

YOUNG GENERATION EMPOWERMENT IN THE PRESERVATION OF BATIK AS A LOCAL WISDOM PRODUCT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstract

Batik is an Indonesian people's product of art, culture, and economy based on local wisdom that needs to be preserved and developed in the digital era. This research aim is to design a program to empower the young generation of batik craftsmen. The Participatory Learning Action (PLA) method was chosen to construct a participatory and implementation empowerment program. The data was collected through simulations and the practice of batik as a medium for interviews, focus group discussions, documentation, and observation. The selection of research subjects by purposive sampling were high school and vocational students, besides batik craftsmen groups in the sub-District of Susukan, Banjarneara Regency, Central Java. Participatory data analysis through construction, triangulation, and verification of data was conducted with the community research subject. The results show (1) that the programs and implementation of the empowerment of batik craftsmen are lacking attention from the younger generation. Creating comprehensive and sustainable empowerment needs the support of all related parties. (2) The improvement of motivation and inspiration to be batik craftsmen and entrepreneurs, to design motifs, make and color batik, then promotion and digital marketing strategies as important points of the batik craftsmen empowerment program.

Keywords: Batik craftsmen; empowerment programs; local wisdom; youth education

1. INTRODUCTION

Gumelem located in the sub-District of Susukan, Banjarnegara Regency is one of the batik centers in Central Java Province, besides Solo, Pekalongan, and Banyumas. This region has specific batik characteristics such as the udan liris and rujak senthe motifs which made it a





hereditary culture. Those motifs have dominant colors such as black, yellow, and brown as well as floral motifs.

The research conducted from 2021 to 2022 found that the history of batik in this sub-district started with the Prince Diponegoro war with the evacuation of Prince Puger to the Banyumas Regency and made Gumelem batik cloth has become famous. The artists from the palace brought batik culture as an activity to the palace. Batik Gumelem was born as a new refugee location, which at the same time developed and adapted batik to the potential, characteristics, and tastes of the local community. Those are the reasons for the similarities motifs among Gumelem, Solo, and Banyumas batik with classic palace batik patterns such as Sidoluhur, Sidomukti, Kawung, Jahe Serimpang, Pring Sedapur, Kawung, and Ceplokan.

Gumelem, located about 19 km from the capital city of Banjarnegara, a part of the sub-District of Susukan has many Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) batik craftsmen. Many of them are well known and become local wisdom, particularly in the Village of West Gumelem and the Village of East Gumelem. Although there are many kinds of batik products surrounding it, the Gumelem batik still exists and keeps growing.

Batik has been recognized by UNESCO for establishing Indonesian batik as a human heritage for culture in October 2009. That award requires some further efforts to improve Gumelem batik's existence by developing its products, motif patterns, promotions, and marketing, to make batik Gumelem more acceptable for a wider community with affordable prices without losing its characteristic as local wisdom.

Local wisdom is a combination of reason and behavior in managing changes in the physical and cultural environment based on local knowledge and experience. It is also the understanding and knowledge of the community about interactions, relations, and customs about nature and humans in the development process, inherent in people's lives which are believed and implemented in the practice of social, cultural, and economic interactions to realize physical and spiritual well-being. Batik is one of the local wisdom products that need to be preserved and developed because it does not only fulfill artistic, social, and cultural needs but also has an economic potential to create jobs and prosper the community (Asrial et al., 2020; Fitrianto & Surnaya, 2018; Poernomo et al., 2019; Qiram et al., 2018; Sarwono & Nurcahyanti, 2019; Tomohardjo et al., 2017; Wahida et al., 2020)

Unfortunately, developing the batik business in Gumelem such as the Wardah group and the other Gumelem business groups still faces some obstacles. On average the batik generation tends to be older than 50 years old. While the younger generation, particularly the millennial group and generation Z between 17 to 30 years old are rarely interested in batik. Batik is also just a sideline to spend time on. Promotion and marketing are still limited to the local and surrounding communities who are familiar, so social or digital media have not been used (Anderson et al., 2020; Asmar et al., 2020; Hassan, 2012; Simpson & Padmore, 2006; Subekti et al., 2020; Tutiasri et al. 2019; Utami et al., 2019).

