

## RETHINKING OF HOLISTIC KNOWLEDGE OF LEARNER AND OF SELF IN PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

JANJA M. GUNDA<sup>1</sup>, NOR HAYATI ALWI<sup>2</sup>, FADZILAH ABD RAHMAN<sup>3</sup>,  
STEVEN ERIC KRAUSS (ABDUL LATEEF)<sup>4</sup> & HJ. AZIMI HAMZAH<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Foundations of Education, Faculty of Educational Studies,  
University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Department of Language and Humanities Education, Faculty of Educational Studies,  
University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup>Institute for Social Science Studies, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

<sup>5</sup>Department of Professional Development and Continuing Education,  
Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

### ABSTRACT

The component of knowledge of learner and of self is central in debated meaning of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) among researchers. Most studies have focused on transformative and integrative arrangements of other components of PCK with agreed soul-body conflict view of learner, particularly in conventional contexts. This phenomenological study was conducted with two objectives in place: First, to address the prerequisites in conceptualisation of learner and of self. Second, it focused to unveil meaning of holistic knowledge of learner and of self. The sample of this study involved five Muslim educators in Tanzania. Face to face interviews were used and later transcribed verbatim. The results reveal two main themes. The first theme is faith and spirituality with Divine Unity of *Allah* and unity of double dimension of human life as its subthemes. The second theme is foundational holistic knowledge of learner and of self. Its subthemes include mission and grand purpose of life, unified theory and practice, ingrained concept of *amānah* (Trust) and enthusiastic acceptance of being role model appeared as subthemes. Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that Muslim educators need Islamic epistemological view and ideological skills of integrating belief in *Allah* and Hereafter as the constructive framework in rethinking for the foundational holistic knowledge of learner and of self in PCK.

**KEYWORDS:** Muslim Educators, Holistic Knowledge of Learner and of Self, Pedagogical Content Knowledge

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The conception of PCK by Shulman is at the heart of recently published works on teacher knowledge base, teacher education and teaching. According to Shulman (1986) PCK is a unique form of professional knowledge of and skill for teaching that develops over time. Disagreeing with the preceding perspective, other reserachers have developed integrative conceptions of PCK. For instance, Turner-Bisset (2001) suggests that PCK is an integrated knowledge base of teaching which should include substantive and syntactic knowledge, beliefs about the subject, knowledge of the curriculum, the context, of self and of teaching, cognitive knowledge of the learner, empirical knowledge of educational ends and general pedagogical knowledge. Central to the conflicting meaning and understanding of vital components of PCK, is the concept of knowledge of learner and of self (Ball, Thames & Phelps, 2008; Abdul Rahman, 2007). According

to Gudmundsdottir and Shulman (1987) knowledge of learner refer to knowledge about students' preconceptions, misconceptions, students' learning interests and learning difficulties about the topics or subject matter they learn. Other researchers consider it as the integration of empirical and cognitive knowledge. Empirical knowledge refers to knowledge of learners' age range, behaviour and social interactions and their relationship with teachers, while cognitive knowledge embraces theories of learners' development and learning (Abdul Rahman, 2007). Besides, knowledge of self is understood as individual teachers' awareness of themselves and sensitivity to learners' multiple spiritual and intellectual needs (Abdul Rahman, 2007). These conceptions suggest uniqueness of knowledge of learner and of self in understanding of PCK throughout.

Over time the transformative and integrative approaches to conception of PCK and related components (i.e., Shulman's model and Turner-Bisset related models) have illustrated efforts to define the concept of knowledge of learner from different perspectives. For relatively some time, however, there has been growing dissatisfaction regarding the disparity in understanding of knowledge of learner and of self in the framework of body-soul conflict, and teacher education as well as later job demands (Finn, 2001; Grossman, 2008). One of the main stated doubts is the predominant practice of separating learners' physical body, and spiritual entity of human being (Hussain, 2007), from the overall meaning and organization of knowledge of learner and of self (Abdul Rahman, 2007). In practice, it emerges that most educators find it difficult to engage, guide or respond to learners' spiritual matters in their classrooms (Mata, 2012). Despite growing attempts to address multilayered conceptions of spirituality, the construct remains difficult to understand (Brown, 2008), wholeness of learners and knowledge continue to be ignored (Al-Zeera, 2001), while meaning, purpose and authenticity among learners continue to be discouraged (Astin & Astin, 1999). Unfortunately, irrespective of the present frame of the secular system of education, most students in different education levels, however, are increasingly interested in spirituality and completeness (Tacey, 2001, Hamjah, Rasit & Sham, 2012). This puzzling experience has important implications for promoting holistic knowledge of learner and of self in understanding of PCK in colleges of teacher education.

