



Fahmina: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam

Vol. 3 (1) June (2025) 01-12

ISSN: 3047-6143

DOI: 10.24952/fahmina.v3i1.15376

<https://jurnal.uinsyahada.ac.id/index.php/Fahmina/index>

Experiential and Spirituality-Based Character Education: A Study of the Thought of John Dewey and Al-Ghazali

Zacky Al-Ghofir El-Muhtadi Rizal*

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

Email: zacky.al-ghofir.el-muhtadi.rizal@mhs.uingusdur.ac.id

Dian Selfiana

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

Email: dian.selfiana@mhs.uingusdur.ac.id

Sabilul Najah

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

Email: sabilul.najah@mhs.uingusdur.ac.id

Nabila Salsa Hidayah

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

Email: nabila.salsa.hidayah@mhs.uingusdur.ac.id

Isna Farahsya

Universitas Islam Negeri K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Indonesia

Email: isna.farahsya@mhs.uingusdur.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine and compare in depth the thinking of John Dewey and Al-Ghazali in the context of character education, focusing on the empirical experiential approach according to Dewey and the spiritual-moral approach according to Al-Ghazali. John Dewey, as a leading figure of Western progressive education, developed the concept of experiential learning that placed direct experience and social interaction as the foundation of the formation of students' morals and personalities. Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali emphasized that character education must lead to the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) through the application of the values of the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as the habit of pious deeds. Through a qualitative method with a literature study approach and descriptive-comparative analysis, this study identifies the principles of character education of the two characters, as well as explains the fundamental similarities and differences in their views. The results show that although they differ in philosophical grounds—Dewey is secular-humanist while Al-Ghazali is religious-transcendental—both agree that character education should be holistic, involving the active processes of the individual, the environment, and life experiences. The novelty of this research lies in the systematic integration between two educational paradigms that have been considered opposite. By bringing together Dewey's principle of learning by doing and the concept of *tahdzib al-nafs* Al-Ghazali, this study offers a new theoretical framework for a balanced model of character education between rational, social, and spiritual aspects. This contribution is important in responding to the challenges of modern education that demand not only intellectual intelligence, but also emotional and moral intelligence.

Keyword: Character education; John Dewey; Al-Ghazali; Comparative studies.

INTRODUCTION

Today, many educational institutions emphasize only the cognitive aspects and technical skills, while character building is often a mere formality, for example through specialized

*Corresponding author

subjects that do not touch the student's real-life practice.¹ As a result, there is a gap between the knowledge that students have and their daily attitudes and behaviors.² In addition, experiential character education that prioritizes hands-on practice is often considered incapable of instilling deep spiritual values, because students' experiences tend to be pragmatic and secular. On the other hand, spirituality-based character education that is rooted in religious values is often trapped in an indoctrination pattern, making it difficult to build the reflective and critical skills needed by students to face the challenges of the times. This condition raises a fundamental question: how to integrate the thought of John Dewey, who emphasized experience as the basis of education, with the thought of Al-Ghazali, who placed spirituality at the core of character formation, in order to produce a relevant, contextual model of character education.

Education is the main foundation in shaping the character of individuals and society.³ In addition to developing cognitive aspects, education also has moral, social, and spiritual dimensions that are important for forming a complete human personality. In the perspective of progressive education, John Dewey emphasized that education is a dynamic and continuous process of social experience.⁴ According to him, learning does not only happen in the classroom, but also through direct interaction in real life. The concept of experiential learning is at the core of Dewey's thought, as stated in his works such as *Democracy and Education*. John Dewey believed that education should train learners to think critically, act ethically, and actively participate in society.⁵

Many researchers have discussed the concept of character education from the perspectives of various figures, including John Dewey and Al-Ghazali. In his works such as *Democracy and Education*, John Dewey emphasized that education is a dynamic and sustainable social process. John Dewey believed that direct experience is an important element in the formation of students' morals and personalities.⁶ Various studies such as JP et al. (2023) state that the experiential learning approach developed by Dewey is relevant to be applied in modern education that emphasizes the active involvement of students in the teaching-learning process.⁷ On the other hand, in the Islamic tradition, Al-Ghazali views education as an effort to perfect one's morals (*tabdzīb al-nafs*) and get closer to God. In his work, especially *Ihya Ulumuddin* Al-Ghazali explained that the main goal of education is to achieve happiness in this world and the hereafter through the mastery of knowledge and righteous deeds.⁸ Several authors such as Safitri

¹ Teresa A. Oliveira dan Mustafa Tevfik Hebebeçi, "Current Academic Studies in Technology and Education 2024," ISRES Publishing, 2024.

