

Teaching of Islamic Doctrine and Beliefs in School Subject Content Knowledge and Pedagogical Considerations

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Abstract

The content knowledge of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) is the important component of the Islamic education subject in secondary school. Thus every teacher of this subject should acquire the pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) of this particular field. This study aimed to explore and analyze Islamic education excellent teachers' PCK and how that the PCK implemented during the lesson. Four Islamic Education excellent teachers who appointed by Malaysian Education Ministry were selected as the participant of this study. The study used the case study design where the data were collected through interview protocol, observation checklist and document analysis. Results of the in-depth interview, teaching observation and document analysis were managed and analyzed using NVivo-7 software. All the PCK components GCPI were interrelated, integrated and contributed to the teacher's experience concerning teaching and learning process. This study found that wise practice and wisdom of practice of the GCPI were the most important elements of effective teaching of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah). It also hopes that this study will be regarded as a guideline to improve the quality of the Islamic Education teacher training particularly in the field of teaching of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah).

Introduction

Teaching of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) is a critical issue to give Muslims young generations convincing answers to these world 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 doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) 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 doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) and theology subject need to be revitalise both in its pedagogy of teaching and content knowledge subject matter. The new paradigm of teaching for transferring content knowledge of Islamic theology in Islamic education needs a specific approach and effective methodology.

Islamic education stresses the necessity for Muslims to lead all aspects of their lives in the best possible way, both spiritually and practically. For instance, a Muslim has to pray five times a day; pay Zakat (an annual payment made by the rich to the poor); fast during the month of Ramadan; perform Hajj (a pilgrimage to the holy sites of Mecca and Medina) once during his or her lifetime; and demonstrate kindness and tolerance. In other words, Teaching Islamic beliefs (aqidah) in Islamic Education occupies a central place in the everyday life of Muslims. Moreover, the subject often focuses on the past (what happened to early Muslims) rather than the present (what is going on today) (Ahmad, 1990; Farhan, 1990). Furthermore, Islamic Education textbooks suffer from weaknesses in many areas: pupils' needs; motivation; layout and presentation of language; consideration of the pupils' linguistic levels; co-operation between the syllabus and the authors of Islamic Education texts on one hand, and the teachers who apply these textbooks on the other (Al-Naqa, 1979; Alalaoy, 1989). The teaching methods of Islamic Education tend to rely on the promotion of memorisation, recall and rote learning. This is considered to be inadequate if the main aims of Islamic Education are to be achieved (Ahmad Munawwar 2009). The importance of Islamic Education is derived from its major theme the religion of Islam.

However, the research findings show that the focus of the teachers is on passing knowledge to the students, with little use of modern methods and aids in teaching. It furthermore showed that many Islamic Education teachers have not mastered the use of teaching aids and they constantly complain of the workload which they must bear and which hinders them from teaching effectively. The number of sessions per week, in the teachers' opinion is not enough to cover the curriculum; yet, the non-availability of teaching aids in school has proved to be a significant discouragement to the use of modern teaching methods (Ahmad Munawwar 2009). Teachers reported that they did not receive any training in using modern teaching methods or aids prior to starting their actual service. There were, in addition, many more factors affecting the teachers' use of modern methods of teaching and limiting their use of helpful teaching aids.

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 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 from 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, four 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 Malaysian Education Ministry. The list of excellent teacher in Islamic education was obtained from Ministry of Education (BPI 2008). Selection of teachers is also based on their first degree academic qualification in *Usuluddin*, *Shariah* and Islamic study and has served as a teacher in Islamic education over ten years.

Perception in Teaching of Islamic Belief (Aqidah)

Islam based on Aqidah (doctrine) and on Shari'a (Islamic law). The elements of doctrine are the belief in Allah, His angels, His books, His prophets, the life hereafter and predestination. Islamic law is the set of laws commanded by Allah in order to make it possible for a Muslim to organize her/his relationships with Allah, with other people (Muslim and non-Muslim), with the Universe, and with life on earth and in the Hereafter (Samouk and Shammari, 2003). In order to give Muslims convincing answer to these modern challengers, the discipline of teaching Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) needs a reform with a new paradigm in 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.

