# Evaluation of the Role of Society-Based Library in Empowering Surabaya City People

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# Evaluation of the Role of *Society-Based Library* in Empowering Surabaya City People

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the role of society-based library or *Taman Bacaan Masyarakat* (TBM) in empowering Surabaya City people. Society-based library will be a place of Surabayans' live-long learning according to the Law on Even Distribution of and Rights to Education. This research adopts a quantitative approach with qualitative data analysis. The sample of the research is fourteen TBMs that have an empowerment program or is near to a small and medium enterprise. Findings of the research include: (1) that TBM role in community empowerment is beginning to be noticeable in their empowerment programs such as trainings for local community, (2) that empowerment programs at TBM are conducted informally and intermittently, such as trainings of producing aromatherapy candles, beads, flannelette, and waste recycling, and (3) the TBM are constrained by shortage of collection and funding for programs. The research recommends that: community empowerment programs should be increased through TBM programs; TBM personnels should be encouraged to innovate; and collection development should be tailored with local needs.

## Introduction

Education is the main tool for humans to raise their standards of living. With education, humans can work, improve the economy, and participate in social environments. Education is so essential that many countries stipulate that it is the right of all individuals. Furthermore, the national education system has attempted to ensure equal educational opportunities and to improve education quality so that the entire citizens can compete in the national and international arenas. In addition, the government initiative to raise the national education budget in 2009 was aimed to promote educational advacement. However, those initiatives have yet to equally provide education to all Indonesians; for example, based on the BPS (Central Bureau of Statistics) data, in 2010 there were more than one million elementary to senior high school dropouts, and more than three million students were unable to

continue to junior-senior high schools and colleges. The main cause of these failures is poverty. The BPS survey states that up to March 2017, there were more than 27.77 million poor peope in Indonesia. Whereas, in Surabaya alone according to the Society Empowerment Body's survey, there were 164 poor families in 2014.

To support the equitable education-for-all programs, the government also provides nonformal and informal education pathways through the development of non-formal and informal education centers and public libraries. As a result, in 2007 the Society Reading Gardens (TBM) program was launched in order to reach poor, remote, and peripheral areas, including those in the city of Surabaya. The TBM in Surabaya is located in several neighborhood halls, parks, malls, district halls, and other locations under the city's Education Service or Library and Archive Agency. The existence of TBM is aimed to assist community development in areas that are difficult to reach by formal educational institutions and public libraries, apart from their role as a lifelong learning centre for the surrounding people. Five years after the launching, more than 800 TBMs have been established across East Java, and until 2012 there have been 400 established in Surabaya. Of this large number of TBM that are primarily located in the city of Surabaya, their impacts on empowering the poor are still hardly known. Considering this condition, the authors are interested to evaluate the TBM' roles in empowering the Surabaya urban poor, and to identify TBM' empowerment programs and their limitations.

## Literature review

### Community empowerment

Empowerment is a way in which people, organizations, and communities are led to be a master of or to control their own lives (Suharto 2006). Community empowerment is an attempt to increase the dignity of society whose present condition is being unable to escape from the trap of poverty and backwardness (Kartasasmita, 1997b).

The approach to community empowerment is an emphasis on the importance of local communities as a self-organized system so that with this approach the community is no longer expected to be the object but the subject that will determine the future of their own lives and of the society in general (Setiana 2005).

According to Kartasasmita (1997b) empowerment efforts have three aspects, namely: (1) Empowerment by creating an environment or climate that enables the development of community potentials, assuming that every individual or every community has some potential to develop. This means that an individual or a society has the potential to organize themselves and

this potential needs to be unlocked. The process of people empowerment is deeply rooted in the independence of individuals, which is then extended to the family and community groups both locally and nationally. (2) Empowerment to strengthen the economic or power potentials of communities. In order to strengthen these potentials, the efforts that need to be done are to increase the education level, health status, and access to resources of economic progress such as capital, technology, information, employment, and markets. This is done by strengthening the potential or power possessed by the people by implementing concrete measures, accommodating a variety of inputs, providing infrastructure, both physical and social, so that it will be accessible by the lower groups of society. (3) Empowerment through household economic development, which seeks to protect the family from an unbalanced competition, and to promote unity and partnership between the developed and the underdeveloped. In the process of empowerment, the strong should be prevented from increasingly marginalizing the weak.