² A. B. A. Avelar dkk., "Integrating sustainable development goals in management education: Impact on student knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors," *The International Journal of Management Education* 23, no. 2 (2025): 101116.

³ Yulastri Rahmawati, "Peran Pendidikan Sosial dalam Membentuk Karakter Individu," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial Indonesia* 1, no. 2 (2023): 60–68.

⁴ Eka Danik Prahasthi dkk., "HAKIKAT MANUSIA: Perspektif Pakar Klasik dan Modern," *Perkumpulan Rumah Cemerlang Indonesia*, 2024, <https://eprints.umm.ac.id/15575/1/HAKIKAT%20MANUSIA%20.pdf>.

⁵ John Dewey, *The essential Dewey, volume 1: pragmatism, education, democracy*, vol. 1 (Indiana University Press, 1998).

⁶ Dewey, *The essential Dewey, volume 1*, vol. 1.

⁷ J. P. Erikson dkk., "Memahami peran pendidikan di era post modern melalui pandangan John Dewey," *Jurnal Kolaboratif Sains* 6, no. 11 (2023): 1572–78.

⁸ M. Mahbubi dan Ali Anhar Syi'bul Huda, "Pendampingan Integrasi Pendidikan Akhlak Berbasis Keteladanan di SMP Nurul Iman Untuk Penguatan Karakter Siswa," *Education, Language, and Arts: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 2, no. 2, September (2023): 52–62.

et al. (2023) consider that Al-Ghazali's thinking is very relevant in shaping a balanced human being between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects.⁹

Several studies show that Dewey and Al-Ghazali both emphasize the importance of education in forming moral and responsible individuals. However, there have not been many studies that systematically compare the principles of their character education in the context of current educational modernization. This research will fill this gap by conducting a more detailed and in-depth comparative analysis of the concept of character education according to John Dewey and Al-Ghazali. The primary works of both figures are used as primary sources, while secondary literature such as journal articles and textbooks are used to enrich understanding and validation of concepts. This research focuses on the theoretical and philosophical frameworks of the two figures, without discussing practical implementation or field case studies. Nevertheless, the results of this research are expected to provide new insights in the development of an education system that is balanced between cognitive, moral, and spiritual aspects.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the library research method to examine the thoughts of John Dewey and Al-Ghazali in the context of character and moral education. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for exploring philosophical concepts in depth through relevant theoretical sources. The data source consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data comes from the original works of the two figures, such as *Democracy and Education* by John Dewey and *Ihya Ulumuddin* by Al-Ghazali. In addition, articles or scientific journals that directly discuss their thoughts are also used as a complement.¹⁰

Meanwhile, secondary data included books on character education, morality, and spirituality that served as support for the analysis. Data analysis is carried out in a descriptive-comparative manner, namely by explaining the concept of each character, then comparing them to find similarities, differences, and relevance in modern education.¹¹ The steps include reading primary sources, identifying the principles of character education, comparing concepts, and assessing their current applications. Through this approach, the researcher seeks to find similarities and differences between Dewey's philosophical view of progressive education and Al-Ghazali's idealistic-religious education. The results are expected to contribute to the development of character education that is balanced between intellectual, moral, and spiritual aspects in the context of Indonesian and Islamic

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Konsep Pendidikan John Dewey

John Dewey, an American philosopher and educator, emphasized that education is a social process that serves to shape an individual's character through direct experience and active participation in the surrounding environment.¹² He argues that education not only prepares individuals for the future, but is also a life process itself, in which students learn through interaction with the real world. In John Dewey's view, schools have a role as miniature societies

⁹ Diana Safitri dkk., "Pendidikan Kecerdasan Spiritual Perspektif Al-Ghazali dan Relevansinya dengan Emotional Spiritual Quotient (ESQ)," *Jurnal Tarbawi* 6, no. 1 (2023): 78–98.

