

# **The Role of Mosque Committee in Empowering Mosque's Educational Programmes: Case Study of Mosques in Gombak District, Malaysia\***

## **Peranan Ahli Jawatankuasa Masjid dalam Penambahbaikan Program Pendidikan Masjid: Kajian Kes bagi Masjid-Masjid di Daerah Gombak**

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### **Abstract**

This article analyses the roles of the mosque committee in enhancing the mosque's educational programmes in Gombak, Selangor. Gombak as an administrative district that is located inside the hectic and modernized area of Klang Valley is prone to foreign ideologies and socio-cultural issues. This study aims to broaden the understanding of how the mosque committee in Gombak could empower the mosque's educational programmes in addressing these issues. This study also aims to discover creative improvisation that the committee could make in making the mosque's educational programmes attractive to the surrounding community. This study focuses on the role of the mosque committee in improving their mosque's educational programmes with a specific case study on selected mosques in the Gombak district. It is a qualitative study that utilizes the deductive and inductive methods derived from surveys collected from Focus-group Discussion (FGD) and literature studies. Recordings from the FGD survey and recent

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literature studies related to this topic are examined and analysed according to its appropriation. The result indicates the importance of the mosque committee and their significant roles in enhancing the mosque's educational programmes such as adjusting the curriculum to cater the diversity of people and continuously improvising the lesson through feedback taken from the surrounding community.

**Keywords:** Mosque Educational Programme, Mosque Committee, Islamic Education, Gombak District, Majlis Agama Islam Selangor.

### Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji peranan yang boleh dimainkan oleh ahli jawatankuasa masjid dalam usaha penambahbaikan program pendidikan masjid di sekitar komuniti Gombak, Selangor. Gombak merupakan sebuah daerah pentadbiran terletak di dalam kawasan Lembah Kelang yang sibuk dan moden terdedah kepada ideologi asing dan permasalahan sosio-budaya. Kajian ini bermatlamat untuk memperluaskan kefahaman berkaitan tentang bagaimana ahli jawatankuasa masjid boleh menambahbaik program pendidikan masjid untuk menanggapi permasalahan-masalah tersebut. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk menemukan kaedah penambahbaikan kreatif yang boleh dilakukan oleh ahli jawatankuasa masjid untuk menjadikan program pendidikan masjid menarik bagi masyarakat sekitar. Kajian ini juga memfokuskan kepada peranan ahli jawatankuasa masjid dalam menambahbaik fungsi program pendidikan masjid dengan kajian kes keatas masjid terpilih di daerah Gombak. Ini adalah kajian kualitatif yang menggunakan kaedah deduktif dan induktif yang berasal dari hasil dapatan tinjauan Diskusi Kelompok Terfokus (FGD) dan juga kajian literatur. Rakaman dari tinjauan FGD dan kajian literatur terkini yang berkaitan dengan topik ini akan dikaji dan dianalisa mengikut kesesuaiannya. Hasil menunjukkan kepentingan ahli jawatankuasa masjid dan peranan besar mereka dalam menambahbaik program pendidikan masjid contohnya dalam menyesuaikan kurikulum untuk menyantuni kepelbagaian masyarakat dan penambahbaikan berterusan pengajian melalui maklum balas yang diperolehi dari masyarakat setempat.

**Kata Kunci:** Program Pendidikan Masjid, Ahli Jawatankuasa Masjid, Pengajian Islam, Daerah Gombak, Majlis Agama Islam Selangor.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A mosque is a place that holds a special position in the heart of every Muslim. It is a place for worship and also functions as an institution that serves as the center of social activities for Muslims. It is the most important and centermost institution in any Muslim community. Even since the Prophet PBUH's time, the mosque was positioned integrally to the Muslims' governance and administration. The mosque function is evergreen and dynamic, evolving to meet the needs of the Muslims at all times. It is a substantial body that oversees the Ummah's condition; spark changes and revives the spirits of promoting virtues and forbidding vices (*al-amru bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahyu 'an al-munkar*) in the

society. Making the mosque prosperous is a responsibility for every Muslim, men and women, all together as a vicegerent of Allah in this world. Allah SWT said:

*“The mosques of God Shall be visited and maintained By such as believe in God And the Last Day, establish Regular prayers, and practice Regular charity, and fear None (at all) except God. It is they who are expected To be on true guidance.” (9:18)*

The importance of mosques cannot be established without the efforts of people who committed their time and energy to make mosques alive, thriving, and prosperous. In our modern days, this task is handled by a group of people appointed to be the mosque’s “committee.” They are either elected by the authorities or voted into that position by the community voting. This committee, usually selected from people with different backgrounds, thrives hand in hand to improve their mosque and indirectly revamp their village or communities surrounding them. They “volunteer” themselves for the ‘Ummah, as many committees receive only small stipends or none at all for their work.

