ISLAMIC TRADITION AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract:

The present study is a comparative analysis of the work done in the field of education by famous Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire and the great Muslim thinker Al-Ghazali. The study takes into consideration the philosophical ideas of both. It is determined that Freire ideas of the problem-posing method are a great revolution in the field of education, based on the experience he got in his society. On the contrary, Al-Ghazali like other great Muslim thinkers are inspired by the divine source and thus his work is not a reaction to prevailing political and social conditions. Therefore, his work encompasses the true nature of the teaching and learning process. The study suggests that the need of the time is to revive Islamic traditions not only in the field of education but in every field to attain the lost glory of the Muslim period.

Introduction

This study is an analytical description of the two main schools of thought: the Islamic school of thought led by the philosophical ideas of Al-Ghazali and the Critical school of thought led by the famous Brazilian educationist Paulo Freire. The study brings to light the difference between the two traditions. It also propounds that the Islamic tradition of education is more balanced where the emphasis is not only on the teaching and learning process but to make the learner a useful individual in a society. Although Freire has similar ideas he does not provide a nexus for this kind of understanding which is a speciality of Islamic traditions. The first portion of the study is the description of Freire works and his teaching the second portion provides a description of Al-Ghazali's views on education. It is then concluded in the last part.

Education is a critical contributor to shaping nations. In human history, one of the main ingredients of human progress is education. Hence it is no wonder that philosophers and scholars have stressed the need for education and provided different frameworks for the betterment of the educational process which in turn results in the betterment of human lives and societies. The study of the philosophies put forward by the western educators based on their personal observations and contextual factors like economics, politics and society.

The large majority presented their work in response to the social injustice and inequality among different classes in society. It is one of the reasons that their work is applicable to one part of the world but may not be as applicable to others due to contextual differences. On the other hand, the Muslim philosophy of educations is based on divine guidance and is based on the Quran and the Sunnah (sayings of the holy prophet). Here, it is important to note that the western scholars although benefited from the Muslim scholars but never accepted their contribution. It is, therefore, important to present their work to the world so that their contribution to the larger body of knowledge is accepted and new horizons for the research can be found. This study endeavours to make a comparative study of the two notable traditions of the educational philosophies: the critical pedagogical tradition which is led by the famous Brazilian educational scholar Paulo Freire and the Muslim educational philosophy led by the great Muslim scholar Al-Ghazali commonly known as Imam Ghazali. There has been a debate among teachers in the classroom, educators, policymakers and researchers for the best framework for the upcoming challenges in the teaching-learning environment. McLaren and Farahmandpur (2004) argue that the educators are under the pressure due to the new prevalent neoliberal definition of education which is merely based on the notion of success marked by 'winners and losers.

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This definition has narrowed the scope of education and converted it into a race for marks and grades.The need to maintain the balance between theory and practice critical educators inspired by Freire's philosophy of education has tried to address the challenges faced by the policymakers, educators and research scholars. This moment is mainly catering to two areas: the issue of inequality in the classroom and the socio-political background. The whole practice is to promote a more human world through a praxis that seeks to counter dominant ideologies embedded in a social, intellectual and political context(McLaren & Lankshear, 1994). Hence, Paulo Freire's work is a great contribution to the existing theoretical knowledge in the field of education. Al-Ghazali's philosophy of education is based on Islamic traditions and he takes the insight from the Holy Quran and the saying of the Holly Prophets (Sunnah). While Paulo Freire derives his inspiration from many great scholars like Socrates, Aristotle, Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, Ivan Illich etc. On closer inspection of Freire's work, it is evident that his teachings are closely intermingled with his experience of exile, oppression, poverty, opposition and his dedicated hard work. He believes in educating humans by humanizing them. Freire's first-hand experience of the prevailing forms of oppression goes a long way in developing his thoughts in this regard. The purpose of this work is to combine the Islamic philosophy of education propagated by the work of great Islamic Scholar Al-Ghazalï along with the works of famous educator Paulo Freire's educational philosophy in order to develop a critical framework for understanding what actually is needed in the classroom to create a real learning environment and creating an understanding of what transpires in the classrooms and the contextual factors involved.

