

CREATIVE ECONOMY EDUCATION-BASED PRESERVATION OF GEBLEG RENTENG BATIK CULTURE IN KULON PROGO DISTRICT

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2. SEARCH ARTICLE

CREATIVE ECONOMY EDUCATION-BASED PRESERVATION OF GEBLEG RENTENG BATIK CULTURE IN KULON PROGO DISTRICT

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ARTICLE DETAILS

ABSTRACT

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This study examines the characteristics and roles of *gebleg renteng* batik with regards to the creative economy-based cultural preservation strategies in Kulon Progo District and identifies the supporting factors and challenges of the cultural preservation efforts. Employing the qualitative method, the study took place in several small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Kulon Progo District, namely Batik Faras SME, Batik Sembung SME, and Batik Sinar Abadi SME. The data collection methods used include observations, interviews, documentation, and literature review, and the inductive reasoning was selected as the data analysis method, involving analyzing the data to drawing a conclusion. *Gebleg renteng* batik pattern is characterized as having positive philosophical values that can be applied in education by instilling the values of preserving local wisdom, building the spirit of cooperation, developing the sense of caring for each other and the environment, developing the drive for learning, and building perseverance, optimism to reach one's dream, independence as well as self confidence into the students. *Gebleg renteng* batik has two important educative roles, namely cultural role, to preserve the culture as part of identity, and economic role, to stimulate creativity in the development of *gebleg renteng* batik to contribute to the local economy through a creative economy in batik SMEs. The supporting factors in the preservation of *gebleg renteng* batik is the strong commitment of the local government, while the challenges lie in the human resources with only a few young people involved in batik making and in the limited training available.

KEYWORDS

Gebleg Renteng Batik, Cultural Preservation, Creative Economy, Education

1. INTRODUCTION

As a developing country with a large population, Indonesia is still plagued by poverty and unemployment. The number of companies in Indonesia is not enough to accommodate and reduce the unemployment rate. Thus, the already high number of young unemployment and jobless in Indonesia is increasing [1-12].

One way to address the issue is by giving a real and effective education oriented towards job creation, economic development, community prosperity, and independence. Thus, The Ministry for Tourism and Creative Economy has developed the creative economy in Indonesia as an implementation of the economic development blueprint launched by the President in 2008. This is a necessary critical approach to realign the creative city notion with prevailing economic and geographical contexts in which creativity often emerges through locally embedded talent and entrepreneurial networks [4].

Agrees with the idea, The researchers argues that the Indonesian government development agenda has been orientated towards industrialization [8]. The globalization era has seen rapid industrialization and development, leading to unprecedentedly rapid changes. Kulon Progo is no exception, especially with the construction of the New Yogyakarta International Airport (NYIA) at Temon. Kulon Progo residents who used to be farmers have been forced to adapt to the rapid industrialization. Furthermore, to support the NYIA, Kulon Progo human resources are

expected to be ready being creative to take part as actors instead of mere spectators.

Being creative means engaging knowledge, attitude, and imagination together [10]. As the NYIA is a mega project will be visited by foreign tourists, Kulon Progo Government and the people have to work creatively together to welcome and take part in the NYIA era in various sectors, human resources, tourism, employment, development, and economy. The international airport will also bring in capitalism, free market, and foreign cultures to Kulon Progo, while Kulon Progo has its own local wisdom needing to be preserved to prevent identity loss being replaced by foreign identity.

One way to strengthen local identity is through identity politics. Kulon Progo District has its *Bela-Beli* Kulon Progo Program (defending Kulon Progo by buying the local products), which according to the researchers is a pro-people and pro-poverty movement that calls for the local people's participation in developing Kulon Progo economy by opting for local products over foreign ones [13]. This program is also seen as an SME strengthening effort in Kulon Progo. Local products being promoted include mineral water produced by Kulon Progo Water Utility Company called *AirKu*, batik pattern indigenous to Kulon Progo named *gebleg renteng*, local superior rice variety called *Melati Menoreh* (*Menor*) produced by a local farmers group, andesite rock, palm sugar, etc.

Batik industry is one type of SMEs in Kulon Progo. Among indigenous batik patterns from Kulon Progo is *gebleg renteng* batik in Batik Faras SME, Batik Sembung SME, and Batik Sinar Abadi SME. The researchers noted that Kulon Progo is a district with the lowest Regional Gross Domestic Product among all the districts in Yogyakarta Special Region [13]. Therefore, the creative industry/SME strengthening is needed to develop the creative economy in Kulon Progo.