On the other hand, batik has been used as a learning material and major, particularly in the Vocational High Schools of Susukan and Senior High Schools of Klampok. However, the





research found that students' interest in continuing to become batik craftsmen or entrepreneurs is that only 12 % of 50 students were randomly chosen for the research area. They considered that being a batik Craftsman or entrepreneur as the major profession is less promising and prospective compared to other professions such as a government officer and private sector.

Another finding shows the need for regeneration not only in the field of production but also in the design, promotion, and marketing digitally in this information and communication technology era. It is expected the younger generation has more motivation, interests, and skills that are quickly adaptive and innovative to become creative and productive agents and economic communities, particularly in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) products that are typical of the village, including the batik (Adawiyah et al., 2018; Centobelli et al., 2016; Izagi et al., 2022; Khoziyah & Lubis, 2021; Maryani, 2021; Pambudi & Suyono, 2019; Trenggalek, 2021; Utari, 2021).

Increasing batik development in this area needs support and partnerships from any related parties including local governments such as the Office of Education and Culture, the Office of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperatives, the village government, and also universities that join together with SME craftsmen and batik entrepreneurs, started from the planning of batik business to implementation of that empowerment program. It also must be designed comprehensively by building motivation, cohesiveness, institutions, knowledge, and skills in creating motifs, and coloring the batik. Furthermore, creating design promotions and marketing both conventionally and digitally through social media.

According to many scholars, empowerment requires initiative, participation, and collaboration from all parties, from the government that has policies and budgets, business groups, and the community itself, to educational institutions. It can be denied that the keywords of empowerment are participation, collective action, sustainability, and collaboration to achieve mutual prosperity, and independence and create agents of change (Budi et al., 2018; Chaudhuri, 2016; Handoko et al., 2014; Kamruzzaman, 2020; Sabiq et al., 2020; Sugito et al., 2019; Sulaiman et al., 2022; Suswanto et al., 2021; Rwebugisa & Usinger, 2021).

Based on those research backgrounds, it is interesting and important to conduct a study on empowering the younger generation in the preservation and development of batik as a sociocultural heritage and local wisdom, besides batik also has uniqueness, and attractiveness and provides economic value for the community. Those are the novelty of the study about the batik empowerment in the research location.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research process was conducted from 2021 to 2022 with the Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) method as a form of qualitative research for identifying the community's problems and potentials and gaining a deeper understanding of the community's situation (Kumar, 2002). Furthermore, the community analyzes and makes decisions about the problems they faced, from, with, and for the community. It shows many valuable processes had been





conducted by the community i.e assessment, learning process, optimizing aspirations, and participation.

Simulations, the practice of batik as a medium for conducting in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), analysis of documentation, and observation of participating in community empowerment activities were chosen for collecting data. The research informants are the representatives of students and teachers at vocational schools in the sub-District of Susukan and students and teachers at senior high schools in the sub-District of Klampok who have majors, curriculum, and batik materials, besides the SME of Batik Wardah which is often actively used by the students for internship place. While the research sites are Panerusan Village and East Gumelem Village, the sub-District of Susukan, Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java Province.

