

THE MASTER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

AND

**AL-GHAZALI'S PROPOSED CURRICULUM AND GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION –
FROM BIRTH THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION – AND HOW THEY PERTAIN TO
OUR CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENT**

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THE MASTER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Many Islamic writers throughout history have discussed the Islamic perspective on the master-pupil relationship (Al-Ghazali, 1997; Al-Nawawi, 2000; Al-Mawirdi, 1976; Ibn Al-Haj, 2001; Ibn Salah, 2001; Al-Suhrawardi, 1983; Al-Zarnuji, 1947; Ibn Miflih, 2001). Al-Ghazali referred to a number of places in the Islamic literature describing the critical nature of both learning and teaching, and praised these practices as being among the highest forms of worship. This concept is detailed clearly in classical Islamic literature.

One example of a master's devotion to educating his students is the medieval scholar, Al-Khayat. Al-Khayat (d. 1101 CE) lived in Baghdad in Al-Ghazali's era. He spent most of his time teaching 70 blind students (Al-Dhahabi, 1994, Vol. 19, pp. 222-224). This is a demonstration of how the master-student relationship went beyond the usual challenge of teaching "normal" students to include accepting the additional responsibilities involved in teaching disabled students as another aspect of worship.

Most Islamic discussions of this relationship begin by touting the value of knowledge, citing supporting examples from the *Qur'an* and *ahadith*¹ (Prophetic sayings). These writers explain their perspective in terms of these references, validating the importance of teaching effectively, as well as being an effective student. Some of these examples examine the relationship in a particular setting, such as Ibn Salah's (2001) book discussing teachers and students of *hadith* science. Ibn Salah described the circumstances in which the companions learned the *ahadith* from the Prophet, and that they took great care to record what he said accurately. Other authors have written about learning Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) (Al-Nawawi, 2000), which are the religious laws that guide all aspects of a Muslim's life.

Some scholars have looked at the moral issues involved in the master-pupil relationship. Al-Mawirdi (1976), as an example, emphasized that those who teach must be of the highest moral standing, and that they must truly be masters in their area of expertise before they take on the responsibility of teaching others. Nofal (1988, pp. 531-532) spoke of Al-Ghazali's assertion that having knowledge obligates one to share it.

In [Al-Ghazali's] opinion, teaching is not the duty of scholars and teachers alone; anyone who learns something has a duty to teach it. However, that does not mean that the scholar or teacher must teach everybody everything.

Nofal further reports that Al-Ghazali proposed a professional code of ethics for teachers in order to ensure that they practice what they preach and be good examples not only to their students, but to people in general. Al-Suhrawardi (1983) and Al-Qushayri (1990) examined master-pupil interactions in terms of the *Sufi shaykh/murid* relationship.

Some Muslim scholars start discussing the relationship from the perspective of the teacher (Al-Nawawi, 2000), while others (Al-Ghazali, 1997; Al-Mawerdi, 1976) start by describing the students' duties. Al-Zabidi's (n.d.) commentary on Al-Ghazali's *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences)* mentioned that Al-Ghazali started with the duties of students because before teachers become masters, they must first be students. Al-Ghazali (1997) and other post-classical scholars have addressed the value of knowledge, the merit of learning, and the excellence of teaching. There is a wealth of supporting evidence in the body of Islamic teachings to motivate both teachers and learners to both learn as much as they can and to share what they have learned. It is worth noting that the one characteristic mentioned most frequently as critical to being both an effective teacher and an effective learner is to approach the process with sincerity.

¹ This is the plural form of the word, and is used to refer to three or more *hadith*, which are the Prophetic sayings.

Al-Qanun fi at-tibb (The Canon of Medicine) is Avicenna's (1984) comprehensive encyclopedia of medicine, based primarily on the achievements of Greek physicians in the Roman imperial age and other resources available to the author at that time. The *Canon* was used until the dawn of anatomical experimentation in the 16th century. Bloom and Blair (2000, p. 135) call this work "the most famous single book in the history of medicine in both East and West. It was translated 87 times, mostly into medieval Latin, but also into Hebrew and other languages" (See also Britannica.com, 2001, ¶5; Alexander & Selesnick, 1966).

Avicenna's (1984) *Canon* gives detailed instructions for the structure of a young child's day, particularly from the perspective of the child's physical and psychological development. Avicenna proposed that children become thirsty for knowledge at about six years old, and that is the best time to begin the 'work' of education. Prior to that time, he feels that the child learns best through play. Until that point he proposes that a child begin the day by

Waking up in the morning and taking a bath, then allowing the child to play for an hour before giving him breakfast. Then let the child play for a long time, until the child gets tired. After the child plays, give the child another bath, then feed the child a more substantial meal. Do not allow the child to drink water with the meal because this interferes with digestion. Then, when the child is six years old, the parent should look for a teacher for the child (Avicenna, 1984, p. 224).

Some two centuries after Al-Ghazali's time, the sociologist Ibn Khaldun's (b. 1332, d. 1406 CE) *Muqaddima (An Introduction to History)* (1967) spoke of the importance of both teachers' and learners' practical experience and training. Soraty (1985, p. 1) describes some of the contributions Ibn Khaldun made to education in terms of the Master-Pupil relationship:

1. Both the teacher and the student need to be prepared for and receptive to the learning process.
2. Corporal punishment as a means of discipline is ineffective.

3. Educators need to consider the importance of practical experience and training in the learning experience.

Reagan (1996) notes that Ibn Khaldun believed that education occurs within a civilized social order. “Education is a social phenomenon and teaching is one of the social crafts; man is a social animal and his prosecution of learning is conditioned by the nature of the material, intellectual, and spiritual forces of the civilization in which he lives” (Reagan, p. 131). Reagan observed that Ibn Khaldun, like Al-Ghazali before him, also noted that reasoning ability is what provides the basis for education. Ibn Khaldun noted that it is this capacity that allows humans to cooperate with each other, and this interpersonal cooperation fosters the master-pupil relationship.

Many scholars (e.g., Ibn Khaldun, 1967; Taha Hussein, 1994; and others) acknowledge Al-Ghazali’s opinion in their descriptions of the concepts of punishment and reward for students.

Students should be admired and rewarded with something that gives him joy, and should be praised in front of others. But if the student does something bad, it is best to pretend not to notice and not to bring it to the attention of others, and if he repeats the action, he should be privately reproached and made to feel that it was a very serious thing and be told beware of doing anything like this again or I shall tell others and you will be disgraced in front of them (Al-Ghazali, in Winter, 1995, pp. 77-78).

Many of these thinkers, Al-Ghazali included, supported a systematic approach to punishment. For example, one shouldn’t just beat the offender the first time the mistake is made. Rather, first bring the matter to the student’s attention and request the better alternative. At the next offense, again call the mistake to the child’s attention and remind the student of the desired action. If it persists, gradually increase the severity of the consequences until the unacceptable behavior is eliminated. Ibn Khaldun (1967) also argued that the use of physical punishment (e.g., spankings and other physical means of discipline) as a disciplinary tactic has too many

drawbacks. He asserted that children who are punished in this way learn to hate the subject and resent the teacher and they will become liars, and that hitting children has a negative impact on their self-esteem. He recommends using positive reinforcement as an incentive to discipline students.

