A New Approach in Islamic Education: Mosque Based Teaching and Learning

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ABSTRACT

Mosque plays an important role in education at the time of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W and even before the British colonial period in Malaysia. Nowadays, the role of Islamic education has been taken over by schools and madrasa. Therefore, this article aims to discuss new approaches in teaching and learning of Islamic Education based on a mosque. The discussion focuses on the role of mosques in Islamic education in Malaysia and mosque based teaching and learning module. In addition, several research have shown that the mosque could contribute to the achievement of students in Islamic education subject. Thus, this innovation is seen to improve the role of mosque as an educational institution and form the collaboration between schools, mosques and the muslim communities in the implementation of Islamic Education.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Teaching and Learning, Innovation, Approach, Mosque.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, the Malaysian education system prior to the British colonial period was primarily related to the learning of *al-Qur'an* and Islamic religious teaching which took place at home, in the *surau* and mosque and it played a significant role in the development of local Muslim community (D.D. Chelliah, 1947). According to Abu Zahari (1984), the experience of schooling for Muslim children was attending Quranic classes conducted by a local *imam* or living with *Pak Lebai* to learn religious instruction as well as relevant knowledge and the skills of daily life. They were usually the highly respected local *'ulama* and learned people and the educational was mainly based on mosques. The *Story of Abdullah* and the *Malay Annals* exhibit the traditional Muslim education system and also its educational activities, for example learning and reciting the *Qur'an,* the instruction of Islamic knowledge and also debate among Muslim scholars (Munshi Abdullah, 1916). The instruction was free and no restriction on time or age. This kind of system remained until the arrival of the British which later made a significant changes on the national education system in Malaysia, particularly the Islamic education system.

MOSQUE IN THE ISLAMIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

As discussed by many educators and scholars (Ab. Halim et. al, 2003; Mohd Mokhtar, 2003; Abdul Shukor, 2009), mosque has a very significant responsibility in the Islamic community since the period of Prophet Muhammad S.A.W and from the first day of the existence of Muslim Ummah in Madinah. On the arrival of his Hijrah from Makkah, in the city of Madinah, he had built the

first concrete thing in Islamic civilization i.e. a mosque. The establishment of the mosque was seen as the most important matter as argued by Spahic Omer (2009):

> *The mosque institution was set to be introduced at once as a nucleus of the believers existence and an epitome of the inexhaustible struggle between good and evil on the earth.*

During this significant period, the Prophet's mosque was seen as the ultimate center for the Muslim Ummah where various activities were conducted. In other words, the mosque was a community center and many types programs and social and educational activities were conducted under one roof. Spahic Omer (2009) states that:

> *Apart from being place for congregational prayers and other collective worship (ibadah) practices, the mosque, likewise, furnished the Muslims with other most vital social amenities, it served as the seat of the Prophet Muhammad's government, a learning center, a hospital, a rehabilitation centre, a welfare centre and the place for some legitimate recreational activities.*

The role of mosque became more significant where more than nine mosques had been established by the Muslim community in Madinah alone during that time. Although the building of these mosques were extremely simple, but the impact of these mosques to the development of the community were notable.

In Islam, seeking knowledge through education is a part of responsibilities of every Muslim since education is a process through which human beings are trained and prepared in a intensive way to do their Creator's bidding in this life to be rewarded in the life after death. Islam considers education not only as a common process of socialisation, but it is to improve and develop the condition of the society to conform with the Islamic teaching. Islamic education is a life-long process of preparing an individual to order his own life in accordance with the injunctions of Islam and fully contribute to the reconstruction and development of his society for the implementation of these injunctions (Niaz Efran & Zahid A. Valie, 1995). Therefore, the role of education is not only through formal education but the non-formal and informal education. As mentioned earlier, in the golden age of Islamic civilization, mosque not only stresses on the community spirit of Islam or *ukhuwwah* but also as a divine place, religious educational and social center. From the education perspective, the Prophet Muhammad had established mosque as the main educational institution for the Muslim community. According to Hisham Mortada (2003) :

> *The concern for learning and education was notable in the traditional Muslim environment. In the early periods of Islamic state, the mosque was the place where teaching and learning religion-related subjects was conducted by 'ulama.*

However, the situation had gradually changed when schools or madrasah had emerged for educational purposes and replaced the role mosque as an education center for the Muslim community. This condition can be obviously seen in the current education system in many Islamic states including Malaysia. Undeniably, mosques nowadays are mainly used by the community for limited types of religious activities such as daily ritual prayer, tarawikh prayer, Jumaat prayer, 'Id prayer and non-formal religious teaching (Mohammad Tajuddin, 1998).