The mosque committee plays a vital role in enhancing the mosque’s educational programmes. Mosque, which also works as a learning institution, needs to have an authentic and robust educational programme so that the disseminated knowledge will benefit the community. The committee here is the one that administrates and puts an arrangement to the educational programme based on the curriculum given by the religious authority. Any incompetency of the educational programme will detrimentally impact the Muslim ‘umma in the future. Thus, this research aims to discover the mosque committee’s role in empowering the mosque’s educational programmes. It will discuss the importance of the mosque as an educational institute and enlist the significance roles played by the mosque committee in enhancing the mosque’s educational programmes.

### **1.1 Mosque and Education: A Brief History**

“Knowledge” and “Education” are integral with the mosque’s institution. For example, the establishment of The Prophet’s Mosque (al-Masjid al-Nabawī), other than a place of worship, was also intended to be a gathering place for people to learn more about Islam. The formation of Qubā’ Mosque, Mirbad Mosque, and al-Masjid al-Nabawī, for instance, also play a significant role that educated and shaped the Muslims’ char-

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acter building during the Prophet's time (Haron, Ripin, & Yusof, 2008, p. 2). The mosque educational features later kept being developed with the expansion of Muslims' land and migration. Through time, independent institutions specific for Islamic education were created under the mosque's institution, such as preliminary school (*Kuttāb*), general schools (*Madrasah*), and university (*al-Jāmi'ah*), with most of them were built within the mosque's compound and were put under the mosque's jurisdiction. The mosque institution's diversified roles showcased substantial responsibilities held by its management in ensuring that the mosque's potential is utilized and its benefits far-reaching to all Muslims.

### *1.1.1 Role of Mosque Committee in the Knowledge Dissemination Process in the Early Islamic Age*

After the construction of the first mosque - the *Qubā'* Mosque - in the first year of Hijrah, many other mosques have also been built throughout Islamic lands. Most of these mosques have nearly similar roles: a worshipping place that also works as a center for Islamic teaching (Imamuddin, 1984, p. 160). Nonetheless, their educational system was mostly informal until specific programmes such as the *Ṣuffah* or *Kuttāb* were embedded into the mosque institution (Haron et al., 2008, p. 4).

The history of *al-Ṣuffah* or *al-Kuttāb* begins at the time of the Prophet PBUH. A space connected to the Prophet's Mosque was dedicated to learning Islam, and the teaching there was led by the Prophet PBUH himself. Several companions such as *'Abd Allāh ibn Rawāḥah*, *'Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit*, and *Abū 'Ubaydah ibn al-Jarāḥ* were also trained and appointed as teachers (Al-Hasani, 2019, p. 3). *Suffah* or *al-Ṣuffah* educational programme is considered as the most significant earlier formal institutions in Islamic education history that housed seventy to hundredths companions, among them *Abū Hurayrah*, *'Abd Allāh bin Mas'ūd*, *'Ammār bin Yāsir*, and *Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Fārisī* (Al-Ḥākim. 2002, p. 18).

At the time of the Rashidun Caliphate (*al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn*), *al-Ṣuffah* and *al-Kuttāb* systems were developed to be more formal than they were before. Its curriculum focused more on teaching the Quran, learning Islam, and some basics in other disciplines (Ahmad Syalaby, 1976, pp. 37–45). At the time of the following caliphates, several mosques have been institutionalized to have a more significant educa-

tional role, such as what happened to the Qayrawān mosque in Tunisia, the Qarawiyyīn mosque in Morocco, and al-Azhar mosque in Egypt (Haron et al., 2008, p. 8; ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Tāzi, 2000, pp. 111–113). These mosques become central to the distribution of knowledge in the Muslim world alongside several other educational institutions established later, such as the madrasah and the *Bayt al-Hikmah*.

### ***1.1.2 Role of Mosques in Disseminating Knowledge in Classical Era of Malay Archipelago***

It is hard to ascertain when actually Islamic education started to develop in the Malay archipelago as historians are still in disagreement on the exact date Islam came to the Malay world. The assumed date can only be estimated with the arrival of Islam in Malay lands, with according to some authorities such as al-Attas believes that it was in the early 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century (Al-Attas, 2011, pp. 32, 79, 89–90). This was based on the historical fact that the first King of Malacca, Parameswara, embraced Islam and changed his name to Megat Iskandar Syah in 1414 AD (Haryanto, 2015, p. 86). This claim is still in dispute due to the lack of evidence, with Wake favouring Muzaffar Shah and dating the event in the mid 15th century (Wake, 1983). Several archeologists and historians are also in dispute with the scholars of Islamic studies, with the earlier contend that Islamisation in the Malay world happened from the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards while the latter argue that the rapid Islamisation actually took place between 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Ahmad, 2014, p. 75; Hassan & Basri, 2005, pp. 12–13; Rahman, 2003).