Severe punishment in the course of instruction does harm to the student, especially to little children, because it belongs among (the things that make for a) bad habit...It makes them feel oppressed and causes them to lose their energy. It makes them lazy and induces them to lie and be insincere...Thus, a teacher must not be too severe toward his pupil, nor a father toward his son, in educating them (pp. 424-425).

Taha Hussein (b. 1889, d. 1973 CE) was an Egyptian educator and author. In one of his books, *The Future of Education in Egypt*, he addressed the rights of teachers and the master-pupil relationship.

If we ask the teacher to serve as an educator in the old sense of the word, his task is not merely to fill the pupil's head with knowledge but more importantly, on the one hand, to train and discipline his mind, to make him upright, and to prepare him for practical life; and, on the other, to raise his intellectual level. The first duty that we owe this tutor is to trust and have confidence in him and to make him aware of our trust and confidence (Taha Hussein, in Galal, 1994, p. 702).

To further examine the master-student relationship in Islamic education, it is necessary to describe the rights and responsibilities of both master and students.

Rights and Responsibilities of the Learner and the Teacher

The Student

First, we will define the term "student" to clarify exactly which people are included in this concept. Because we are discussing education within the Islamic context, we will begin with

the Arabic term for student: *talib al'ilm* (seeker of knowledge). The significance in this term is on the word *talib*, meaning one who seeks or asks for – even demands. This implies that there is a good deal of initiative on the students' part. Support for this practice of seeking knowledge is demonstrated by the common practice of students traveling far and wide – initially in the Arab world and, today, anywhere on earth – in search of knowledge.

Another term is *tilmidh* (disciple)², but that word does not refer to the active pursuit of knowledge that the former term implies (Totah, 1926). Khan (1976, p. 46) defines “student” in terms of Al-Ghazali’s references to these ones who are taught. He calls anyone who “attends any institution to get or learn some type of education” a student. This person could “be of any age, who picks up knowledge, from anywhere and anybody, in any form, at any cost, to improve upon his intellect and morals, to... purify his soul and to follow the path of the righteous.”

Throughout Islamic history, many of the thinkers have proposed guidelines for students, which are still applicable today.

- Students need to appreciate their teachers. Al-Ghazali mentioned that “a person has three fathers: one who begot him, another who fostered him, and a third who educated him, and the last is the best of all” (Shalabi, 1954, p. 175). In his book, *Mizan al-'amal (The Criterion of Action)*, Al-Ghazali (1989, p. 145), added that the “father gives life to the body while the teacher gives life to the mind.”
- Students must honor and respect their teachers (e.g., not preceding the teacher when walking together, not initiating a conversation without the teachers' permission, by choosing a suitable time for seeking his advice, and so forth). The need to respect and admire one's teacher has nothing to

do with social status or affluence. There is a story that Al-Dhahabi (1994, Vol. 21, p. 26) relates of two young princes who loved and admired their teacher so much that they personally brought his shoes to him at the end of the day's lessons. Obviously, a servant could have done this – and these two boys most likely had plenty of servants – but they transcended perceptions of social class and privilege to show this respect to their *shaykh*.

- Students must sincerely want to learn. Teachers will willingly do a great deal to help a student needing assistance.
- Students should be encouraged to demonstrate initiative and not be shy about asking questions. The teacher should welcome inquiries, and it is permissible to ask the teacher to explain his examples.

Abu Haneefah (in Salahi, 2001) was a highly respected jurist and theologian in early medieval Islam (11th century CE), and the founder of the Haneefah school of Islamic law (*fiqh*). He enjoyed a special relationship with his students, and utilized an interesting teaching method unlike those of his peers. Like Socrates, he did not merely lecture or dictate material. Rather, he presented a situation to his students and outlined the principles that applied to it, then gave the students the opportunity to discuss it among themselves. He reserved the right to revise the information later, but in this way Abu Haneefah also encouraged his students to think for themselves and not depend only on their teachers' opinions. He noted that, "what we say is merely an expression of an opinion, which is the best we have determined. If anyone comes to us with something better, he is entitled to uphold the truth" (in Salahi, 2001, p. 50). Al-Baghdadi (in Al-Hilaalee, 1988) said that it is befitting that shyness should not prevent a person from asking questions about something that has happened. But if the student is too shy or

² Al-Ghazali in his writings used many terms for student such as '*talib al-'ilm*', '*murid*', '*al-muta'alim*'.

embarrassed to pose a question to the teacher, then the student should engage assistance from someone more approachable to ask the teacher on his behalf and to relay the answer. As Ibn Khaldun (1967) suggests, asking questions is the key to knowledge, and students should be encouraged to inquire and participate in discussions.

It is important to clarify one of Al-Ghazali's (1997) directions concerning student-teacher interactions. In *Ihya'* and other books, he spoke of not questioning the teacher, but this did not mean that the student should never ask questions or seek clarification; only that the student should not badger the teacher with incessant questions (Al-Zabidi, n.d.). The student should listen carefully to all that the teacher says. Then, if some clarification is needed on a particular point, it is acceptable to ask. In fact, in Al-Ghazali's manuscript of *Minhaj al-Muta'alim (The Path of the Learners)*, he mentioned that how one presents or phrases a question is half of the process of the pursuit of knowledge (Al-Ghazali, in Bazzun, 1997). Al-Ghazali's *O Disciple* is essentially a response to an inquiry from one of his students. Like Plato, Al-Ghazali used interactive teaching methods where the students ask questions and the teacher responds.

Khan (1976) notes that the ultimate purpose of obtaining knowledge is to then share it generously and benevolently with others. Thus, the student, in turn, becomes a teacher. Khan (p. 47) reports how the "formal difference between the teacher and the taught actually vanishes away into the thin air," such that the relationship between the two individuals evolves into one of "mutual gratification and glorification." Khan acknowledges that sometimes the student will surpass his teacher, but at no time does this minimize the importance of the teacher in achieving this level.

The Teacher

In order to better understand the Islamic perception of who the teacher is, first we will define the concept. Al-Ghazali asserts that a teacher is one who imparts “anything good, positive, creative, or constructive” to anyone, without regard to the student’s age, “in any way, by any method” (in Khan, 1976, p. 46). Just as there are several terms for referring to students, Al-Ghazali also used several terms to describe a teacher, such as ‘*mu’alim*’ (teacher), ‘*murshid*’ (advisor/guide), or ‘*shaykh*’ (master). Al-Ghazali asserted in *Ihya*’ (1997) that teachers are the physicians for the heart and soul, because they guide and advise learners. Al-Ghazali recognized that there are many aspects to the teacher’s role.