MOSQUE IN THE CURRENT MALAYSIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Before further discussion, it may be useful to see the meaning of mosque in the Malaysian context. A mosque is usually built in a *mukim* or a district for the community and commonly defined as

a building used by Muslims for the performance of prayer. Generally, every mosque in Malaysia is certified by the state religious council for the performance of Friday Prayer. Besides that, a mosque is also be used as a place for the Islamic non-formal education as well as the community's social center.

There is also another type place for performing prayer known as musolla or surau. Surau or musolla is commonly a small place for daily congregational prayer which has been built by a small community. However, most of the surau have not been granted by the government for the performance of Friday Prayer. In the city or town area, there are many surau atau musolla which have developed in building, services, petrol stations or shopping complex. The main purpose of surau or musolla is mainly for performance of daily prayers or religious rituals or ibadah. In addition, all government schools today have their own surau or musolla for the performance of prayers, "spiritual laboratory" and for school religious activities.

However, from several research and observation, it is found that many of the Islamic Education teachers prefer to teach Islamic education subject in their classrooms rather than in the school musolla or the nearest community mosque (Ab. Halim et. al, 2003; Ab. Halim et. al, 2004). In fact, the schools' surau or musalla, particular in the non-residential schools, are mainly used for performance of daily prayers particular the Zohor and Asar prayers and only few activities of teaching and learning of Islamic education have been conducted in school surau or musolla.

Generally, the students will go to the nearest mosques for particular purposes such as the Friday prayer, hajat prayer or to attend some types of religious celebrations for example the *Maulidur Rasul* and *Maal Hijrah*. Yet, during these religious festivals, most of the schools have also carried out their own programs. As a result, the students or teachers are unable to attend the activities that have been organised by mosques during that time.

In term of teaching and learning facilities, nowadays, many of new mosques have been furnished and equipped with relevant facilities such as seminar rooms, classrooms, hall, meeting rooms, computers and LCD projectors. However, in reality, the situation is complicated since there is no genuine coalition between mosque and school. Both of institutions are still unable to bring together their activities for the benefits of their children. The situation is becoming more difficult due to the shallowness of knowledge and understanding of Islam among the society and there are still Muslims who only understand Islam in the context of rituals and religious ceremonies. This issue has decreased the whole quality of teaching and learning in the present Islamic education system and as a result, school and mosque are unable to play their real task in educating and moulding their students to be good human beings.

That is why there are people who start to question the effectiveness of mosques and schools in educating the Muslim children to be good individuals. Several questions have been raised concerning the association between mosque and school such as:

(1)   Why should mosque and school have a "conflict" with each other?
(2)   What are the roles of mosque and school in educating Muslim children?
(3)   What are the reasons behind this "conflict"?
(4)   How could we overcome or at least to minimise the "conflict"?
(5)   Who should become the mediator to resolve in this particular issue?
(6)   Is the similar situation also occurs in the other Muslim communities?
(7)   Is this a result of the process of secularising the education system in Malaysia?

This situation seems to suggest that mosques are still not fully utilised by schools for the formal Islamic education lesson. Thus, from the interviews with 16 Islamic education teachers, there are several reasons why many teachers are unwilling to use mosques for the lesson of Islamic Education, i.e.:

(1)   School and the state education department procedures such as the approval of proposals for programme, forms of application etc.
(2)   Financial restriction from their school or the Ministry of Education.
(3)   Possibility having problems among their students such as truancy and run-away from school during the lesson.
(4)   Security of the students.
(5)   Insufficient time allocated for teachers.
(6)   Too many clerical duties among teachers.
(7)   Demand from school to finish the formal curriculum.
(8)   Lack of cooperation from colleagues.
(9)   Parent's commitment in Islamic education programme.
(10)   Mosques are far from their schools.
(11)   Lack of cooperation from mosque officials.
(12)   Such activities are not evaluated in any school or public examinations.

In addition to the above discussion, as far as the researcher is concerned, there is no formal teaching and learning of Islamic Education subjects has been systematically planned and conducted in mosques by the national or state educational authorities. In order to understand this issue, it may useful if we look at the location of mosques and schools in some areas. The following figures (figure 1-12) show several sites of mosques and schools in Malaysia (sources from Google Earth).

Therefore, there is a need to develop a module of teaching and learning of Islamic Education which is based on mosque. Based on the concept of innovation in teaching and learning, the main aim of this module is to offer an alternative teaching and learning approaches, techniques and methods of Islamic Education subject based on mosque. It is hoped that the Islamic education teachers will have opportunity to implement the teaching and learning of Islamic Education outside the common formal classrooms in schools.