In Tanzania, teacher education is not much different, from other developing countries (Vavrus, 2009). In 1990s, Tanzania opted liberalization policy and incorporated religious, including Islamic, Teacher Training Colleges (Anangisye, 2010). Remarkably, the setting of public education in general and teacher education in particular is ideologically secular. This means the responsibilities to teach religion is left to specific religious-based Teachers' Training Colleges, in addition to the teaching courses in the curriculum (Anangisye, 2010). To date, the founding of Islamic (pre-primary, primary, secondary schools and teachers' education colleges) has been remarkable throughout the country. In 2007, in a bid to reform teacher education in the form of strengthening subject content, pedagogical knowledge and skills of teaching (Kitta & Fussy, 2013) Tanzania incorporated PCK as a teaching method course for diploma teacher education (Tanzania Institute of Education [TIE], 2007). In such context, clear understanding of PCK and its related components, in this case knowledge of learner and of self, play a leading and imperative role in describing expert teaching (Ball, et al. 2008, p. 2). Therefore, thinking about holistic knowledge of learner and of self in educators' PCK is vital as it is linked to conception of expert teaching knowledge base.

In Islam, the conception of holistic nature of a learner or an educator as a human being is a matter of necessity. From the Prophetic teaching, every child is born in a state of *al-fitrah*, which can be translated as 'innocence' (Hanson,

2001, p. 14) or the unchanged composition that *Allah* has made inherent to the universe, life and man (Khatab, 2006; p. 65). Here, both learner and educator are conceptualised as a created beings, with the dual nature from the mixture of clay and spirit (38: 71-72). In this respect, holistic knowledge of learner and of self is here referred to a re-conceptualized knowledge dimension which includes understanding of both the learner and educator as created human beings with the attention of the integrated and unified concept of life according to the Islamic view. Ideally, Muslim educators in Tanzania as elsewhere are expected to be as *murabbis*, “as a person to learn from” (Kazmi, 1999:5). That is important in the efforts of nurturing the growth of intellectual, physical and spiritual constituents in knowledge of learner and of self, not outside of this world but inside it (Maududi, 1978).

So far, however, the literature is scant on holistic view of knowledge of learner and of self. The debated meaning of PCK and its components (Kind, 2009; Ball, et al. 2008; Abdul Rahman, 2007) do not appear to fit well into promoting holistic knowledge of learner and of self, at least from Muslim educators’ perspectives. In fact, there is inadequate address on what kinds of structural changes in educators’ knowledge of learner and of self, which would follow from acknowledging the epistemological and the political transformation of our contemporary knowledge culture (Weiler, 2006). In addition, no research has been found that surveyed the aspect of holistic knowledge of learner and of self in Tanzania, despite shortage of qualified educators for promoting teacher ethics in teacher education colleges and schools (Anangisye, 2010; Boimanda, 2004). Specifically, there is also lack of expertise in guidance knowledge amongst considerable number of educators, leading to morality problems too (Issa, 2010). Taken together, these observations suggest that the said dramatic disconnect between body and soul is too wide in the conceptualizing knowledge of learners and self.

### 1.1.1 Relevancy of the Study

Recently, researchers have shown an increased interest in addressing unity and holiness of learner and of knowledge (Hamjah, et al. 2012; Bakar, 2011; Al-Migdadi, 2011; Al-Zeera, 2001; Al-Faruqi, 1988). To the best of authors’ knowledge, however, there has been limited research on prerequisites of promoting holistic knowledge of learner and of self. Currently, much has been published from generalized conventional perspective (Anangisye, 2010; Anangisye & Barrett, 2006; Boimanda, 2004). In practice, such generalisability is problematic and inadequate because it, fails to address integrated nature of learners’ spiritual, mental, physical and ethical scopes in all subjects (Nasr, 2012). Therefore, this research was needed to fill gap in knowledge and contribute to this growing area of study from educators’ views.

Furthermore, one of the most significant current discussions in teacher education, teaching and learning is interdependence of learners’ spirituality and intellectual achievement (Mata, 2012; Hamjah, et al. 2012). Yet, other researchers seem to confuse such interdependence, on the pretext of being too religious or theological for the secular academy to deal with (Anangisye, 2010; Tacey, 2002; Buchanan, 2008). To Grace (2002) that is secularization echoed by crucial loss of the sense of divine existence in human life. The existing excuses fail to resolve the impacts of, conflicted body and soul to the humanity (Maududi, 1978). This research provided an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge in Muslim educators’ perspectives in Tanzania, to unity of knowledge and education (Baba, Salleh, Zayed, & Harris, 2015) and discipline mind and soul of learner and of self from the Islamic view (Al-Attas, 2005; 1977). A primary concern of this study was on their insights into the life purpose of the learner and of self, the life mission of the learner and of self and making use of cognitive-empirical and revealed knowledge sources.

## 1.2 Research Question

Based on the above articulation and as an effort to draw coherent understanding of the holistic knowledge of learner and of self, this research sought to answer the following two questions: First, what are the prerequisites in conceptualisation of learner and of self among Muslim educators' views? Second, what is the meaning of holistic knowledge of learner and of self among Muslim educators' views?