The research using participatory methods can be used for analyzing the data through some stages: (1) the principle of triangulation was used for methods, sources, and disciplines, (2) looking for diversity and differences at its the same time, (3) direct investigation from and with local communities (Bergold & Thomas, 2012).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Gumelem Batik Development: a Portray

The results show that the history of the Gumelem batik started with the changing of a fief area to the Village of Gumelem. It was illustrated by the palace activities such as the government management system, economic life, fashion, and regulations for the people to gain prosperous life in the village as a whole, independent or autonomous. This kademangan was led by a demang with a management structure who works and serves, including batik craftsmen to fulfill the kademangan family needs. Batik Gumelem comes from the name of kademangan, which is now a village. Kedemangan was a part of Jogjakarta palace territory which is why at the beginning there was batik from Kademangan Jogjakarta. Batik was brought by relatives from Kedemangan Jogjakarta to the Village of East Panerusan and the Village of West Panerusan and its surroundings. The development of Gumelem batik has fluctuated, which has ended for daily clothing. Written batik has more privileges compared to printed batik, although it is rarely available.

In early 2000, in the Village of Gumelem, batik was only done by canting (a tool for batik production) and coloring activities in the sub-District of Sokaraja. Then, the Wardah batik group has taken the initiative to start learning with their coloring. This idea made them finish the batik cloth and prepare it for sale. The further progress was this batik group tried to recruit other batik craftsmen to join in their efforts. This made it possible for them to produce their batik to finish the process. Since 2004, batik in the Banjarnegara Regency has shown quite encouraging developments with around 22 batik craftsmen. It increased to 132 craftsmen from 2000 to 2021 based on the data obtained from the Economic Section of the Banjarnegara Regional Secretariat.





Gumelem batik has been rising again around 2009 with the Regent Decree No. 025/591 of 2009 concerning the batik for an official uniform of the District of Banjarnegara officers from Wednesday to Saturday. Then that regulation was followed by the policy of Banjarnegara Regent Regulation Number 51 of 2016 concerning the official uniform for the government village officials within the Banjarnegara Regency. According to informants, one of the SME batik in this region that has a significant contribution to developing batik is the SME of Wardah, which was pioneered in 2010.

In certain areas, many batik industries are founded, and most of them are still traditional and put as part-time jobs. The traditional batik crafts have motifs, patterns, coloring, and styles with different characteristics. Banjarnegara with Gumelem batik as a center for batik crafts in the region has its coloring and motifs, to differentiate it from other areas such as Yogyakarta, Surakarta, and Pekalongan. The Gumelem batik displays many dark colors such as dark brown and black, while the motifs are taken mostly from the natural surroundings.

The research found two types of batik: modern and classic. Classical batik has a high value and characteristics which makes it quite expensive. It takes a long and complicated process to finish this type with around 3 to 4 weeks. It has a basic pattern with various motifs such as parang, kawung, truntum, titik, and ceplok. The basic ingredients are white cotton cloth of good quality and white cloth made of silk which will produce batik with more vibrant colors.

In contrast, modern batik does not depend on the polarization and color of classical batik, but it can be produced with a variety of motifs and patterns. Modern batik follows the development of using materials and the coloring process. It has replaced canting with brushes in the coloring process using cloth or cotton. The making of both types of batik was quite the same, but the coloring process and the pattern depend on the tastes of the craftsmen and the consumers.

Batik Gumelem, including the Batik Wardah business group, has become the location of internships and practicums for students around the sub-District of Susukan. That activity is expected to have a significant contribution to preserving the culture and business of batik. Gumelem batik mostly has motifs that exist in Banjarnegara which have characteristics such as culinary or tourism. The batik of good quality (which is neatly handwritten and in small pieces) from this region has been known from local to national level.

Batik production, especially in the Batik Wardah group, consists of purely written batik, semiwritten batik, or combination batik (combining written batik with stamped batik) and printed batik. With only 5 craftsmen, Batik Wardah produces 5 pieces of written batik and twice the number of batik combinations monthly. When there is a special order they can produce more.

The batik craftsmen as small enterprises bring important benefits for increasing workers' prosperity and supporting the regional economy. For improving its contribution, policy and financial support from the government, capital facilitation, and partnerships with other related stakeholders including educational institutions are very important and strategic to implement.