Aboo Zayd (2000, p. 41) discussed the importance of the teacher in the learning process.³

Whoever becomes involved in seeking knowledge without a *shaykh* will emerge without knowledge, because knowledge is a profession, and every profession has its experts. Therefore, it is necessary to have a proficient teacher in order to learn.

Khan (1976, p. 47) reported Al-Ghazali’s assertion that a teacher “places the highest and noblest ideas before his student and guides him to attain them.” This corresponds with other Islamic scholars, who maintain that learning is accomplished best when one has a *shaykh* (teacher) (Aboo Zayd, 2000; and others). Aboo Zayd cites instances where someone actually learned something in private study of particular books, but notes that this practice can be dangerous because there are things that exist in books that divert from knowledge, including possible misinterpretations due to language problems, reading difficulties, and misunderstanding.

Aboo Zayd expressed that, “knowledge used to be noble, passed down [from men] to men, but when it entered the books the wrong people became involved in it” (pp. 42-43). Al-Ghazali’s teacher Al-Juwayni explained that, the requisites of knowledge are “a quick mind, zeal, poverty, foreign land, a professor’s inspiration, and of life a long span” (in Makdisi, 1981, p. I), meaning that, with or without written materials, one still needs the guidance of a teacher, thus validating the contribution of the teacher to the learning process.

Other medieval *Sufi* scholars (Al-Rundi, in Mahdi, 1972, p. 6) distinguish between two kinds of *Sufi* masters (teachers). Al-Rundi said that, “there is on one hand the teaching master (*shaykh al-ta’lim*), that is, the master who teaches the books on *Sufism*. This master is necessary; he is the ‘guide to the path of God.’ Then there is the training master (*shaykh al-tarbiya*) whose function is to reform the character and improve the minds of those whose moral character is defective and whose wits are dull” (p. 6). Al-Rundi differentiated between them by explaining that the teaching master provides the scholarly direction the students need for study, and is needed by all *Sufi* students, and the training master is needed by some students to prepare them for the rigors of study by “tak[ing] complete charge of them, subject[ing] them to a harsh regime, dictat[ing] what they should do and learn,” in order to prepare the students morally and behaviorally for Sufi study. But Al-Rundi emphasizes that “such disciples...need a teaching master, as well” (pp. 6-7).

Al-Ghazali (1997) and others recommend the following guidelines for teachers in establishing relationships with their students:

³It is important to note here that the students in Islamic history had a great respect for books, and, in turn, books had a significant influence on them. For instance, one library of medieval Islam owned 600,000 volumes. In contrast, there were only about 30,000 books on the entire continent of European libraries (Muessig & Allen, 1962; see also Gates, Myhrvold, & Rinearson, 1996) before 1450. Ibn Al-Jawzi, the medieval Islamic scholar, describes his relationship with many books, mentioning that he grasped much knowledge in reading the more than 20 thousand book during his student learning years at the Nizamiyah College, where Al-Ghazali was a teacher. Thus, in the

- ♦ Be kind to your students and treat them as if they were your own children. Follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad in spreading knowledge without expecting any remuneration for it. This is not to say that it is disgraceful to make one's living as an educator – Al-Ghazali, himself, supported his family by teaching. It is generally accepted that he meant that one should be willing to share one's knowledge for the pleasure of helping another learn.
- ♦ Be honest with your students and be willing to admit that you might not know something, rather than guess and give the student incorrect information. Be sincere.
- ♦ Advise your students as far as you can, and tell them that the object of education is to gain nearness to God, not to attain power or riches.
- ♦ Dissuade your students from evil ways with care and caution, with sympathy and not with rebuke and harshness. The “teacher must warn his pupil against evil habits by indirect methods and by implication, not by direct instruction” (Al-Ghazali, in Tritton, 1957).
- ♦ Do not revile other teachers' subjects to your students.
- ♦ Choose simple problems for the beginner and for those of limited intelligence. Don't teach things that are beyond the student's capacity to understand, and teach your students only those things that are clear and suited to their level of understanding. Al-Ghazali noted that “were a physician to treat all of his patients with a single medicine he would kill

most of them; and so it is with the *shaykh* [teacher] who, were he to charge all his aspirants with one kind of exercise, would destroy them and kill their hearts” (in Winter, 1995, p. 41).

- Teachers should be discreet about asking students whether they understand the lecture – especially in front of other students – because a student may claim to understand to avoid embarrassment in front of other students.
- Pay attention to opinions expressed in front of those in subordinate relationships (i.e., students and children) because they may cause conflict for the listeners, who may feel that they have to adopt these opinions – even if they do not agree with them – simply because they are expressed by someone perceived to be an authority (i.e., a parent or teacher) (Avicenna, 1984).
- Avoid repeating stories one hears, because such stories may involve embarrassment or shame about that person, especially if there is no way to confirm the truth of the story. Even if the story is true, do not repeat it. Al-Ghazali noted that it “behooves a person to be silent about what he sees of other peoples’ actions unless reporting it is beneficial to Muslims or prevents some crime” (in Al-Dhahabi, 1993). In this lesson, Al-Ghazali lists six points that the person hearing the slander should pay attention to: do not believe it, prevent the tale-bearer from spreading the story further, be angry with the tale-bearer, avoid forming a bad opinion about the

person slandered, don't spend time looking into the tale, and do not tell others the story.

- Practice what you teach in order not to confuse the student, and support your knowledge with practice in order to inculcate the knowledge in the students' minds.
- Conflicts and disagreements between teachers, parents, and others in leadership positions should be settled away from those in lesser positions (e.g., students and children). Using the parent-child relationship as an example, Avicenna (1984) asserted that witnessing such conflicts confuses the child and can cause not only emotional distress, but also physical symptoms. He warned that the child's experience might be absorbed subconsciously and that these manifestations may even appear in situations unrelated to the cause of the internal conflict.

Ibn Khaldun (1967) and other Islamic thinkers have emphasized that teachers avoid being too severe with their students. Al-Rashid offered one of the best examples when he spoke to his son's teacher, Khalaf ibn Al-Ahmar.

O Ahmar, the Commander of the Faithful is entrusting his son to you, the life of his soul and the fruit of his heart. Take firm hold of him and make him obey you. Occupy in relation to him the place that the Commander of the Faithful has given you. Teach him to read the *Qur'an*. Instruct him in history. Let him transmit poems and teach him the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. Give him insight into the proper occasions for speech and how to begin a (speech). Forbid him to laugh, save at times when it is proper...let no hour pass in which you do not seize the opportunity to teach him something useful. But do so without vexing him, which would kill his mind. Do not always be too lenient with him, or he will get to like leisure and become used to it. As much as possible, correct him kindly and gently. If he does not want it that way, you must then use severity and harshness (in Ibn Khaldun, pp. 425-426).

This is a superior example of the parent taking an interest in his son's education, making sure that he and the teacher were of like minds concerning discipline. Here, Al-Rashid was not instructing the teacher as much as confirming that they had the same standards and priorities.