1.1 Introduction to the life and works of Al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali is thought as one of the leading school of thoughts in Islamic history both in theory and practice. For almost ten centuries he has been an influential figure both in the Muslim and non-Muslim world. He was born in 1085 A.D. in a place called Tus near Khurasan in Persia in a family known for learning and knowledge. The death of his father at an early age forced him to study in a madras where he got his major part of education. Afterwards, he travelled far and wide for the sake of learning. It was during the stay at the Nizamia madrasa where he started a thorough study of Greek philosophy and started comparing it with Islamic philosophy. Eventually, he concluded that philosophy that accorded the Islamic principles is the correct one rest is flawed. His books named *Maqasid al- Falasifa*'The Aims of the Philosophers'and, *Tahafut al-Falasifa*'The Incoherence of the Philosophers' deals with the same subject in which he opposed other philosophers on three distinct issues i.e. Man, God and the universe. Among his seventy-five other books, these two books influenced Christian philosophers and others as well(Smith, 1944; Watt, 1953).

Along with Al-Ghazali's thoughts on other issues, he persisted in his search for the best educational system based on the principles of Islam. Although he is not considered an educational philosopher yet he provides a good sketch of the way of life for the student, teacher and scholars. His work lay the foundation of the rights and obligations of both student and teacher. In addition to it, he also provides guidance to the relationship between the student and teacher,

1.2 Introduction to the Philosophical thought of Paulo Freire.

Although Freire's major concern is the oppression in the part of the world called Latin America yet his feelings are embedded in oppression in the third world country in general. He studied different schools of thought, such as Marxism, Existentialism, liberation theology and phenomenology etc. in his early years. Thus, his philosophy carries shades of different philosophical ideas.

His major contribution towards education is to launch a criticism against the more popular method of education which he refers to as 'banking system'(O'Cadiz,2018).For him, rot
learning is not the way of attaining knowledge but it should be learnt through the critically adopted in a person's life. It entails that the banking system fails in order to provide the challenges of the real world which exist outside the books. Therefore, it becomes a tool in the hand of the elites or the oppressors who wish that the underprivileged should never become critical. Instead, he proposes a solution to that and by introducing the problem-posing method which is more like a Socratic dialogue and can create critical consciousness and in turn can provide the objective of humanizing the student(Freire, 1985; O'Cadiz, 2018).

The major contributions of Paulo Freire

As mentioned above the study is a comparative analysis of the educational philosophies of the two great scholars from different eras working in the distinct philosophical schools yet their work coincides on many places and hence, is a source of guidance for scholars, teachers and the students. Both the great philosophers synthesized different intellectual schools with the aim to achieve the best possible solution to educational problems. One might argue that Al-Ghazali is more a mystical educational thinker but cannot deny the rationality of his experience as an educator.

2.1 The Banking system.
This section argues the difference in point of view of both scholars as well as the commonalities among them. The whole practice is to find out the best practice and theory combination in the field of education. Freire reviews education with a new approach. According to him the task of education is to humanize the individual and to oppose all kinds of oppression, inequality and injustice. He believes that the prevalent system of education is serving the purpose of the dominants (Freire, 2018). Interestingly, he is not the only one to think in this way. Al-Ghazali's philosophy propounds the same. Al-Ghazali believes that the basis of education is to make a child a useful citizen with the task of humanizing. The whole practice is to make him aware of the world around him in a congenial environment where he can learn and excel without any oppression and tyranny(Asari, 1994).
Freire recognizes two main stances in the field of education. According to Freire (2018), the first system which he calls the banking system is captive and enslave humans in the clutches of the powerful in the society. This system does not allow room to ponder outside the certain pet system and thus the lack of reflection enslave the individual allows him to use the lens desired by the oppressor. The other system which he refers to as a problem posing method liberates human beings by making them ponder in a certain subject matter. First, we should elaborate on the problem-posing method in order to get an insight into it then we can take into consideration the understanding of Al-Ghazali on this matter.
Collins (1977) noted, "Freire was severely critical of traditional Brazilian education for its fondness for memorization and rhetorical skill, and for its failure to teach people to be critical." Freire is sure that teaching how to read and write is no solution to the problem and cannot bring about any change in the world although it is considered as a fundamental way adapted in many societies for the depositing of the knowledge. But it is an immature understanding of the process of education and the denial of man's ontological vocation(Bryson & De Castell, 1993).