Batik in Kulon Progo is the reflection of creativity, resulting from creativity, taste, and will as well as the crystalization of local wisdom in Kulon Progo. Batik is also a cultural heritage from the great ancestors and needs to be preserved. Not only is it a creative work, it also possesses an economic value. SMEs are considered to be able to contribute to the local economy and to empower the human resources of Kulon Progo, so they will be ready to benefit from the opportunities brought by the NYIA. Having its economic value, *gebleg renteng* batik is expected to stimulate the creative economy, which in turn will develop the local economy of Kulon Progo.

All members of the community, i.e. the local government, scholars, batik makers, and the rest of the community, are expected to participate to make this happen. Kulon Progo Government policy impacting all levels of the community including government officers and local universities will help stimulate the creative economy (SMEs) in Kulon Progo as well as preserve *gebleg renteng* batik.

The role of local universities as stated, "Serves the cultivation of local citizenship and fosters the preservation of local cultural heritage [6]." Therefore, the universities act as local public sphere providing local researches and development providers. The researchers argues that "The sector needs to focus in more detail on its 'third role', which includes fostering regionally embedded, co-created and co-owned knowledge [3]." Meaning, the education of local economic potential and creative human capital is important to be taught. Abreu & Grinevich (2014) consider human capital by focusing on the highly trained individuals that constitute the human resources of universities including engaging in start-up, patents, and other economic activities.

2. METHODS

This study employed the qualitative method and was conducted from August to October 2018 in Kulon Progo District, involving Kulon Progo local government, trade office, culture office, Batik Faras SME, Batik Sembung SME, and Batik Sinar Abadi SME. The data collection method used was interviewing. The writers conducted interviews with *gebleg renteng* batik makers, *gebleg renteng* batik business owners, the mayor of Kulon Progo District, the head of Kulon Progo Education Office, the head of the Industry Section of Kulon Progo Trade Office, and the secretary of Kulon Progo Culture Office. The data analysis method used was the Spradley Model, including data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing a conclusion. The triangulation used was data triangulation, which was done to evaluate the data credibility by corroborating the field observation results with the interview data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The field observation data from *gebleg renteng* batik SMEs (Batik Faras, Batik Sembung, and Batik Sinar Abadi) show that there were quite a number of batik makers in each of the SMEs. There were males, females, some young, but most were middle-aged or older. Orders and production of *gebleg renteng* batik saw an increase following Kulon Progo District Government policy on the use of *gebleg renteng* batik for uniforms. The production, which was limited to only several batik pieces, surged to 500 to 1000 pieces a month sold at prices ranging from IDR100,000 to IDR1,000,000 each.

The strong commitment of Kulon Progo District Government was translated into the policy requiring all government officers, village officers, and elementary students to high school students to wear uniforms with *gebleg renteng* batik pattern every Thursday. For elementary school students, they have to wear *gebleg renteng* batik with red background, junior high school students blue, and senior high school students grey. This policy was issued in the form of Circular Letter of Kulon Progo Mayor Number: 025/2171 2 July 2012 about the Use of *Gebleg Renteng* batik. As for the cultural preservation effort, especially with regard to *gebleg renteng* batik within the school community, a Local Regulation on Character Education has been issued in Kulon Progo. This character education coverage includes *Mataram-ism* or Javanese cultures, including batik.

Characteristic of *gebleg renteng* batik. *Gebleg renteng* is a batik pattern indigenous to Kulon Progo, and the name *gebleg renteng* derives from the words *gebleg* and *renteng*. *Gebleg* is the name of a traditional food in Kulon Progo, and *renteng* is the Javanese word for the line. Therefore, *gebleg renteng* means a line of *gebleg*. This batik pattern has a long story about how it came into being. It was through Kulon Progo batik contest where *gebleg renteng* was selected as a new pattern of Kulon Progo batik. Its creator was Ales Candra Wibawa. Besides the *gebleg* motif, which represents a traditional food of Kulon Progo District made from tapioca flour and shaped like the form of number eight (8), there were other motifs in *gebleg renteng* batik pattern such as mangosteen, an indigenous plant to Kulon Progo, *binangun* symbol, representing the slogan of Kulon Progo District in the form of a flower bud ready to bloom, which means that Kulon Progo is soon going to 'bloom' to be beautiful and to be a gem from Java.