This is an expression of confidence in the teacher's ability, not an indication that the parent is unsure that the teacher knows what to do.

Summary

Thus, we can see that the master-pupil relationship is not a casual, unstructured affiliation. Historically, the connection has been based upon a mutually workable, interactive association. If both the teachers and the pupils approach the relationship from Al-Ghazali's perspective, the process should be rewarding and beneficial to both. Additionally, most of Al Ghazali's (and others') philosophies can easily be applied to today's classrooms. The guidelines offered in the section on teacher attributes list kindness, discretion, honesty, etc. – traits that are still valued today. Islamic education is humanistic, moralistic, spiritual, and practical. It is a reflection of the Islamic philosophy as stated in the *Qur'an* and by the Prophet, Muhammad.

Reviewing Islamic educational literature throughout history, one finds that Muslim thinkers and scholars offered many approaches to teaching methods and the interpersonal relationships among teachers and students. Educators in contemporary Muslim classrooms might benefit from a “refresher course” on Al-Ghazali's teachings, as a way of remembering educational values from the past in order to re-apply them in the classroom of today and in the future.

**AL-GHAZALI'S PROPOSED CURRICULUM AND GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION
– FROM BIRTH THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION – AND HOW THEY PERTAIN TO
OUR CONTEMPORARY ENVIRONMENT**

What is Curriculum?

Generally speaking, curriculum is what made up the information you learned in school.

But there is no single universally-accepted definition for what comprises a curriculum. The word comes from the Latin *currere*, meaning ‘to run a course.’ In contemporary use, it has come to include the course content and the planned learning experiences (means) to convey the content, such as the books, study guides, and other media and activities. There is usually a statement of the intended outcome (results) from the lessons. But the context of curriculum is the entire experience, both planned and unplanned, that lead to the growth and education of the students (Parkay, 2001). There are three types of curriculum in the educational process:

1. Explicit Curriculum, or that which is overtly presented to the students, and includes the goals and objectives, the particular courses to be offered, and the expected outcome of this exposure. That is, the publicly announced expectations that the school has for its students (Parkay, 2001, p. 371; see also McNergney & Herbert, 2001, p. 371).
2. Implicit or Hidden Curriculum, which refers to the attitudes, behaviors, and culture of the school and its agents that are presented to the student unintentionally (Parkay, 2001). This includes the school’s pedagogical, organizational, and social environments, and what the students learn from their exposure to these components.

3. Null Curriculum is that which is expressly not taught – the options that students are not afforded and items that are not to be part of their intellectual repertoire. Eisner (in Parkay, 2001, p. 372) proposes that we teach what we teach “largely out of habit, and in the process neglect areas of study that could prove useful to students.”

McNergney and Herbert (2001, p. 371) also note that, “curriculum is not the exclusive province of schools,” suggesting that learning is not restricted to formal educational institutions, but can occur anywhere, with anyone.

There are also aspects of information inclusion that pertain more to the process of conveying the information than to the information itself. The first is the extracurricular activity, which is anything outside the realm of the conventional lesson and may include sports or other non-essential activities. Participation in extracurricular activities is considered to be an indicator of better student performance; ironically, there are those who argue that inadequate performance on the regular curriculum should necessitate reduced access to extracurricular activities until grades improve. Other scholars propose that were it not for the student’s involvement in extracurricular activities, those with academic problems might otherwise drop out (McNergney & Herbert, 2001).

There is also the concept of integrated curriculum, which challenges the former compartmentalization of taught matter by subject to instead combine concepts and skills from different areas. Material is instead presented in terms of a theme, and all lessons – perhaps art, music, social studies, and language – reflect a connection to that theme. There is more of an interdisciplinary approach to instruction, to inter-relate pieces of data to each other.

Curriculum in Islamic Education

In Islamic education, the term 'curriculum' refers to the entire educational experience, including the means for education, the design of the facility, and the budgetary and financial support for the institution. But it cannot be finalized until we know why we are educating the student. The aim of education in Islam is to produce a good Muslim who is both cultured (i.e., knows how to use knowledge for his spiritual, intellectual, and material growth) and expert (i.e., can use this knowledge for the benefit of the community) (Ashraf, 1985).

Islam stresses the importance of the integrated curriculum in that knowledge is not acquired just for the sake of knowledge, but because Islam asserts that whatever one learns affects and influences one's behavior (Ashraf, 1985). Thus, factual knowledge cannot be separated from the discretion one needs to use the knowledge appropriately. In Islam, the decisions about what "equipment of knowledge and...attributes of mind and character" an individual should possess frame the decisions about what subjects should be included in a given curriculum (Ashraf, pp. 40-41). The aspect of integration within Islamic education refers to the criteria that all subjects must be taught from an Islamic point of view and that the religious teachings must correspond with and conform to the religious perspective. By integrating the religious foundation with the intellectual knowledge and presenting them together, we can ensure that the student gets the whole, accurate picture.

Salahi (2001) emphasizes that knowledge must be acquired entirely, from multiple perspectives, to be understood in context. His example was how Abu Haneefah proposed that the study of the *ahadith* necessarily included a study of *fiqh* (Islamic law), in order that the entire body of information is understood in context.

Al-Ghazali and Curriculum Development

A review of texts concerning Islamic curriculum development reflects an approach consistent with Al-Ghazali's. Materials are organized for presentation, knowledge is classified, and priorities set for the instruction of children. Tyler's (1959, p. 55) recommendations for curriculum organization are categorized into "continuity, sequence, and integration." To some extent, Al-Ghazali suggested these principles and they are still valid today. Al-Ghazali denounced the philosophers, but maintained some of the philosophies – Islamizing them as needed – in order that the concepts come from an Islamic point of view (Ashraf, 1985).

Al-Ghazali addresses various opportunities for learning and teaching, both formal and informal, throughout the life cycle. He wrote about the master-pupil relationship and the responsibilities to be borne by both educators and learners in all aspects of formal education. But, he also emphasized that the ability to learn exists long before a child enters organized schooling and encourages parents to take advantage of the opportunities to guide and teach their children from birth.

Classical dictionaries show that the Arabic language includes some 40 different terms to describe infants and children and the various stages of their development. Al-Ghazali used some of these terms in his writings to talk about the curricula for these life phases.⁴ Al-Ghazali recommended that the teacher/parent consider what the student is capable of learning. Therefore, we should consider the abilities of the student in each of these phases when developing or assigning curriculum to young students.

⁴ Some of these terms are '*janin*' (infant) '*ghulam*' (about seven years old), and '*shab*' (adolescent) for more information see *kitab al-Mukhassas* by Ibn Sida (2001) see also Gil'adi, 1992).