According to the seventh century AD Chinese documents cited by Fatimi, Muslims may have already reached China and Southeast Asia in the earlier age of Islam. (Bruce, 1996, p. 71; Fatimi, 1963). The oldest concrete proof of this presence is a tombstone dated 291 AH (903 AD) discovered in Kedah (Bruce, 1996, p. 73). The conversion of this region to Islam may have started in Sumatra - specifically, Aceh - that most historians believe was responsible for spreading Islam to neighboring kingdoms such as Pasai and Perlak (Bruce, 1996, p. 73). Another historian, Bougas, considers Patani the first part of the Malay Peninsula to convert to Islam (Bougas, 1992, p. 89). Nonetheless, most historians proposed that Melaka - a tiny urbanized Muslim coastal town that paid tribute to Srivijaya - as the earliest (Bruce, 1996, p. 75). The precise date of its conversion is unclear; nevertheless, even before the conversion, the Melakan ruler provided appealing facilities and incentives to foreign Muslim traders, including homes and “a place for their mosques,” ac-

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According to Cortesao (Cortesao, 1944, p. 24). This supports the notion that Muslims constructed mosques regardless of whether they resided in Muslim nations. The Melaka empire in the 15th century became both Southeast Asia's most significant port and a centre for Islamic scholarship in the archipelago (Bruce, 1996, p. 75).

In the Malay Archipelago, the place for Islamic education actually started in the teacher's house. The main focus at the earlier stage was reading the Quran. The teaching was informal, and the Jawi alphabet was introduced to ease the community in reading Arabic. (Haryanto, 2015, p. 86) After the ruler's conversion to Islam and the increasing number of Muslims, the overall society became Islamized, and congregational mosques or Friday mosques were built and later given greater importance as an educational institution. These mosques were usually located near the palace or governor's residence and became a place for people to gather and improve their knowledge of Islam (Bruce, 1996, p. 75). The educational programme and curriculum at the beginning stage emphasize the ability to read, write, and recite the Qur'an. Lessons in addition to studying the Qur'an were soon added, such as the sciences of Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic creeds, exegesis, history, Sufism, and Islamic Philosophy (Nor & Othman, 2011). Independent educational institutions such as "Pondok", "pesantren", "meunasah", "langgar" and "dayah" were preferably established within the vicinity of the mosque.<sup>1</sup> Islam was also taught in the palace and mosques were used for Islamic celebrations such as the commemoration of the Prophet's birthday (*Mawlid al-Rasul*) and the coming of the month of Ramadhan (Nor & Othman, 2011, p. 67).

Islamic educational programme in the Malay archipelago has a nearly similar system yet different institutional names based on different places and kingdoms. Nonetheless, to a large degree, mosques hold immense importance as an integration base for all these institutions. In the Samudera Pasai Sultanate and the Lamuri Sultanate, the mosque provid-

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<sup>1</sup> "Pondok" is an educational institution for students who come to live in a temporary period, and it is set up in a certain area in the vicinity of the school based on mosques, suraus and others. See Shafie Abu Bakar (1984), "Ke Arah Pembaikan dan Pengembangan Sistem Pendidikan Pondok di Malaysia", *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 2. Selangor: Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia, p. 27.

"Dayah" or "Zawiyah", "Meunasah", "Langgar" and "Pesantren" are similar with "Madrasah" (general school), a place/building where Islamic education and discussion took place. See Mardin (2018), *Institusi Pendidikan Islam di Nusantara Pada Masa Awal (Kajian Dari Abad ke-7 Sampai ke-19 M)*. Intelektualita: Kajian Pendidikan, Manajemen, Supervisi Kepimpinan, Psikologi Dan Konseling, 7(1).

ed high-level Islamic education to the learners<sup>2</sup>. Lessons were given at the corner or veranda of the mosque comprising subjects such as Islamic theology, jurisprudence, logic, astronomy and others. There was no age limit for the students and the teachings were given in an open gathering (*halaqa*) (Mardin, 2018, p. 8). In the Demak Sultanate, mosques were responsible for providing general lessons from beginners to a higher level of education through an open gathering discussion approach and debate (Mardin, 2018, p. 12).<sup>3</sup> The same system was utilized in many classic Islamic kingdoms in the Malay archipelago. Other developed and independent educational institutions were later established to provide more formal and systematic Islamic education such as “*Pondok*” in the Malay Peninsular and Pattani, “*Pesantren*” in Java and Madura, “*Rangkang*” in Aceh, and “*Surau*” or “*Langgar*” in Minangkabau (Ismail & Mutalib, 2013, p. 8). With the introduction of these new institutions, the educational responsibilities of the mosque institution were greatly distributed. Islamic education has become more specialized and systematic with the introduction of teaching schedules and specific books for specialized subjects. Still, the approach was still in the shape of an open gathering (*halaqa*) that did not limit the class to any specific ages or status (Ismail & Mutalib, 2013, p. 8).