The characteristic of *gebleg renteng* has positive philosophical values that can be applied in education. Furthermore, students in Kulon Progo District have to wear *gebleg renteng* batik to school every Thursday. *Gebleg*, a portion of traditional food from Kulon Progo, which in the batik pattern is arranged in a line, symbolically means that culture including traditional food needs to be remembered and understood by every generation to prevent its extinction. The symbolic number eight arranged in a line represents the unbreakable spirit of cooperation which builds students' character to always collaborate with one another. *Gebleg* arranged in a line also symbolizes equality among students; they all have the same opportunity to learn and to succeed.

There are also other motifs in *gebleg renteng* batik pattern, namely mangosteen, and oriental magpie-robin, which together means that every student has to be open-minded in their pursuit of knowledge and in preserving their culture. *Binangun* is symbolized by a flower bud, which means not only Kulon Progo as a district which will 'bloom' to be beautiful and to be a gem from Java, but also its human resources through education which will help students grow and develop to be smart individuals in terms of their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor ability and to be the golden generation and the pride of Kulon Progo as well as to be the future leaders of Kulon Progo and Indonesia.

The light tones of *gebleg renteng* batik varieties symbolize optimism; through education, students will be able to have a bright future, which will bring happiness to the parents and society. The educational values represented in *gebleg renteng* can also be applied in the teaching and learning of social sciences. *Gebleg renteng* batik is one strategy to preserve the culture of Kulon Progo District. Batik is an artwork through the process of batik making. *Gebleg renteng* SMEs at Lendah Sub-district, Kulon Progo, particularly Batik Faras SME, Batik Sembung SME, and Batik Sinar Abadi SME have created jobs for the local communities in the surrounding area.

In line with the creative theory, the researchers in Munandar (2004: 20) states "Creative action is an imposing of one's own whole personality on the environment in a unique and characteristic way [7]." Batik making process in SMEs creates interactions among individuals to cooperate in order to ensure successful completion of the task.

When it is translated into the teaching of culture and social sciences, creativity students are expected to be able to solve problems individually and in groups. Students are then able to come up with novel ideas or relevant tangible products. In reference to creative graduates, the researchers note that "Existing research overlooks the most important role of universities as a conduit for bringing creative practitioners into a region, to educate them and produce high quality creative human capital" [5].

It is important to instill the feeling of pride to buy local products of Kulon Progo into students, so the spirit of independence promoted by the local government through the *Bela-Beli* Kulon Progo program can reach all the society in Kulon Progo including students, who will be proud of Kulon Progo local products and 'defend' Kulon Progo by buying and wearing its local products. The pride is very critical for all local citizens to have since the authors suggests that some aspects that hinder creativity within a person are related to self-esteem and lack of confidence [7].

The role of *gebleg renteng* batik in creative economy education-based plays a central role in the creative economy-based cultural preservation. This is in line with the authors who argues that a preservation process or action has to understand the strategy or technique based on the needs and context [11]. Therefore, the presence of practitioners is vitally needed here. Practitioners serve to maximize the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education, embedding entrepreneurship teaching into

practice-based modules within the core curriculum in close collaboration with industry [2].

Batik SMEs or batik maker groups in Kulon Progo had existed before, but they remained under-developed. Kulon Progo Government consistently motivates and raises awareness of *gebleg renteng* as a strategy to preserve and develop the batik pattern to increase the local revenue or stimulate a creative economy, which is warmly welcomed by the community. The supporting factor in the preservation of *gebleg renteng* batik is the strong commitment of the local government. The internal challenge is the human resources; the majority of batik makers are elderly people, while the young batik makers remain limited. The external challenge of *gebleg renteng* preservation is limited training. Many batik makers could not participate in training held in other villages.

4. CONCLUSION

Gebleg renteng is an indigenous batik pattern to Kulon Progo District, and the name derives from the words *gebleg* and *renteng*. Other motifs in *gebleg renteng* include mangosteen, oriental magpie-robin, and *binangun* symbol. The characteristics of *gebleg renteng* pattern has positive philosophical values to be applied in education by instilling the values of preserving local wisdom, building the spirit of cooperation, developing the sense of caring for each other and the environment, developing the drive for learning, and building perseverance, optimism to reach one's dream, independence as well as self-confidence.

Gebleg renteng batik has two important educative roles, namely the cultural role, to preserve the local traditions and uphold the identity, and the economic role, to stimulate creativity to develop *gebleg renteng* batik through batik SMEs in order to develop a creative economy, which in turn will contribute to the local economy.

The supporting factor in the preservation of *gebleg renteng* batik is the strong commitment of the local government. The internal challenge lies in the human resources because the majority of the batik makers are elderly and the young batik makers remain limited. The external challenge in the preservation of *gebleg renteng* batik is the limited training available. Many batik makers could not participate in training held in other villages.

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