## Community empowerment through TBM

Society-based library (TBM) can be also interpreted as a small-scale library, and many call this a reading corner, reading house, smart house, and so on. Meanwhile, according to the TBM technical manual issued by the Ministry of National Education, a TBM is an institution promoting reading habits that provides space for reading, discussion, book review, writing, and other similar activities, which is equipped with reading materials, such as books, magazines, tabloids, newspapers, comics, and other multimedia materials, and supported by personnels acting as motivators.

There are several pathways of establishing a TBM, such as from community initiative to provide access to knowledge and life-long learning; from a broader program of corporate social responsibility of an organization; and from a government program in providing equitable access to education and knowledge to improve the quality of life. This study will only discuss the TBM established by the government who has been promoting them since 2008.

In 2010, the Ministry of National Education, specifically the Directorate for Community Education Development designed a program, an initiative directly in touch with integrated empowerment programs which would be implemented directly. These programs were focused on the deprived, i.e., those who live in remote indigenous areas, underdeveloped/outer/border areas, densely populated illiterate areas, marginalized urban communities, the elderly, and marginalized women and children. Furthermore, according to Mohammed Hamid in his speech, through a variety of initiatives of this program, it was expected that the national education investment for the

fulfillment of the citizen rights to access quality education can actually benefit all people.

### Previous studies on TBM

Although TBM have been initiated since 2007 (through the BP-PNFI program) and until now there have been thousands of TBM throughout Indonesia, there are not many studies that discuss the role of TBM in community empowerment. Studies on TBM are largely limited to those based on many articles that have sprung up in the media. In 2009–2010, many TBM sprang up, including in Surabaya whose TBM in each *kelurahan* (urban village) are managed by professionals (graduates majoring in library science) and by personnels that underwent a simple library management training; there are also TBM at Cito and Kapas Krampung shopping malls, built in 2009, and at the Royal Plaza founded in 2010 (Surya Daily, December, 22 2010). Birawa Daily mentioned that in East Java alone there were more than 800 TBM, while in Surabaya it was predicted that by 2015 the number would reach 1000 TBMs, each to be built in each neighborhood hall (Birawa Daily, September 21, 2011). Those TBM are mainly focused on illiteracy eradication. The results of the researchers' preliminary observations in several villages in Surabaya TBM show that the TBM is used by local people especially for the fulfillment of education and information for children and housewives. But, of course, the above programs are not enough for community empowerment.

From the above results, it can be said that the establishment of the TBM is a government program through the relevant agencies including the Ministry of National Education, the city and district libraries, and communities. But until now there is no further study on the existence and the role of TBM among communities, thus the success of TBM in empowering the community through its services, as well as constraints that occur in the field, are still unknown. TBM also as a place where the local kmowledge are created, so TBM can act as an agent in managing community local knowledge (Anna 2016).

### Research methods

This study uses a quantitative approach and a descriptive method because the purpose of this study is to evaluate the role of TBM in community empowerment. Research sites are the places of research studies to obtain data used to answer the research questions. In this study, the research sites are the TBM throughout Surabaya City.