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

To understand the phenomenon of promoting holistic knowledge of learner and of self from perspectives of Muslim educators, one should note that knowledge and education in Islamic view are united through the daily practice of religion. In this respect, these concepts can be approached their purpose and meaning. The central goal of both knowledge and education in Islam is to produce a good person, meaning a conscious being of his or her connection with his or her Creator, the Almighty Allah, and the rest of creation (Al-Zeera, 2001). Consciousness of the Creator means being responsible vicegerent and a servant of Allah and being acquainted with His power and unity. This understanding calls for integration of revealed teachings in running of human affairs. Here, it includes conceptions of learner and of self in PCK (Abdul Rahman & Scaife, 2012; Turner-Bisset, 2002) to unified physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects (Nasr, 2012; Mata, 2012; Tacey, 2002). This suggests knowledge beyond secular inspired orientations.

### 2.1 Prerequisites for the Conceptualisation of Learner and of Self

The nature of human being plays an important role in the conception of learner and of self. The main question relates to what is the true nature of man or who or what man is in relation to his Creator and other creations in the universe (Abdul Razak & Hisham, 2013). Commenting on this discussion, Ahmed (2015, p.1) asks: "What makes us human? Is it the size of our skulls or the shape of our teeth? Is it the absence of a tail on our backs or the size of our thumb? Is it the size of our brain or the color of the skin? Did man evolve from the apes or was he divinely created? Collectively, it seems that a major criticism of Ahmed's questions is that questionable framework commonly used to justify the unjustifiable.

For instance, some arguments are put forward in favour of nature focus on genetic inheritance and other biological factors, as oppose to responses to nurture, which explain the impact on human beings from external factors after conception, such as the learning of an individual (McLeod, 2007). To date, however, there has been little agreement on the issue among researchers from the two camps, despite the recognition that both nature and nurture are significant in accounting for human behaviour (Eagly & Wood, 2013). Moreover, we have attempted to briefly focus on the description by Charles Darwin, because of its centrality in the Western perspective and research on the nature of man. As Abdul Razak (2011) stated that for over the last hundred years or more the West intellectual development through psychology and many other areas of research have been mainly influenced by Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) conception of man as descendant of the ape family.

The key problem, however, is that to Darwin the instincts found in man have been acquired from the primate family, such that it is easily equated to the rest of the animal kingdom (Abdul Razak (2011). This is a problem because that doubtful Darwin's opinion transformed the way humans think about themselves and its effects has continued to inform modern thought until the present (Francis, 2007). As a result, it is conventionally thought that learner as other human beings are merely conceptualised, as rational animals (Shaw, 2009, p. 1). One of the limitations with this Darwin's inspired

opinion and his supporters is that man started in utter ignorance. Coherent to this study, it can be reasoned that even the discourses on prerequisites for conceptualisation of learner and of self as one dimension of PCK from the Western epistemological view are cognizant of such assigned status. This is due to the reason that the question of nature and nurture of man is vital for gaining an understanding of the teaching knowledge of educators and teachers alike.

Interestingly, other observers and researchers have already drawn attention to the insincerity in Darwin's opinion. Karmiloff and Karmiloff-Smith (2001) report that prior to birth babies have been listening to the languages they hear in their homes. This makes babies proficient learners who can separate the speech patterns of the languages that are familiar to them from those that are not (David, 2004). For the sake of discussion, this observation can mean that in the learners' mind there are things at work opposite to other animals. Otherwise, the question can be asked as to whether the learning of babies happens by mere chance? What really guides babies to separate speech patterns? Who teaches the babies? Given the multiplicity of worldviews, what makes the learning, if any, of babies consistent? Answers to these questions must surely challenge the chance argument by Darwin and friends. Because of these perplexing contradictions, Muslim educators in particular are considered to have failed if they accept the Darwinian thesis or nature versus nurture versions of man as a learner, 'and then just paste some kind of Islamicity onto it' (Nasr, 2012, p.15). The basic reason is that there is a clear idea of the Islamic concept of life.

The primary concern on the nature of life from the Islamic epistemology is that, learner is a created being with the dual nature from the mixture of clay and spirit. It is described in the Quran (2:30) and (38: 71-72):

"Behold, Your Lord said to the angels: I will create a vicegerent on the earth" (2: 30). Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: I am about to create man from sounding clay, from mud molded into shape. When I fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit all you down in obeisance unto him" (38: 71-72).

In this context, the following lessons can be derived from these verses: First, humans are a creation of *Allah* and are made up of a mixture of clay exemplified by the temporal physical body and eternal spirit or *ruh*, which leaves the body on the death of an individual (Abdul Razak, 2011). Second, human beings are vicegerents of *Allah* on earth. According to Haneef (2011), vicegerency (*Khalifah*) is a position of honour, power and authority but also a remarkable task based on the following Quranic provisions: The position of vicegerent (*khalifah*) is an honour (2:30), *Allah* has made the whole creation obedient to human beings (31: 20), human beings are expected to appreciate their honored position (14: 32-34), human beings have been given the faculty of reasoning and insight to subdue the forces of nature and to explore its sources for use (2:33) and the position of vicegerent is a noble trust which should never be abused (38: 26). A point must be made here that, faith in *Allah*/God as the Master, Sovereign and Deity is the key issue that grounds dimension of holistic and comprehensive conception of knowledge of learner and of self from the Islamic view. Within this prerequisite, therefore, to make meaning of holistic knowledge of learner and of self is to embrace all aspects of the human nature that can produce opportunities to transform through the full growth of their abilities. The question of nature of human being is further elaborated in the next subsection in order to enrich the meaning of knowledge of learner and of self.