Al-Ghazali had many suggestions for the things people need to know to be productive members of the family and community. He also taught that a balanced education is not only learning about what to do external to one's self, but that it also includes personal and moral development and purification. As an educator, Al-Ghazali's encyclopedic knowledge has influenced Islamic education and defined its practice for nearly nine centuries, and he is still one of the most important factors in shaping the future of individual and societal Islamic thoughts and practices (Nofal, 1994). His most significant work, *Ihya' 'ulum al-din*, has been used as a textbook in some Islamic universities (e.g., Al-Azhar University in Egypt) for many years (Mubarak, 1988; Al-Barjas, 1983). *Ihya'* also "became the most quoted Muslim text after the *Qur'an* and the *ahadith*" (Armstrong, 2000, p. 90). Al-Ghazali suggested a number of subjects that parents could teach their children informally (i.e., within the family unit prior to entering school), as well as topics to be included in formal curricula from primary schooling through higher education.

Informal Curricula – Early Education

One of the chapters in *Ihya'* is titled *Disciplining the Soul*. Here, Al-Ghazali outlines his philosophy of the daily life curriculum to the parents. He established a comprehensive curriculum to address the child's needs in terms of the spiritual, health, and social relationships, including life in the family and with friends, and recreation. Al-Ghazali directs parents to teach their children the *Holy Qur'an* and the guidelines offered there, as well as the Prophetic traditions concerning the beginning of Islam and about key figures in Islamic history. From the inception of Islam, before the written text was completed, Muslims have been encouraged to

memorize the *Qur'an* as a principle means of preserving it and of transmitting the information contained there. This practice of memorization continues even today.

An ethnographic examination of Al-Ghazali's writings reveals that Al-Ghazali encouraged parents to instill the *Qur'an* from the beginning, even before the child had a comprehensive grasp of the language, to ensure that the principles and guidelines were firmly implanted in the child's mind. Ibn al-Arabi (in Ibn Khaldun, 1969), who was apparently a student of Al-Ghazali's, suggested alternatively that children first be taught the language and helped to memorize the *Qur'an* later, in order that the child not just know the words, but also understand the concepts. Ibn Khaldun noted that starting with language and calculation clashes with habits too deeply because "custom has greater power over conditions than anything else. Accepted custom gives preference to teaching of the *Qur'an*." Ibn Khaldun concluded that if one waits "until the child becomes a youth, they might miss the chance to learn the *Qur'an*" (p. 428).

In terms of moral curriculum, Gil'adi (1992) and Umaruddin (1970) report that Al-Ghazali's focus was developing a balanced person by impressing good qualities on the child's soul. Al-Ghazali asserted that human nature could be molded by moral instruction, which is what led him to consider the ways to raise and educate children. He believed that natural inclinations and instincts should not be suppressed entirely, but rather focused on their appropriate expression. That is, that desire was created for some benefit (he cites an example of desire for food motivating nourishment), but that children should be steered away from things that might cause depravity. In order to learn moderation (i.e., dealing appropriately with the forces of desire), Al-Ghazali suggests addressing one of the earliest manifestations of desire, the passion to eat, by teaching good eating habits based on restraint and moderation. The child

absorbs these lessons gradually. Al-Ghazali also suggested breaking up larger lessons into smaller segments, using the example of teaching young children to fast for Ramadan gradually, a few days at a time, to progressively prepare them for the time when they will have to fast for the entire month (Al-Ghazali, in Winter, 1995, p. 80).

Winter (1995) mentions that Al-Ghazali taught parents to encourage their children to distinguish between right and wrong and, once this point is reached, to use this discretion to “aid in [the child’s] education” (p. 76). The child will become shy about attempting things, and it is useful to take advantage of this characteristic to further the child’s education. Young, Latham, and Serjeant (1990) mention praising a child for good conduct to encourage the child to continue the behavior. But if the child does something wrong, Al-Ghazali recommends that the parent ignore it the first time – particularly if the child recognizes the error – and admonish the child privately without excessive scolding, otherwise the parents’ words will “lose their effect on [the child’s] heart” (Young, Latham, & Serjeant, p. 440).

In *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali (1997) reports that some physical activity is necessary for children and suggests activities such as daily walks and movement. Al-Ghazali was inspired in this area by Ibn Miskawayh, whose ideas are also reflected elsewhere in *Ihya'*. Both Gil’adi (1992) and Winter (1995) discuss Al-Ghazali’s proposals, and assert that Al-Ghazali’s objective was to prevent sloth and obesity. Al-Ghazali advocates a balance in activity such that the child is not so worn out by playing as to be exhausted, nor so deprived of opportunities to move that he is overburdened by incessant lessons that will cause his heart to die and harm his intelligence, and make life so hateful to him that he will cast around for some means of escape” (Winter, 1995, p. 80). This demonstrates that Al-Ghazali recognized not only instruction in the critical subjects,

but also the value of diversion from study. “Preventing a child from playing...only deadens his heart, numbs his intelligence, and spoils his life” (Young, Latham, & Serjeant, p. 441).

The instruction Al-Ghazali advocated in daily life curriculum (Al-Ghazali, 1997) recommended teaching a love of asceticism, avoiding association with bad companions, appropriate table manners, and the rudiments of worship. Practices such as gluttony are discouraged by teaching children not to overeat, particularly since overeating can lead to excessive sleeping which causes laziness, and that children need to be taught to appreciate and be content with what is on their plate by sometimes eating nothing but bread, in order that they not consider that fancier foods are their due.

Al-Ghazali suggests also interactive curriculum such as games and describes toys popular in his era, such as toy animals, *sawlajan* (ball with a wand). He also proposes that games can be used as teaching opportunities, especially with the very young. Gil’adi notes that virtually any game was acceptable for children, the only restriction being on games of chance. Another suggestion was to own and care for a small pet, such as a bird. Al-Ghazali (1997) does acknowledge that young children learn even beyond the spiritual and intellectual aspects of informal education offered in the home. He suggests that parents are also responsible for finding appropriate social contacts and directing their children to associate with good company. His perception was that interaction with respectable friends is part of the foundation of children’s education.

Formal Curricula – Higher Education

We have considered how Al-Ghazali's approach to curriculum reflects a balanced approach to the moral, physical, social, and intellectual development of children. Thus far, our discussion has covered the young child, but Al-Ghazali also addressed education well into adulthood, which will be discussed below.

In *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali established a program of compulsory education for younger children, both in the home and in the *maktab* or *madrasah*.⁵ In another chapter in this book entitled "The Book of Knowledge," Al-Ghazali includes a detailed discussion of the curriculum for older students and for teaching in schools of higher learning, using methods with identifiable *Sufi* components (Gil'adi, 1983). In terms of the course content, Al-Ghazali distinguished between two main categories of subjects: the religious sciences (individuals' obligations) and the intellectual (philosophical) sciences (the community's obligations). He divided the community obligations into the religious and non-religious subjects. The religious subjects include both the theoretical (*kalam*) and the practical (religious devotion, jurisprudence, politics, and ethics). He also advocated learning language and grammar in order to understand the religious sciences. Al-Rabe (1984, p. 127) notes that, "it is important to keep in mind here that Al-Ghazali did not consider language and grammar part of the religious sciences, but as a means to study them." When he wrote *Ihya'*, Al-Ghazali added another part to the religious sciences: the study of the *Qur'anic* readings and *hadith* sciences.