In this study, the population is the entire TBM in Surabaya City, numbering to 400 TBMs (based on data from the Surabaya City Library). Sampling

was done through the purposive sampling technique by which the researchers included the TBM into the sample based on criteria such as those TBM that have community empowerment programs or have done innovation or have SMEs nearby. Out of 400 TBM in Surabaya City, only fourteen have community development programs or SMEs or innovation, namely: *Kelurahan* Ngagel Rejo, Neighborhood (RW) VII of *Kelurahan* Ngagel Rejo, Putat Jaya, Neighborhood (RW) II of Mojo, Neighborhood (RW) V of Siwalankerto, Neighborhood (RW) I of Siwalankerto, Neighborhood (RW) V of Jambangan, Kedurus, Neighborhood (RW) III of Warugunung, Neighborhood (RW) II of Rungkut Wonorejo, Neighborhood (RW) V of Kalirungkut, "Mawar," Neighborhood (RW) V of Peneleh, Neighborhood (RW) I of Tembok Dukuh.

## Findings and data analysis

The composition of TBM staffs are women (77%) and men (23%), which have been working for 7 months to 3.5 years. Professional librarian positions in general are mostly occupied by women, and this is also the case with TBM personnels. The big number of women working as a librarian is for several reasons, such as: the field of librarianship needs people who are patient and careful, and these are often of women characteristics, in addition to the low risk of hazards of the position. As for education level, nearly 80% of TBM personnels are high school graduates, while the remainders are university graduates with a variety of disciplines.

The library personnel position should not be underestimated by placing personnels that have no competence in the field of library management. Managing a library is not the same as attending to and watching it. Managing a library could mean that the personnels must be able to: select, provide, and deliver information to the users; design library development programs according to the public needs; perform secretarial activities (simple administration); and conduct research related to library activities. Library personnels should also be capable of planning library development tailored to users needs, so that the programs can reach the targets.

A total of 70% of the *kelurahans* where the TBM are located already have SMEs in which creative housewives can generate money. The SMEs engage in a wide variety of activities as shown in the table above. The SME as a family-based microenterprise often has problems, especially related to funding, both for production and for improving product quality through trainings. If managed properly, the SMEs can strengthen the local economy. But in reality, many operators of SMEs do not have adequate skills and education so that their businesses do not flourish well.

Most of the SMEs in *kelurahans* are not supported by the TBM, especially in the provision of relevant information regarding their businesses. Only few

SMEs have been assisted, such as Dinamo and Kampung Kue enterprises, in the form of provision of collection about dynamos for the former, and online promotion by the TBM for the latter. Ideally, a community reading garden whose primary purpose is as an "extension arm" of the Surabaya City Library must be able to provide the same services as that of the parent institution. The TBM should also be able to profile their users because they are established in the middle of different community in each *kelurahan*.

Here we can see that the TBM's role in providing services to support community empowerment is very minimal. The TBM and SMEs do not work together, as the former do not provide collection that suits local needs. Boonaree, Goulding, and Calvert (2018) offer reading for pleasure in the community library (CL) by providing books, inclusiveness, safe environtment, engaging all communities, and CL also can change the villager attitude about reading and book purchasing.

Broadly speaking, TBM' conditions (50% of them) are comfortable, clean, and tidy for reading and learning. However, several TBM' rooms are so small that they barely accommodate few users. Another 50% of TBM are less comfortable; even a TBM is not really appropriate because it is very dirty, namely the TBM RW V of Siwalankerto; whereas the TBM at Peneleh is less strategic because its location is deep into the alley.

The TBM needs to be comfortable, clean, and quiet in order to attract people to come. But there are some things that lessen comfort, such as sharing space with the buldings of early education schools or of the *kelurahan*'s halls. The TBM have yet to have their own separate premises that can be managed freely, they still use one of the rooms belonging to the *kelurahan*, such as the Neighborhood Hall buildings. It seems that the organizer of TBM, namely the Surabaya City Library, simply uses the available space and fills in one of the space corners with TBM equipment such as book shelves, collection, desks, carpets, and reading tables. There is no attention for interior design and addition of other furniture.

