Teaching Islamic Theology in Secondary School: 
Subject Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Considerations

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ABSTRACT

Teaching is a real art because there is no one style in it. Most of the great Islamic scholars, if not all of them, have possessed different styles and techniques in their teaching and educating careers. Furthermore, different branches of subject content knowledge require different techniques too. This research aims to explore and identify some ideas of great scholars such as Al-Ghazali, Al-Syaibani and Shulman’s concerning teacher content knowledge, knowledge of pedagogy, knowledge of student, curriculum knowledge and teachers’ beliefs in the nature of teaching Islamic theology. This paper will briefly discuss pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) as a specialized knowledge that teacher must have and use in teaching theology subject areas. It will focus on how teachers translated their PCK of teaching Islamic theology in their teaching process in secondary school level. The method used for qualitative research was case study approach and the data was collected through observations and interviews, and analyzed using constant comparative method. Sample for the pilot study was two excellent Islamic education teachers from secondary school. The findings from the pilot study showed that there was integration of PCK component among excellent Islamic education teachers in their teaching processes.
INTRODUCTION

Teaching theology is a critical issue to give Muslims young generations convincing answers to these modern challengers. The main objective of teaching Islamic theology should be to reinforce our young Muslims with the intellectual and spiritual weapons that can stand to the onslaught of western ethical globalization. Thus, the greater challenge to Islamic theology at present is no longer revolving around the theological differences of the past but rather around ideological challenges advocated by western thought such as, positivism, secular humanism, liberalism and post-modernism. These ideologies not only threaten the tenets of Islamic belief but more seriously the Islamic doctrine itself (Fatimah 2005). Therefore, the way we present the Islamic theology subject need to be revitalize both in its pedagogy of teaching and content knowledge subject matter. Transferring content knowledge of Islamic theology in Islamic education for secondary school level need a new paradigm of teaching with a specific approach and methodology to give young generations convincing answers.

Teaching Islamic education is an area that needs to emphasize on approaches and methods in the practice of education in this country, especially in the teaching of Islamic theology, but in-depth research is still less until now. At the secondary level of education, literature review found that writing and research done related to Islamic education in this country have not touched specifically on teachers' professional knowledge which includes subject content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge of teachers in integrated teaching process. The method of teaching Islamic theology are considered dry and not reaches the goal (Wan Mohd Nor 1989). Study by Ab Halim (2003) found that students are less interested in the complex field of study such as 'aqidah' and 'usul fiqh' compared with the practical and fact in 'ibadah' and 'akhlak'. Teaching Islamic theology should be strengthened with a new approach that student always aware that Allah is Knower, Seer, the Hearer, Eternity, Authorities and others (Wan Mohd Nor 1989).

The ability of Islamic Education teachers to inculcate a firm foundation of faith to students through formal education in teaching ‘aqidah’ indicates a continous problem in research conducted by Chee Pee (1983), Wan Mohd Nor (1989), Md Radzi (1997), Mohd Arif (1998), Mohd Arip (2000), Ab Halim (2003), Fatimah (2005) and Ahmad Munawar (2009). An example is the study by Ibrahim Al-Shafee of students’ tendency to disregard religion subjects. The survey observed methods of teaching which depend on lecturing students and did not allow them to participate in discussion, fail to use attractive instructions or story telling approaches to capture the interest of the learners. A
study of the effectiveness of the Islamic Curriculum by Talal Al-Meajal published in 1992, remarked that teaching methods in Muslim education were often poor and ineffective because they left most of the students feeling that their teachers had not made the best use of their opportunities. He also observed that presenting Religious Education failed to create a relationship between its subject matter and the daily life of the students.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Normally, a qualitative research approach is to answer the questions of how and what happens, exploration and research topics that require answers in detail (Creswell 2003). Case study provides explanations related to a case or an individual, give explanations to "why" the situation occurs and to evaluate the program or individual. This type of study also includes research in the exploration programs, activities, processes, one or more individuals (Gall et al. 2003). This study used qualitative approach to explore the situation and the environment in the classroom during teaching sessions conducted by the excellence teachers of Islamic education. This “case study” used interviews, checklists teaching observation and analysis of documents as an instrument. Data in-depth interviews, observation and documents analysis collected and analyzed with the method of continuous comparison (constant comparative method) to build the concept of study.

For this study, two outstanding teachers of Islamic education have been selected as study participants. They are excellent teachers who certified their expertise in the field of Islamic education by Cabinet Nadzir. The list of excellent teacher in Islamic education was obtained from JAPIM (BPI 2008). Selection of teachers is also based on their first degree academic qualification in Usuluddin, Shariah and Islamic civilization and has served as a teacher in Islamic education over ten years.