## 2.2 The Meaning of Holistic Knowledge of Learner and of Self

One of the central questions in this research asks on what is the meaning of holistic knowledge of learner and of self among Muslim educators' views. The question of meaning is the question transformative learning. According to Mezirow (2000) transformative learning is the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference

(meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they generate beliefs and opinions that will prove they are able to guide action (p. 7–8). In the scope of this research, this understanding is important since it involves learning in the process of meaning making (Baxter-Magolda, 2009). In addition to that, it supports self-authorship, a theoretical demonstration of holistic meaning-making capacity (Baxter-Magolda, 2009). Accordingly, self-authorship is characterised by an individual's internally generated and coordinated beliefs, values and inner devotion in preference to depending on external values, beliefs and interpersonal loyalties (Kegan, 1994). Hence, this transformative concept is vital as it can be used to engage respondents to reflect their beliefs in conceptualising in holistic meaning of knowledge of learner and of self.

Previous studies and reviews have attempted to show the centrality of knowledge of learner in the making of pedagogical content knowledge. For instance, Gudmundsdottir and Shulman (1987) did two case studies involving beginner and expert teachers were addressed. The focus was on the role of teacher's pedagogical content knowledge in social studies. From this work, knowledge of learner is linked to understanding of learners' preconceptions, misconceptions, learning interests and difficulties about the topics or subject matter they learn. Equally, in efforts to review and enrich the meaning of PCK more caring and integrative, other researchers have suggested knowledge of learner and of self to avoid demarcation and learner-centred become the prime focuses (Abdul Rahman, 2007; Abdul Rahman & Scaife, 2012; Turner-Bisset, 2002). Yet, the meaning of this component of PCK remains to play around non spiritual dimensions, and does not go beyond. Remarkably, there is also a growing body of literature on teaching knowledge base seems to pay particular attention on spirituality of learner (Mata, 2012; Buchanan & Hyde, 2008; Tacey, 2002). Nevertheless, the main flaw of the most of reviewed studies and papers on the knowledge of learner and of self and spirituality is the failure to address what is the nature of life, who is a learner and self and, how they have come into beings (Al-Attas, 2005). This sounds as the major fault of secularization of knowledge (Chapra, 2009; Grace, 2002), which, awkwardly, has also been steadily informed into the knowledge construction, including meaning of PCK and its components as knowledge of learner and of self. Regrettably, explanations it provides have failed to address main challenges rolling from the lack of ethical principles. Most of the suggested approaches often give more weight in physical than spiritual dimensions of learner and of self. This observation suggests that holistic meaning of knowledge of learner and of self is a missing component to cover the origin and greatest honour of man as the best creation of *Allah*.

There is also lack of agreement on the right philosophical and theoretical underpinning the conception of knowledge itself. According to Bromme (1995), the lack of theoretical support complicates the conception of components making up PCK, and to a certain extent it sounds perplexing (Abdul Rahman, 2007). Others researchers, are concerned with the epistemological problem of Shulman's idea of PCK, that "the language he uses strongly suggests...is grounded in objective reality" (McEwan & Bull, 199; p.318). Perhaps, it is from that epistemological ground that conceptions of the nature of learner and of self is taken for granted and neglect the formidable combination of spiritual entities of learner and of self as human beings. Subsequently, such inattention does not adequately offer solutions to the problems of alcoholic teacher educators, absenteeism, corruption, unethical dressing, examination fraud, and sexual misconduct (Anangisy, 2010; Boimanda, 2004). This realization opportune Muslim educators who are keen to language, scope and examples grounded in Islamic thoughts to share the comprehensive and holistic meaning of education, teaching and or related concepts of knowledge, consistent to proper arousal of an inner self (Hussein, 2007). This is possible following existence of rich Islamic literature from classical time to present attempting to address the self through combined understanding of

human body and mind constant to the expected wholeness.

Remarkably, a considerable and growing body of literature has articulated a Qura'nic theory of personality. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine it to its width and deepness. However, it serves the point that the centrality of Qura'nic teachings in the life lived of Muslims, fits this section to just acknowledge that the personality from the Qur'anic theory is psychospiritual, structural, dynamic, topographic and holistic in nature (Abu-Raiya, 2012). This means it pays attention to *nafs* (self in singular) and *anfus* (selves in plural), *roh* (spirit), *a'ql* (intellect in favour of cognitive processes) and *qalb* (heart) in building intellectual and spiritual context that can update research and practice on knowledge of human character (Haneef, 2011). For the sake of this section, powerful illumination and reflection on the nature of man by Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058–1111) is employed. The reason behind is that it can help educators to deal in a holistic manner with student teachers in their practice and teaching (Haque, 2004). Besides, his ideas give insights into the multi-layered conception of human nature in a truly comprehensive model (Yaqoob, 2000). In sum, this understanding is vital for this study as it provides an exciting opportunity to advance our attempts to engage respondents in meaning making of holistic knowledge of learner and of self.