Freire points out the feature of the banking system which he considers as a default anti dialogical. The first is the cultural invasion. It is an imposition on the cultural identities of others. Here the invaders leave no choice to invade but to mimic them and blur their view of the world. The

invaded only sees what invaders want them to see and for him"To renounce invasion, would mean ending their dual status as dominated-dominators"(Freire, 2018). The second being the existential duality. Freire thinks that the oppressor can only view the lives of the oppressed according to their view of life and over a period of time the oppressed are forced to live in the same manner. This breed Fatalism which is the third outcome of the banking system. Fatalism creates a sense of submissiveness of the individual in the tyrannical society. The fourth point raised by Freire is necrophiliac tendencies which creates the invulnerability of the invader. Thus, the oppressed remain dependent on the oppressor. The last main issue discussed by Freire is the existential duality. The banking system pours the oppressor consciousness into the oppressed which in turn results in violence. The oppressed assault themselves which is indirectly an assault on the oppressor. Freire believes that the answer to all these points is the critical or problem-posing method.

Freire (2018) mentions the banking system of education nurtures the following student teacher contradictions.

According to him, the role of the teacher is to teach while a student should learn. In this context, the teacher is the sole knowledge holder and the students are to learn from him. Thus, the teacher is pouring his thinking process into the students and students are bound to think in a similar manner. The teacher is the centre of activity and the students are mere listeners who have to listen to him and should maintain discipline in the class. The selection of the subject matter is purely the teacher's responsibility and the student learns whatever is selected. While mimicking the teacher-student, having a stake in it have to adopt whatever is on offer. Since the teacher is the central figure in this process students are the mere audience and is under the burden of authority posed by the teacher even if it is in opposition to the freedom of students.

The Problem Posing Method.

In replay to the banking system of education Freire devises a new approach which is based on critical thinking about the universe and its placement in it. Freire calls this method a liberating method. It is fundamentally not information providing approach but it is cognitive. The whole approach is based on the student-teacher dialogue. Thus, it's not a one-way monologue. This provides a new terminology 'teacher-student with 'student-teacher.'(P,88). Learning is the obligation for both and they, in turn, learn from each other. Therefore, this approach is neither self-taught nor the knowledge is entirely held by one.

The chief purpose of education is the empowerment of educators. Educators can question their existence and their role in the society which is subversive politically. So, it is not merely the transmission of knowledge from the knowledgeable who possess the power to the less knowledgeable who lacks the power. Rather it is dialogic, creative, cognitive, political, critical and transformative(Srampickal).

The role of the educator is to initiate the dialogue and facilitate hence he is a political agent with radical progressiveness. He is not the beholder of knowledge but he creates an environment where his pupil can create and recreate the view of the world which possesses new challenges to both teacher and disciple. Thus, the knowledge is not transferred from teacher to pupil or vice versa but it is a mutual process. IF the educator wants to stuff his ideas into his student's mind then he is ignorant of the creative capacity of human beings. Thus the educator has to be dialogic which a democratic way and nurture a critical attitude in his students. This critical attitude is liberating in nature.

