

Al-Ghazali's Perspective on the Innate Nature of Teachers to Improve the Quality of Islamic Education

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Abstract

This study is motivated by the tendency of contemporary Islamic education systems to emphasize cognitive and administrative aspects while neglecting spiritual and moral dimensions, thereby reducing the role of teachers to mere knowledge transmitters. This research aims to examine the concept of teacher's fitrah from the perspective of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and its relevance in improving the quality of Islamic education. The study employs a qualitative approach using library research, with primary data derived from Al-Ghazali's works and secondary data from relevant academic literature. Data analysis is conducted through content analysis and a hermeneutic approach to interpret the meaning of texts comprehensively. The research gap lies in the limited number of studies that position teachers as subjects possessing their own fitrah that requires continuous development, rather than focusing solely on students. The findings reveal that teacher's fitrah encompasses spiritual, moral, and intellectual potentials that must be actualized through self-purification (tazkiyat al-nafs), exemplary conduct, and holistic competence development. The implementation of this concept leads to a paradigm shift in education, strengthens teacher character, and enhances the quality of learning interactions. Teacher's fitrah becomes a fundamental element in constructing an integrative, value-oriented, and sustainable Islamic education system.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of fitrah in Islamic education affirms that human beings are created with innate potentials oriented toward truth, goodness, and the recognition of God. Within this framework, education is not merely a process of knowledge transfer but a holistic endeavor to develop human potential in its entirety. However, contemporary Islamic education still demonstrates a reductionistic tendency that prioritizes cognitive and administrative aspects, while the spiritual and moral dimensions receive comparatively less attention (Piergentili et al., 2021; Sahin, 2018; Taylor & Habibi, 2020). This condition contributes to a diminished understanding of teachers' roles, reducing them to mere instructors. In contrast, from an Islamic perspective, particularly according to Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, teachers hold an essential function as spiritual guides responsible for nurturing and directing students' fitrah.

In Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's thought, human fitrah is understood as spiritual potential that must be directed toward perfection through an educational process centered on the purification of the soul (tazkiyat al-nafs) (Rahman et al., 2023; Rassool & Keskin, 2025). Al-Ghazali emphasizes that the human heart, especially that of children, is in a receptive state, making education a decisive factor in shaping moral and spiritual development (Al Ghazali, 2005; Fallujah, 2019). Teachers, in this regard, do not merely function as transmitters of knowledge

but as exemplary figures (*uswah*) who cultivate character through modeling and habituation. Education, according to al-Ghazali, is rooted in the integration of knowledge, practice, and ethics, all of which serve to preserve the purity of human *fitrah* (Alsuhaymi & Atallah, 2025; Arroisi & Syamil, 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in several key aspects. First, it positions teachers as subjects who possess their own *fitrah* that requires continuous development, thereby shifting the discourse from a student-centered to a teacher-centered perspective on *fitrah*. Second, it integrates al-Ghazali's concepts of *tazkiyat al-nafs* (purification of the soul) and *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct) into a coherent framework for teacher development that has not been systematically elaborated in prior studies. Third, it proposes a conceptual framework for *fitrah*-based teacher education that integrates spiritual, moral, and intellectual competencies in a holistic manner. Fourth, it identifies practical implications for teacher training programs, competency standards, and evaluation systems within Islamic educational institutions. This novelty contributes significantly to the advancement of both Islamic education theory and practice.

Various studies on *fitrah* in Islamic education have emphasized the importance of holistic human development, encompassing intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. However, most of these studies position students as the primary focus, while the dimension of teachers' *fitrah* remains underexplored. In fact, from Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's perspective, the quality of teachers plays a decisive role in educational success, as teachers are the primary agents in the internalization of values. Without a proper understanding of their own *fitrah*, teachers may struggle to guide the *fitrah* of students effectively. Therefore, it is necessary to reaffirm that teachers also possess a *fitrah* that must be nurtured, purified, and continuously developed.

