



Self-Regulate Learning and Al-Ghazali's Theory of Education

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ABSTRACT

Al-Ghazali, the famous Muslim scholar from the 5th century presented the Theory of Education in which he defines the major goal of the mankind is to implement the shari'a which can result in the development of the best human society. The impact of society on the learning behavior of the pupil is also advocated by the Self-Regulated Learning process. This process involves the phases of observation, planning, execution and the evaluation. Zimmerman, the major contributors to the Self-Regulated Learning presented a number of shared features that were found to be already stated and asserted by Al-Ghazali. Winne & Hadwin's Information Process Model for moving the facts from one's temporary to the permanent memory is also the way suggested by Al-Ghazali for memorizing the Holy Quran. Like the proponent of the Self-Regulated Learning, Al-Ghazali also believes that the flair of knowing the facts needs a motivation. He asserts that the knowledge is always kept within the human soul and the cognitive abilities play a substantial role in granting a substantial level of inspiration and motivation for self-learning. It is better to incorporate Al-Ghazali's contribution like the division of curriculum, categorization of knowledge, code of ethics for students, and the notion of ikhlaq in the learning process of the students for harvesting the best of results.

KEYWORDS

Shari'a, Farz-e-Ain, Farz-e-Kafaya, Ikhlaq, Amal, Maktab, Cognition, Self-regulation.

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INTRODUCTION

Self-Regulated Learning is one of six major domains of self-regulation. The theory is concerned with the teaching and learning practices in academics. Several theories have been presented in the context of self-regulated learning. The most famous of them are by Zimmerman, Winne & Hadwin, and Pintrich. These theories are quite handy for learning or mastering one's own learning process. This helps to develop a robust learning procedure which involves the observation, planning, execution and the evaluation. On the other hand, Al-Ghazali is a famous Muslim scholar from the 5th century who made a number of significant reforms in the academic learning process of Muslims. He also presented the most legitimate, effective and productive process of learning. For him, the major obligation of the man is to strive for the eternal world hereafter for which the major focus of Al-Ghazali is on *ikhlaq*, the behavior or attitude. This work intends to work out a relationship between both the theories. There are a number of shared features that help to develop a better strategy and course of learning for the learner. The researcher intends to argue that the fusion of Self-Regulated Learning Process with Al-Ghazali's theory of education can yield the best of learning practices for an ideal and productive learning system.

Al-Ghazali's perspective on Education and Learning

According to Ghazali, the human soul is the natural keeper in which one's knowledge potentially exists. He compares this scenario with a seed that naturally contains the oil. Every man on the planet is born with a learning potential and this is what pre-embedded within extinct of the mankind. According to the Islamic philosophy of education presented by Ghazali, this learning potential of the man helps him developing a relationship with his creator. Ghazali terms the heart of an infant to be innocent that is ready to take the impressions from the world outside. Like all the Islamic philosophers, Ghazali divides the time and universe into two short-lived periods which are the living world and the eternal hereafter. The current living world is temporary while the eternal life will be permanent. The scientific laws are not the sole sources of control but the work is effectively working through a continuous intervention of God. The God is the cause of every small or great event occurring in the entire universe.

Human is an immortal soul that never dies but is transferred from on the world to the other. By birth, a man is neither evil nor closer to good. He has the liberty of choosing the best what suits him the most. All the success of the man is to strive for the hereafter. In Ghazali's perspective, a normal society is comprised of the people who can't be virtuous (Giladi, 1988). A society that is

dominated by the evil contains the people who obtain a greater position by shunning the rules rather living in it and the converse is also true. An individual is liable for fulfilling his duties towards the society with respect. Moreover, the existence of groups is more significant than an individual in a society. These groups are expert in their fields. For example, the matters of internal and external affairs are taken by the ruling elite and the religious questions are answered by the scholars. The common person has no choice but to obey.

Ghazali terms the awareness and the knowledge of a man to be the most significant aspect of one's personality. He identifies two major sources of information that serve to nurture the sagacious level of human being. The first one is the observation through senses and the ability of reasoning. The second one is the divine revelation from God. The reliability of the knowledge extracted from these resources depends on upon the method and the reliability of the observer or extractor. The productive knowledge can be harvested out of these mediums if man's self is cultivated through exercise, experience and learning.