¹⁰ John W. Creswell dan Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Sage publications, 2016).

¹¹ S. Pd Rukin, *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif* (Yayasan Ahmar Cendekia Indonesia, 2019).

¹² Khritish Swargiary, *Principles of Education* (Google, 2024).

that can enable students to develop social and moral skills. Through involvement in group activities and joint problem-solving, students learn values such as cooperation, responsibility, and empathy, which are essential in character formation.

The concept of progressive education introduced by Dewey emphasized the importance of hands-on experience in the learning process.¹³ John Dewey believes that students should be actively involved in activities that are relevant to their lives, so that they can develop meaningful understanding and skills. This approach is considered relevant in the formation of early childhood character, because at this stage, brain and mental development is going on very rapidly. The concept of education is very influential in the development of technology. Dewey believed that learning should be based on direct experience.¹⁴ Education is not only about passively receiving information, but it must also involve students in meaningful activities. Dewey emphasizes the "learning by doing" method in which students acquire knowledge through exploration and experimentation.¹⁵ Dewey saw schools as a reflection of broader social life. Schools should be communities where students learn to work together, communicate, and solve problems democratically. Dewey rejected a rigid and rote based approach to traditional education. Instead, he proposes a flexible curriculum, which adapts to the interests and needs of students, so that they are more motivated to learn. According to Dewey, education must prepare individuals to participate in a democratic society.¹⁶ This means that students must learn to think critically, make decisions, and work in a democratic environment from an early age. According to Dewey, teachers are not just informers, but more as facilitators who guide students to think for themselves, explore, and find solutions to the problems they face. Dewey emphasized the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in education.¹⁷ This means that learning should not focus on just one subject, but should connect different fields of knowledge to be more relevant to real life. Dewey believed that education does not only take place in school but is also a lifelong process. Every experience, both inside and outside the classroom, can be part of learning.

These Dewey concepts are still very relevant in modern education, especially in active learning approaches, project-based education, and educational systems that emphasize critical thinking and creativity.¹⁸ In addition, John Dewey also emphasized that education must be democratic, and able to provide equal opportunities for every individual to develop his or her potential. John Dewey argued that democratic education will be able to produce a better society, because the individuals in it have strong character and are able to contribute positively. The implementation of John Dewey's thought in education in Indonesia can be seen in the contextual learning approach, where students are encouraged to connect the subject matter with

¹³ Kien Thi Pham, "John Dewey's Educational Philosophy and Experience for Current Vietnamese Education," *Contemporary Pragmatism* 21, no. 4 (2024): 399–415.

¹⁴ A. Sa'dud Daroin dkk., "ANALYSIS OF DEWEY METHOD IN TRANSFORMATION OF TRADITIONAL AND MODERN EDUCATION," *The Fourth International Conference on Government Education Management and Tourism* 4 (2025): 056–056, <http://conference.loupiasconference.org/index.php/ICoGEMT-4/article/view/653>.

¹⁵ Moses Alabi, "Experiential learning: Fostering deep learning through active engagement," December, 2024.

¹⁶ Yi-Huang Shih, "Learning for democracy: Some inspiration from John Dewey's idea of democracy," *Frontiers in Political Science* 6 (2024): 1429685.

¹⁷ Si Chen, "Enhancing Project-Based Learning in 21st-Century Classrooms: Lessons from Dewey and Kilpatrick's Progressive Ideas," *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas* 98, no. 2 (2025): 29–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2025.2482196>.

¹⁸ Kien Pham Thi, "The Relevance of John Dewey's Pragmatism for Educational Innovation in Contemporary Vietnam," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2510055, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2510055>.

their real experiences, so that learning becomes more meaningful and contributes to the formation of good character.