Building on this perspective, it is important to position the concept of teacher *fitrah* as an integral component of efforts to improve the quality of Islamic education. Teacher *fitrah* encompasses spiritual, moral, and intellectual potentials that must be developed through self-awareness and commitment to divine values. In al-Ghazali's view, ideal teachers are not only knowledgeable but also sincere, exemplary, and oriented toward the hereafter in fulfilling their responsibilities. The quality of education is therefore not determined solely by curriculum or pedagogical methods, but significantly by the inner quality of teachers as educators who guide with wisdom and spiritual depth.

Based on this discussion, this study aims to examine in depth the concept of teacher *fitrah* from the perspective of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and its relevance in improving the quality of Islamic education. It seeks to reconstruct the role of teachers as *murabbi* who not only transfer knowledge but also nurture the soul and character of learners. In addition, this study aims to formulate a conceptual framework for *fitrah*-based teacher education that integrates spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions holistically. Through this approach, Islamic education is expected to produce a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also spiritually grounded and morally mature.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research design, aiming to examine in depth the concept of teacher *fitrah* in the perspective of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali and its relevance to improving the quality of Islamic education. The qualitative approach was

chosen because this study focuses on understanding meanings, concepts, and philosophical and normative constructions of thought. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of ideas contained in both classical and contemporary literature. This research is not oriented toward quantitative measurement but rather toward a critical interpretation of texts and ideas as the object of study.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained from the main works of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali that are relevant to the concepts of education and fitrah, such as *Ihya' Ulum al-Din* and other works discussing aspects of ethics and education. Meanwhile, secondary data are derived from books, scientific journals, and previous research related to the concepts of fitrah, Islamic education, and the role of teachers. Data collection is conducted through documentation study by systematically reviewing, classifying, and organizing various literature sources. This process aims to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research theme.

Data analysis is conducted using content analysis techniques and a hermeneutic approach to interpret the contextual meaning of texts. The researcher carries out the process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in stages. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation by comparing various relevant literature and checking the consistency of concepts across references. Validity is further strengthened through peer review and the researcher's careful and critical examination of sources. The findings are expected to achieve a high level of credibility and reliability in explaining the concept of teacher fitrah within the perspective of Islamic education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Fitrah

Fitrah in the perspective of Islamic education is a fundamental concept that affirms that human beings are created with innate potentials oriented toward truth, goodness, and the recognition of God (HRP et al., 2024; Nuranisa et al., 2025). This potential is not empty but already contains an inclination toward divine values. Within this framework, fitrah serves as the ontological basis for understanding human nature as beings composed of physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Education, therefore, plays a crucial role in developing this potential in a directed manner so that it does not deviate from the purpose of creation as a servant ('abd) and vicegerent (khalifah) on earth.

Conceptually, fitrah can be understood as the initial condition of human beings in a state of purity and readiness to accept the values of truth. However, fitrah is not a static entity but a dynamic potential that can develop or become distorted depending on environmental influences and the educational process. This indicates that education has a strategic function in maintaining the purity of fitrah while simultaneously guiding its optimal development. Education, in this sense, does not merely function as a transfer of knowledge but as a process of guidance that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in a holistic manner.

In Islamic studies, fitrah is also understood as a value orientation that leads to monotheism (Mrahorović, 2023). Every human being possesses an inherent tendency to recognize and acknowledge the existence of God as the ultimate source of truth. This inclination forms the foundation of spiritual awareness that is embedded from birth. Fitrah also encompasses the potentials to think, feel, and act, all of which can develop through experience and learning.

Without proper guidance, these potentials may deviate from their intended direction. Therefore, education oriented toward fitrah must maintain a balance between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development in a harmonious and integrated manner.

Teacher

From the perspective of Islamic education, teachers are not only understood as transmitters of knowledge, but as supervisors who have the responsibility of shaping the personality of students. Teachers play the role of facilitators who direct the development of the potential of fitrah optimally through a holistic approach. This role places the teacher as a central figure in the educational process, since the success of education is not only determined by the material taught, but also by the quality of the interaction between the teacher and the learner (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2021). Teachers are required to have balanced intellectual, emotional, and spiritual competencies.