3.2 Challenges in Batik Business Development

Gumelem Batik has become an icon of written batik in Banjarnegara, precisely in the sub-District of Susukan. The name of Gumelem itself exists in two villages, East Gumelem and West Gumelem Village. However, batik crafts from other villages around Gumelem are also known as Gumelem batik, including the Wardah batik group from the Village of Pangrengan. This batik craftsmen group was established in 2010. For many years, the owner of Wardah has been a batik Craftsman who collaborates with other colleagues. Unfortunately, Gumelem batik craftsmen do not have enough infrastructure to complete the batik making, even in the District of Banjarnegara itself. Banjarnegara does not have a place for dyeing batik cloth and they have to send it to the sub-District of the Sokaraja, located in the District of Banyumas. The limited number of batik craftsmen contributes to the regeneration problem. On average, the workers in this business group are 50 years or above. This is a serious problem of the low awareness and interest of the younger generation to pay attention to the batik business.

Another challenge is the environmental pollution of water and soil fertility derived from the batik coloring process using textile chemical paints. That problem needs greater attention from any related parties and is to be solved immediately. The empowerment program for batik craftsmen and the young generation of batik on how to control textile dyes and to raise natural batik coloring with environmentally friendly plants such as eco-print batik products must be developed more (Budiyanto et al., 2018; Handayani et al., 2020; Indrayani & Triwiswara, 2021; Martuti et al., 2020; Setiyono et al., 2017).

According to the students, batik Craftsmen is a less prestigious job due to it still being traditional. Batik is a distinctive and cultural characteristic inherited from generation to generation. Batik should be preserved to keep away from extinction, besides being able to become a source of pride and local wisdom. The young generation is expected to have potential, high creativity, and interesting ideas to develop batik business. It can be denied that the income from the batik business is fluctuating, but it has the potential to reach higher income compared to officers' income. It is also possible to provide jobs for the surrounding community.

The younger generation does not have a strong awareness and motivation to batik business. They prefer to find a job in big cities and become employees. Going outside the village will give them a broader opportunity to get a job with a higher salary (Amouri et al., 2021; Chandra et al., 2021; Kang & Xiong, 2021; Kuddus et al., 2020; Melia et al., 2018; Sulistyorini, 2020; Sola, 2014). It is not only the regeneration problem but promotion and marketing are other challenges when the batik craftsmen in this region still depend on the word-of-mouth method. They have not been touched by digital marketing in this digital era. Commonly the buyers who have known the peculiarities and advantages of Gumelem batik come to the batik workshops. Most of their products are to fulfill orders and be marketed to Semarang and Jakarta. The combination type sold for 150,000 IDR per piece. The motifs often produced are Dawet Ayu, Pring Sedapur, Pring Setetek, Parang Mrica, Laras Pongas, Sekar Kupu, and others





Failing in the coloring process is one of the obstacles to face the craftsmen because it decreases the quality of the batik. In this case, the craftsmen will lose money. For batik that cannot be repaired, they will continue to screen printing process and use batik printing.

Another challenge is environmental pollution of water and soil fertility derived from the batik coloring process using textile chemical paints since many of the batik craftsmen use synthetic dyes instead of using natural dyes. That problem needs greater attention from any related parties and is to be solved immediately. The empowerment program for batik craftsmen and the young generation of batik on how to control textile dyes and to raise natural batik coloring with environmentally friendly plants such as eco-print batik products must be developed more (Budiyanto et al., 2018; Chinwe, 2013; Handayani et al., 2020; Indrayani & Triwiswara, 2021; Martuti et al., 2020; Setiyono et al., 2017).

Environmental pollution is unavoidable, particularly for the river. Maintaining and preserving the environment from damaged and developing natural dyes in batik products is a part of local wisdom, which is based on the values and culture that become the lifestyle of a society (Desore & Narula, 2018; Lellis et al., 2019; Naqsyabandi et al., 2018; Steelyana, 2012; Sulistyorini, 2021; Sulthonuddin & Herdiansyah, 2020). The description of Gumelem batik craftsmen's development can be illustrated in Figure 1.

