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Conceptual Framework of Al-Ghazali Epistemology Knowledge in Media Education

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Abstract

The upheaval of the digital age has made media education an essential component in determining the belief, thought, and behavior of media practitioners. The task of the century is to raise a generation of educated people, especially those with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that go beyond what is taught in standard media curricula. As a result, the emphasis in media education needs to change from dualistic thinking to the idea of the absolute truth of knowledge. This calls for a deeper comprehension of what education means. Determining the meaning of education, the idea of knowledge from Al Ghazali's philosophical standpoint, and its connection to human nature and Islamic ideas is the goal of this articles. A conceptual framework for the epistemology of knowledge in media education is suggested in light of the review.

Keywords: Epistemology; Media Education; Al Ghazali; Secularism

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1.0 Introduction

The negative impact of the media has been widely discussed, but the only minimal effort has been made to combat the issues. Recently, more than 40 dramas promoting LBGTQ+ can be found especially on the popular satellite television platform and OTT (over-the-top) such as Netflix, Disney+, Hulu, Amazon Premium Videos, and many more. This has sparked a concern since the said OTT is available through online subscription, and youngsters are vulnerable to unfiltered content being presented by the media. The digital age turbulence has made media education a crucial part in shaping the belief, thought and action of the media content creator. When the world has no boundaries with the emergence of the internet and various media, maybe it's time for media education to rethink the media content served to the community. The untangled issues happening in various areas in the world today are somehow rooted back in the unresolved problems of knowledge; because what is needed for the human species is knowledge to function as a complete human being. The confusion of knowledge later on branches to many other problematic consequences such as media content adapting dangerous ideologies, to name a few - hedonism, relativism and secularism. This has sparked the questions on the responsibility of the media content creator because media nowadays is consumed by many and plays an integral part in informing and educating.

2.0 Literature Review

Media education is a field of study that focuses on theories and information on various media, particularly mass media. The three stages of the communication process—Source system (media production), Message system (media form and content), and Receiver system—

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have historically made up the foundation of Media Studies (Watson and Hill, 1993). A more recent area of study that emphasizes knowledge application is media education. The goal is to teach the public how to better use and influence the media as well as how to comprehend and analyze it. (Alice Y.L. LEE, 2010) It is generally acknowledged that in the modern media age, media literacy becomes even more crucial. There seems to be agreement on the goal of media education, despite the fact that the justification and definition of media education vary among nations. Its goal is to raise media-literate people who can interact with the media sensibly and responsibly (LEE A.Y., 2010)

Media literacy, literacy involving critical analysis of media content, digital and information literacy, film literacy, news and reading literacy, Internet literacy and online safety, digital game literacy, and media communication literacy are just a few of the individual types of literacy that are seen as being developed by media education today (Petranová, Hossová, & Velick, 2017). In Canada, media education is linked to strengthening Canadian cultural identity while media education is utilized to train moral media professionals in mainland China, it is also used to educate virtuous people in Taiwan. In Hong Kong, media education advocates the prudent application of what has been learnt from the media to daily life in addition to encouraging critical citizenship. Media education research needs to be contextualized because every region has different characteristics when it comes to media education (LEE A.Y., 2010). Media education has grown from a niche issue to a worldwide movement over the past 40 years. Many countries have quickly incorporated teaching and learning about the media into their curricula for high schools and colleges. What do people, especially young people, "learn from the media" has been a prominent theme in media education over the years (LEE A.Y., 2010).

Determining "what people should learn" has rooted in the epistemology of knowledge and this is the root of all crisis when it comes to education. The theory of knowledge or epistemology, aims to define what knowledge is, how it is used, and why it has particular aspects. Furthermore, the notion of knowledge under discussion must, at least initially, be understood modestly to include notions of belief, hypothesis, and other related ideas. Because it is incorrect to call cognitive theory "the theory of knowledge" or "epistemology" as a whole. Along with knowledge in the truest sense, it is also concerned with erotic's, or the process of asking and responding to questions, rational belief, probability, plausibility, evidential, and last but not least, knowing in the true sense of the word (Rescher, N., 2003). In this context, the term "epistemology" refers to both the study of knowledge and the definition of knowledge in this particular discipline. The question of whether knowledge types have curricular value is also peculiarly troublesome for media education, and as a result, the epistemologies of this field of study are also underdeveloped. Many scholars, educators, and organizations have made an effort to establish the ideal curriculum for media education (McDougall 2006), but they have largely refrained from specifying what students "should know" (Connolly S., 2020).