### ***1.1.3 Role of Mosque Committee in Modern Era***

The role of the mosque in the modern era has been severely diminished from its stature in the past. Nowadays, there has been separate institution and establishment to tackle the issues of education in Muslim countries. Learning in the mosque would count as informal education, while the role to conduct formal learning was transferred to the learning center, schools or madrasah, colleges, and universities that move independently from the mosque institution. The ministry of education administers these institutions while the mosque administration was handled either by the surrounding Muslim community - independently - or super-

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<sup>2</sup> Samudera Pasai Sultanate: The Samudera Pasai Sultanate, also known as Samudera or Pasai or Samudera Darussalam or Pacem, was a Muslim harbour kingdom on the north coast of Sumatra from the 13th to the 16th centuries CE.

Lamuri Sultanate: Lamuri or Lambri was a kingdom in northern Sumatra, Indonesia from the Srivijaya period and is thought to have become absorbed into the Aceh Sultanate by the early 16th century.

<sup>3</sup> The Demak Sultanate was a Javanese Muslim state located on Java's north coast in Indonesia, at the site of the present-day city of Demak.

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vised by the other ministry/department focusing on religious affairs (Abdel-Hady, 2010, p. 11).

Mosque committees in non-Muslim countries mostly have more roles and are more independent than their counterpart from the Muslim countries. Nonetheless, their roles are quite similar; usually responsible for financial management, funding, activities planning, administration, and educational programmes of the mosque. The only difference would be that the mosque committees in Muslim countries are typically supervised by the religious authority, while those in non-Muslim countries would be loosely supervised. Especially in Malaysia, the mosques are managed under the supervision of "Majlis Agama" (religious council) of the states, which fall under the Sultan's jurisdiction.<sup>4</sup> The committee's importance in managing the mosque cannot be looked down, as they are the ones who pragmatically implement the order of the state's religious authority while giving feedback on the issues of the masses back to the ruler.

In Selangor – including Gombak - the mosque committees are selected once every three years (Abdul Hamid & Ahmad Fozi, 2019, p. 1). Competitive selection for the spots indicates the increasing interest of people in the mosque institution. The election became a platform for some people to strengthen their political influence and for some other to express their dissatisfaction on the existing committee. Failing to organize activities, mismanaging the mosque's finances, and unobliging attitude are the main factors encouraging other parties to contest for their position. Islamic Religious Department of Selangor (JAIS) has listed four main elements that must be present in all parties leading mosques and suraus in the state of Selangor, which are: (1) The mosque committee should facilitate the unification of the *ummah*, (2) Need to be accommodative to people, (3) Just and equal in treating people regardless their background, (4) Ability to manage the mosque well (Abdul Hamid &

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Malaysia's Federal Constitution, Part 1, Article 3 (2): "In every State other than States not having a Ruler the position of the Ruler as the Head of the religion of Islam in his State in the manner and to the extent acknowledged and declared by the Constitution of that State, and, subject to that Constitution, all rights, privileges, prerogatives and powers enjoyed by him as Head of that religion, are unaffected and unimpaired; but in any acts, observances or ceremonies with respect to which the Conference of Rulers has agreed that they should extend to the Federation as a whole each of the other Rulers shall in his capacity of Head of the religion of Islam authorize the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to represent him."



Ahmad Fozi, 2019, p. 4). Selected committees will be formally issued special appointment letters that requires them to attend continuous obligatory courses and mosque's management workshops (Abdul Hamid & Ahmad Fozi, 2019, p. 5).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study's primary purpose was to assess the mosque's committee's roles and their influence in enhancing the mosque curriculum studies, especially in the Gombak district. Thus, several surveys were conducted in 4 different mosques located at Selangor between April to May 2019. The list of mosques and its details are as follows:

1	Masjid Al-Syakirin, Gombak – 14 April 2019	This mosque can accommodate about 5000 people at any one time and among the most packed mosque in Gombak in terms of activities. Programs/lectures with famous speakers received the highest attendees.
2	Masjid Al-Islahiyah, Kuang, Gombak – 21 April 2019	This mosque can accommodate about 1000 people at any one time and have about 25 to 100 regular attendees for each daily prayer. Maghrib prayer has the highest number of attendees, and the number might increase during lectures with famous speakers. The program with the lowest number of participants was the Arabic language class, and the worst overall number of attendees in terms of age was among the youth. This mosque has five more <i>surau</i> under its jurisdiction.
3	Masjid Al-Hidayah, Gombak – 4 May 2019	This mosque can accommodate about 2500 people at any one time and recorded the highest number of attendees during the Maghrib prayer. Lectures related to inter-religious discussion and topics related to the hereafter receive the highest participation from the community. The highest attendees in terms of economic background would be from the lower and middle class.
4	Masjid Taman Tun Teja, Rawang – 11 May 2019	This mosque recorded the highest number of attendees during lectures inviting speakers playing on satire, politics, and insulting