In terms of location, TBM are in the middle of population and thus accessible by all residents in each *kelurahan*. This is in accordance with the wish of the Surabaya municipality who wanted to bring libraries closer to the people. Nevertheless, location is not the primary key in attracting the public to use the library. According to Boonaree, Goulding, and Calvert (2017) community library (CL) that developed and located in local community is important so all people can easily and comfortably to use the library with no strict rules. Apart from location, the library should have collection relevant with the community needs, have professional personnels in running the library, and have appropriate facilities.

Nearly every TBM has a collection of more than 500 copies; there are even several TBM whose collection exceeds 1000 copies, such as the TBM of the following *kelurahans*: Ngagel Rejo, Kali Rungkut, Kedurus, and Tembok.

According to the Surabaya City Library, TBM programs are an extension of its services. Therefore, they expanded the services of information provision to users by establishing TBM across Surabaya. The existence of TBM has marked the increasing habits and hobby of reading; therefore, the adequate quantity and variety of collection are an important issue.

According to the Guidelines for TBM Management (Paudni, 2012; 04), the minimum collection size should be at least 300 titles, consisting of books, magazines, newspapers, leaflets, and audio visual materials. In order to develop and foster the reading interest of the public, it is expected that the largest collection of a TBM is entertainment reading materials (40%), followed by practical knowledge (30%), while the remaining 30% is for other fields such as religion, politics, arts, law, and education (subject to local conditions). The collection of TBM should be tailored to the needs of local residents; for example, the needs of communities in farming areas are different from those around oil palm plantations. Or, the reading needs of communities in the mountain or coastal areas are different from the needs of those living in urban areas. Therefore, TBM need to have a collection of library materials that are relatively complete according to its vision, mission, planning, strategies, policies, and objectives. A good collection is those that are able to meet the desires and needs of the readers. The library's advantage in collection is an attraction for users, so that the more complete the the library's collection, the more will be read and borrowed, and in turn the more crowded the TBM is and the higher the intensity of the book circulation. In turn, the information transfer process becomes greater and the TBM becomes as an intermediary bridge between information sources and the users.

Basically the main task of any information management entity (in this case TBM as an extension of city library services) is to build extensive collection on behalf of the users. Without good and adequate collection, the TBM will not provide good services to the users. The TBM personnels should know the collection well so as to satisfy users. Collection must be built up from a systematic and purposeful selection tailored to the objectives, plans, and available budgets.

The TBM's services and development should be based on the wishes and information needs of the group. It is nearly impossible to collect information about all aspects of all groups of users, yet it is better if the development team knows about users' work rules, common interests, education, behavior, communication, information, values, and related characteristics. The collection of data about the users is an advantage in policy formulation, project selection, and project evaluation.

The TBM collection comes from various donators. The Surabaya City Public Library has a big contribution to the collection of each TBM. In addition, the collection also comes from the Library and Archives Agency

of East Java, PT Sampoerna, Indonesia Library Development Foundation, students and professors of Petra University, City Education Service, and donation from Surabaya citizens, as well as from independent entities such as politician and the Kick Andy program from Jakarta. The TBM often attempt to update their collection because their entire collection has been read by users; thus, sometimes a TBM obtains loans from other institutions such as the Library and Archives Agency of East Java or by mutual exchange among the TBM.

The creativity of TBM staffs is necessary to increase the collection in terms of quantity, types and subject variety. The acquisition of TBM's collection needs to be planned properly. If the budget is not enough to purchase library materials, the TBM may use the methods of exchange, receiving gifts, as well as asking for helps from TBM-related government agencies, publishers or the donors, in the form of books or funds. TBM also can utilize the electronic resources from the internet. Some TBM-related government agencies include the Education Service, Social Welfare Service, Welfare Office, and Mental-Spiritual Office. Such organizations need to be approached to promote reading and study habits implied in TBM activities. These agencies are expected to play an active role in optimizing the TBM. All stakeholders need to come together and deliberate to reach the same perception and agreement to formulate policies and establish a solid team in an effort to develop the TBM, raise funds and sponsorship for the continuity of the TBM. However, it is still the TBM personnels who should filter the collection, mainly those from donation or gifts. The types and variety of collection have to prioritize the needs of the community covering the three aspects of life, education, and entertainment.