The module's title is "Mosque Based Teaching and Learning Module" in which this first model focuses at form two students (14 years old) (Ab. Halim & Nik Mohd Rahimi, 2010; Abd. Shukor, 2009; Anisah, 2009; Mohd. Azman, 2009). With the assistance of several post-graduate students, the researcher had planned and designed the module based on the Islamic Education Curriculum of the ICSS, the Form Two Islamic Education text book of the ICSS and text book's Teacher Manual. The module consist of four main fields of Islamic Education of the ICSS and it has covered several topics of the Form Two Islamic Education text book i.e.:

(1) Field of Tilawah al-Quran :
     (a) Repentance and remember to Allah
     (b) Unity is basic of prosperity
(2) Field of Ibadah:
     (a) Solat Jama' and Qasar
     (b) Fasting and the development of Muslim's akhlaq

Figure 1 al-Muqqarabin Mosque, Bandar Tasik Selatan, Kuala Lumpur

Figure 2 Istiqomah Mosque, Sg. Merab, Selangor

Figure 3 Nilai Town Mosque, Negeri Sembilan

Figure 4 Kajang Mosque, Selangor

Figure 5 Sungai Limau Mosque, Sungai Besar, Selangor

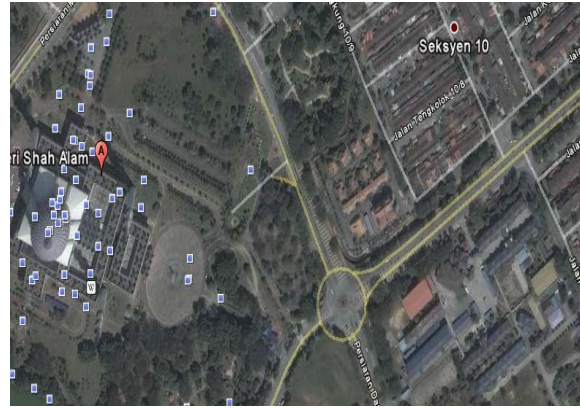**Figure 6** Abu Bakar Baginda Moque, Sepang, Selangor

Figure 7 Sg. Manggis Mosque, Kuala Langat, Selangor

Figure 8 Selangor State Mosque, Shah Alam, Selangor

Figure 9 Petaling Mosque, Petaling Jaya, Selangor

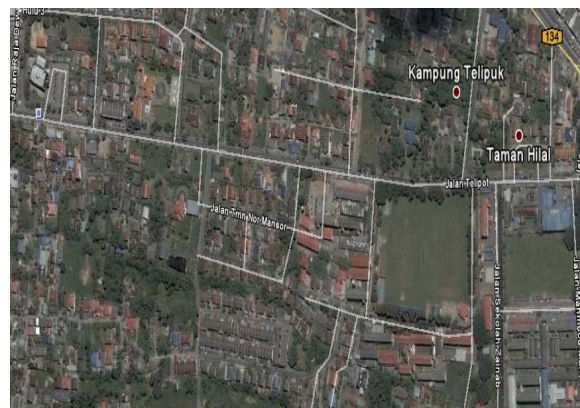**Figure 10** AS-Syarikin Mosque, Gombak Setia, Selangor

Figure 11 Makmuriah Mosque, Sungai Besar, Sabak Bernam

Figure 12 Telipot Mosque, Kota Bharu, Kelantan

(c) The Ibadah of Fasting
(d) The Beauty of Ramadhan

(3) Field of Sirah and Islamic Civilization
    (a) The establishment of mosque

(4) Field of Adab and Akhlak Islamiyah
    (a) Maintaining the purity of mosques
    (b) Protect your own dignity

In the module, there are several examples of teaching and learning activities for teachers and students. This three days and two night module has also outlined several objectives and suggestion of activities in every part of the module.

In assessing the module, three studies were carried out by three researchers. These studies used the quasi-experiment design where a pre-test and post test were conducted in order to examine the effectiveness of the module. The samples were classified into two groups i.e. control group and experiment group who were selected based on *purposive sampling*. The experiments were conducted in three selected secondary schools and involved 180 form two students. During the experiments, the treatment groups were instructed using the mosque based teaching and learning module and the control groups were taught with the same topics using conventional or common process of teaching and learning.

The findings show that the mosque based teaching and learning had significantly contributed to the students' achievement in Islamic Education. For example, the study by Anisah (2009) shows that the students' achievement in the test given to them. During the pre test, in was found that there was no significant difference between the control group and treatment group. The result below shows that the students have similar achievement since the result indicates that the sample were statistically identical.