Al-Ghazali Education Concept

Moral education is a conscious effort to instill confidence in a person, especially in his heart, with the aim of forming good, directed, and positive habits both according to common sense and religious sharia.¹⁹ Therefore, moral education has a very important role for every individual. Not only students need it, but educators also have to learn and develop themselves in the aspect of morals in order to get recognition and appreciation from the surrounding environment. According to Imam Al-Ghazali, the terms *khuluq* and *khalq* can be used simultaneously but have different meanings.²⁰ *Khalq* refers to the physical form or outward appearance of a human being that can be seen by the eye directly (*bashar*), while *khuluq* refers to the inner traits, personality, or character that exist in humans that can only be realized through the eyes of the heart (*bashirah*). Since humans are made up of bodies and souls, the power of the soul or *nafs* that can be felt through *bashirah* has a higher position than the physical body which can only be seen by ordinary senses of sight.

Moral education according to Imam Al-Ghazali aims to eliminate bad qualities in oneself and replace them with noble morals. He believes that a change in morality is possible, such as changing a person from a rude attitude to a compassionate attitude.²¹ In his view, there are changes in God's creatures that cannot be changed, such as the heavens and stars that have been established by Him, but in other aspects, especially in humans, improvement and perfection can be achieved through the process of education. According to Al-Ghazali, it is impossible to completely eradicate lust and anger from the face of the earth. However, efforts to control it and minimize its negative impact are possible through spiritual practice and continuous self-coaching. In the framework of this moral formation, Al-Ghazali also explains the structure of the human psyche which consists of four main elements, namely *nafs*, *qalb*, *spirit*, and *intellect*. Each of the four elements has a general and specific meaning, which is interrelated in shaping a person's personality and morals.

These stages show that morality is not something static, but can change and develop. Therefore, a good habituation process is needed to form noble morals. This view is in line with the opinion of Imam Al-Ghazali who divides beings into two types, namely stagnant beings who do not undergo change, and dynamic beings who have the potential to develop and change through efforts such as *mujahadah* (struggle against lust), education, and *riyadah* (spiritual practice).²² In Al-Ghazali's view, the process of forming good morals is carried out through two main approaches, namely *mujahadah* and *riyadah*. With these two models, a person can achieve positive and noble moral stability. This process must also be accompanied by asking for guidance and gifts from Allah SWT, as well as maximizing the function of human nature as an innate provision to know goodness. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali's thinking on moral education in general is in line with the principles of religion and ethics that develop in society.²³ Al-Ghazali

¹⁹ Atiya Rustum dan Zainab Moin, "Moral Training of Youth in the Light of Islam (An Insightful Approach)," *AL-DURAR* 4, no. 4 (2024), <https://www.tcais.net/index.php/aldurar/article/view/243>.

²⁰ Rustum dan Moin, "Moral Training of Youth in the Light of Islam (An Insightful Approach)."

²¹ Nurhikmah Nurhikmah, "Character Education Islam From the Views of Imam Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Al Burhan* 4, no. 1 (2024): 53–66.

²² Ekhlas Alhaib dan Ali Kadhemi Alsandhi, "The concept of morals and education in imam Al-Ghazali's thought," *Science* 3, no. 1 (2022): 48–55.

²³ Mohammad Syaiful dan Rifqi Khairul Anam, "The Concept Of Moral Education According To Imam Al Ghazali And Relevance To Education In Indonesia," *At-Tajdid: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemikiran Islam* 8, no. 2 (2024): 601–15.

not only focused on the spiritual and spiritual aspects, but also gave an important place to the development of the world and worldly things in his education system. This shows that Al-Ghazali views the balance between the life of this world and the hereafter as an integral part of the formation of a complete and comprehensive morality.

If morals have been imprinted in a person's soul, then what is needed next is the management and coaching of these morals in order to realize good behavior and in accordance with the teachings of the Prophet PBUH.²⁴ Without an effort to form and practice these morals, it is impossible for a person to have truly good morals as long as he does not try to make them part of his life and does not refer to the values of the Qur'an and Hadith. Imam Al-Ghazali stated that morality in accordance with the *Shari'ah* will not be firmly embedded in a person's soul as long as he does not get used to doing good deeds and abandoning bad deeds. According to him, noble morals will only be formed if a person makes good deeds a habit that is done regularly, just like people who love kindness very much and feel happy to do it. On the other hand, he must also hate and be bothered by bad deeds, so that his heart is moved away from these negative qualities.