**TEACHER PERCEPTION IN TEACHING ISLAMIC THEOLOGY**

In order to give Muslims convincing answer to these modern challengers, the discipline of Islamic theology needs a new paradigm in its both methodology and content. It is necessary to emphasize on the importance of the dynamic and the up-to-date theology of Islam by addressing the emerging contemporary needs using the premises of traditional roots or sources and original terminology. Therefore, an academic subject Ilm Kalam should first define its priorities, develop its curriculum and elucidate its methodology. In doing so, we obviously do not wish to cut off modern Ilm Kalam from its traditional roots and the positive aspects of its early contributions. We need to critically study
modern western discipline and expose their weakness and fallacies from the rational and ethical points of view before challenging them from the Islamic perspective.

This balanced integrated approach is what is known today as the Islamization of Contemporary knowledge to actualize the modern approach. The teacher of traditional approach of Ilim Kalam should aware of two important aspects. The first aspect concerns the teaching of Islamic Islamic theology should not be purely of abstract historical manner that detaches from the contemporary problems of the Muslim Ummah. Student should be exposed to the issue of faith in Allah from the rational and informational perspective of modern scientific discoveries. This would vicariously give them a forceful picture of Islam as a dynamic worldview. The second aspect concerns the holistic approach of submission to Allah and its dimensions. To be a good Muslim it is not enough to simply accept the existence of God and the truthfulness of the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in cool detached manner. A belief or Islamic theology that does not stimulate feelings and positive emotion in the believer is rather inert. The Qur'an emphasizes these aspects (i.e. cognitive, emotional and behavioural) in numerous instances. Accordingly, the curriculum for Islamic theology should clearly delineates these aspects, like cognitive, emotion and behaviour, supported with modern authenticated studies in the field of human sciences.

By principle, teaching Islamic theology and faith education processes need to go through several stages starting from after birth, mumayyiz, youth (murahiqah) and adult (mukallaf). Teaching Islamic theology in Islamic education after birth is by proclaims monotheism language through azan and iqamah. Further, during mumayyiz is stressed on say repetitively and memorizing (talqin, tardid and hifz). While in teenage level (murahiqah) until adult (mukallaf) through tadabbur and think of universe creation and phenomenon lies against evidence and hard evidence in al-Qur'an (an-Nahl;10 17, al-Baqarah; 164, al-Tariq; 5 10, Abasa; 24 32, Fathir; 27 28, Qhaf; 6 8). (Abdullah Nasikh 2002). According Miqdad (1986) teaching Islamic theology must be coordinated with the level of thought and pupil knowledge by using suitable reference material according to developmental stage, maturity, pupil knowledge and age. The teaching intend to guide faithful pupil to SWT Allah by appreciating the power, creation and glory (an-Nahl;10 17, al-Baqarah; 164, al-Tariq; 5 10, Abasa; 24 32, Fathir; 27 28, Qhaf; 6 8), inculcate in soul engrossed, taqwa and ubudiyyah to SWT Allah (al-Mukminun; 1 2, al-Zumar; 23, al-Hajj; 34 35, Maryam; 58, al-Hadid; 16) educate soul of feeling muraqabah and sincere in all activity and behaviour (al-Baiyyinah;5, al-A'raf 200 201).

The pedagogical aspect frequently used by Prophet (p.b.u.h.) for convincing answers are as follow:
1. Teaching by Questions and Answer
The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) frequently taught by using questions and answers. He was gifted in obtaining information from His students and in opening their minds to thought in this way. Al-Qardhawi described his method as being dependent on asking questions and waiting for the answers. Sometimes, he would provide answers to his hearers and it will be seen that there was always an element of ‘give and take’ between him and the learner when he used this method.

2. Teaching by Lecture
The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) also presented issues in a clear and logical lecture format often in the form of sermons accompanying a general ceremony. On this occasion, He never allowed the atmosphere to become boring and enthusiasm was seen on his face. The text report that his eyes would "turn red", his voice becoming louder to attract listeners and to bring them nearer to him in their thoughts.

3. Teaching Through Using Examples
Using an example is an excellent way of transmitting information to others. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) gave many examples when he wanted to explain things. Al-Qardhawi points out that Al-Suyuti's book Al-Jami' (a collection of the Prophet's traditional sayings arranged in alphabetical order) contains 42 examples of this technique. The Prophet's use of examples can be divided into two groups, the sayings in which he uses a theoretical example based on words and second when he uses an example based on the combination of words and a gesture of the hands.

4. Teaching Through Stories
The method of using stories is well known since the early ages, it can be both true and fictional in all cultures. In his book The Prophet's Educational Theory For Children, Suid has described how stories play an important role in attracting the attention of children, and how it rank high among the modern didactic methods as they influence the minds of children through being enjoyable. We find many stories narrated by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) to his companions, wether old or young, who listened his stories with enjoyment and care.

5. Teaching Through The Use Of Demonstration
The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) often illustrated stories with reference to living examples, and would use his hands gesture to attract the interest of the audience. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) described on how to performe wudu' in front of a group of people, asking, "Who does wudu' like me?" before praying two
rak 'ats. On another occasion he led the people in prayers while standing on the mimbar (the stand from which the imam delivers sermons), and when he had finished, he turned to the people and said, "My people, I did this so that you can follow me and so that you can see how I pray".