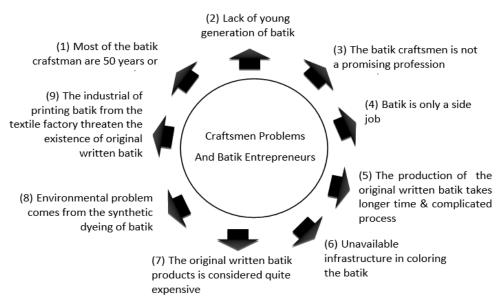


Figure 1: Problems of Batik Craftsmen and Entrepreneurs

3.3 Batik Business Empowerment Program Design

Batik craft products are not unique, have an interesting cultural heritage and local wisdom, but can develop a potential small industry. It requires local government policies support, especially the services for the economic creativity of SMEs. Empowering the batik can be in the form of





counseling to increase motivation, inspiration, and productive thinking patterns, (2) counseling and training in designing batik motifs both manually and digitally, (3) Coloring technique training, (4) training to standardize the products in term of packaging and labeling, (5) training on promotion and marketing strategies for digital batik products.

The support from the Office of Education entering the batik training for students in schools both as formal and non-formal education materials, besides the empowerment program for strengthening business institutions, expanding market access, increasing the capabilities and expertise of human resources, and adopting technology (Amaroso et al., 2020; Devi et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2016; Jones & Roley, 2011; Kunday & Şengüler, 2015; Mustanir & Lubis, 2017; Peltier et al., 2012; Ugwuogo, 2013; Umunadi, 2012). The independence of the batik Craftsmen is the aim of the empowerment programs through developing management, coloring, and marketing ability. Law Number 20 of 2008 concerning MSMEs emphasizes that the empowerment program is an effort from the government, the community and the private sector to establish, develop, and provide entrepreneurial assistance to SMEs. Other studies stated the importance of implementing empowerment programs, including for batik craftsmen through training in batik techniques that will correlate to the quality, beauty, and attractiveness of products. Joining an exhibition is also an important strategy to show the batik to larger communities. Then, it contributes to increasing income.

Designing empowerment programs for the development of batik craftsmen is an important and strategic factor that must pay attention by the local and regional governments including educational institutions to provide counseling, training, mentoring, and partnerships. The target of the empowerment program is the surrounding community groups, especially women's institutions and more specifically the younger generation of students. The planning process for the design of empowerment requires participatory, dialogical, humanist communication, and joint action among the related parties such as the batik craftsmen groups, the younger generation of students, also the government and educational institutions to match the empowerment program with the problems, the expected needs and the potential sectors that can be developed (Anomsari & Abubakar, 2019; Kim & Shin, 2017; Mustanir & Yasin, 2018; Özaralli, 2003; Sulaiman & Ahmadi, 2020; Unterfrauner et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2019). Empowerment is not only a development program but also a form of non-formal education for the community and students to increase the value, uniqueness, and privileges of batik as a culture and high artwork by improving product quality, packaging, labeling, and promotion and marketing based on information technology.

Human resources are important factors in determining the development of organizational management from planning, organizing, actualizing, and monitoring to evaluating. The business development of batik craftsmen is determined by the enthusiasm and skills of the craftsmen, capital, complete infrastructure and facilities, raw materials, marketing networks, location, support from economic institutions such as cooperatives or other financial institutions, government policy, training programs, and batik Craftsmen institutions itself (Butts et al., 2009; Chhotray et al., 2018; Christens, 2012; Dewettinck & van Ameijde, 2011;





Garcia & Bonavia, 2021; Koslowski & Duvander, 2018; Lechner et al., 2018; Sulaiman et al., 2019; Thojampa et al., 2020).

