, the rapid advancement of technology and the digitalization of education demand an educational model that accommodates character formation based on Islamic values. Therefore, this study aims to explore how Al-Ghazali's concept of heart-based education can be implemented in modern education, particularly in addressing moral degradation and the need for character education rooted in spiritual values.

This research seeks to analyze the concept of heart-based education according to Al-Ghazali, including the principles and methods he proposed for character formation. Additionally, it aims to identify the relevance of Al-Ghazali's thoughts in contemporary education, particularly within formal and non-formal education systems. Furthermore, the study will explore the implementation of heart-based education in modern curricula by considering the integration of technology and digitalization in learning. Moreover, this research will evaluate the impact of heart-based education on students' character through empirical studies or case analyses to assess its effectiveness in shaping morality and individual integrity. Through this research, it is hoped that Al-Ghazali's heart-based education can serve as a reference for developing character education curricula in the modern era and provide solutions to the challenges of moral decline in the education sector.

METHODS

This research employs a library research method, gathering data and information from books and classical texts in both Arabic and Indonesian. The nature of this research is descriptive analysis, which involves systematically explaining and presenting existing materials before analyzing them to derive

conclusions¹¹. The thesis is structured using a qualitative research method. This method is often referred to as the naturalistic research method, as it is conducted in a natural setting. It is also known as the ethnographic research method because it was initially used in cultural anthropology studies¹².

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study on The Concept of Heart-Based Education According to Al-Ghazali affirm that heart-based education plays a crucial role in shaping individual character through the integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects. Al-Ghazali emphasizes that education is not solely aimed at enhancing intellectual intelligence but also at cultivating individuals with noble character and a deep spiritual connection with Allah. In his view, the qalb (heart) serves as the central control of human behavior and is divided into two main aspects: the physical heart, which functions as the biological center of life, and the non-physical heart, which governs behavior and moral decision-making. When the qalb is pure and sound, an individual will act in accordance with virtuous values. Conversely, if the qalb is tainted by desires and evil, one's behavior will deviate. This study finds that the primary goal of heart-based education, according to Al-Ghazali, is to draw closer to Allah (Taqarrub Ilallah), achieve moral and ethical perfection, acquire beneficial knowledge, develop a well-rounded individual in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, and attain happiness in both this world and the hereafter. Education should focus on fostering a spiritual connection between humans and God, guiding individuals to embody akhlaq al-karimah (noble character), and ensuring that the knowledge imparted is meaningful and beneficial to life. Furthermore, heart-based education seeks to create balance within individuals so that they are not only intellectually intelligent but also empathetic, socially skilled, and morally upright.

In its implementation, Al-Ghazali proposes several methods for heart-based education, including role modeling (uswah hasanah), self-reflection and muhasabah (introspection), discussion and dialogue, as well as spiritual practices such as dhikr

¹¹ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019).

¹² Ahmad Mukhtar et al., *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Jln. Sungai Lareh No.26, Kel. Lubuk Minturun, Kec. Koto Tengah, Kota Padang, Sumatera Barat: AIKOMEDIA PRESS, 2024).

(remembrance of God) and worship. Teachers or educators must serve as exemplary figures for students by embodying moral values in their daily lives. Additionally, education should encourage individuals to engage in self-evaluation to assess the extent to which they have practiced moral and spiritual values in their lives. Discussion and dialogue are also considered essential, as they enable students to gain a deeper understanding of ethical principles through social interaction. Moreover, spiritual practices such as dhikr, supplication, and prayer are fundamental elements of heart-based education, as they bring inner peace and heighten awareness of God's presence.

This study also highlights the relevance of heart-based education in the context of modern education, particularly in shaping students' character and moral integrity. A curriculum rooted in spiritual values can help address the growing moral decline in contemporary times. Character education in the digital era is also a critical issue, where the concept of heart-based education can be integrated into technology based learning. For instance, e-learning platforms can be designed not only to deliver academic content but also to instill moral consciousness in students. Additionally, heart-based education emphasizes the role of the environment family, school, and society in shaping an individual's qalb. Therefore, strengthening community and family based education is essential. The implications of this study suggest that heart-based education is not merely a philosophical concept but can be practically implemented in various aspects of modern life. Educational institutions can develop a more holistic curriculum by integrating spiritual and moral values across all subjects, not just religious studies. Furthermore, the use of technology in moral education can be enhanced by leveraging artificial intelligence to support ethics and value based learning. Non formal education within communities and families also plays a crucial role in fostering a sound qalb from an early age.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the concept of heart-based education, further empirical research is needed to measure its effectiveness in shaping students' character and moral integrity across different social and cultural contexts. By applying the principles of heart-based education, individuals are expected not only to achieve academic success but also to develop strong moral

values and a deep connection with God. The relevance of heart-based education in the modern era is increasingly significant in addressing moral degradation and the rapid advancement of technology. Therefore, incorporating this concept into contemporary education systems is a strategic step toward fostering a generation that maintains a balance between intellect, morality, and spirituality.