Teachers in the framework of fitrah-based education have a broader dimension as role models (*uswah*) and moral guides. It not only teaches knowledge, but also instills value and forms character through example. Teachers must be able to understand the potential, interests, and needs of students individually, so that the learning process becomes more adaptive and meaningful (Bhardwaj et al., 2025). In this context, teachers also have a nature that needs to be developed, especially in the aspects of sincerity, integrity, and commitment to divine values, in order to be able to carry out their role effectively.

Islamic Education

Islamic education is a process of human development that aims to develop all potential possessed in a balanced manner between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects. The main goal of Islamic education is not only oriented to academic achievement, but also to the formation of character and faith. In this framework, education is understood as a process that directs humans to achieve perfection as people who have faith, knowledge, and morals. Islamic education must be based on the values of monotheism which is the center of the orientation of life.

In practice, Islamic education cannot be separated from the role of the environment that includes family, school, and community (Fandy, 2023; Islamic et al., 2024). These three environments have a significant contribution in shaping the learning experience of students. Family is the initial foundation in instilling values, while school plays a role in developing potential systematically. The community is a space for value actualization in real life. The synergy between the three environments is an important factor in ensuring that the education process runs effectively and sustainably.

Islamic education also demands a holistic and non-partisan approach. The curriculum must be designed to accommodate the development of the entire human dimension, including the moral and spiritual aspects. In addition, the learning method must be able to encourage active participation of students and provide a meaningful learning experience. With such an approach, education not only produces intellectually intelligent individuals, but also has emotional and spiritual maturity. This is the main indicator in improving the quality of Islamic education as a whole.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's Perspective on Fitrah

According to Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, human fitrah is a fundamental potential that is inherently sacred and inclined toward accepting truth (Al Ghazali, 2005; Arikewuyo, 2020; Arroisi & Syamil, 2025; Hasan & Tamam, 2020; Kesuma et al., 2025; Ningtias & Nugroho, 2025). He emphasizes that every child is born in a state of readiness to receive good values, but the direction of their development is largely determined by the surrounding environment and the education they receive. In his view, the human heart is likened to a pure jewel that can be shaped according to the influences exerted upon it. Therefore, education plays a crucial role in preserving and directing this fitrah.

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali further emphasizes that the primary goal of education is the purification of the soul (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) and the formation of noble character (Firmansyah & Mustopa, 2025; Karima et al., 2025). He holds that knowledge without morality is incomplete in value, as the ultimate aim of education is to draw closer to God. In this context, fitrah must be developed through a process of habituation and continuous practice. Education, therefore, does not only function to increase knowledge but also to shape character in accordance with moral and spiritual values.

Al-Ghazali also highlights the essential role of teachers as spiritual guides who are responsible for directing the fitrah of students. Teachers must possess sincerity and integrity in fulfilling their duties, as the success of education is highly dependent on their quality. In his view, teachers do not merely transmit knowledge but also shape the soul through exemplary conduct. They must serve as role models in behaviour and ethics in order to exert a positive influence on students (Emilia et al., 2023; Osman, 2026).

Al-Ghazali positions fitrah as the foundation of education that must be preserved and developed in a balanced manner. He rejects educational approaches that focus solely on intellectual development while neglecting the spiritual dimension (Khasawneh et al., 2022). According to him, ideal education integrates knowledge, practice, and morality into a unified whole. The development of fitrah thus produces not only intellectually capable individuals but also those with spiritual depth and moral maturity.

Implications for Islamic Education

The concept of teacher fitrah in the perspective of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali positions teachers as educational subjects who possess spiritual, moral, and intellectual potentials that must be developed in a balanced manner. Teachers do not merely function as transmitters of knowledge but as spiritual guides responsible for preserving and directing the fitrah of students. Within this framework, teacher fitrah encompasses the inclination toward goodness, the teaching of truth, and the internalization of divine values. The quality of education is therefore highly determined by the extent to which a teacher's fitrah has been optimally actualized.

The main implication of this concept is a paradigm shift in understanding teacher competence. Competence is no longer limited to pedagogical and professional abilities but also includes spiritual and moral dimensions. Teachers are required to recognize that the act of teaching is a form of trust (*amanah*) with an inherent dimension of worship. This necessitates the integration of knowledge, faith, and practice in educational activities. Teachers must not only master subject matter but also embed values within every learning process.

From Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's perspective, teacher character is a fundamental element in the development of educational fitrah. Teachers must embody sincerity, patience, humility, and consistency in doing good. These characteristics are not merely personal traits but essential instruments in the educational process. Students tend to imitate teacher behaviour, making exemplary conduct (*uswah*) the most effective educational method. Consequently, character formation among teachers becomes a central priority in improving the quality of fitrah-based Islamic education.

Teacher self-development is an essential component in the actualization of fitrah. Teachers are expected to engage in continuous self-reflection and spiritual purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*) to perform their roles effectively. This includes enhancing spiritual quality through worship and strengthening intellectual capacity through lifelong learning. In this context, teachers must remain continuous learners, as both knowledge and student needs evolve over time. Thus, teacher self-development is an ongoing and integrated process in maintaining educational quality.

Interaction between teachers and students in the fitrah perspective should be grounded in affection and respect. Teachers should not position themselves as authoritarian figures but as facilitators who understand students' needs and potential. Such an approach fosters a conducive learning environment and encourages active student participation. Humanistic interaction also supports the development of students' confidence and critical thinking skills, making learning more meaningful and effective.

In implementation, teachers must be able to recognize the unique fitrah of each student. Since fitrah develops in diverse ways, educational approaches must be individualized and adaptive. Teachers need to identify students' interests, talents, and learning styles to provide appropriate stimulation. This requires strong observational skills and empathy. With the right approach, students' potential can develop optimally without pressure or distortion.

Fitrah-based learning methods require teachers to apply varied and contextual pedagogical approaches. Instead of relying solely on lecturing, teachers should utilize dialogue, reflection, and experiential learning. This allows students to understand material more deeply and connect it to real-life contexts. In addition, habituation methods play an important role in shaping character through consistent reinforcement of positive behaviours.

The implications for assessment also highlight the need for a paradigm shift in evaluation practices. Assessment should not focus exclusively on cognitive achievement but must also include affective and spiritual dimensions. Teachers are expected to evaluate students' character development and attitudes as part of educational outcomes. This requires comprehensive and holistic assessment instruments, where educational success is measured not only by academic performance but also by moral and personal development.

The fitrah of teachers also demands integration between professional and moral roles. Teachers must maintain consistency between what they teach and what they practice. Any inconsistency between the two can weaken students' trust and undermine the educational process. Therefore, integrity becomes the central principle in the teaching profession, reflecting the unity between knowledge and action, which is fundamental in Islamic education.

At the institutional level, the development of teacher fitrah requires adequate systemic support. Educational institutions should provide development programs that not only enhance technical competence but also strengthen teachers' character and spirituality. This can be

achieved through training, mentoring, and structured religious development activities. Such support enables teachers to actualize their potential more effectively and contribute significantly to educational quality.

The educational environment also plays a crucial role in supporting the implementation of teacher fitrah. Synergy among schools, families, and communities is a determining factor in educational success. Teachers must establish effective communication with parents and society to ensure consistency in values transmission. A supportive environment strengthens value internalization and helps students develop strong and sustainable character.

In conclusion, the concept of teacher fitrah in the perspective of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali provides a comprehensive framework for improving the quality of Islamic education. This approach emphasizes the integration of competence, character, and spirituality within the teaching profession. By fully actualizing fitrah, teachers can fulfill their role not only as educators but also as moral and spiritual guides. This becomes a key foundation for creating holistic, value-oriented, and sustainable Islamic education.

CONCLUSION

The concept of teacher fitrah in the perspective of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali's thought emphasizes that the quality of Islamic education is highly determined by the inner quality and professionalism of the teacher as a spiritual guide. Teachers do not merely function as transmitters of knowledge but as murabbi who are responsible for preserving, directing, and developing the fitrah of students in a holistic manner. The actualization of teacher fitrah requires the integration of intellectual, spiritual, and moral competencies, manifested through sincerity, exemplary conduct, and commitment to divine values. With this approach, Islamic education can move from a purely cognitive orientation toward the formation of the whole human being. Strengthening teacher fitrah is therefore a fundamental strategy in improving the quality of sustainable and meaningful Islamic education.

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