The stages of the design of the empowerment program are:

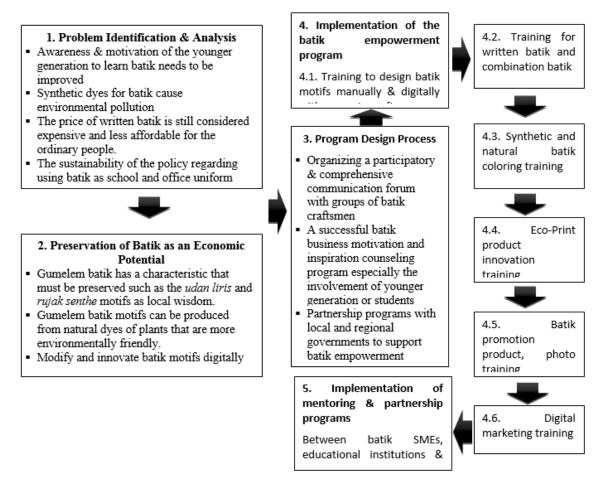
- 1) The empowerment program planning process is carried out in a participatory manner by involving the community, especially batik craftsmen, entrepreneurs, and the younger generation with the local and regional governments supported by budget policies, capital and facilities assistance, promotion, the use of batik for students and office uniforms, as well as some bazaar activities in the district level.
- 2) Developing the batik craftsmen institutions through training in production, packaging, promotion, and marketing using technological innovation approaches. The cooperative of batik craftsmen is also possible to be formed to collect products and assist in capital and marketing obstacles.
- 3) The potential implementation of empowerment programs carried out by local governments in collaboration with universities ranges from:
 - Counseling to instill and increase awareness, interest, and enthusiasm of the younger generation in batik.
 - Training to improve the ability or expertise in written batik, batik design, packaging, promotion, and marketing strategies with computerized technology innovation and the use of social media. Training on making natural dyes from plants and the movement to protect the environment from pollution.
 - Assistant programs for institutional strengthening, recruitment, product development, promotion, and marketing.
 - Programs for the formation and strengthening of batik institutions, especially from the younger generation, both in villages and in junior and senior high schools, such as creating a young batik organization. The Batik cooperative helps with capital, production, and marketing.
 - The partnership program among universities, the private sector, and the government, especially in the use of batik products for uniforms increases batik productivity.
- 4) The recruitment process for the batik generation also prioritizes the younger generation by introducing and providing motivation and skills to junior high and high school students. Batik is an additional subject matter and local content for each school to instill the enthusiasm, interest, and potential of batik in young generations. This needs to be supported by local government policies through The Office of Education in collaboration with related parties such as the labor service, cooperatives, and SMEs.
- 5) Monitoring and evaluation can be carried out by local and village governments, as well as by universities that become assistants or facilitators of empowerment management to improve batik entrepreneurship. The results of monitoring and evaluation are very important as input and improvement for the next program planning.





Based on the results of research on the development of Gumelem batik, especially in the Wardah batik Craftsmen group, a batik business empowerment program design can be formed, as shown in Figure 2.