The major contributions of Al-Ghazali

In contrast to Paulo Freire'sphilosophy which is more a response to the situation he faced during his age, Al-Ghazali's approach is based on the sound foundation of Islamic Sharia.   For him, the purpose of the man is to get close to God and thus education fosters the man to abide by the

teaching of Islam. Thus teaching and learning is not merely a social process but a divine one as well. Al-Ghazali takes a child as a 'tabula rasa' where he acquires the knowledge in interaction with society, culture and environment. Thus he broadens the canvass of education by adding parents and environmental factors along with teachers and students. The process presented by Al- Ghazali is more systematic and gradable. He also supports the critical approach but creates diversity in it by discussing other important factors in it (Watt, 1953). In response to the problem-posing approach, Al-Ghazali stresses the character building of the child so that he can understand his rights and duties. He should be given ample opportunities to understand the world by virtue of exploring on his own but the required guidance should always be there so that he may not stray from the path. In this upbringing of the child, parents are an equal contributor. Therefore, the idea of critical education is combined with systematic guidance to provide the student with a congenial environment to learn and grow as an individual.

3.1 The midway Between Banking system and Problem Posing Method.

Al-Ghazali creates a balance between the problems posing method along with the banking system of education. Since his teaching is enlightened with the teaching of Islam blended with the great philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Ibn- Rushed etc. he sees the education process at a broader level neither inclining to one side nor another. He asserts that the teacher should intervene at the point where he thinks a student can get astray and on the other hand leaving room for his growth on his own. The teacher according to him almost always has more knowledge than his student so it is his responsibility to take the student on the right track (Nofal, 1993; Tibawi, 1962).

Al-Ghazali provides a guideline to the teachers which include teaching a child from an early age to the later stages of his life. For him, it is important to send the young child to maktab (elementary school) because he can learn everything very quickly and its effect on him is lifelong. The teacher should devise activities that include academic an extra-academic. The teacher should design the activities according to the stage of learning of the child and his interest according to his/her changing age. These changing interests can be used by educators to attract the boy to school, by offering first the temptation of different games, then ornaments and fine clothes, then responsibilities, and finally by awakening a longing for the hereafter.

The teachers are entrusted to develop five qualities i.e. intellect, good morals, good character, self-denial and truthfulness. So the process of education is not limited to stuffing the mind with information but also include critical thinking, intellect, religious, moral and physical consciousness. In addition, learning should not be limited to theory only but the learning should contribute to practice. True learning is a combination of theoretical knowledge with the practical aspect.

The most important obligation of human is to attain knowledge and Awareness. There are two ways for a human to acquire them. The first is based on sense and logic. The human attributes of sense are lacking in so many ways and thus, can be faulty at times and only provide access to the man to the material world. The second is the divine source. This source enables man to discover the immaterial worlds. So it provides a way for man to get close to Almighty. Here, it is important to note that the role of teacher and students are important in this regard, the concept of the teacher as a true mentor is important for the student to excel. Hence, it is the teacher which is the main source of inspiration. Al-Ghazali does not rule out the teacher centre approach but he creates a balance between the student centre and teacher centre approach where the teacher manipulates where he thinks it is important.

The concept of methods and knowledge of teaching

Almost all the Muslim educational philosophers and scholars talked about the issues related to students, teachers, the relationship between them and their rights and duties but Al-Ghazali appears to be the first one to provide a detailed organization of these matters by providing a list of the

duties of both pupil and instructor. He devoted these books for this purpose namely IIhya' 'Ulum al-Din, Fatihat al-'Ulum and Mizan al-'Amal. In these books, he tries to define the duties of students and teachers along with the method and knowledge of teaching.

Al-Ghazali being the researcher and the educator has a deep understanding of the problems of the knowledge. He wanted to make a nomenclature of it and is also interested in its objectives, concepts, and methodologies. The great Muslim scholars like Ibn-e-Sina or Ibn-e-Hashim try to create a taxonomy of the types of knowledge and especially in science. In this regard, Al-Ghazali also made numerous classifications of science and hence, in return tries to classify the knowledge itself. According to him, the true knowledge lies in the study of theology. It is the knowledge revealed in the Holy Quran by Allah almighty himself. It is the purest form of science that provides us with a detailed description of the whole universe and attached with it is the knowledge of Sharia told by the Holy Prophet and the prophets before him. IT is also the purest form of knowledge as Allah has revealed it to Prophet and in return, the prophet gave it to his followers. It is important to mention that Al-Ghazali never omitted all those related disciplines from religious knowledge. He involved genres like mathematics, al-chemistry, or medicine etc. (Watt, 1953). His classification of scientific knowledge is more or less influenced by the Greeks and other Muslim scholars.