Table 1 Pre Test Result

	Group	Num	Mean	S.D	D.F	T-Value	Result
Mean score Pre test	Control	32	58.50	11.64	62	1.84	0.07
Mean score Pre test	Treatment	32	63.56	10.36			

Finding in Table 2 shows that the overall mean for the treatment group is higher than the mean of the control group. The t-test result below shows that there is significant difference between the control group and the treatment group. This finding seems to suggest that the mosque based teaching and learning module has significantly contributed to the students' achievement in the Islamic Education subject.

Table 2 Post Test Result

	Group	Num	Mean	S.D	D.F	T-Value	Result
Mean score Post test	Control	32	75.69	11.64	62	1.84	0.01
Mean score Post test	Treatment	32	82.63	12.08			

The study by Mohd Azman (2009) in another school also shows the similar result with the previous study done by Anisah (2009). The finding suggests that the module of mosque based teaching and learning has also given positive impact on the students' achievement.

Table 3 Pre Test Result

	Group	Num	Mean	S.D	D.F	T-Value	Result
Mean score Pre test	Control	29	77.72	7.00	56	1.54	0.42
Mean score Pre test	Treatment	29	80.79	8.17			

The above t-test result shows that there was no significant difference during the pre test between the control group and treatment group in this schools. Before the experiment, the table shows that the two groups were almost similar and statistically identical. However, after the experiment completed, Table 4 below shows different result as there is a significant difference between the control group and treatment group. The overall mean for the treatment group is higher than the mean of the control group.

Table 4 Post Test Result

	Group	Num	Mean	S.D	D.F	T-Value	Result
Mean score Post test	Control	29	85.03	5.95	56	6.58	0.001
Mean score Post test	Treatment	29	93.48	3.53			

A study by Abd. Shukor (2009) and another study by Mohd Azman (2009) also show that the students from the treatment group have more positive perceptions towards their Islamic education teachers compared to their friends from the control group. The following table shows several items concerning their perceptions towards their teachers:

CONCLUSION

Finally, the above discussion shows the position of mosque in the implementation of Islamic education in the present education system. Although Islamic education subject is recognized as one of the core subjects in the national curriculum, the implementation of the subject seems to have a kind of "conflict" with the mosque institution. Today, mosques have not been seen as the essential institution in the Muslim education system. In other words, it does not meet with the ideal concept of mosque during the period of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W and the Golden Age Islam. As discussed earlier, the emergence of formal schooling system and madrasah had contributed to the decline of mosques' functions in education and producing '*ulama*. Today, many of mosques in the Muslim world, including Malaysia, are only used for limited Islamic religious programs such a daily ritual prayer, Jumaat prayer, 'Id prayer and non-formal religious teaching. It is hoped that the mosque based teaching and learning module could improve the roles of mosque in formal education. Thus, the notion of real form of "cooperation" and "collaboration" between schools, mosques and the Muslim communities must be redeveloped in order to transform every mosque as a center of education and be able to support the current Islamic education system. It is hoped that the "disagreement" could be turned to be the true coalition between school and mosque.

Table 5 Perception Towards Islamic Education Teachers

No.	Items	Control Group	Treatment Group
1	Most of the Islamic education teachers are creative in their teaching.	3.97	4.03
2	My teacher always gives me opportunities to evaluate my own work	3.90	3.90
3	My teacher always gives me opportunities to give idea during the lesson	4.62	4.69
4	My teacher always encourages the students to cooperate in group activities .	4.41	4.41
5	My teacher always uses lecture method during the lesson of Islamic Education	3.55	4.00
6	Sometimes I feel boring with the teacher's explanation during the lesson	3.21	3.17
7	My teacher always uses different approaches in his/her lesson.	3.83	4.03
8	My teacher always uses book text in classroom	3.83	4.17
9	My Islamic education teacher is the best role-model	4.00	4.07
10	My teacher always asks me questions during the lesson.	4.48	4.41
11	I'm very happy to give feedback to my teacher's questions.	3.79	4.31
12	Demonstration from my teacher has helped me to understand the lesson	4.28	4.38
13	My teacher always brings the students to the computer laboratory during the lesson of Islamic education.	2.52	2.38
14	My teacher rarely uses mind mapping method during the lesson of Islamic education	2.14	2.83
15	I could understand teacher's explanation during the lesson in the class room.	4.34	4.03
16	I could produce a good Islamic education project with my teacher's assistance	4.38	4.48
17	My Islamic education teacher always gives me home works	3.07	3.34
18	I always have been given opportunities to give idea during the lesson of Islamic Education	3.93	4.00
19	I feel very happy when my idea is accepted by my teacher	4.28	4.62
20	My Islamic education teacher has always encouraged me to find references in the library in order to improve my understanding towards the lesson.	3.38	3.79

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