Perspective of Self-Regulated Learning

Zimmerman has presented the way a learner can master his own learning process. He asserts that it is not the mental level or the skill of individuals that make them motivated. But, it is a self-directed process which serves to transform one's abilities into the target oriented skills (Zimmerman, 1990). The self-regulated learning is the notion presented by Zimmerman which is the one of the six domains of the self-regulation. This domain is a subject of the most concern for the mentors. This is where the concept of metacognition is presented. It means to think about one's thinking. The strategic action and the motivation of learning are essential for something to be learned effectively. In other words, the self-regulated learning is the mechanism for evaluating and controlling oneself. The autonomy of a person grants him the power to control, monitor and set the goals assigned to him. This helps to expand the expertise and the augmenting the level of self-improvement. The self-regulated learner is cognizant of his academic potential and is equipped with the set of strategies they implement to tackle their respective day-to-day challenges in the studies. The incremental attitude towards intelligence is quite necessary for one to master his process of learning. Also, a student dedicated to the self-regulation believes in the fact that the challenges have to be taken for developing a profound understanding of a certain subject. According to Zimmerman, a high level of self-efficacy is essential for a person to be a self-regulated learner. Such learners are always successful as they have a complete control over their learning environment. Three different phases of learning are described by Zimmerman in

which the self-regulated learning is beneficial. The very first phase is the one in which a learner tries to learn something. In the second phase, the learner struggles to troubleshoot the problems and debugging the errors. Finally, the third phase is when a learner tries to teach something to the others.

The self-regulated learning is further explained by Pintrich through his model of self-regulation. This model has four phases which start from the *forethought, planning, and activation phase*. After that, there is a *control phase* and then the cyclic model moves to the *reaction and reflection phase* (Pintrich, & Garcia, 1994)(Shukor, & Noor, 2014). The cycle is repeated as the learner goes on learning the next thing. In the very first phase of this process, the student starts planning the things and intends to activate his knowledge. The best learning strategies are chosen in the planning phase. In the monitoring phase, the student observes himself. The self-monitoring and the self-reflection are quite significant in this context to work out the competence of a person. This helps the students in self-evaluation. Later on, in the control phase, the learner tries to regulate the pace and learning progress. The final phase in this model is the reflection phase which helps the student reflect on the results and gauge the extent to which the chosen strategies in the very initial stage were effective. This process involves the meta-cognitive process which was further explained by Fritz and Peklaj. This process of self-regulation involves the phases of planning, organization, self-instruction, self-monitoring, and finally the self-evaluation process.

Shared features of Al-Ghazali's and Zimmerman's theory

Although, the worldview of Zimmerman and Al-Ghazali seem to be quite different but actually most of the aspects of their theories are either closely or loosely related to each other. A quite interesting relationship can be crafted between the two scholars.

Principles governing the art of learning:

In many aspects, the approach of Al-Ghazali and Winne & Hadwin are related to each other. In self-regulated learning, four phases are defined in a sequence known as “phases of recursive sequence”. They can be recalled as “task perception, goal setting, enacting, and adoption” (Winne, & Hadwin, 1998). The very first phase of this sequence involves the data and facts collection about a certain thing. The task perception helps to decide the facts concerning the environment around. In the very next phase, the pupil works out the target that is needed to be accomplished. This phase also involves a plan that is used to achieve them. The number of goals cannot be confined to one depending upon the motivation and cognitive engagement. The useful tactics are adopted as the effective learning strategies. The last phase of the learning sequence is

the adaption which means to perform and execute the plan. This result of the action determines if the strategy is needed to be changed. This is a judgmental phase that determines the extent to which a certain goal is practical and achievable. Winnie & Hadwin (1998) claim these four phases to be the part of every academic task.

On the other hand, Al-Ghazali also asserts on considering the situations and the circumstances for adapting the best of strategies in both the teaching and learning. Ghazali claims that not all the strategies are equally effective in every working climate. There is a substantial need to work out the required skills and the ample knowledge for accomplishing a certain task to which Irfan, Abbas, Talib, and Hussain (2020) called the planning. Ghazali's philosophy of learning is based on the *Amal*, which means to put something into practice. To him, the learning is productive if and only if it is put into the practice. In other words, the theoretical masses of the planning of words are of no use until its practicality is known.

Al-Ghazali's worldview of learning and teaching is quite close to the notion of proficiency learning. The model of Ghazali is prone towards the fact that a learner and the teacher should never move from one particular subject to the other. The learning process has to be context sensitive. The pupil should never move to the next subject before the completion of the first learning cycle. In many cases, some subjects are the pre-requisite of the certain subjects. Like in the self-regulated learning, Al-Ghazali recommends considering the interconnected knowledge and relation of a subject to its various branches.

The Information Processing Model

The cognitive psychology presented the Information Processing Model (IPM) that helps to store the information into the long-term memory of the human. This process helps to make the student a self-regulated learner. The IPM helps to retrieve the information from memory that is the most relevant to the confronted problem for the self-regulated learner.

Surprisingly, the very identical approach was already suggested by Al-Ghazali. He explains this through the terms like inculcation, repetition, and memorization. The continuous repetition of the concept moves it more the temporary one to the permanent memory. This is also the way of memorizing the Holy Quran to become *Hafiz*. This process augments the level of understanding and clarity regarding the subject. The commitment to the concepts is ingrained in conviction.