Thus, he classifies science into two categories. The first is the natural sciences which are further sub-divided in two categories. The theoretical aspect which encompasses religious practices along with its theoretical study. The second one is the practical side of this study which includes the areas like economics, social sciences and political sciences etc. The second genre according to Al Ghazali is the origin of sciences which again is divided into two subcategories. The first subcategory is the revealed sciences. This subcategory is based on the teaching of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). It includes the study of ethics, morality, traditions and customs, exegesis, rituals and most important among them is the oneness of Allah. The second subcategory flows from the first and it includes the sciences which are rational in nature. These are the product of human intellect which includes the ability of thinking and reason. This subcategory creates science like arithmetic's, physics, theology and other natural sciences (Bakar, 1998; Treiger, 2011). Based on the classification of knowledge, Al-Ghazali creates a nexus for learning. The centre of this nexus is the learner. It's up to the capacity of the learner

to understand and get his share from the revealed and rational sciences. The understanding of truth thus may be different depending on the learner and his perception. For him, these sciences are part and parcel for each other and cannot be separated by any means. Here, the role of the teacher is very important. The teacher is the main guidance for any learner. There is a need for him to stand up and guide the student according to the student's capacity(Nofal, 1993).

For the purpose of guidance, Al-Ghazali talks about the curriculum for the studies. For him the development of an individual is the development of the whole social set-up thus, it is important to develop a curriculum that should encompass not only the religious and social responsibilities of any individual but also the need for new scientific knowledge. Therefore, Al-Ghazali creates a curriculum that is divided into two main parts.

5.1 Al-Ghazali's Classification of Curriculum.

As mentioned above Al-Ghazali thinks the learning of revealed sciences and rational science is important but he also considers the interest of the student in learning the two. For him, the student can excel in any one of them according to his or her understanding and aptitude. But he also understands the fact that there must be something which is a must for the student and he calls it compulsory for any student to learn. His, division of curriculum is hence, based on the two factors: compulsory and obligatory(Asari, 1994; Bakar, 1998).

1.1.1 Compulsory.

Al-Ghazali along with other great Muslim scholars have based their understanding of the knowledge on the teaching of Islam hence, the majority of them take the learning of the Islamic teaching as mandatory(Hashim, 2007). They called it (Farz-e-Ain) which means compulsory or obligatory. This obligatory part of the curriculum is based on the religious teaching of Islam given in the Holy Quran and the teaching of the Holy Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). Al- Ghazali asserts that the study of the compulsory part should be the part of the elementary syllabus where the student must learn the main tenant of Islam and should get the knowledge of what is Haram (prohibited) and what is Halal (legal). It should start with the teaching of Quran and Sunnah. Then the socialization part should be included. In this, the student learns to live their lives according to the Islamic way of life. He should understand what is needed for him to become a good Muslim and a useful person for society.

The student also needs to learn how to get living while remaining close to the (Farz-e-Ain) and devote his life for the sake of learning. Aristotle is of the view that morality should be included in one's learning (Carr & Steutel, 2005). It should be a mandatory part of one's understanding of society. Al-Ghazali in a similar way is also concerned with the moral development of the individual which in turn is a moral development of the whole society. In his famous book, 'Kemiya-e-Saadat'

Al-Ghazali

dedicated a major part on moral ethics. He debated on extensive subjects starting from eating to subjects like marriage and kinship.

1.1.2 *Non-Compulsory.*

The second part of the curriculum according to Al-Ghazali is the non-Compulsory part. He calls that as Farz-e-Kifaya. It is a part which a student should opt for according to his/her own inspirations. In this Al-Ghazali creates a distinction between the revealed sciences and rational sciences. The revelled sciences are divided into the study of the Quran, Sunnah, Ijma and Fiqah. It is important to note that the study of revelled sciences may have led to the foundation of Dars-e-Nizami(Kakakhel, 1987). Although it is not the notion of Al-Ghazali the philosophy is almost similar to other Islamic scholars in this regard.