In Imam Al-Ghazali's view, moral education should begin early, and an educator has an important role in this process. He emphasized that a teacher or educator must be a consistent example between the knowledge taught and the behavior shown to students.²⁵ This means that moral education is not enough just to provide theoretical knowledge, but must be accompanied by real examples from educators. Therefore, moral education should not be allowed to run without proper direction and strategy. It requires smart efforts, high commitment, and seriousness from those responsible in the world of education. The goal is not only to make students intellectually smart, but also to be able to use these abilities to behave and behave well, and have a noble personality. From this, it can be understood that moral education does not only teach the concepts of right and wrong, but further instills habituation towards goodness. Thus, students not only understand what good morals are, but are also able to feel the value of good in their hearts, and voluntarily and consistently implement them in their daily lives.

According to Al Ghazali, moral education is the soul of Islamic education (education developed by Muslims), and Islam has concluded that moral education and morality are the soul of Islamic education where achieving a perfect morality is the true goal of education.²⁶ Imam Al Ghazali's view regarding the dynamics of morality is very likely that a point of change in a person's attitude can be at any time and is not a gift from birth. Like a person who used to be lazy then becomes diligent, it is very likely that it will happen. This is a criticism from Imam Al Ghazali to the school of nativism which states that if there is a change in human morality.

According to Imam Al-Ghazali, in educating bad morals, it is necessary to try to train the person to do deeds and vice versa.²⁷ And he also said that improper treatment and social association are symptoms of mental illness which is often referred to as mental shock, which must be immediately restored, by educating with spiritual exercises and trying to practice right deeds. If we want to form positive morals in children, then the first step that must be taken is to provide guidance and teaching the right science. After that, they need to be directed to learn

²⁴ Nabeel Al-Azami, *Muhammad saw. 11 Leadership Qualities That Changed The World* (Elex Media Komputindo, 2024).

²⁵ Nurul Indana dan Ali Mustofa, "The Concept of Islamic Education in the Perspective of Imam Al Ghazali and Its Relevance in the Contemporary Era," *Urwatul Wutsqo: Jurnal Studi Kependidikan Dan Keislaman* 13, no. 2 (2024): 242–56.

²⁶ Nurhikmah, "Character Education Islam From the Views of Imam Al-Ghazali."

²⁷ Khusnul Nur Azizah dan Zainal Abidin, "The Concept of Islamic Education Based on the Perspective of Imam Al-Ghazali," *Al-Munawwarah: Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2025): 48–56.

and practice praiseworthy knowledge, so as not to get lost into misunderstanding or behavior (*bathil*). In the process of forming students' morals, the important thing that should not be ignored is the purification of the soul (*taẓkiyat al-nafs*). This can be done by getting children used to performing mandatory worship such as prayer, reading the Qur'an (reciting), fasting, and other worships. Through the regularity in carrying out the worship, the child's soul will always be filled with strong positive and spiritual values.

Moral formation is not only done through one way, but requires various approaches that are in accordance with the condition and development of children. As educators or parents, we need to have a varied strategy so that children stay motivated and on the right path according to our expectations.²⁸ In addition, it is very important for us to understand the inner state or feelings of the child. By knowing their emotions, interests, and inner responses, we can convey knowledge and direction in a more appropriate way and not give rise to a sense of negativity or rejection towards the educating party. Thus, the process of moral education will run more harmoniously and effectively, and be able to create a generation that is faithful, devout, and noble in character.

Comparison of the Educational Concepts of John Dewey and Al-Ghazali

Both John Dewey and Al-Ghazali acknowledged the existence of an innate human potential that is able to control their own lives or to be able to provide understanding for themselves. It's just that the term often used by John Dewey is the innate potential of humans, while Al-Ghazali speaks of it with the term *fitrah*. In addition, John Dewey and Al-Ghazali's conception of innate potential both emphasized the guidance of human potential which was indicated to be pragmatic. Meanwhile, the educational goals of the two have differences. However, both John Dewey and Al-Ghazali view students as subjects as well as educational objects who have the freedom to make choices in interpreting their personal and social lives.²⁹