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		words/presentation. Programs on Islamic thought and <i>‘aqīdah</i> , with academic presentations/lecturers, receive the lowest participation from the community. The highest attendees in terms of age would be the pensioner (above 55 or 60 years old), while the lowest number of attendees would be among the youth below 40.
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The primary data collected consists of interviews of the mosque committees. A set of preliminary questions was asked to the committees, followed up by an open-to-all sharing session. The interview includes discussing each mosque’s issues, problems, and solutions from the mosque committee’s perspective. The discussion was later elaborated freely based on the importance of those issues. The committee was given the freedom to voice their opinions, attitudes, and understanding based on the discussion flow. The discussions were transcribed, analyzed, and written into a report.

**3. RESULTS**

From the surveys done in 4 mosques and analyzed concerning the works of literature on this topic, this study found out 13 significant roles of the mosque committee in enhancing the mosque curriculum study, which are as follows:

**1- Adjust and diversify teaching topics/syllabus based on the needs of the local community**

A survey done in Masjid al-Islahiyah and Masjid al-Hidayah showcased that lectures were actively organized to cater to the community’s diverse needs; men, women, kids, young, old, etc. Repeated classes on the same subject were arranged to celebrate new attendees, while a more in-depth hierarchical study on the specific field was organized to celebrate the old attendees.<sup>5</sup> The survey also shows that enforcing classes without the community’s demand/necessity will not receive useful feedback. Those classes’ attendance will be very minimal and short-lived, such as what happened with the Arabic course in Masjid al-Islahiyah.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah’s meeting transcript.

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah’s meeting transcript.

Various needs of the community necessitate the need to organize multiple programs. Most mosques organized *Maghrib* lectures daily, while *Ṣubḥ* lectures were organized on every public holiday. *Ḍuḥā* classes were organized four times a week, and special talks inviting famous speakers were scheduled once every three months.<sup>7</sup> Those lectures were arranged for different disciplines and topics. Courses and a one-time selected forum were organized to tackle current issues surrounding the community, such as couple issues, time-wasting, illegal racing, etc.<sup>8</sup> The mosque committee plays a large role in arranging those lecturers depending on their judgment on the community's needs and current obligations.

Rearranging teaching subjects in the mosque to cater to the community's needs is nothing new in Islam. It has been known that the "*al-Karāsī al-ʿIlmiyyah*" program, hundreds of years of on-going teaching programmes in al-Qarawiyyīn mosque, also tackle different fields of knowledge. Several teaching "seats" were positioned at the mosque's central pillars, and other lecturers were assigned to teach diverse disciplines of *ʿilm*. Teaching there was not limited to Islamic studies' only but ranging from entirely another domain of knowledge such as poetry, ethics, language, philosophy, mathematic, history, navigation, geography, astronomy, governance, sports, engineering, medicine, and pharmaceutical ('Abd al-Hadi al-Tāzi, 2000, pp. 127–128). This practice was also implemented in the classical era of Malay Archipelago's mosques as the mosque was responsible for organizing a variety of classes such as Arabic language, astronomy, philosophy, Islamic logic according to different levels and backgrounds of students (Mardin, 2018, pp. 6–15; Nor & Othman, 2011, pp. 66–68).

## **2- Study the tendencies and factors that attract people to the mosque**

It is also up to the mosque community's responsibility to study the tendencies and factors that attract people to the mosque. Some mosques creatively utilize sponsorship to include free meals and foods, while others attract people with certificates for

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<sup>7</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah's meeting transcript.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah's meeting transcript.

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their organized classes.<sup>9</sup> The mosque committee will also work to ensure that the lectures' objective is achieved while entertaining the attendees in the best way possible. This method of *da'wah* in utilizing something people like or love is not something new in Islam as the Qur'an says:

*“Invite (all) to the Way Of thy Lord with wisdom And beautiful preaching ; And argue with them In ways that are best And most gracious : For thy Lord knoweth best, Who have strayed from His Path, And who receive guidance.”*  
(16:125.)

This act of being tactful or “*hikmah*” was portrayed by the Prophet PBUH himself. In the early days of Islam, the Prophet PBUH invited people to his lectures accompanied by “food” and “meals” (Haykal, 1966, p. 158). This action could soften the heart of the listeners and attract them to the kindness promoted in Islam. Nowadays, even some mosques have gone to the extent of organizing annual events such as public carnivals and exhibitions in an effort to attract more people to visit the mosque.