According to Al-Ghazali (1993) human individuality has four spiritual entities, which are *Nafs* (soul, ego) which encompasses *qalb* (heart), *aql* (intellect) and *ruh* (spirit). Al-Attas (1998, p.50) further helps to clarify as follows:

“When the human soul is involved in intellection and apprehension it is called ‘intellect’; when it governs the body it is called ‘soul’; when it is engaged in receiving intuitive illumination it is called ‘heart’ and when it reverts to its own world of abstract entities it is called ‘spirit’. Indeed, it is in reality always engaged in manifesting itself in all these states”

Now, separation of mind, body and spirit by secular prompted views has had significant influences on educational trends. In this case, it has excluded knowledge of the said spiritual entities as a whole from the knowledge of learner and of self. In fact, a more comprehensive meaning of knowledge of learner and of self would include the knowledge of these entities in the meaningful attempts of integrating, the wholeness and holiness of education, knowledge and human being (Al-Zeera, 2001). This suggests that to steer away from holistic understanding of learner cannot support the essence of educating good person in full development.

Furthermore, one of the fundamental focuses of the Prophetic teaching is the concept of the human heart. In a well-known Prophetic tradition or hadith it is reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

“In the body is a piece of flesh; if it is pure, the whole body will be pure; but if it is corrupt, the whole body will be corrupt. Indeed it is the heart”. (It is narrated by Bukhari and Muslim).

Thinking about dual nature of man as discussed in the earlier parts, this Prophetic teaching can be used to imply that man's heart has always been the heart of the matter irrespective of how antiquated this may sound to modern sensibilities (Tahidi, 2001). Consistent with this research, this means the heart of a learner needs to be activated and nurtured in the classroom and beyond in the same way as the intellect and physical body. This is what Hassan, Suhid, Zainal Abiddin, Ismail & Hussin (2010) seem to suggest that the oneness of *Allah* has to be reflected through unity of human thought, *aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart) and revealed guidance and holistic education. In the context of this discussion, therefore, this thought is vital because it supports a re-conceptualization of knowledge dimension of learner and of self as

created being with potentials that can inform good human character and completeness from within person. In other words, the knowledge of entities of human being is required in order to sustain satisfactory answers to questions related to the meaning of knowledge of learner and of self and the mission and purpose of life.

### 3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This third section is concerned with the methodology used for this study. A qualitative design underpinned by Islamic epistemology as philosophical and theoretical base of knowledge construction was employed. The focus was to appreciate life lived experiences among respondents who have been trying to integrate spiritual dimension from the Islamic view on their conception of learner and of self when teaching. Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenological approach was employed, because it acknowledges researcher pre-understanding of the world, cultural realities and concerns to what matters in practical life (Chesla, 1995). In fact, it set up how these researchers entered the field and defined what to see and not to see. For this research, respondents were given an ample time to share their experiences. The flows of interview sessions were activated through short thought-provoking questions. The sample size of five male respondents was purposively selected, because of being experienced and willing to share knowledge (Merriam, 2009). This sample was considered convenient for this phenomenological sort of study, based on researcher's judgments consistent to purpose of the study, quality of interviews, time limit and available resources (De Gagne & Walter, 2010). Besides, it fit suggestion by De Gagne and Walter (2010) that a size of 5 respondents can be big enough to what Merriam (2009) calls as saturation. Two respondents were at their early 70s and others were between 40s to 60s years old with wide range of teaching method course (N=5), Islamic knowledge (N=2), Geography (N=1) and English language (N=2).

**Table 3.1: The Profile Research Respondents (n=5)**

Name	Age	Subject Taught	Level Taught	Education Level	Years of T. Experiences
Murzaquun	70s	English Lit.	Cert& Dip	Master	50s
Mudir	70s	English Lit.	Cert& Dip	Master	50s
Mudaris	60s	Islamic. Knowledge	Cert& Dip	Post. Grad. Dip	35
Murabbi	50s	Islamic Knowledge	Cert& Dip	Bachelor	16
Mudarrif	40s	Geography	Cert& Dip	Master	11

### 3.1 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data in this research was drawn from two main sources. First, the data was drawn from in-depth semi structured interviews two times each for 60 to 90 minutes over the course of five months was conducted. Second, documentary review through studying written materials including Islamic knowledge and teacher education related textbooks, newspapers, newsletters and exchanged e-mails with one respondent. Later, field peer debriefing and triangulation of transcripts were employed for trustworthiness of the research findings (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2007). The scripts were given back to respondents for addition and changing before further analysis. Themes were confirmed based on analysis of all interviews. The data were analysed using Baptiste's (2001) suggestions: First, reality of the phenomenon was treated as holistic, in with revealed knowledge, reasoning and experiences (Ahmad, 2012). Second, data were tagged, labelled, and defined, before placed in themes. Third, themes were connected as clear matured stories. Finally, the writing up included theme as narrative accounts among Muslim educators.