The principles of teaching Islamic education recommended by the Qur'an and the Sunnah are also emphasizes the appropriateness of content. The treatment knowledge based on the level of thought, diversity of teaching methods and approaches, and emphasizes knowledge of the characteristics and abilities of students (Al-Baqarah 2: 185, al-Hajj 22:78, al-Ma'idah 5:6) to enable pupils to be able to understand (*idra'*) content knowledge, to appreciate and interpret in real life. By comparison, the characteristics of teaching content pedagogical knowledge (PCK), which involves integration of at least three main components: the knowledge content, knowledge of teaching strategies and knowledge of understanding students have in common with the principles emphasized in Islamic education.

By principle, teaching of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) in education process 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 to 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. Teaching of Islamic beliefs (aqidah) intend to guide faithful pupil to 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 *ubudiyah* to 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).

Throughout the education system, there is no single 'best' method of teaching; conscientious teachers should pick out several methods to suit their educational settings and provide a high and effective degree of pupils participation, considering pupils' abilities, the nature of the subject matter, the available time and the required objectives. 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 doctrine and beliefs (aqidah), 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 of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) considered dry, empty 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 continuous 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 Islamic Education failed to create a relationship between its subject matter and the daily life of the students. The pedagogical aspect frequently used by the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) in teaching Islamic beliefs (aqidah) 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. Using this approach means that the teacher asks specific questions to prompt pupils' minds and lead them to the correct answers. Once all aspects of the subject were covered, the teacher relates the ideas has elicited from pupils to Quranic verses, the Hadith, the Sirah, the lives of the Prophet's (pbuh) companions, etc. This supports pupils' thinking and shows them how Islam links things together and connects the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. Thus, pupils learn that Islamic beliefs (aqidah) resources should provide the basic points in thinking.

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 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. Teachers use this method when they present a difficult topic or emphasise certain meanings. A teacher should not spend a long time lecturing, as this may cause pupils to become bored, and s/he may have to prepare questions for pupils to increase classroom interaction.

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. Under this approach, the teacher has to discuss a practical problem and give real examples that will engage the pupils' interest, encouraging them to find a solution by leading them to gather relevant information. This will reinforce the pupils' ability to think and search; they will learn how to use their skills and organise their information to solve problems, where Islamic thoughts and ideas have been well connected with their own lives.

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, whether old or young, who listened his stories with enjoyment and care. Teachers can use story telling, whether historical or fictional, in teaching all aspects of Islam. They have to make the story exciting to keep the pupils' attention, then follow it with an explanation and conclude by analysing the truth behind it. This method is suitable for both younger and older learners and is consistent with the Sirah and moral cultivation (*al-akhlaq*). A teacher who uses such a method should realise that a story has to be suitable in terms of time available, the pupils' level and the pedagogical purpose.

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 fulfil its obligations. Teacher should promote pupils' strengthen relation to Allah and make them more aware of the fact that Allah is watching over people and knows everything about them. Strengthen pupils' relation to the prophets' (p.b.u.h.) sayings, so that they can comprehend and learn them by heart. Infuse in the hearts of pupils love for the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), so that they will take him as a role model (*Qudwah*) in their speech and actions. Promote Islamic values and orientation that will make a new generation of Muslims capable of facing contemporary challenges and interacting with society in a spirit of trust, optimism and cooperation inspired by Islam. Explain the close connection between faith and science, and its impact on the development and progress of society.

In principle, Qur'an and Sunnah always promote the method of repetition in the teaching and learning process to understanding of the key concepts in the Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) as faith to Allah, faith in the unseen (*al-ghaib*), the day of resurrection, recompense of sin and reward (al-Najati 1993). The explanation of these key concepts mentioned in several places in the Qur'an to show the importance of strengthening the faith. The same approach used by the Prophet to explain the key concepts to his companions with repeated references to three times as he stopped for a while (al-Najati 1993b; Al-Sadan, 1999; Abdel Haleem, 2002). The Prophet also use various approaches to attract the student by asking questions, making eye contact, facing their faces, touching them, using visual aids, making sketches and illustrations, organizing ideas, using the number of logical structure, making the body language (gesture), the control room degrees and effective use of concrete objects in teaching (Abdel Haleem 2002).