### **3- Invite an *ustādh* (preacher) who can attract people coming to the mosque**

The committee is also responsible for selecting a suitable lecturer (*ustādh*) to handle the classes. Famous *ustādh* is more useful in attracting people to the mosque than the subject or syllabus itself.<sup>10</sup> The committee must select lecturers who are well-versed in the topic he is presenting and make the people attentive to his lectures. Some mosques utilize great reciters, public figures, and famous speakers to boost the mosque's attendance. The committee usually used online social groups such as WhatsApp or Telegram with other mosque committees to exchange well-known speakers' contact numbers.<sup>11</sup> Celebrity speakers are typically invited for forums and are paired with academic scholars to balance knowledge's strictness and leisure.<sup>12</sup> The necessity to leverage between

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<sup>9</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah's meeting transcript and Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah's meeting transcript and Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah's meeting transcript.

<sup>12</sup> Refer to Masjid Taman Tun Teja's transcription.

eloquent speakers and credential academics is also a part of “*ḥikmah*” ensuring that the learning process is conducted in the best way possible.

It is also important for the Ustaz to possess *Murabbī*’s characteristics. Imām al-Ghazālī RH mentioned in his manual for students; “*Ayyuha al-Walad*” that it is necessary for a student to have a teacher who is also a *murabbī* who could influence the students to change himself as a better Muslims by cleansing all of his negative manners to positive virtues (Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 60). It is important that the teacher or preacher is someone who could influence their spirituality aspects (*al-ta’thīr al-rūḥī*) as what has been known in Sufism (Maḥmūd, 1969, p. 338). Therefore selecting a pious and influential preacher is one of the most important aspects for this reason.

#### **4- Make sure the class presentation accommodates the diversity of the people**

Most of the lectures do not implement the strict ruling of manners (*al-adāb*) in their conduct.<sup>13</sup> This approach is to ensure that the older participant and the laymen are celebrated. Too much formality and strictness could drive people away from the class, which is unsuitable with the objective of teaching in public places such as the mosque. Their presence at the mosque should be celebrated as an encouragement for them to return again to the mosque. It is also one of the solutions to tackle the issue of dwindling numbers of people attending the mosque. The committee’s task is to ensure the lectures accommodate the diversity of characters in the community, mediate the equilibrium of manners and respect to both lecturers and the attendees.

It is also known in the Shāfi‘ī school (*madhhab*) that it is permissible for non-Muslims to enter mosques with the permission of the Muslims community. Imam al-Rāfi‘ī and al-Nawawī agreed with this ruling (Al-Zarkashī, 1996, p. 318). One of the strongest pieces of evidence of this ruling is a report from Sa‘īd bin al-Musayyab narrated that Abū Sufyān when he was still a non-believer entered the Prophet’s mosque in Madinah (Al-Zuhaylī, 2004, p. 2690).

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<sup>13</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah’s meeting transcript.

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### **5- Collect feedback from the community**

The mosque committee needs to constantly improve by being transparent, open, and always taking feedback from the community. This approach is to ensure that those programmes will be continuously improved. This feedback can be collected through surveys, attendees' numbers, personal inquiries, post-mortem meetings, and feedback boxes.<sup>14</sup> They will take the intermediary roles between the attendees, the lecturers, and the religious authorities by conveying the syllabus and programmes' effectiveness conducted in the mosque. They need to ensure that the lectures benefit the attendees in terms of the presentation, materials, presenters, and syllabus. They need to have keen eyes and be sensitive to the surrounding changes, particularly to the attendance graph and presence in the mosque. The feedback can be shared with another mosque through the exchange of experience and solutions.<sup>15</sup>

One event on how the community helps to improve the mosque can be reviewed in the al-Qarawiyyīn mosque's history. This mosque is known to have an integrated and dynamic two-way relationship with the people of Fez. The Fez community will provide sponsorship and give useful feedback to the mosque. In contrast, the mosque institution will do its best to arrange teaching programmes and other activities that benefit the surrounding community. The mosque does not limit its function as a place of worship but also performs as a learning center and an endowment institution. Its endowment has been used to support the mosque activity, establish a public library, build a psychiatric hospital, create shelters for the needy, buy foods for animals and its treatment, provide loans without interest, and provide support for the country's defense against invaders ('Abd al-Hadi al-Tāzi, 2000, pp. 454–458).

### **6- Adhere to the MAIS guide in selecting lecturers and conducting classes**

Most mosque refers to Selangor Islamic Religious Council (Majlis Agama Islam Selangor – MAIS) for guidance and conditions in selecting speakers and conducting classes.<sup>16</sup> All religious speakers need to own MAIS credentials before they are permitted to deliver any lectures in Selangor. Those speakers need to hold tight on *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-*

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<sup>14</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah and Masjid Taman Tun Teja's meeting transcripts.

<sup>15</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

<sup>16</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah's meeting transcript.

*Jamā'ah* creeds and should not preach deviant ideologies as gazetted by MAIS.<sup>17</sup> It is the role of the committee to make sure that this rule is followed.