However, without critically examine the framework of what should be taught in the media education, it will create the confusion of the epistemology where people could fall into relativism and not having any solid understanding on the ultimate source of knowledge. In Muslim – majority country (particularly in Malaysia), there's a guideline by the government on the content of the media which mostly avoided the sensitive issues of racial and religious but somehow this can't eradicate the secularism influence of the media content produced even by local media practitioners. In *Kamus Dewan* 2005 edition, secularism can be defined as a doctrine, beliefs, and anything that rejects any religious values in the human social life, while it also refers to those who are free of religious belief and then have a metaphysical view that organises their thoughts and language, as defined by Netherlands theologist Cornelis Van Peursen (Cox H, 2013). Secularism, also described as freeing the world from the understanding of himself grounded by religion and any religious understanding, rejected all closed worldviews and removed all supernatural myths and sacred symbols (Al-Attas, 1978). The worst thing about secularism is, first and foremost, that it brings confusion to the epistemological aspects of human knowledge, where the dichotomy of religion and understanding led us to adopt empiricism and rationalism as the only source of finding knowledge.

This dualist thinkers emerged as a result of the existence of two distinct educational systems: the traditional Islamic educational system and the contemporary secular educational system Isha'raf Hossain (2009). By looking at the history of the process used to build media education curricula, the basis of the issue can be clarified. Since the majority of Islamic nations were colonised by western nations, these nations' educational systems have been adapted and put into place. Unfortunately, confusion has arisen regarding the original conception of education and the process of knowledge creation as a result of adoption. The sublime and spiritual component of education has therefore been disregarded (Wahid Bakhsh Shaikh, 1999). The attention then given to the evolution of knowledge based on western philosophy, which emphasises scientific evidence and heavily rely on the empiricism and rationalism. As a result, the impact of adoption has led to a dualistic epistemology of knowing among academics, philosophers, and all facets of human life (Syed Mohammad Dawilah al-Edrus, 2007). The long-term effects of dualism in knowledge include the emergence of conflict and crisis in the cognitive process as well as in moral judgement when people are unable to distinguish between good and bad or between the truth and the false (Anuar Ahmad, 2009). In Islamic perspectives, the integration of senses, intellect, intuition, and divine revelations were used to find the truth about the meaning of everything (Mohd Tap M. N., 2017). The following sub-topics in this articles will discuss further about the concept of knowledge introduced by Al Ghazali which constitutes of knowledge of the self, knowledge of the God, knowledge of the world and the knowledge of the next world as the framework formulation in media education.

3.0 Methodology

This exploratory research study mostly focuses on the literatures related to Al Ghazali's thoughts. This was done by searching, compiling, reading, classifying, analyzing, and formulating Al Ghazali's philosophical ideas related to media education formulation. The formulation of a potential framework based on the analyzing of literature toward Al Ghazali's philosophy will be guiding a potential new researchers to understand media education production.

4.0 Conceptual Framework of Epistemology Al-Ghazali's in Media Education

Al-Ghazali divided knowledge acquisition into two categories: as a means to an end and as the end in and of itself. In an epistemic process, a thing's spirit rather than its physical form is what is perceived (Mohd Zaidi, 2002). The soul, which is a permanent part of God's creation, was designated by Al-Ghazali as the source of knowledge. The revelation is the source of knowledge in Islam. The holy book of the Qur'an conveys revelation knowledge, and everything of God's creation reveals the laws of nature. As a result, the process of learning must integrate the faculties of reasoning (intellectual activity that involves contemplating God's creation) with the internal senses of a human nature that is purely submissive to God (spiritual dimension) (Hamzah R et al,2012). Al Ghazali argue that epistemology of knowledge must be based on four things:

1. The knowledge of Self

In his manuscripts *Fi' Aja'ib Al Qalbi*, Al-Ghazali defined knowledge as the achievement of meaning about an object in the heart. Therefore, the process of knowing is the process of uncovering the nature of a thing. (Mohd Tap M. N,2017). Al Ghazali argues that one should know himself first as it is the nearest and is certainly beyond the knowledge of physical aspects. Knowing the self-consist of the perennial issues such as where we come from, what are you in yourself, and the purpose of our life. Men were created with animal, demonic and angelic qualities where we hold a great responsibility not to let the lower faculties dominate the intellects. The media practitioners can adopt this concept by knowing that their higher faculty was the intellect, which differs us from animals. Humans have dignity, whereas whatever tarnishes human values in Islamic traditions should be avoided. Al-Ghazali is not an enemy of rationalism. He stressed that denying the intellectual (*aqal*) is the act of arrogance toward the incredible gift given by God to the human species. However, total dependence on the scholars alone can be said to be one of the arrogant acts, too, and the ignorance of the reality of the intellect itself (Mohd Tap M. N,2017). Al-Ghazali redefined the understanding of the intellect by looking at the connections between the hearts and the intellectuals; He describes the soul as placed for placing an *ilm* (knowledge) while *aqal* (intellect) is one of the faculty in the hearts which in charge of finding knowledge. This claim contradicts the western understanding, which puts an intellect in the highest position rather than the heart. But the advancement of technology brings a new field called neuro cardiology that focuses on the nature of the spirit, which recently prevailed the truth about hearts.

Dr Armour, in the year 1991, found out that the heart has its "own little brain" or "intrinsic cardiac nervous system," which is structured of approximately 40,000 neurons that are "similar like a neuron in the brain," which confirmed that the heart also has its nervous system. The research also stated that the heart communicates with the brain in many methods like biochemically, neurologically, energetically, and biophysically so it is confirmed that the heart sends more signals to our brain than vice versa (Ali. M Alshami,2019). At the same time, many in the west have proffered that the brain is the centre of consciousness. This validates a hadith from Prophet Muhammad PBUH:

Verily, in the body is a piece of flesh which, if sound, the entire body is sound, and if corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Truly, it is the heart. (Narrated by Imam Al Bukhari (Book 2, Hadith 52) and Muslim (1599).

By looking at the hadith, we now understand that the heart is the key moderator of a human being. Al-Ghazali stressed that intellectuals cannot stand alone in acquiring knowledge of the unseen; that is why the intellects need a divine revelation to grasp the understanding and concept of the metaphysical world. Al-Ghazali argues that our five senses are like five doors opening to the external world. Still, our hearts have windows that open to the unseen world of spirits, and we can find it during sleep when our five senses are closed that windows open, and we receive an impression from the spiritual world (Al-Ghazali, 1909). This has refuted the rationalism and empiricism as the only way to find the truth by neglecting the most sophisticated element given by God - the spiritual heart.

2. The knowledge of God

Al-Ghazali argues that man's attributes reflect God's attributes. Still, the means of existence of man's soul indicates some insight into God's presence which both God and soul are invisible, indivisible, beyond the confinement of space and time (Al Ghazali,1909). The intellects naturally believe in God. Even for the most remote aboriginal in the forest, they are still worshipping something because our human minds naturally know there must be powerful forces out there that arrange and control this beautiful universe. The facts that we are the only species having an intellect also indicate that there must be a reason behind it. For those who sincerely want the truth, they need to search for the lights, and to gain the lights, we need to purify the hearts, which is stated in the Al-Quran:

He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself. And mentions the name of his Lord and prays. (Qs Surah Al – A'la. 14-15)