The freedom in question is a basic value that must be maintained and guided in accompanying his life. The basic human value that is called is *fitrah*. However, in terms of the purpose of freedom between the two figures, they are different. For John Dewey, students are the subjects who are prepared for all circumstances.³⁰ According to him, students are independent and independent individual subjects without limits. Because students who undergo their educational process with their awareness, abilities, and strengths as well as personality are the main actors who become the creators of their own history. Even with the educational process, it has a pattern that has the potential to change the world. Therefore, according to John Dewey's thought, if students want growth and development in all intellectual resources, students must free themselves from the control of rules that restrict, limit or bind freedom of thought (intelligence). So that the process of forming fundamental skills both intellectually and emotionally has an effect on future welfare. This is different from Al-Ghazali who views education as worship and as a control in the development of human values as creatures and in the end education is able to lead humans to the awareness of their existence as servants. However, Al-Ghazali did not let go of world affairs in education. He sees the world as an intermediary to achieve happiness in the hereafter.

²⁸ Jonathan C. Erwin, *The Classroom of Choice: 100+ Strategies to Reach and Teach Every Learner* (ASCD, 2024),

²⁹ Chamisah Chamisah, "Dewey's Philosophy and Thoughts An analysis of the Compatible Applied on Islamic Education," *Proceedings International Conference: Education, Science, and Technology* 1, no. 1 (2024): 289–310, <https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/estetik/article/view/26536>.

³⁰ PRISCA KOBIA, "DEWEY'S PHILOSOPHY OF EXPERIMENTATION AND TRAINEES ACQUISITION OF PRACTICAL SKILLS IN TECHNICAL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA." (PhD Thesis, 2024), <http://41.89.236.15/xmlui/handle/1/4384>.

Based on the analysis of the two concepts, it can be concluded that education according to John Dewey and Al-Ghazali has similarities in terms of the process of humanizing humans. Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference in his approach. According to John Dewey, education aims to free students from all forms of restrictions, so that they are able to develop democratically and dynamically. Education for him is an effort to develop individuals as subjects who are able to face and solve problems in the future according to their growth and life experiences. On the other hand, according to Al-Ghazali, education is an intermediate process that functions to develop the innate potential (*fitrah*) of humans, with the ultimate goal of getting closer to Allah SWT.³¹

Dewey stated that education in a broad sense is a means or path for human social survival. Every individual is born into society without bringing provisions such as language, beliefs, norms, or social ideas. This process is part of the human life experience. Based on this view, it can be concluded that the philosophy of education developed by John Dewey is based on the understanding of Progressivism. Progressive education basically emphasizes the importance of learning by doing. Furthermore, Dewey believed that humans learn through direct experience. This belief places it within the framework of the philosophy of pragmatism education, where reality can only be truly understood if experienced directly.

The progressive education views that he proposed were also greatly influenced by his pragmatic understanding.³² He argued that education should not be limited to transferring knowledge from teachers to students. More than that, education must focus more on developing critical thinking skills and readiness to face real-life changes and challenges. In Dewey's view, children must actively interact with their environment in order to be able to adapt and develop. He also emphasized that teachers and students should learn together. Dewey's view of the learning environment is strongly influenced by the principle of democracy, namely equal rights and votes in the learning process. The approach he developed is completely child-centered (child-centered education), where learning is directed according to the interests and needs of students. In Dewey's perspective, children should be given the freedom to explore their surroundings to support their intellectual, emotional, and social growth as a whole.

The school of philosophy embraced by Al-Ghazali is Idealism. Idealism philosophy places superiority on the aspects of the mind, spirit, or spirit (soul) over material or material things. In Al-Ghazali's view, education is seen as an effort to form good morals while eliminating bad traits from human beings. Thus, education can be interpreted as a systematic process that aims to create positive and progressive changes in human behavior. Based on this understanding, it is clear that Al-Ghazali placed special emphasis on the formation of behavior that was in harmony with the teachings of Islam. According to him, the educational process requires a directed delivery method, such as teaching indoctrinatively or through a curriculum that can be taught as part of a certain subject. Furthermore, Al-Ghazali stated that the main goal of education is the development of noble ethics, which includes the cultivation of moral and ethical values such as obedience, humanity, modesty, and hatred of negative traits such as arrogance, love of luxury, and lies. This entire process is aimed at making humans able to obey Allah SWT, submit to His will, and always be grateful for all the blessings given.

