

CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON THE ROLE OF MOSQUE AS AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM SOCIETY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Mosque is a significant institution since the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) The mosque not only plays a comprehensive role as a place of worship, community and social center but it also is an important place for learning. Unfortunately, the development of contemporary human civilization has made the role of mosque as education center to be taken over by different secular institutions. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the development of mosque as an educational center. This paper uses the method of literature survey on two different mosques in Malaysia. Thus, it aims to improve the understanding on the role of mosque as educational center in modern Malaysian society.

Keywords: Mosque, Learning, Islamic Education

INTRODUCTION

According to Islamic theology, everyone is encouraged to learn. In the early Islamic era, mosque played a very important role in education. The word Mosque comes from the Arabic word, Masjid, which means a place where all the Islam believers meet, gather and worship. Since the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) mosque served many purposes, and it was a very important institution in the lives of Muslims. It acted as an Islamic community center, a place of worship, a place of political discussion, religious instruction and it was also an educational center. In the early age, Prophet (pbuh) delivered his addresses to his followers within the premise of mosque. Mosque was a place where he educated people to deal with the social issues, a place where he explained revelations, a place where he met emissaries and discussed the meaning of the message of Islam. In the mosque, Islam and practice of knowledge were closely related. Mosque was established in every place where Islam took hold, once established, the mosque could develop into an education center, started from hundreds of students to thousands sometimes, and frequently contained important libraries. This is how the mosque spread the Islamic education throughout the Islamic civilization from early 570 A.D. until recent days.

THE ROLE OF MOSQUE IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION DURING EARLY AGE

THE MOSQUE AS AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

Islamic Education refers to the Islamic learning in which a student studies about the Quran and Hadith i.e., traditions of Prophet (pbuh) which include religious knowledge, matters of worship and also the knowledge on general life (Lanre, Malik, & Hamad, 2014).

Teaching took place mostly in the mosque during the early age of Islam. The first mosque that is connected to a school was set up at Medina in 653 A.D., and by 900 A.D. almost every mosque was connected to an elementary school for both boys and girls (Omer, 2010). Their education normally started at five and the first thing that they would learn was writing the ninety-nine most beautiful names of God and simple quotes from the Quran. After they have mastered the technique of reading and writing Arabic, the Quran was then studied thoroughly, and they would then be introduced to other necessary sectors of knowledge. For a student who wants to indulge in further study, they could go to the larger mosque, where the education system was more advance, offering instructions in Arabic grammar and poetry, logic, algebra, biology, history, law and theology (Alkhateeb, 2012).

The basic way in which education took place in the mosque was the “Halaqat al-Ilm” or in short Halaqa or study circle. The study circle is the earliest form of learning and spiritual development, traditionally unrestricted and free of cost. It is described as a gathering of Muslim seated in circle or a gathering of students around the teacher. Students sat beside the teacher as a sign of respect. The teacher was in charge of the study circle, but students were allowed to discuss on the content of study, exchange knowledge. Discussions were highly encouraged in the study circle. In addition, there was no any restriction on fields of knowledge and students were allow to discuss everything during the study circle which was hold in the mosque (Zaimeche, 2002).

THE MOSQUE AS A FOUNDATION OF UNIVERSITIES

As the number of student increase, the role of mosque was getting more distinct, and the mosque gradually took on more functions. Despite of just being a learning center, the mosque was turned into a new type of institution, it combined the mosque with a Khan which is type of inn to accommodate students from out of town. The mosque then effectively functioned a school and a hostel for poor student who was from abroad. Besides, the mosque also provided other assistances for the students of knowledge. The students were exempted from paying fees and monetary allowances were given regularly. Some of the students were given a minimal assistance for food and accommodation. The mosque was upgraded, and provided accommodation for the students. The mosque later expanded into spaces such as library, kitchen, washroom, and some common learning space (Rasdi & Utaberta, 2010; Rasdi, 1998; Zaimeche, 2002).

Rulers also played an important role in spreading the mosque as an education college. They prepared libraries for students, deposited books which were related to religion, science, intellect, and language. They also appointed librarian to in charge on the management of the libraries. Large number of teachers were hired and paid by the rulers (Zaimeche, 2002).

ROLE OF MOSQUE AS ISLAMIC EDUCATION CENTER IN MALAYSIA: CRISIS AND POTENTIAL

Muslim is the majority population of Malaysia and Islam is the official religion of this country. The implementation of Islamic policies which was initiated by the former Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohamed has ensured the development of Islam in this country. Various Islamic activities and programs were carried out to fulfill the spiritual needs of the Muslim community. From these, the mosques were built as a response to the increasing number of Muslim populations. In Malaysia, the state Islamic Religious Department is responsible for running religious classes in the schools and the mosques. According to the Director of Islamic Progress (JAKIM), government has put in a total of RM 32.6 million for religious classes since 1986 (Rahman, Mohamed, Ahmad, Adam, & Mohamad, 2011).

Currently, the mosque still plays an important role in Malaysian Muslim community, but the role of mosque as an education institution has gradually been replaced by the schools. The first formal and modern Islamic school was founded in 1932 in Terengganu. Since then, there is a very distinctive separation between the role of mosque and the school. The school is in charge of formal education program whilst mosque is in charge of informal religious program.

At the beginning, the purpose of formal Islamic School is to educate legal officers, imams and learned scholars for the development of Islam community (Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor et al., 2012).