The authority's responsibility in allowing only eligible speakers in the mosque - as stated by al-Imām al-Ghazālī RA - is also a part of promoting virtues and forbidding vices (*al-amru bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahyu 'an al-munkar*) (Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 71). Allowing unqualified or uncreditable speakers to stand at the podium (*minbar*) may confuse the ignorant masses on the correct teaching of Islam. This action is deemed necessary to ensure that there are no deviant and extreme ideologies seeping inside and harming the community's harmony and unity.

### **7- Prioritize book study to ensure the perfect hierarchy of knowledge**

Several mosques have a different opinion on the book study or "*pengajian berkitab*." For example, Masjid al-Islahiyah believes that book study will motivate people to come to their mosque due to its continuous nature.<sup>18</sup> Book study is also suitable for them as it ensures correct methodology in understanding the discipline of one specific branch of knowledge. It aligns with a poem by al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī RA that talks about the importance of "consistency" or "continuity" in seeking knowledge (Abdul Rahim, 1997, p. 378).

Nonetheless, Masjid Tun Teja's committee contends that book study is not really effective in attracting people to their mosque. However, they agree on its importance of providing the best understanding of the religion.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, they admit that continuous book study should be prioritized over a one-off program (*dawrah 'ilmiyyah*). It is up to the committee's inventiveness to ensure that book study can be promoted and presented attractively to the surrounding society.

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<sup>17</sup> Refer to MAIS Seksyen 118 Enakmen Pentadbiran Agama Islam (NS) Tahun 2003 Pin. 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah's meeting transcript.

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Masjid Taman Tun Teja's transcription.

### **8- Prioritize studies that tend to be pragmatic rather than philosophical**

Classes that are more pragmatic or practical rather than philosophical, such as courses related to ibadah - that are easier to understand and can be immediately applied - are more attractive to the community.<sup>20</sup> These courses could be interpreted as 'Module Based Learning'. Most attendees dislike having 'heavy' lectures, particularly items related to Islamic thought and philosophy. Most of them usually went to the mosque in a state of leisure after working all day long – thus – their minds are not prepared to digest heavy philosophical discussion. In-depth philosophical discussion requires full focus and attentive energy that somehow tires the mind. Therefore, the committee needs to ensure correct timing and a suitable targeted group of audience for each lecture.

Moreover, several Muslim scholars such as Shaykh Ismā'īl Ibn al-Muqrī (d. 837 AH) and al-Ḥasan bin Mas'ūd al-Yūsī (d. 1102 AH) also forbids the layman to learn philosophy. Al-Yūsī, in his work, contends that philosophy is divided into two kinds, good and bad (Al-Muqrī, 1978, p. 182; A. al-M. al-Ḥasan bin M. Al-Yūsī, 2013, p. 141). Therefore, this does not mean that learning philosophy is entirely prohibited. Nonetheless, teaching it to the laymen who did not have any essential and consistent learning will bring more harm than good. Scholars like Imām al-Ghazālī suggest that the learning of the fundamentals in Islam are more important as it deals with what is necessary for laymen (Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 56).

### **9- Create intensive courses according to the immediate needs of the people**

The mosque committee's role is to look after people's needs, particularly in providing religious programs that could enhance their spiritual and intellectual deficiencies. They organize immediate or ad-hoc programs to tackle current issues in Islamic domestic law, *Ḥalāl* certificates, and Islamic banking. Programs such as slaughtering courses, Marriage courses, *Hajj & 'Umrah* courses are also provided regularly depending on the instruction of MAIS and demands from the neighborhood.<sup>21</sup> Courses or lectures related to general knowledge such as safety and scam

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<sup>20</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah's meeting transcript.

<sup>21</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah and Masjid Taman Tun Teja's meeting transcripts.



alerts can also be organized occasionally.<sup>22</sup> Some mosques also provide daycare and tuition to prepare the neighborhood kids for their examination.

These diverse roles taken by mosque institutions can also be seen even at the time of the Prophet PBUH and his companions. al-Masjid al-Nabawī at the time of Prophet PBUH functions as a gathering place, learning center, place of shelters for the *Ṣuffah*, place to meet foreign diplomats, a place to tend the wounded in battle, a place for sporting competition, a place to discuss on administration, place to collect for the needy, place to judge a dispute, etc.<sup>23</sup> This reform of mosque, from a place of worship to multi-purpose institution can be seen with al-Qayrawān mosque, al-Azhar mosque, and al-Qarawiyyīn mosque, which is the example of the latter has been given above.<sup>24</sup>

#### **10- Ensure the class presentation follows the mosque's rules and guidelines**

Several mosques come out with their own different rules and guidelines to ensure the lectures' effectiveness.<sup>25</sup> The presenter or the speaker must follow those guidelines as the guidelines are usually created to tackle past complaints and issues in the mosque. Examples of these rules are that the speaker should not arbitrarily appoint someone else to replace his lectures without the mosque committee's consent, and he needs to strictly follow the scheduled time for his presentation.<sup>26</sup> The mosque community implements these additional rules and guidelines to ensure smooth operation and administration of the mosque. Enacting rules and guidelines for the sake of greater good (*maṣlahah*) is the mosque's right that could be considered as a part of promoting virtues and forbidding vices (*al-amru bi al-ma'rūf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*) (Al-Ghazālī, 2013, p. 71).