In terms of educational methods, both John Dewey and Al-Ghazali agree that methods are a very important aspect in supporting the educational process. Both believe that the use of the right methods can help achieve the expected educational goals. However, there are

³¹ MelliFera Lubis dkk., "Relevansi Konsep Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Ghazali terhadap Pendidikan Islam Kontemporer," *Jurnal Penelitian, Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran: JPPP* 3, no. 2 (2022): 154–68.

³² Rohmah Wati dkk., "Filsafat Pendidikan dalam Relasi Ganda: Analisis dan Sintesis," *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research* 4, no. 6 (2024): 1807–19.

fundamental differences in the concept and stages of application of the methods they adopt. According to John Dewey, educational methods are grouped into three main forms, namely, one problem solving. According to John Dewey, this educational method requires students to develop a critical mindset in solving various problems, according to their level of development and ability. In the process, teachers do not act as a dominating party, but only as mediators and facilitators who guide, direct, and help students in facing and solving the problems they face. There is a mutual interaction between teachers and students during the learning process. The active role of students is highly emphasized, while teachers are present to support and facilitate the learning process so that it continues to run effectively and meaningfully.

Second, Learning by Doing, this method also places teachers as mediators and facilitators who help the learning process of students. The main focus is to develop students' awareness of various developments and needs in society. In other words, this method aims to open the eyes of students that society is a real part of life that must be understood and lived. Through this approach, students are trained to always be responsive and active in responding to social needs in a sustainable manner throughout their lives. They not only learn for themselves, but are also formed to be able to make a positive contribution to the environment and the surrounding community.

Third, the discipline method, this method directs a teacher to be able to arouse the enthusiasm of students so that the power of learning arises as well as the basic potential of humans who think, speak, and do. The three educational methods are essentially to bring out pragmatic critical awareness from students with the aim of achieving a pragmatic and progressive education. As for Al-Ghazali, the educational method must be able to arouse motivation to learn and be able to eliminate boredom. In addition, in the educational process, an educator needs to provide positive encouragement and punishment that is educational. Encouragement can be given through praise, gifts, or other forms of appreciation as an effort to motivate students. While punishment should not be destructive, it is directed to form good habits and instill discipline in students. Al-Ghazali also emphasized several important educational methods, such as memorization methods, understanding material, fostering belief, and strengthening justification for the values learned. In addition, he highly prioritizes moral methods which include example and habituation. With these two methods, learners not only understand the theory of goodness, but also actually experience it in everyday life.

Simply put, these two lines of thought—John Dewey and Al-Ghazali—each have a distinctive twist. He emphasized more on the freedom of students to study actively and independently according to their interests and needs. In contrast, Al-Ghazali had a religious-ethical mindset influenced by his sufistic background. Al-Ghazali emphasizes more on the purification of the soul, submission to Allah SWT, and the formation of noble morals and morals. From this explanation, it can be seen that although there are fundamental differences between these two figures, they also have similarities in terms of the importance of education to form a whole human being.

CONCLUSION

A study of the thought of John Dewey and Al-Ghazali shows that character education has a broad and profound dimension, encompassing aspects of empirical experience and spiritual values. John Dewey emphasized the importance of education through real experience and social interaction as the basis for democratic and contextual character formation. Meanwhile, Al-Ghazali emphasized the importance of purification of the soul and the habit of pious deeds as the foundation of moral education derived from the values of revelation. Although both come from different backgrounds and traditions, there is a common point in

their view that character education is not only about cognitive aspects, but also affective and practical aspects. Dewey emphasized the pragmatic and social aspects, while Al-Ghazali emphasized the spiritual and moral aspects. The combination of the two provides an integrative opportunity in designing a character education model that is balanced between the development of intellect, experience, and heart. Thus, character education ideally emphasizes not only on social skills and rationality, but also on the formation of the heart and morals through spiritual values. This integrative approach can be the foundation for building a holistic and sustainable education system in the modern era.

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