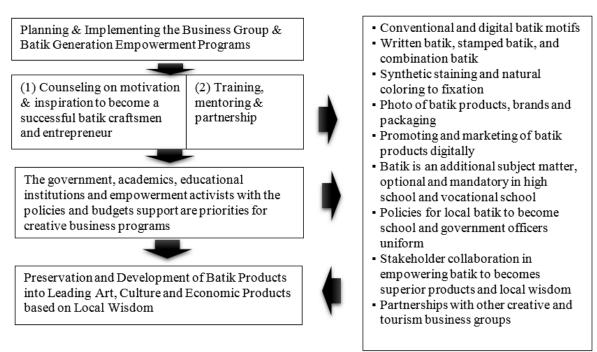


The batik empowerment program produced by this research is based on a participatory study that constructs the problems, potentials, and needs of batik craftsmen and entrepreneurs, as well as high school and vocational high school students: (1) Counseling on building motivation and inspiration to become the successful batik craftsmen and entrepreneurs. (2) Counseling and training to make batik motifs manually or conventionally by drawing directly on paper canvas or directly on batik cloth with a pencil or bullpen. Then batik motifs digitally used computer applications such as CorelDraw and Photoshop to finish the drawing process. Making conventional and digital batik motifs can be improvised, using their illustrations according to the batik's intuition or be inspired by other images by tracing directly on paper media, cloth and computer. (3) Batik training by tracing batik motifs that have been made and traced to Mori cloth media and then batik with heated wax following the motif to be made. (4) Training on





synthetic batik colorings such as Naptol, Indigosol, and Remasol to color fixation. Natural coloring with plants such as second, noni skin, mundu, mangosteen, turmeric, sugar, indigo value leaves, guava leaves, and areca nut seeds. (5) Training on labeling or branding brands, packaging, promoting, and marketing by digital media such as Facebook, Instagram, and other marketplaces. (6) Mentoring and partnership programs among village, regional and central governments with batik craftsmen groups, academics, and the younger generation, especially students, can be illustrated in Figure 3.





4. CONCLUSION

Batik is a work of art and culture, which is unique, attractive, and has characteristics based on local wisdom, has a superior economy that needs to be preserved and developed in the digital era. Gumelem Batik is one of the typical batik products of Banjarnegara Regency, Central Java Province which is dominated by brown and black color. Its motifs reflect plants that can be found surrounding the community. Batik Gumelem, like other batik groups, has some problems. Most of the batik craftsmen are 50 years or above and only work as side jobs. They consider batik to be a promising source of income.

Written batik is relatively expensive, ranging from 500,000 IDR to 2,000,000 IDR for each piece. That higher price was caused by the long and complicated process. It also requires precision and patience from creating the motifs to coloring. Another factor is that the request for this type of batik is very rare. It is only worn by middle and upper economic status.





Compared to written batik, combination batik products are more affordable. The price is around 150,000 IDR to 500,000 IDR or below, while stamped and printed batik is the lowest price. It costs around 100,000 IDR to 250,000 IDR. The last two types of batik can be produced more quickly and for larger communities such as for school and work uniforms.

Batik enterprises, including Gumelem batik, have environmental problems after dyeing batik with synthetics. It contaminated the fertility of the fields, gardens, and rice fields which are fed by river water.

It seems a periodic, comprehensive, and sustainable basis of the batik empowerment collaboration among related parties such as the village government, local government, academics, and the younger generation is never conducted.

The implementation of batik empowerment needs a strategic concern. One of the priority programs is to improve the creative economy, arts, and culture, as well as tourism sectors. Empowerment programs for the preservation and development of batik need to be pioneered by the government that has policies and budgets such as ministries or local government offices in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and Cooperatives, tourism and creative economy, education and culture that can synergize with business groups of batik craftsmen and academics.

The batik empowerment program analyzes the problems, potentials, the needs of batik craftsmen groups and the younger generation. Increasing motivation and inspiration to become batik craftsmen and entrepreneurs are necessary to conduct, including improving capability in creating conventional manual batik motifs and digitally designing using batik applications such as Photoshop and CorelDraw. Another is the batik technique and coloring either synthetically or naturally coloring with plants. Then, photo techniques for batik products, promoting and marketing of batik through digital media such as marketplaces and online shops on Facebook, Instagram or websites are further skills that need to be developed.

Batik Gumelem needs greater attention and support from local government policies such as the wearing of school uniforms for teachers and students from elementary to high school, besides official uniforms for government officers at any level. That policy helps increase production, promotions, sales, and income as well as the sustainability of the business.

Educational institutions such as senior and vocational high schools in the Gumelem area have subject matter and practice of batik as an additional and primary subject to foster the students' interest, preserve and develop batik as a potential, unique, and interesting local wisdom and creative economy commodity.

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