<sup>22</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

<sup>23</sup> Refer to Abdel-Hady, *The Masjid, Yesterday and Today*.

<sup>24</sup> Refer to chapter "Results: 1- Adjust and diversify teaching topics / syllabus based on the needs of the local community."

<sup>25</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah and Masjid Taman Tun Teja's meeting transcripts.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah's meeting transcript.

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### **11- Ensure the continuity of studies despite changes of the speakers**

It is known that book study lectures require a long period of time (usually years) before completion. There are several cases where book study lectures were short-lived due to problems from the lecturer's side. Nonetheless, it is up to the mosque community to ensure that the lessons are continued through any necessary means, such as finding a new replacement for the lecturer or putting it on hold. They are also responsible for explaining the latest situation of the lectures to the new lecturers so he can proceed with the continuation of the lessons smoothly.<sup>27</sup> Consistency in studies is among the six conditions for learning commended by al-Imām al-Shāfi'ī RH in his famous poems (Abdul Rahim, 1997, p. 378). Continuity and consistency in conducting classes will bring blessing (*barakah*), tranquility, and mercy of Allah SWT to the mosque.<sup>28</sup>

### **12- Using the latest technological advances in disseminating knowledge and giving lectures**

Utilizing technology in *da'wah* is a part of wisdom (*hikmah*).<sup>29</sup> Some classes are now using loudspeakers outside the mosque to benefit women who stay at home.<sup>30</sup> Several mosques also started to do live streaming and online broadcasting for lectures. Nowadays, nearly all lecturers have started to use PowerPoint presentations and slides in their classes (Dato' Safei, 2018, p. 3). The committee has utilized the advancement of modern technology to improve the mosque's presence in the community.<sup>31</sup> The utilization of technology has become more significant, particularly in this time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The mosque committee's responsibility is to find out the most proficient method of utilizing the technology in enhancing the mosque curriculum study.

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<sup>27</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Hidayah's meeting transcript.

<sup>28</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

<sup>29</sup> See *Qur'ān* 16:125.

<sup>30</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Islahiyah's meeting transcript and Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

<sup>31</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

**13- Regulate education's role to be neutral and free from the outer influence (politics/interests of particular groups/heretical teachings/divisions, etc.)**

The mosque should be a place of peace and unity that symbolizes the Muslims' togetherness and should never be a place to sow discord and hatred among Muslims. It is a place to put all indifference among Muslims and used only for the sake of Allah SWT. Qur'an says:

*"And the places of worship Are for God (alone): So invoke not any one Along with God." (72:18)*

This verse affirms the sacredness of the mosque and Allah SWT's absolute ownership over His place (Al-Zuhaylī, 1997, p. 179). Advocating sectarianism and cronyism to the interest of one's political party, heretical group, and deviant ideology should never be permitted to happen in mosques.<sup>32</sup> This harmony should begin within the mosque institution itself as there are several cases of "invisible hand" related to a political party and deviant ideologies trying to control and disseminate disunity within the committee.<sup>33</sup> It is the mosque committee's responsibility to become the role model for the people and protect the institution from outer influence. They need to be careful not to appoint lecturers with political or deviant agendas that may advocate hatred speech "sugarcoating" with Islamic teaching.<sup>34</sup> It is also a trustee (*amānah*) for the committee to observe and protect society from these agendas and ensure that the mosque curriculum study is as academically and neutral as possible.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The Mosque committee is the backbone of the mosque institution in the community. Their roles in managing the mosque varied; they oversaw the mosque administratively, financially, and educationally. They help to translate religious authority's vision to the masses in the best way possible. They are also responsible for selecting the speakers and arranging the mosque curriculum studies to satisfy society's needs. The mosque institution's success and thriving presence in the community are highly

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<sup>32</sup> Refer to Masjid al-Syakirin's meeting recording.

<sup>33</sup> Refer to Masjid Taman Tun Teja's transcription.

<sup>34</sup> Refer to Masjid Taman Tun Teja's transcription.

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dependable on the mosque community's roles. They are the torchbearer of the religion and the caretaker of the “*Markaz al-Ummah*” of the Muslims. Their roles are undeniably important to ensure and maintain the mosque's significance as a place for worship, peace, and knowledge.

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