⁵ Al-Zabidi's (n.d.) commentary on Al-Ghazali's *Ihya'* noted that a *maktab* is for studying the *Qur'an* only, while *madrasah* is the school for studying the *Qur'an* with other subjects.

Al-Ghazali also noted the study of logic as a tool of thought, asserting that, “nothing in logic is relevant to religion by way of denial of affirmation” (in Watt, 1996, p. 35). Al-Ghazali used logic to illustrate some of his examples of jurisprudence, and he tried to teach religion by means of logical analysis (see Al-Rabe, 1984). Although some Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyyah criticized Al-Ghazali for including logic in his curriculum – Ibn Taymiyyah considered that “to be in contradiction with religious beliefs and leading to heresy” (Al-Rabe, 1984, p. 146) – others such as As-Subki (in Rosenthal, 1975) agreed to inclusion of logic. Al-Ghazali acknowledged that logic, in and of itself, was not the problem, but that there is the likelihood that it can also be misused to ‘prove’ false doctrines and lead to unbelief (in Watt, p. 36). As-Subki (in Rosenthal, p. 82) defined the value of logic, noting that logic was like a “sword which can be used either for holy war or for highway robbery.” As-Subki emphasized that it is more important for the student to master the *Qur’an*, the Prophetic sayings (*ahadith*), and jurisprudence, and to be firmly grounded in the dogmas before taking on the study or use of logic.

Al-Ghazali’s Classification of the Sciences

Al-Ghazali classified the different branches of knowledge according to those concepts that are necessary to spend time on (i.e., that knowledge of these topics contributes to living a devout life), and those that are not necessary. Accordingly, Al-Ghazali’s directions concerning proposed curriculum further classify the usefulness of knowledge into the practical sciences (*‘ilm al-mu’amalah*) and the spiritual sciences (*‘ilm al-mukashafah*). Al-Ghazali also emphasized that not all people master the spiritual sciences; it is generally attained only by highly spiritual

people.⁶ This section will focus on the learning of the practical sciences, because those are the subjects taught in schools and colleges.

The Practical Sciences

Al-Ghazali categorized this branch into two subcategories: individual obligations (*fard ‘ayn*), which are comprised of those concepts which one personally needs to do or know to conduct one’s life (e.g., prayer) and community obligations (*fard kifaya*), which includes those concepts concerning one’s involvement in the community as a whole, such as mathematics and medicine. If a communal obligation is not met, then the entire community is held accountable; but each and every member of the community is not personally obligated to perform the action.

Al-Ghazali sorted the communal obligations into one of two categories: religious sciences, which are those that are essential in coming to know God and which enhance one’s well-being; and non-religious (intellectual) sciences. Al-Ghazali further divided the religious sciences into four sub-categories according to their importance in practicing religious teaching: the foundation, the branches, the preliminaries, and the supplementaries. Al-Ghazali assigned the non-religious sciences to three sub-categories:

⁶ Al-Ghazali (in Gianotti 2000, p. 4) asserted that, “by the sciences of the unveiling I mean whatever is sought exclusively [for the purpose of] laying bare the object of knowledge.” For Al-Ghazali (1997), knowledge of the unveiling sciences was the ultimate goal. Not everyone is worthy of the vision of unveiling science, but only those humans who are pure and blessed, or those he calls *Sufi*. As an indication of the difficulty expressing these sciences, Gianotti (2000) reports Al-Ghazali’s acknowledgment that the prophets did not speak about the unveiling science “except by way of symbol and gesture, by way of example and brief summarization” (p.5) because the specifics of this knowledge would be more than the average person would understand. From a hermeneutic perspective, it is important to note that Islam asserts that true belief is proper worship; Allah casts it in the hearts of whomever He chooses among His servants. Disclosure of knowledge, notions, inspirations, and dreams are not authentic references in Islamic law. Thus, they should not be given any consideration except when they do not conflict with the *Qur’an* and Prophetic sayings and established principles of Islam (Al-Banna, 2000).

Praiseworthy Sciences (*'ulum mahmudah*), which is any science essential to the community's welfare (e.g., medicine, mathematics, logic, arithmetic, agriculture, etc.).

Permissible Sciences (*'ulum mubāhah*), which are those neutral activities one is allowed to know and do (e.g., poetry, history, and biography). They do not confer the benefits of the praiseworthy sciences, but do not harm people, as do the objectionable sciences. For instance, Al-Ghazali accepted that poetry and certain other artistic expressions were appropriate, as long as the subject material covered was valid (i.e., addressed religious or spiritual themes, not passion). He did not agree with visual art and images, however, because of the potential for idolization.

Objectionable Sciences (*'ulum madhmumah*) include any subject which has not only no benefit to the individual or community (e.g., magic, legerdemain, and divination), but may confer harm upon its practitioners.

Thus, Al-Ghazali established priorities for subject matter according to their value to the student and society. The highest priority was to learn the necessary (religious) sciences, which means attaining a comprehensive knowledge of the *Qur'an*, the *ahadith*, and Islamic law (*fiqh*). These topics he considered to be most important, and to be the cornerstone of any further education. Then the student could proceed to the non-religious (intellectual) sciences.

Al-Ghazali's Curricula and Modern Perspectives

Al-Ghazali reflected the Islamic cultural norm in his direction to organize one's education around character formation (Gil'adi, 1993; Abul Quasem, 1978; Benomran, 1983). These scholars concur that most of Al-Ghazali's guidance focuses on teaching appropriate

personal conduct and strong values, and that he was concerned more with one's moral and spiritual obligations than with intellectual development (i.e., learning about science and mathematics). The most important of the intellectual sciences was to acquire language skills: reading, writing, and speaking.

Many researchers (Benomran, 1983; Shafshaq, 1980; and others) have suggested that Al-Ghazali discouraged students from learning about intellectual sciences. Armstrong (1993, p. 364) argued that

...the attack against the [philosophers] mounted by [Al-Ghazali] had been immoderate. It had caused division between piety and rationalism, which had affected the intellectual standing of the [scholars]. This was apparent in the outdated curriculum of Al-Azhar. Muslims should, therefore return to the more receptive and rational spirit of the [*Qur'an*].

Al-Qaradawi (2001) explains that, in today's context, while spiritual development and adherence to *shari'ah* are still important, the quality and character of contemporary life indicate that the lower priority Al-Ghazali placed on broad knowledge in the areas of science and math is no longer adequate because lifestyles have changed. It used to be sufficient that someone in the community was well versed in medicine and math; today, there need to be many "someones" who know this in depth.