The second part of the curriculum in the non-revealed section is the study of medicine, literature, linguistics, history and politics etc. The works of Al-Ghazali revealed that he devoted his life to the understanding and studying of this science under the light of the teaching of the Quran and Sunnah. Therefore, he begins with the fundamental sciences like Sunnah and understanding of the Quran and follows it with Fiqah.

Al-Ghazali breaks down the knowledge into levels for the students. The first is the elementary level which is the primary level a must for every student. Then the intermediate and higher level. For him, learning at elementary and primary levels is a must but the attainment of higher pursuits is linked with the aspiration of the learner.

5.2. Teaching Learning Process.

Al-Ghazali does not think teaching and learning merely a process as mentioned by Paulo Freire where the teacher is concerned with the understanding of the student through a problem posing method but he takes it as an interaction that benefits the teacher as well as the learner. On one hand of this is the teacher giving instructions and answering the queries posed by the pupils and on the other hand perusing knowledge for the betterment of his understanding and in turn for the student as well. Thus it should be a balance between the banking systems where when necessary the teacher is giving his input more especially when the subject is new to the students on the other hand he should allow the student to think freely in order to put his higher critical skills to work(Asari, 1994; Freire, 2018; Treiger, 2011). Al-Ghazali understands the need for practicality for the subject and accentuates the fact that the teacher should relate his teaching with practical situations. The

understanding of the skill or knowledge can be best attained if it is dealt with in a practical context so that the simple memorization of the thing can be minimized. It is the duty of the teacher to make sure that the concept should be learnt first and then the student should move to the next topic. This mark the starting of a gradual approach towards teaching.

Al-Ghazali also enumerates certain codes of ethics for the student to follow in order to get knowledge. Some of the main tenants are discussed here. The first and foremost duty of the student is to peruse knowledge. This pursuit of knowledge not only satisfy him as a learner but also make him close to Allah thus, helps him attaining the higher acquisitions in this world and the world hereafter. The student should learn one subject at one time and should not move forward to another until attaining a good mastery. He/ She should select the subject for higher pursuits with care and they should stick with it.

Conclusion

The study is based on the Islamic traditions of teaching and learning in comparison with the teachings of critical scholars. The comparison is done in order to understand what inspires better for the teaching and learning process. Here, it is important to note that it is thought that the Islamic school of thought does not possess a predefined educational system and Islamic educational system is lacking behind in this modern era. The study reveals that the two traditions have their own merits. Critical pedagogics and other modern scholars provide their work in response to some social and political injustice in societies. Hence, they identified the problems and acted according to their own contexts. Their teachings are context-dependent inspiring only those who are involved in particular situations. This approach is limited in nature and thus needs a major revision.

On the contrary, Islamic traditions of education are inspired by the divine sources and thus are taken from the Holy Quran and the Sunnah (sayings of the prophet). These traditions create a nexus for teaching and learning based on the Hadith *"The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim."* - Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 74 and many more like it. Thus Islamic traditions provide global principles for the acquisition of knowledge.

In this paper, the researcher has taken the thoughts and philosophy of Al- Ghazali as a model for the attainment of knowledge while looking at the critical method of teaching. Al-Ghazali as many think that he is not an educational philosopher and not as prominent as some of the others like Al-Rushd or Al-Kindi is still a reference in the history of Islam. His views are for every generation and based on the closeness to God can be a guideline for every human being. He creates a balance between the problem-posing method and the Banking system of education hence, not ruling out the possibility of anyone but making it context dependent.

He provides a list of rights and duties for the students and thus entails a better classroom environment. The study suggests that it is the need of the hour to understand what is missing a link in our thought process as for an educational process is concerned because no nation can make progress until it possesses a good educational system. Fortunately, the Islamic educational system has been tried and tested with its past Glory. Thus, it is suggested to educationists to rethink and revive Islamic traditions of teaching in order to get the lost glory of the Muslim empire.

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