Biography of Al-Ghazali

His full name was Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Ghazali. He was born in the year 450 Hijri (1058 CE) in the city of Tus, located in the province of Khorasan, Persia. Al-Ghazali had one brother. Before passing away, their father entrusted his loyal friends with the responsibility of caring for his two sons and ensuring they received a proper education. His friends honored this request, and both children were given the opportunity to study. Once they had exhausted their father's inheritance, they were encouraged to continue pursuing knowledge as much as possible. Al-Ghazali was an exceptional scholar and thinker. Due to his brilliance, he was given the title *Hujjat al-Islam* (The Proof of Islam), *Zayn al-Din* (The Ornament of Religion), and *Bahrūn Mufriq* (The Boundless Ocean). Because Al-Ghazali's father was known for his unique character, his name is sometimes pronounced as "Ghazali" with a double "z," meaning "eccentric." However, the more common pronunciation uses a single "z," derived from *Ghazala*, the name of his birthplace. Al-Ghazali had a son named Hamid, earning him the title *Abu Hamid* (Father of Hamid). For this reason, his full name is recorded as *Abu Hamid Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Ghazali al-Toosi*.

Education of the Heart According to Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali divides the concept of the qalb (heart) into two meanings: a) The first meaning refers to a physical organ flesh in the shape of a cypress or a cone, located on the left side of the chest, with a cavity containing dark blood. It serves as the source and center of the soul. In this sense, the heart also exists in animals and in the bodies of the deceased. b) The second meaning refers to something subtle (Al-Lathiifah), which is connected to the physical heart but functions as the center of human behavior. However, the relationship between the two cannot be fully explained in words, as it belongs to the realm of personal experience. This subtle

heart represents the true essence of a person it is the faculty that perceives, understands, and commands. It is this heart that truly recognizes Allah (SWT). The qalb possesses the ability to experience emotions such as anxiety and happiness. When the qalb is in a good state, the entire body will function properly as well¹³. Imam Al-Ghazali's concept of heart-based education is an approach that integrates spiritual and moral aspects into the educational process. He emphasizes the importance of moral and ethical development as an essential part of education. According to Al-Ghazali, education should not only aim to develop intellectual abilities but also focus on shaping good character and spirituality through the refinement of the heart (kalbu). In his view, the heart plays a crucial role in decision-making and influences an individual's behavior. Al-Ghazali argues that education must incorporate spiritual aspects to achieve true happiness¹⁴.

Al-Ghazali's philosophy of education emphasizes the heart as the essence of humanity and the center of learning. His educational concept aims to cultivate noble character and bring about progressive changes in human behavior. Al-Ghazali's educational approach encompasses various aspects, including educational goals, curriculum, teacher-student ethics, and teaching methods. He highlights the importance of religious sciences and ethics, leaning towards a religious, Sufi, and pragmatic approach. For children's education, Al-Ghazali proposes methods such as role modeling, habituation, advice, as well as rewards and punishments. His educational concept, particularly in character education, is considered highly relevant to the Indonesian education system, which emphasizes intellectual, moral, and spiritual development¹⁵. Some key aspects of heart based education include balancing reason and the heart, moral education, recognizing the heart's potential, both formal and non-formal education, and the role of the environment¹⁶.

¹³ Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulumiddin*, Terj. Moh Zuhri, Muqoffin Mochtar dan Muqorrobin Misbah. (Cetakan Pertama: Semarang: Asy Syifa, 1993), h. 582.

¹⁴ Azhari and Mustapa, "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Menurut Imam Al-Ghazali."

¹⁵ Royani, Lubis, and Helmi, "Konsep Pendidikan Imam Al-Ghazali Dan Relevansinya Dengan Sistem Pendidikan Karakter Di Indonesia."

¹⁶ Duriana and Anin Lihi, "Qalbu Dalam Pandangan Al-Ghazali," *Mediasi: Jurnal Dakwah, Komunikasi Dan Pengembangan Ekonomi Masyarakat* 9, no. 2 (2015): 28–45.