It is worth noting that Al-Ghazali was also aware that the majority of scholars were studying Islamic law, while other areas of learning were neglected. The prestige of jurisprudence – and the high regard for Islamic law, in general – were like magnets to young students, drawing them into a worthwhile profession. But this ignored the impracticality of the idea. Al-Ghazali was gratified that many students chose to study only law, but recognized that it would create a society out of balance. He noted that the "town is crowded with jurisprudents employed in giving legal opinions and defending cases," and that "many a town has no

physician” (Al-Ghazali, 1997, p. 23; see also Faris, 1991, p. 51). He proposed that the educational institutions needed to adjust to the workforce in society. In other words, even though math and science are not as prestigious as religious studies, from a practical point of view there needs to be a greater variety of practical careers being filled if society is to function optimally; all professions are needed, not just law. Al-Ghazali suggested that it would not be mandatory that all students study the minute details of science or math, but that all students would benefit from a general introduction to these subjects. But it was a long time before Al-Ghazali’s observations were applied to expanding curriculum. For many years, the curriculum at the Nizamiyah College in Baghdad where Al-Ghazali was a teacher and headmaster, stressed Islamic law courses almost exclusively. Hoodbhoy (1995, p. 14) notes that this remained the standard “until [it was] somewhat modified by Shah Wali Allah (1703-1762) to include arithmetic and logic.”

Al-Siby (in Al-Salih, 2001), a policymaker in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education, mentions that one still finds a disproportionate number of people studying Islamic law in Kuwait today, and that not enough students are pursuing careers in medicine, engineering, or other fields critically needed in that country. Doctors, engineers, and other professionals are well respected in Kuwait today, so there is no social reason for this phenomenon. Even in junior and senior high school, many teachers have to be hired from other countries – particularly in math and science – because there are not enough Kuwaitis trained in these fields. This indicates that the higher education system in Kuwait provides educational opportunities based on supply rather than demand, and is consequently not educating students according to the current and future needs of the Kuwaiti workforce. Perhaps, as more people seek education beyond high school – and awareness of the need to balance societal needs is keener – this situation will change.

Al-Ghazali's concept of scientific knowledge included many basic principles which are still recognized today (in Nakosteen, 1964, p. 42):

1. Stimulation of the search for scientific knowledge;
2. Application of scientific arts;
3. Advancement of applied sciences and their extensive application;
4. Encouragement of arts and crafts;
5. Encouragement of individual initiative and academic freedom for both teachers and pupils; and
6. Attainment of excellence, to produce great [persons] of learning and leaders in public affairs.

Shafshaq (1980) alleges that Al-Ghazali was interested only in the spiritual and moral aspects of life, and did not address mundane practical issues. Although Al-Ghazali did not designate specific handicrafts and other practical issues in his classification of curriculum, he taught that manual labor and handicrafts were among the best forms of worshiping God, if one did them with pure intention and according to Islamic law (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 2. pp. 30, 124-125). To support this assertion, Al-Ghazali (1997) reported how the companions of Prophet Muhammad worked in the land and sea trades, as well as in agriculture, and commended these companions as being good role models (Vol. 2, p. 125). Al-Ghazali (1997) clearly addressed the concept of supporting various handicrafts, and explaining that these crafts contributed to the sustenance and aesthetics of society.

To confirm that there were, indeed, people involved in engineering and invention, Hill (1994) describes various examples of ‘fine engineering’⁷ in existence in the early centuries of Islam. Al-Ghazali may not have mentioned the use or construction of these devices, or have provided details about them, but that does not mean that they were not built, used, or appreciated. For example, Al-Ghazali did not avoid discussing engineering or discourage the study of engineering. He merely wrote about what was important to him. Other people have written about topics Al-Ghazali did not address, and were not concerned about matters that Al-Ghazali relevant. As one example, Umar al-Khayyam (b. 417/1048, d. 508/1131) was a scholar of mathematics, astronomy, language, *fiqh*, and history. Because of his brilliance as an astronomer, he was appointed to be the director of the observatory in Baghdad. This indicates that respected medieval scholars must have been studying the practical sciences. Al-Ghazali merely had different priorities for what subjects were more important than some other thinkers. The fact that Al-Ghazali did not address a certain subject does not prove that he disagreed with it or that it was unimportant, thus refuting Shafshaq’s (1980) claim that Al-Ghazali meant that only the religious sciences were important from a practical viewpoint.

Al-Ghazali found less value in pursuing knowledge of the arts (music, art, or theater) and did not include these subjects in his proposals for formal education (see Nofal, 1993), although he did specify in other discussions that any participation in these permissible sciences would depend on the content being lawful. Because this is a gray area and there is no supporting documentation in the sacred texts about what is lawful and what is forbidden, it is essentially up to the believer to determine exactly what is or is not acceptable. Rather than accidentally doing

⁷ Hill (1994, p. 25) describes fine engineering as “those types of machines or instruments that were designed to give pleasure to courtly circles, or for timekeeping, or for the use of scientists (mainly astronomers).” They distinguish this from utilitarian technology, “which is concerned with machines, such as mills, water-raising devices, and textile

something unlawful, many Islamic scholars have proposed not participating in these arts at all, and these guidelines have been adopted by many Muslims. Some contemporary Muslim parents advise their children to avoid subjects such as music. Al-Ghazali acknowledged subjects such as music lessons and singing, and referred to opportunities for listening to approved music and for singing (e.g., during a pilgrimage, in warfare, to supplement religious shortcomings, festivals and marriage celebrations, etc.), since such songs revive one's spirits, lighten the heart, and inspire one to carry on the work of this world and next (Al-Faruqi, 1982). But, Al-Ghazali advised followers not to waste time listening to music or singing if there were other things to be done. His position seems to be that music, like medicine, is good but only in prescribed doses.

On the other hand, there are other Islamic scholars who do permit music. Siba'i (1984) notes instances in Islamic history where music was provided for entertainment (i.e., not ceremonial) purposes, because it was felt that music had a therapeutic effect. One instance he cited from the 13th century (CE) described how one hospital provided a place for "fascinating music and interesting stories" where insomniacs could go to pass time (p. 196). Siba'i explained that the understanding at the time was that "melodiousness" was psychologically helpful to patients being treated for diseases, even those with only physical ailments (p. 211). Libraries in the Middle Ages also had separate areas designated for listening to music where "students could refresh themselves with music after long tiring hours of study" (p. 218). This implies that music as a form of entertainment and psychological renewal was, indeed, accepted at one time.

A recent report from the US Department of Education (2001) entitled "*Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*" presented data from a study that followed more than 25,000 students for 10 years. They found that "students consistently involved in music and

machinery." But these descriptions, which date back to the first few centuries of Islam, indicate that mechanical devices did exist, and someone had to have been making and operating them.

theater show significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by grade 12 – regardless of their socioeconomic status” (pp. 6-7). Elsewhere in that report, research has documented a positive effect on learning when children listen to music. Al-Qaradawi (1960, p. 300) notes that Islam “permits singing under the condition that it not be in any way obscene or harmful to Islamic morals,” and notes that it creates an atmosphere of joy and happiness. Music offers many advantages for family and community celebrations, as well as many benefits associated with music as a component of education. In order to make music accessible to those who seek it, without compromising the integrity of those who choose to avoid it, perhaps music education could be offered as an elective subject: available to all who want it, with equitable alternatives for those who don’t. This is also an opportunity to involve the parents in the child’s education by allowing them to suggest the alternative activities.