#### 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The fourth section presents the findings of the research, focusing on the two key themes and respective five sub-themes. To understand the prerequisites and meaning of holistic knowledge of learner from perspectives of Muslim educators as respondents, different questions were asked and interpreted. Table 4.1: below represents the findings indifferent themes as emerged. The findings showed that perspectives of Muslim educators participated in this study begin from the premise that the most fundamental relationship in the life of human beings is their relationship with *Allah*. The Muslim educators accept the existence of a spiritual aspect in human beings that survives death.

**Table 4.1: Prerequisites and Meaning of Holistic Knowledge of Learner and of self**

Faith and Spirituality	Foundational Holistic Knowledge of Learner and of Self
Divine Unity of Allah	Mission and Grand Purpose of Life
Unity of Dual Dimension of Human Life	Unified theory and practice
	Ingrained Concept of Amanah (Trust)
	Enthusiastic Acceptance of being Role Model

##### Faith and Spirituality

An initial objective of the project was to appreciate the prerequisites for conceptualisation of learner and of self. The findings of the current study found that almost all five respondents indicated that firm belief in *Allah* is the prerequisite for the conceptualisation of learner and of self. This theme is reflected by other two sub-themes related to Divine Unity of Allah, mission and grand purpose of life and certainty of life after death as explained below:

##### Divine Unity of Allah

In order to explore more about faith and spirituality, the findings from this study found that the principle of Divine Unity (*Al-Tawhid*) is the respondents' highest force at work. For instance, Mudaris shared his conviction that Allah is All-knowing about human psychology and the best way to nurture holistic and balanced human beings. He articulated that:

*“In order to know how to teach to produce good human beings, one needs to carry on this firm belief about Allah first as the integral in the process so as to develop clear principles on what we learn and how we apply it in educating a vicegerent of Allah”.*

Interestingly, Murzaquun also reported conviction of Allah and the essence of knowledge of teaching. His exposure to different types of reading and experiences strengthened his conviction that Allah occupies the fundamental position in everything, including knowledge. He remarked,

*“In everything Allah is there. My objective when I conceptualise something including learner and knowledge relating to my teaching is to start with that reality through integrating what I observe and what I learn from the Qur'an. My line of thinking and which hasis the throughout ...is to bring the idea of Allah close to students' daily living”.*

These findings suggest that whoever is serious to embark on noble task of educating good human being, he or she should have firm faith in the existence of Allah the Creator. Perhaps because of their long lived history and experiences in education and teaching, these aged respondents were able to share their strong internal voice.

This observation suggests that it is imperative for educators to have such firm belief in Allah because it increases their confidence and passion to understand and educate learner to complete achievement inside and beyond college or

school life. It is also a necessary starting point for mental clarity and firmness in responding to the seemed complicated questions about the nature of learner and of self. This finding is in agreement with Hussain's (2007) articulation which showed that the question "what it means to be a person and who we actually are" sound critical as they appreciate the authority of Divine power, revelation and inner experience as a source for ethical understanding. These findings offer a unique opportunity to appreciate what Maududi (1978) suggests as the essence of life and a distinguishing concept of man's place in the universe. In fact, unwavering faith in Allah should go beyond the level of declaration to integration of various knowledge dimensions, concepts and models in what and how educators teach (Al-hudawi, Musah & Hamdan, 2014). In summary, these results show that having firm belief in the Divine Unity of Allah is a strong predictor of high achievement, in founding informed meaning and purpose of knowledge of learner and of self.

### **Unity of Dual Dimension of Human Life**

This is another important subtheme emerged under faith and spirituality. Most of the respondents thought that certainty in the unity of life and success in this world and hereafter was another force at work. Mudir, one of the research participants was concerned with the outcome of his life in the Hereafter. He said:

*"I always focus on doing things that please Allah as a way to succeed in the present life and afterlife. In this way, it is necessary to integrate what and how we learn and teach because there is no separation from life as it is knowledge itself. There was a time we were not in this life and the same logic maintains that we will go back."*

In what seemed to be the same line of thinking, Murabbi responded to the question on perquisite that, "I think the question is to position this knowledge and relate it with something spiritual. This means in learning as in teaching learners and educators should be connected to the permanence of the hereafter, for which this world according to the Prophetic teaching is but a cultivating ground". The respondents felt that belief in the hereafter affects every aspect of their lives and it cannot be considered in isolation. The findings are consistent with the work of Haneef (2011) who established that belief in the Hereafter is a foundation of accountability and retribution in Islam, in that man's efforts are geared to achieving permanence.

Taken together, the definitive presence of belief and certainty in Hereafter is important. It can help an individual educator, to take considerable steps in rethinking and incorporating impartial and considerate understanding of learner and of self beyond worldly gains. It is unfortunate that the life of learner and of self is situated in a contrast, in battle with each other, or in erroneous antagonism to each other. From the findings our educators in this respect, should not only be complemented by the success in the form of grades that their students score in the periodical or annual examinations (Nasr, 2012; Nadeem & Ahmad, 2006). Instead, our educators should also be sensitive and concerned to the spiritual and holistic implications of their conceptions of knowledge of learner and of self in their teaching process. To do that, Muslim educators need to develop understanding of what Al-Fārūqī (1992) mentions as philosophy, methods and objective of respective discipline to avoid bifurcation of knowledge of learner and of self. This understanding calls for what we can suggest as the shift from the so called soft innovation to hard reformation in teacher education and academia as a whole.