Among the lessons that can be learned from this description of the Prophet's methods is consideration of individual differences between learners. He appointed Mu'adh bin Jabal to teach what the priority to believers in order to preach the message of Islam. Abu Dharr (one of his companions who known for his weak judgment) reported that he had asked the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), “Why do you not appoint me as an administrator of some place?” The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) replied by patting him on the shoulder, and said, "Abu Dharr, you are weak and this office required trust. If I give the task to you it could become the cause of humiliation and sorrow to you on the Day of Judgment. Nobody can be an office with justification that cannot fulfill its obligations.

RESEARCH FINDING

Based on interviews and observation of teaching behavior, the study participants have understanding and perception of specific knowledge related to content such as the beliefs. Participants stated that content knowledge is shaped and tend to the abstract philosophical discussion. In addition, all study participants felt that the subject content knowledge is shaped conceptual quarter. Consequently, teachers need to understand this fact and act subject content knowledge of the process to form easily understood by students.

Research findings from interview data found that study participants have understanding and knowledge of the characteristics of the quarter, which includes the aspects of the nature of the subject quarter, the essence of the subject quarter, cognitive aspects of the subject creed, creed and delivery of the subject filling the Qur'an in the subject quarter. Finding study found almost all the study participants have the understanding that knowledge is connected to each other touching basic aspects of human life in Islamic view, forming paradigm faith, explain the goal of life, fundamental to the formation of character and also to the integration of basic knowledge. Retrieval research study found that all participants have the perception that teaching is a difficult quarter and most of the state it is also the knowledge content is something that is very sensitive to the subject presented. The pedagogical content knowledge PCK as a specialized knowledge that teacher must have and use in teaching theology subject areas. The findings from the pilot study showed that there were integration of PCK component among excellent Islamic education teachers in their teaching processes were:
1. **Subject content knowledge**

The two study participants have the understanding of the importance of content knowledge to ensure the effectiveness of teaching the beliefs that:

(i) The willingness of teachers to teach  
(ii) In-depth content knowledge  
(iii) Strengthening the knowledge content using multiple approaches  
(iv) The mastery of knowledge in the syllabus content and syllabus of knowledge related

2. **Pedagogical Subject Knowledge**

Participant’s pedagogical subject knowledge have been identified as follows:

(i) Method of teaching that includes inductive method *(istinbatiyyah)* and deductive method *(istiqraieyah)*.  
(ii) To use integration of knowledge, utilize teaching situations *(mauqif ta'lim)*, compare contextual teaching concepts and easy to difficult teaching approach.  
(iii) Teaching technique is to motivate students, instilling creative and critical thinking skills, memorizing formulas, instruct exercise outside the classroom, memorizing concept of definitions, mental maps and the keyword concept.
(iv) The sequence of teaching began with the topic of the lesson, classroom management, time management and class control

3. Knowledge Related With Pupils

The study participants have knowledge and sensitive to the diverse characteristics of students who can be categorized as follows:

(i) General information related to background knowledge of the student such as Islamic basic knowledge, skills Arabic language and Quran basic skills.
(ii) Identifying the level of student cognitive skills related to communication by using different teaching approaches.
(iii) Level of difficulty in teaching students to understand depend on mental readiness of the student (nafsiyyah) to follow the lessons.
(iv) The attitude of student toward the subjects which involve their beliefs and teaching students to build readiness themselves.

4. Curriculum Knowledge

Study participants have general knowledge on the development of Islamic education curriculum, specifically the teaching curriculum of ‘Aqidah’.

(i) The content knowledge of Islamic education curriculum syllabus
(ii) Examination oriented curriculum in Islamic education
(iii) The suitability of curriculum based on students
(iv) Implementation of curriculum based of Islam Hadhari concept
(v) The view of planning and implementation of curriculum
(vi) Co-curricular activities

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, exploration of pedagogical content knowledge among excellence teachers of Islamic education have shown their PCK components consist of subject content knowledge, pedagogical subject knowledge, knowledge related to students, curriculum knowledge and the perceptions of teaching subject matter. Each of these components complements each other, integrated and continued to expand to form teachers’ teaching experience. There are some similarities and differences in the
formation of PCK, influenced by the teachers perceptions of teaching which was applied in the form of behaviour in the classroom. Teaching requires integration of knowledge with other subject disciplines such as geography, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy and other recommendations such as the Qur'an to help teachers develop their PCK in-depth and effective.

Teaching methods that stimulate students to think like brainstorming, analogy, Socratic, inquiries and cooperative learning encourage the students to follow more than education and information compare to lecture method in teaching. In short, the pedagogical content knowledge are expected to clarify understanding of the beliefs and concepts of information, ability to understand something abstract, understand base revel knowledge (wahy) and cognitive knowledge (aqli). Understanding of this structure will develop teaching and learning in the Islamic education more systematic and dynamic. Restructuring of the real meaning of these aspects include inquiries of something, find the source of evidence and understand the thinking material (text), practical skills and appreciation value. The teachers teaching style on Islamic education should be consistent with the approach to curriculum changes and with current developments and current issue.

REFERENCES