In searching for the truth, Al-Ghazali says that one important aspect is "light" or "*nur*." As we know, lights are characteristic of revealing and clarifying; thus, according to him, it is the key to knowledge opening. Al-Munqidh min al-Dalal said: "If with the external light everything is seen by the eyes, then with God everything will be seen by the eyes of the heart" (Mohd Tap M. N,2017). The failure of human beings to understand the "tauhid" concept will lead to much confusion. Nothing can heal them except a "light" from God. Tauhid, in Islamic terms, is the knowledge that explains the existence of God, the attributes, the proof of prophethood and the facts, and the discourse in *sam'iyyat* (unseen) and the belief which is based on Islamic sources, particularly the Al-Quran and the hadith (Nur Farhana A B,2012). The firm belief in the metaphysical world is most important since it creates a solid ground for human beings to act accordingly as a human species by valuing their actions towards their life in the hereafter. Intellect and senses should be a guide in finding the truth, but without "lights," both change to the evil who deviated; that is why some people have an intellect and hearts, but

they cannot think, understand, hear or see (Mohd Tap M. N,2017). This explains the phenomena of atheism, agnostic, polytheistic, and many other negative ideologies enclosed in the media today. Al Quran clearly states:

..... And he to whom Allah has not granted light - for him there is no light. (Qs An-Nur 4:40)

3 The knowledge of this world

Al Ghazali argues that the world is a stage or marketplace and the human being is a pilgrim where here it's the place to collect provisions where there are only two things necessary for us: the protection and nurturing of the soul and body. The body was just a riding animal of the soul which will soon perish one day, and the soul should take care of his body in this world (Al Ghazali,1909). This indicates that human beings should not excessively pay attention and adorning their riding animal but pay more attention to his destination because man's bodily need is rather simple – food, clothing, and dwelling place. The desires, however, complicate us since we want what others have and strive in this world to accumulate unlimited wealth, sometimes distracting us from remembering God. The Muslim media practitioners should not advance the content only on wealth accumulation, materialistic world views, and look down upon the poor, which will advancing social disintegration within the ummah. Even though Islam is not an enemy of wealth, the wealth in Islam has a different concept from the capitalist world where the rich were asked to give zakat and charity so that the poor around us can have a good life too. The wise man uses in proportion, transform the provision of this world in exchange for the hereafter.

4 The knowledge of the next world

Muslims view death as a departure to the next world, whereas Al Ghazali argues that death means escaping from the world's entanglements and union with God, whom he loves (Al Ghazali,1909). The sinner carries into the next world their punishment, so thus the faithful take their good deeds. Believing in this concept prevents human beings from doing such bad acts because all human beings will be questioned about the deeds. Media practitioners should incorporate this understanding into their minds and actions while creating content for the viewers. In one hadith, prophet Muhammad S.A.W said:

Whoever guides someone to goodness will have a similar reward - Sahih Muslim no 1893

This indicates the reward someone will get if they initiate something good. The media practitioners in this digital era should consider it a huge opportunity to frame this digital society into virtues based on Islamic principles. The media practitioners can imbue the content based on this framework:

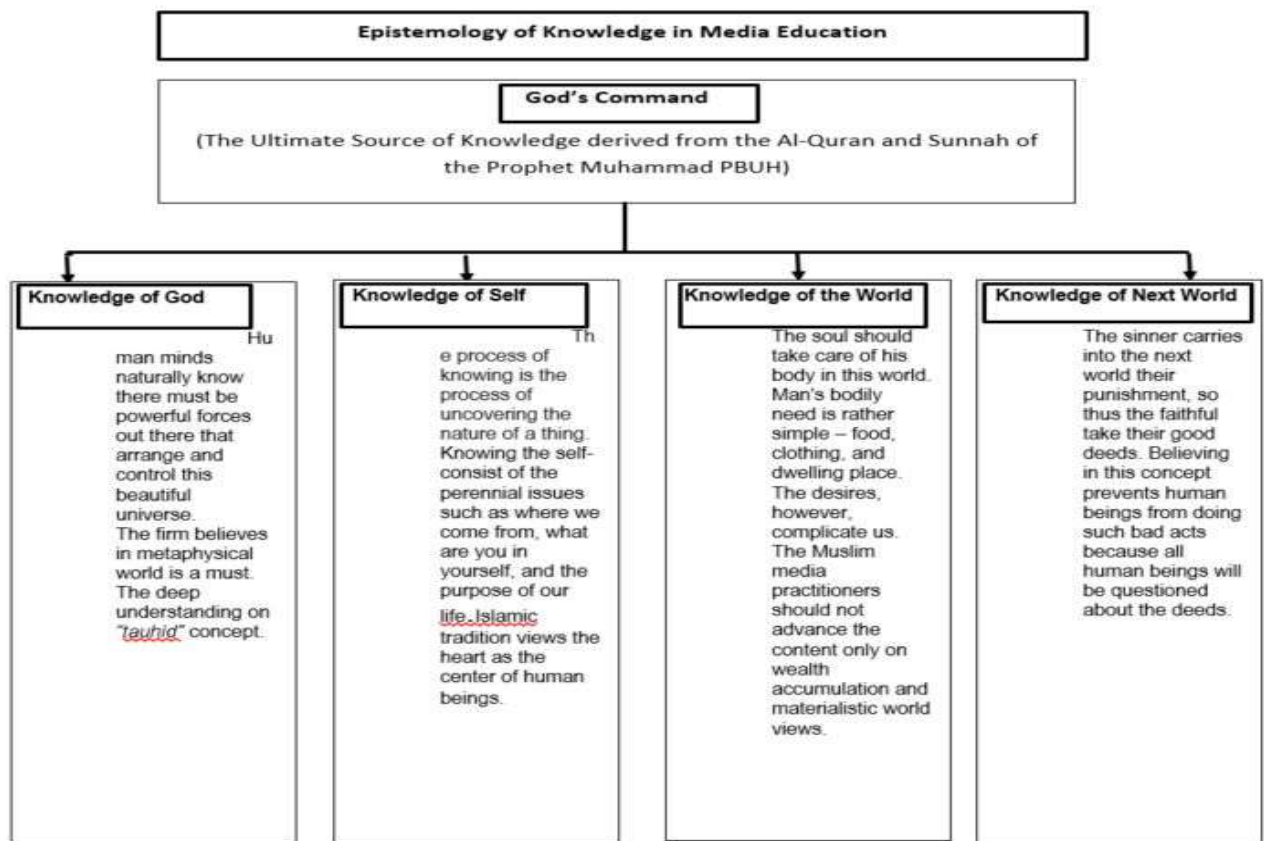


Fig 1: The Conceptual Framework of Epistemology in Media Education

Education should play a leading role in the development of a knowledge-based society, and the epistemology of knowledge should be based on common ethical principles (Hamzah R et al., 2012). Anis Ahmad (2009) contends that this global ideal, which transcends racial, ethnic, language, and racial boundaries, should be put at the top of the hierarchy of values. They have a universal origin, are global in scope, and are pertinent to the entire human race. We shall lose humanity, culture, and civilization if we lose these ideals. Media educational content must aim to transfer good values. A moral-oriented program must be at the heart of the content. The excessive entertainment program should be reduced and replaced by the content that helps build a spiritual human being who integrates both senses and rationalism with hearts.

5.0 Conclusion

As the most powerful medium in shaping people's beliefs, perceptions, views, and values, the media should understand their responsibility in creating content for the consumers. Media content should not mislead, contradicts with Islamic tradition, contains no importance or negligent. Instilling Al-Ghazali epistemology in media education will help media content practitioners understand the meaning of knowledge and regain back their identity. The curricula that are used in media education have molded the students' development as dualist thinkers. Understanding the definition of education and the epistemology of knowledge is necessary if we are to shift media education from the dualistic thinking to the absolute truth of knowledge. Therefore, reshaping media education framework is very crucial in developing and preparing young generation with genuine intellectual, skills and attitudes. The conceptual framework of Al Ghazali epistemology of knowledge can also be considered on other branches of knowledge as well because it tackles the root of the issues of knowledge crisis in the entire education realm.

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