### **Foundational Holistic Knowledge of Learner and of Self**

Foundational holistic knowledge is here conceptualised as a quite general and simplistic conception and integration of the knowledge dimensions consistent to wholeness of learner and of self in the making of unified meaning of

PCK. It is the result of individual's compose their own reality in the context of their relationships with others and the surrounding community. Closely related to above discussion, the findings emerged under this theme in the form of mission and grand purpose of life, unified theory and practice challenging environment, showed that respondents were in touch with the conceptual understanding of their origin in consciousness as discussed below:

### **Mission and grand Purpose of Life**

Having firm belief in Allah as discussed above, has to the great extent influenced the conceptions of the respondents that knowledge of the learner and self must be connected to the purpose and mission of life. For instance, Murabbi's responses were that:

*"Humanity as a whole, including learners and us are the creations of Allah with life mission and purpose. That makes us complete beings with interwoven spiritual, mental, emotional and physical potential either inside or beyond classroom borders. So my focus throughout my teaching is to support the growth of learners' potential in a holistic manner by internalizing beneficial values from the Islamic view and shunning materialistic values".*

Other respondents felt that the holistic dimensions of a learner need holistic knowledge of teaching consistent with life purpose and mission. It was revealed that human beings were created with honour as vicegerents (*Khalifah*) of Allah (s.w.t) on earth as their life mission and being servants which is to worship (*Ibadah*) Him alone. This holistic conception is shared by Mudir: 'I have come to understand through my attempts to use my knowledge of teaching that I am supposed to help students to make use of their knowledge and appear as vicegerents (*Khalifa*) of Allah inside and beyond the college. Mudaris commented that:

*'...I consider complete knowledge to educate learners with integrative acquired knowledge including Geography, Mathematics, Physics, and Biology, Chemistry, English and Arabic languages alongside revealed knowledge to produce servants and vicegerent who can establish justice in society.*

Consistent with the staunch belief in Allah earlier described, necessitates a conception of knowledge of learner and of self that is integrative and holistic to bring about complete submission to His Will as both servants and vicegerents.

The finding is consistent with the findings on self-authorship by (Baxter-Magolda, 2010; 2009) where respondents demonstrated trust in their internal voice and were committed to their beliefs. As far our review of literature is concerned, it sounds reasonable to bring the point in the discussion that having firm belief in *Allah* and be able to live it is vital for proper conception of knowledge of learner and of self. There is no doubt that the existing objectivist and integrative viewpoints on the meaning of knowledge of learner and of self as of PCK itself, have the potential to define and defend professional knowledge of and skills for teaching. However, their failure to unify the physical and spiritual domains of learners and self is an epistemological limitation. It seems to impair the existing meaning of knowledge of learner and of self when dealing with basic questions about the spirit, heart and self of learners as human beings.

These findings further support Hashim (2005) that the goal of educating students in Islamic view is to make them vicegerents of Allah to preserve and safeguard the universe and spread social justice. That is inculcation of being accountable for one's deeds (*Muhasabah*) in the framework of patience and sincerity to moral principles for the sake of Allah (Zaroug, 1999). From findings, it can be reasoned that both objectivist and integrative thoughts in isolation understanding of spiritual elements of human beings cannot help the meaning of knowledge of learner and of self, in

completeness (Al-Zeera, 2001). An implication of these findings is that being confident to bring out internal inspired views enriched by firm belief for unifying nature and coherent view of life, education, knowledge and learners is something important. It can help in constructing holistic knowledge of learner and of self since each of inborn potentials of human beings is constantly interconnected, with education, knowledge, training and ethics necessary in building future human resource professionals (Abuarqub 2009). Once such insights are in practice, then, meaning of holistic knowledge of learners and of self can go beyond mere intellectual to complete development consistent to grand life mission and purpose of life.

### **Unified Theory and Practice**

The concept of unified theory and practice also emerged as an important element in meaning making of holistic knowledge of learner and of self. Respondents seemed to insist integration of the actual practical application of the theoretical meaning. For instance, Mudir maintains that as a way to ‘sustain my goal I keep on sharing what I know with others and try to learn endlessly from other people so that the abstract and theoretical knowledge of my subject is not separated from practical ethics and the lives of my students’. Here Mudir seemed secure and was able to gain wisdom from the experience of uniting different dimensions of knowledge. Being older and experienced, he appeared to have his own philosophy to deal with meaning making in creative ways. In addition, Mudaris noted that:

“...the holistic of knowledge and of self is not separated from the holistic dimension of any knowledge, since the reality of teaching knowledge like other knowledge is not separated from the sources of all realities - Allah the Almighty”.