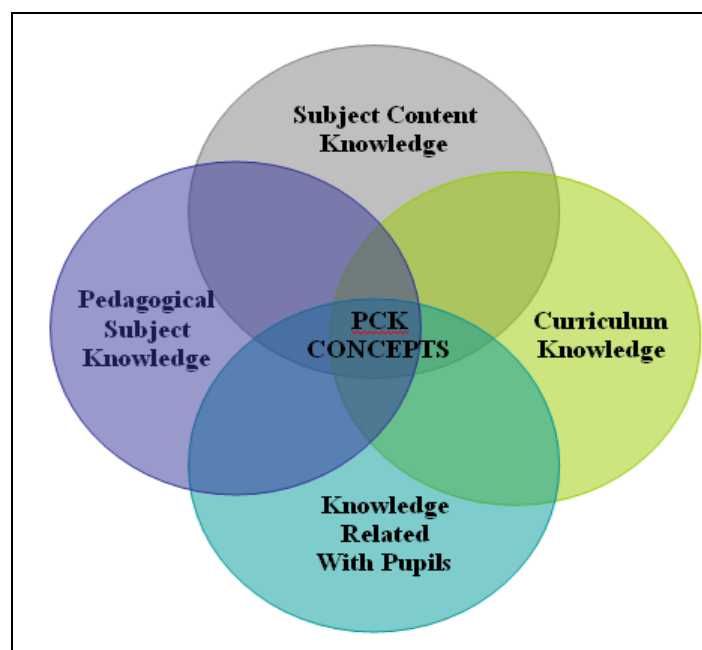
Teaching of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) from the perspective of the Qur'an emphasized gradual approach (*tadrij*) in up to the application of the understanding, confidence and faith occur smoothly and firmly embedded in a person. For example, the Prophet Abraham interacts with Allah about the reality of the creation and the earth gradually to strengthen faith while building the strength to argue face idolaters (al-Imran 6:75-79) and Allah shows the turn of a creature that died to strengthen the faith (al-Baqarah 2:260).

The Prophet Abraham use a logical approach base on pedagogical content knowledge in debate and argue to convince King Nimrod and his people the reality of life and death (al-Anbia '21:52-65) (Al-Makanisi 2001).

Research Finding

Based on interviews and observation of teaching behavior in the classroom practices, all the participants have understanding of specific knowledge related to content knowledge of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah). Participants stated the teaching that content knowledge of Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) from the abstract philosophical discussion approach. In addition, all participants felt that the content of the subject Islamic beliefs (aqidah) is in conceptual knowledge. Consequently, teachers need to understand this fact and act subject content knowledge of the process to form easily understood by students. Thus, teaching is in fact consistent with the concept of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), which emphasizes teachers' understanding of content knowledge presented to students, teachers' ability to diversify the appropriate teaching methods that are easily understood by students and teachers understanding of the characteristics and abilities of students acquired through experience, knowledge, pedagogical skills and content subjects (Shulman 1987).

Research findings from interview data found that participants have understanding the characteristics of the knowledge, which includes the aspects of the nature of the subject, the essence of the subject, cognitive aspects of the subject creed, creed and delivery of the subject filling the Qur'an in the subject. The 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 of faith, explain the goal of life, fundamental to the formation of character and also to the integration of basic knowledge. Retrieval research found that all participants have the perception that teaching is a difficult 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 Islamic doctrine and beliefs (aqidah) subject areas. The findings from the study showed that there was integration of PCK component among excellent Islamic education teachers in their teaching processes were:



1. Subject content knowledge

All the 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 has 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 depends 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 question, 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 level 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.

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