The Purpose of Heart Education According to Al-Ghazali

Imam Al-Ghazali, a great thinker in the Islamic tradition, outlined a profound and holistic approach to education, particularly in the context of spiritual development. According to Al-Ghazali, the primary objectives of heart-centered education include:

1) Drawing Closer to Allah (Taqarrub)

One of the fundamental goals of heart-centered education, as emphasized by Al-Ghazali, is to bring individuals closer to Allah. He believed that the educational process must incorporate the teaching of deep religious and moral values. Through proper education, individuals are expected to develop a deeper understanding and awareness of their Creator, ultimately leading them to true happiness in both this world and the hereafter¹⁷.

2) Moral and Ethical Perfection

Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of developing good character through education. This goal includes cultivating *akhlaq al-karimah* noble character so that individuals can act in accordance with Islamic values and serve as role models for others. Education should be able to eliminate negative traits and instill virtuous behavior in students¹⁸.

3) Beneficial Knowledge

Al-Ghazali stressed the significance of knowledge that is not only intellectual but also practically useful. Knowledge should be balanced with moral development to achieve a holistic educational goal. Therefore, he proposed an educational approach that integrates intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects¹⁹.

¹⁷ Syahraini Tambak, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Al-Ghazali," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 8, no. 1 (2011): 73–87.

¹⁸ M Alfanny Fahmil Ulum and Muhammad Fahmi, "The Concept of Qalbu Education According to Imam Ghazali," *Maharot: Journal of Islamic Education* 7, no. 2 (2023): 190–97.

¹⁹ Widad Sef and M Yunus Abu Bakar, "Relevansi Pendidikan Perspektif Al-Ghazali Terhadap Paradigma Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *Al-Hikmah: Jurnal Agama Dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 21, no. 1 (2024): 93–107.

4) Shaping a Well-Rounded Individual

Al-Ghazali believed that education should aim to develop individuals holistically, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. This includes intellectual growth, emotional intelligence, and practical skills necessary for daily life. He maintained that education should guide individuals in the pursuit of excellence and goodness²⁰.

5) Worldly and Eternal Happiness

According to Al-Ghazali, the goal of education also includes attaining happiness both in this world and in the hereafter. Education should equip individuals with the necessary knowledge and values to lead a meaningful life, enabling them to achieve true and lasting happiness²¹.

Implementation of Al-Ghazali's Kalbu Thought in Education

The concept of the heart's intellect in Islamic education, based on an analysis of its role in understanding thought, can be implemented as follows:

1) A Curriculum Based on Spiritual Values

This involves integrating spiritual values into various subjects, not just religious education, to create a broader context for students. For example, discussing ethics in science or art²².

2) Moral Education

This is a process aimed at shaping individual character and ethics through the teaching of ethical and spiritual values. Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of moral education in achieving a balance between intellectual knowledge and spiritual development. Therefore, moral education should not only cover theoretical instruction but also cultivate the heart through spiritual practices such as dhikr (remembrance of Allah) and muhasabah (self-reflection).

²⁰ Tambak, "Pemikiran Pendidikan Al-Ghazali."

²¹ Sumiarti et al., "Tujuan Pendidikan Islam Menurut Al-Ghazali Ditinjau Dari Perspektif Hadis."

²² Sumiarti et al.

3) Integration of Knowledge

According to Al-Ghazali, knowledge must be combined with moral values to produce individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also ethically wise. Moral education should include teachings on how to apply knowledge in real-life contexts while considering its impact on oneself and others²³.

CONCLUSION

Based on research on the concept of heart-based education according to Al-Ghazali, it can be concluded that this approach emphasizes the integration of spiritual, moral, and intellectual aspects in the educational process. The goal of heart-based education is to shape individuals who not only possess intellectual intelligence but also strong character and a deep spiritual connection to Allah. In Al-Ghazali's view, the qalb (heart) plays a crucial role in decision-making and shaping human behavior. Therefore, education must incorporate moral and ethical aspects to achieve personal perfection. Furthermore, this study highlights that the educational methods proposed by Al-Ghazali such as learning through role models, reflection, discussion, and spiritual practice remain relevant in the context of modern education. In contemporary educational settings, these ideas can be implemented through value-based approaches, curriculum integration that emphasizes character development, and the use of technology to enhance moral and spiritual education. However, this research also identifies gaps in previous studies, particularly regarding the practical implementation of heart-based education in modern educational systems, the limited scope of studies in a global and multicultural context, and the lack of integration with digital technology. Therefore, further research is needed to develop a technology-based heart education model, conduct empirical studies to measure its impact on students' character development, and perform comparative analyses within global education systems. With a more holistic approach, heart-based education can serve as an effective

²³ Fathiyah Hasan Sulaiman, "Konsep Pendidikan Akhlak Al-Ghazali," *Terj. Ahmad Hakim Dan Imam Aziz. Jakarta: P3M*, 1990.

solution for cultivating a generation with both intellectual intelligence and strong moral integrity.

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