Murzaquun on the other hand emphasised on the following:

*‘But I think the thing that has been the focus throughout in working in such kind of institutions is to bring the idea of Allah close to students’ daily living. Now, the impression behind is that I have learnt and practice that when teaching students anything Islamic, patience is needed During my teaching at Advanced level of education both in boys and girls schools, I had to make sure that my students observe their prayers, eat and dress well in Islamic manner.*

These findings suggest that unification of theoretical and practical teaching is important to help learners with understanding. Comparing the descriptions in the literature and the findings of this study, it can be seen that the respondents’ insights were not refined as they seemed to link the dual nature of the learner and of self in broad terms and the need to excel in theory and practice (Hashim, 2005; Al-Zeera, 2001). Three respondents struggled to employ their basic knowledge of the learner and of self as one key knowledge dimension in the meaning of PCK. These differences can be explained in part by the rising of awareness of Muslim educators of Islamic theory of knowledge or epistemology. Yet, as one Murabbi respondent noted, the lack of a detailed understanding of Islamic epistemology might be a challenge to many of them. This might mean a readiness to refine the details of unifying theory and practice for learners’ success in this world and hereafter as earlier discussed.

### **Ingrained Concept of Amānah (Trust)**

From respondents’ shared belief of life after death and being vicegerents of Allah, the ingrained concept of honour and trust emerged. In this concept, respondents placed learners and the self into accountability before the Almighty *Allah*. For example, Mudarrisu said that “I am absolute certain that educating students to become *Allah* fearing individuals (Mutaqqin) is a trust in teaching them to establish justice in the society”. Mudarrib who was another research participant also shared: “Our duty is to fulfill our trust by teaching them to become conscious to Allah swt”. This finding

matches with Haneef (2011) that anyone entrusted with a position has to fulfill it. These findings suggest powerful and comprehensive display sense of self in making meaning of knowledge of learner. It is shown that the main purpose is to subscribe solely to the commandment of *Allah* for the sake of securing the Divine Pleasure (Al-Faruqi, 1992, p.5). Building from this understanding, therefore, meaning of holistic knowledge of learner and of self has to cut across all disciplines and subjects in permanence.

### **Enthusiastic Acceptance of being Role Model**

From the study, respondents also revealed and shared the sense of being role model to be matched with their meaning of knowledge and of self. For instance, Mudaris as one of respondents replied this way:

*'The right way of teaching is to emulate Prophets. We are reading in the Quran time to time that Allah swt appointed Prophets who displayed best examples of how to educate for producing disciplined individuals. There is no shortcut but emulating Prophets for us to become role model students.'*

These findings validates the idea of Ahmad, Othman and Ismail (2012) that students must be trained to always keep their eye on the whole picture or macro-view and this is partially the meaning of *Tawhid*.

Given the centrality of the Qur'anic teachings into daily practices, the idea of emulating the Prophetic ways of teaching is comprehensible. The respondents seemed to think that the Prophets (*as*) are role models to be emulated in the life lived experiences of educating good human beings. This agrees to the Qur'an, as observed by Sabrin (2010) that the reason that messengers were sent out was to bring their respective books of revelation and set an *example* of how to apply them, thereby purifying people from bad behaviour (in Arabic *tazkiyah*) (Qur'an, 2:151). Remarkably, such understanding of the holistic knowledge dimension of learner and self is contrary to studies and reviews by (Abdul Rahman & Scaife, 2012; Ball, et al. 2008; Abdul Rahman, 2007; Tuner-Bisset, 2001) who merely focused on understanding of learners' background, interests and capabilities. The unification of educators as role model to emulate Prophets (*as*) and be emulated was not the case in the cited previous studies. That could be due to the use of conventional epistemological view that seems to limit meaning and purpose of knowledge and education in general to mere examination goals and achievements without considering practical realities.

Understandably, defeatists might disagree with the basic premise that holistic knowledge of the learner and of self can be integrated with unification of answerability and conviction of being role model. This may be acceptable, as noted by Al-Barzinji (1998), only if religion is narrowly confined to one's personal life and family as in the secular society. For practicing Muslim educators as other experts, however, Islam is conceptualised as a complete way of life that underpins the comprehensive meaning of life of learner and of self, and instills a sense of responsibility in the individual and society to the Creator (Nasr, 2012; Abdel-Aziz, 2006). A point can be made here that if the criterion of educators at least at Islamic colleges of teacher education, in conceptualizing of knowledge of learner and of self is short of strong belief in the Divine Unity and the Hereafter there could be a problem. That is the problem of relying in innately isolationist modes of teaching which could not be able to cater to or incorporate all the critical features of human personality. Hence, foundational meaning making stage is vital in conceptualising and educating learners to fulfill the trust of being created as vicegerents of Allah. Satisfying this foundational level of meaning is necessary in attempts to help future generations through teacher education.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

The conventional view on knowledge of learner and of self in pedagogical content knowledge has its sizable share on educating teachers with unbalanced and detached character. The findings, however, show some indications that a paradigm shift has started to take place at the level of individual Muslim educators. This is an important issue for future research. The findings of this research support the idea that there is a need of Islamic epistemological view and ideological skills of integrating belief in *Allah* and Here after as the constructive framework in the construction of foundational holistic knowledge of learner and of self in PCK. This understanding can also function as part of the solution to the debated meaning of PCK in teaching profession.

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