Social Cognitive Perspective

The social cognitive theory to which Zimmerman is a proponent, argues that the psychological issues occur due to the learning of the negative behavior. The maladaptive practices lead to the

critical issues. This seems pretty intuitive that if a person observe the advantages of stealing some stuff would be appealed by the action. The social cognition is prone towards the fact that the learner learns through the interaction and observation. The social cognition makes the learner realized about the practice that could get them the attention of others. Zimmerman has dissected this matter and categorized this observation into three.

This is the fact that is certainly the most significant and worth to be considered in this discussion. The impact of society on both the student and the learning process are our concern. The notion of self-cognition presented by Zimmerman discusses the triadic interaction among a person, his behavior and the working conditions. He presented three significant characteristics of the self-regulated learning. The first characteristic is the self-observation which involves the observation of one's actions, Second, the self-judgment which the analysis can the evaluation of working and performance and third, the self-reaction, which involves a reaction to the consequences of an action. The accurate reflection of the action appropriately tunes the adopted strategy chosen for the accomplishment of the specified goals.

Al-Ghazali is intuitively aware of the impact of the society on the cognitive abilities of a person. His philosophy of education is purely based on the highest level of the Islamic thinking. He is prone towards the integration of the intellectual school of thoughts in society. Al-Ghazali supports healthy debates among individuals as it polishes the sagacious level of the participants. He claims the Islamic society with *shari'a* to be the most appropriate of societies for the better social cognition. Rather asserting on the realization of the self-awareness about the society, he argues to implement *shari'a* so that better learning climate can be formed. The aim of an Islamic society is to nurture the men in a way that they can gain salvation, happiness, and the better eternal lives. Thus, rather advising the learners to keep themselves away from the worst behaviors, Al-Ghazali argues to create an ideal society with the best of behaviors.

Al-Ghazali prescribes to train the students from *Maktab*, the elementary school about the good and bad figures and practices in the society. A student has to be kept from the poetry of love, and association with the 'men of letters'. These people intend to breed the seed of corruption within the soul of the learner. Al-Ghazali prescribes to train them to learn good behavior like respecting the elders, teachers, and the parents. A pupil has to be careful, grateful and well behaved towards his classmates. The arrogant peers have to be avoided and the learning with intelligence and good moral character has to be befriended.

Fusion of SRL and Al-Ghazali's theory of Education

The learning process is merely a small yet significant subset of the Al-Ghazali's theory of education. The process of *Tarbiya* is not confined to the notions like planning, execution, evaluation and impact of society. Al-Ghazali also classified the knowledge on the basis of their nature and the origin. This helps the pupil understanding the theoretical, practical, revealed and rational sciences. Al-Ghazali also divides the curriculum into the *Farz-e-Ain*, the essential or compulsory educational curriculum and the *Farz-e-Kifaya*, the optional educational curriculum. He has also further defined a seven point code of ethics for an ideal student that helps to develop a better learning climate at *Maktab*. These are some of the relevant aspects of Al-Ghazali's theory that can be incorporated in the process of Self-Regulated Learning process. A student following passing the steps of planning, execution, evaluation can consider the aspects like essential curriculum, *Farz-e-Kifaya* and the code of ethics. Al-Ghazali stresses on the practice rather theoretical learning. The self-regulated learning has to be practical oriented and must be taught with the appropriate and relevant applications. Al-Ghazali's approach is context sensitive. He advocates for the specific code of ethics for creating a good learning environment which is among the limitations of the self-regulated learning. These ethics are termed as *ikhlaq* in his writings. The practicality of the planning has to be considered here. Although it is not possible to implement the *shari'a* in its actual spirit at many places especially in the non-Muslim countries, the struggle can be made to craft a better society for the better interaction. Thus, rather finding the best society, Al-Ghazali prescribes to create the one.

CONCLUSION

According to Al-Ghazali, the human soul is the natural keeper of the knowledge like a seed containing oil. The knowledge is a way of developing one's relation to his creator. All the struggles that are being made in the world are to secure the eternal and permanent life hereafter. For this reason, Al-Ghazali puts a great stress on the good deeds and the better *ikhlaq* of the learner towards teachers, parents and each other. For him, the only two sources of knowledge are one's own observation and the divine revelation from God. On the other hand, Self-Regulated Learning process is intended to transform one's abilities into the target oriented skills. The strategy encourages the learner to accept challenges. The process involves different phases like observation, planning, execution, and evaluation. Al-Ghazali also asserts on the profound analysis of the subjects before the execution of a certain plan. He further adds to consider the context and the consideration of the situations while adopting a strategy because not all the

strategies are equally productive in every situation. Both the sides put a great stress on the significance of the impact of the society on the learner. The proponents of the Self-Regulated Learning argue for searching the best learning society for the students but Al-Ghazali asserts to make one. For this, he also presented the code of ethics for an ideal student and also categorized the curriculum into the *Farz-e-Ain* and *Farz-e-Kafaya*. Thus, we conclude that the fusion of Self-Regulated Learning Process with Al-Ghazali's theory of education can yield the best of learning practices for an ideal and productive learning system.

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