A mosque is usually built in a mukim or district where the place is reachable for all Muslims. The most significant role of mosque in Malaysia is the performance of Friday congregational prayer. Despite non-formal education, the mosque also performs as a community center. In addition, there are also a new type of space call musolla or *surau*. Musolla or *surau* is a small place for performing daily congregational prayer for small community. Many musolla or *surau* are easily found in cities, such as buildings, services, petrol stations and shopping malls. In addition, schools today also has this worshipping space for the students to perform their daily prayer and this affected the role of mosque in the community (Rasdi, 2010).

Nowadays, the mosque is equipped with many learning facilities such as hall, classrooms, seminar rooms, meeting rooms, computers and LCD projectors. However, previous researches have shown that Islamic Education teachers prefer to teach in school environment rather than in mosque. During festivals, schools will carry out their own program. With this, students are often hindered from participating in the mosque activities. There is no actual coalition between the mosque and the school. This confirms the lack of an ideal plan for the development of both the mosque and the school, and the lack of suitable program for the benefits of their students. The mosque and the school are not able to collaborate their performance in educating the students.

As a result, the people and community start to doubt the efficiency of mosques and schools in the role of educating the students. Several questions were raised, such as to why conflict appears within the mosques and the schools. The justification of the role of mosques and the role of schools in education field were also questioned. According to prior available researches, they found out several reasons why teachers are not willing to use the mosque for the teaching of Islamic Education. Firstly, there seemed to be a complex procedure of applications if they want to teach in the mosque. Secondly, there are financial restrictions for them to teach in a mosque. Apart from that, there are also some problems among the

students that have resulted in distancing themselves away from the class, as well as some problems pertaining to security. In addition, there were limited times available for allocation of teachers. The demands of the school to complete formal curriculum was not favourable to not allow them to having classes in the mosque. To put matters worse, the distance between the school and the mosque is also seen to be a problem (Tamuri, Ismail, & Jasmi, 2012).

CASE STUDY IN MALAYSIA: RUSILA MOSQUE, TERENGGANU AND MASJID NEGARA, KUALA LUMPUR



Figure 1: Rusila Mosque, Terengganu (Source: www.thestar.com.my)

The first case study is the Rusila Mosque, which is a mosque with a *madrassa* (religious school), which is located in Terengganu. Madrasa is a type of educational institution, a religious school, and is attached to the Rusila Mosque. Normally, this madrasa provides formal education to kindergarten students. They are taught to write, read and also provided with religious education. It also acts as a community centre for the Muslims and also offers shelter for the educational activities (Rasdi, 2008).

The mosque, for all its intent and purpose is devoid of walls and only one passage isolating the building from the principal roadway. It is bounded by houses nearly on three out of four sides of the building with scarcely any boundary. If was ever a mosque that could be termed a "work house" for societal advancement as opposed to a typical landmark, it is this one. Other typical mosques many times costlier than this one could never brag such a social commitment.

Abdul Hadi's political thought of Islam has dependably been demonstrably true to the traditions of early Islam. As a religious researcher, he wandered into PAS with the goal of making, through instruction, an era of Muslims who might not live separate mainstream and religious lives. This philosophy guaranteed the Rusila Mosque stayed in its simple shape that only offers cover for educational purposes (Rasdi, 2008).



Figure 2: Masjid Negara, Kuala Lumpur (Source: www.7travellers.com)

The next case study is the National Mosque of Malaysia, which is located in Kuala Lumpur. It has a capacity of 15,000 people and is situated within an area of 13 acres (53,000 m²) of beautiful gardens. The original structure was designed by a three-person team from the Public Works Department: UK architect Howard Ashley, and Malaysians Hisham Albakri and Baharuddin Kassim. The mosque was built in 1965 on the site of a church, the Venning Road Brethren Gospel Hall, which had stood there since 1922 but was appropriated by the Malaysian government.

Masjid Negara Malaysia was built from 1963 to 1965. It is a symbol of the greatness of Islam as the official religion in Malaysia. This is considered as a modern mosque in Malaysia. This mosque does not have itself attached to any religious school. It is a place of worship, and conduct some religious classes during Friday prayer (Negara, 2008).

DISCUSSION

The role of mosque in education changes gradually from the period of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In the early time, the mosque is the place of learning and teaching; people learn everything in the mosque, and this includes the study of Qur'an, writing, reading as well as the knowledge of science, arithmetic, biology, history, law and others. During this period, people focused their learning in the mosque, they study Islam as well as general knowledge at the same time. This type of learning method is understood to be more suitable in creating a strong personality with the strong believe in Islam, as the knowledge and Islamic education is learned simultaneously, this enable the Islamic spirit to be inculcated more easily.

However, times have changed and so has the role of mosques in education. Today, people learn about Islam in mosques and learn formal knowledge in schools. This allows students to have a clear distinction between religious knowledge and formal knowledge. This learning

method enables students to choose education streams more freely and enables them to receive the type of knowledge solely based on what they have chosen.

In this modern era, people will come into contact with a lot of information and knowledge, sometimes the separation between religion and knowledge will increase the endurance of learning. Thus, people will be more adapted to the environment and the surrounding.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the above discussion that mosque plays an important role in educating the Muslim society. Different kinds of learning and teaching methods bring different benefits to the students. Teaching and learning modules change from time to time, and this is required to increase the adaptive level of people to the environment surrounding. The role of mosque as an education center is very distinct in both early time and contemporary time.

In the past, people rely on the mosque for many things, but now people have changed and adapted accordingly to the new role and functions of the mosque. In order to achieve a perfect learning and teaching method, collaboration between mosques and the schools is very important to ensure the further development of the Islamic Education.

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