Al-Ghazali’s principle objection to art was its potential as a form of idolatry. He objected to drawings and other depictions of humans and animals, which he associated with the veneration of idols or icons, and excluded art from his classifications of knowledge. He emphatically recommended that existing pictures be removed or defaced, and he directed that Muslims not engage in professions such as engraver, goldsmith, or decorator (see Nofal, 1993). Today, it would be almost impossible to avoid some form of drawing or reproduction. Photographs are required for passports, and drawings are used in everything from construction renderings to criminal apprehension. This would suggest that complete avoidance of the arts would be unrealistic. Perhaps the more contemporary approach is to ensure that the drawing has a legitimate purpose, making art training more acceptable to conservative Muslims. Again, this is another opportunity for elective instruction, with other alternative creative outlets for those who opt not to participate.

Howard Gardner (2000) is a psychologist with a deep interest in education. He offers the theory that there are multiple intelligences (see also Parkay, 2001): linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential intelligences. Al-Ghazali, too, was aware of these gifts, although he did not categorize them as specifically as Gardner has. Our ethnographic context analysis demonstrates that Al-Ghazali encouraged both teachers and parents to consider these aptitudes – both from their own perspectives and those of their students – when teaching subjects worthy of study. There is a place for all of these intelligences within Al-Ghazali’s philosophies, especially in the area of existentialism, because of its strong relationship to spirituality.

Embedded in Al-Ghazali’s philosophy is the concept of parents as teachers, and that parents do not need to possess extensive knowledge or be professional educators to have knowledge worthy of passing along and the ability to do so. Al-Ghazali’s models of the master-pupil and parent-child relationships encouraged parents and teachers to support their children and help them develop all of their intelligences, not just reading and writing. This raises the question of whether parents and teachers are helping develop all of the child’s inherent intelligences, or do they unwittingly dismiss the child’s natural attributes as being unimportant if they will not be useful in a career?

Al-Ghazali (2001) emphasized five critical components that education needs to protect: the student’s religion, soul, intellect, family integrity, and resources. Al-Ghazali asserted that any matter that supported these components would benefit society, while anything that compromised the integrity of these components would harm society. He recognized that these concepts were found in every religion, and so determined that they are humanistic foundations for all societies. Al-Ghazali’s goals for curriculum sought first to develop the individual, then

society, ultimately preparing one for the afterlife, where one reaps the harvest of the seeds (actions) sown in this life. In this life, we purify our souls in order to be ready for the next life. Thus, by educating ourselves and our children in these five important areas (i.e., religion, soul, intellect, family integrity, and resources), we can ensure a strong society of humanistic, educated citizens who live full lives on this earth and go on to the next life to reap their harvest based on their faith. Al-Ghazali believed that the cycle of life started with educating young children, allowing them to choose their own path of learning. Then they would go out into society to fulfill their chosen goals and, hopefully, when they died, reap a bountiful harvest based upon what they had sown.

We see this cycle of supporting our children today by educating them, sending them out in society to sow their seeds with the skills of their chosen fields, hoping they live full lives, in order that they go to the next life ready to reap what they have harvested in this life. Some parents attempt to control the cycle by restricting the child's experiences – one example is channeling a child into the education and career paths a parent chooses – thus creating young adults with low self-esteem if they do not succeed in the path their parents have chosen for them. It is better to give the child the opportunity to decide some things for themselves, such as their intellectual interests. While Al-Ghazali encouraged education as a worthwhile goal, he also realized that, for society to operate in balance, its members need to be doing what they are good at and enjoy doing.

Modern Islamic Education

Global perspectives largely influence education today. Worldwide ability to share information on virtually any subject has afforded access to the latest educational trends and philosophies to everyone – and educational systems seeking an updated approach are implementing some of these concepts in their schools, particularly in the case of less developed nations adapting the ideas of the more developed nations. As an example, education in the US is held in high esteem by many countries and policy developments implemented here are frequently incorporated in other nations, sometimes with questionable results.

While acknowledging that Western education has a great deal of valuable information to offer, Kuwait and other Islamic countries are now re-examining the areas where Western influences have been adopted in their schools to ensure that the course material and presentation do not conflict with Islamic culture and tradition. This process is called Islamization, which is the integration of Islam into another concept (Ashraf, 1977; see also Golshani, 2000). Part of the Islamization of education is that Islamic contributions to civilization need to be acknowledged and communicated. For example, Loewen (1995) notes the discrepancies in the documentation of history where “none of the textbooks credits the Muslims with preserving Greek wisdom, enhancing it with ideas from China, India, and Africa, and then passing on the resulting knowledge to Europe via Spain” (p. 45). Loewen complains that this Euro-centric presentation erroneously implies that “before Europe there was nothing, at least nothing modern,” which is misleading. Accordingly, incorporating the contributions of Muslims throughout history will bring all education into more accurate perspective.

Summary

Al-Ghazali provided a comprehensive description of educational processes and relationships, and prioritized the subject matter in order to guide education according to Islamic principles. He considered the various subjects based on the needs of both the students and the community, and integrated knowledge with practice in every type of curriculum. Al-Ghazali's guidelines suggest that there is a natural progression from topic to topic through the various developmental and intellectual phases. He believed that children begin learning at home with their parents and other family elders. Even after children begin their formal education, their teachers continue helping the parents to educate them.

Al-Ghazali established this extensive foundation for Islamic curricula in both home and school to direct the education of both heart and mind. The religious subjects he advocated are still an important and valuable way of life in many Islamic countries, although contemporary society requires a deeper examination of the intellectual subjects than was needed in his era. Al-Ghazali's classification of knowledge supports the concept that education is obligatory, citing the Prophetic saying that, "seeking knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim" (Al-Ghazali, 1997, Vol. 1, p. 25). Al-Ghazali also emphasized that education needs to take the students' individual differences and capacities into consideration.

Both classical and modern scholars in Muslim countries refer to Al-Ghazali's teachings concerning education, particularly as they address the transfer of his educational theories and human behavior to modern Islamic curricula (Khan, 1976; Shalabi, 1978). In order to ensure that Al-Ghazali's foundation meets Kuwait's contemporary needs, it is important to re-examine his writings in terms of what Kuwaiti society needs today. Although Western education has much to

offer this examination, Kuwait and other Islamic countries need to evaluate these contributions to ensure that the course material and presentation do not conflict with Islamic culture and tradition. It would also be helpful to education worldwide to acknowledge Islamic contributions to civilization, in order to resolve the discrepancies Loewen (1995) mentions where Muslims have not been adequately acknowledged for incorporating Greek wisdom and ideas from China, India, and Africa, then forwarding the resulting knowledge base to Europe. Loewen asserts that this Euro-centrism erroneously implies that only Europeans have made notable contributions to education.

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