The data show that the facilities owned by TBM varied, from collection shelves, tables, chairs, carpet, to fans; and two TBM equipped with computers are those in *kelurahans* Ngagel Rejo and Tembok.

To maintain the continuity of TBM, they various alternatives so that people can use them to the full. Facilities and infrastructure could at least make children gather and socialize positively through learning and playing activities. The TBM' rooms should be comfortable for visitors. Hence TBM should be kept clean, cool, peaceful, orderly and safe, including settings of the furniture and other equipment so that visitors feel happy to be in the TBM. Quantitatively, there are numerous TBM in Surabaya, but many of them were minimal in facilities and infrastructure such as small space and room inconvenience due to the city's hot climate. Thus, facilities improvement, particularly regarding readers' comfort should be a priority.

Contribution of the private sector to complete the TBM' the facilities is highly desired; for example, some Surabaya TBM were supported by IBM (International Business Machines) in the form of KidSmart computer grants. This is an effort to encourage children to think smart and creatively. The

IBM KidSmart is software with a number of devices that can trigger children creativity. The devices are equipped with English storytelling, multimedia, pictures, and puzzles. The existing TBM' facilities and infrastructure should be improved, and future TBM should be more representative, so that they can cultivate reading interest of the public. In turn, the community is expected to become an informed, intelligent, and scientific society, thanks to TBM.

### Community empowerment programs

Community empowerment is an attempt to increase the dignity of the society that, in its present condition, is unable to escape from poverty and backwardness (Kartasasmita, 1997a), with emphasis on the importance of the local community as a self-contained system that is able to organize themselves so that the community is no longer an object but a subject that can determine their own future.

Empowerment efforts can be done by creating a climate that allows the community's potentials to thrive and by strengthening the community's economic potential or bargaining position; for example, increasing the level of education, health status and access to resources and economic development of families.

Apart from being a learning and information center, the TBM can also serve as a platform to carry out community empowerment activities by applying the concepts contained in the books or collection owned by the TBM. The program of community empowerment so far has been done informally and not planned in advance. The observation results show that twelve out of the fourteen TBM stated that empowerment activities were carried out intermittently or by a third-party initiative. Meanwhile, the two remaining TBM have never held a community empowerment program, namely the TBM Neighborhood I of Wonorejo that is still struggling with promoting their library.

Of the twelve TBM, five have conducted empowerment programs in cooperation with a third party such as: the TBM *Kelurahan* Ngagel Rejo that cooperated with NGO Lensa Indonesia and Forum for Indonesia in holding a training in aromatherapy candle making; the TBM Neighborhood V *Kelurahan* Kalirungkut in cooperation with Bogasari in establishing Cake Village small enterprises; and the TBM Putat Jaya in collaboration with NGOs and the local government to provide training in prevention and treatment of child trafficking victims, because this TBM is located in a prostitution area. The other seven TBM such as the TBM of *Kelurahan* Warugunung, of Wonorejo Towers, and of Neighborhood VII of *Kelurahan* Ngagel Rejo, have a program of craft making for visiting children.

### *The role of TBM in empowering the community*

So far, the TBM supervised by the Surabaya City Library have begun doing community empowerment programs, particularly in children education through tutoring and crafts-making programs. TBM also can create reading for pleasure for children, in which they can access to the free and good reading materials and develop their reading skills (Boonaree, Goulding, and Calvert, 2017). On the other hand, economic empowerment has been hardly touched on by TBM, while the existing programs are unregistered and informal in nature, such as trainings. Considering that the purpose of public libraries is to provide a lifetime learning source for all people of different backgrounds, and that TBM are the public libraries' extension arm, then TBM should be able to provide information services for life-long learning of the society. But in reality, TBM services are not community-based (i.e., not promoting life-long learning and community empowerment). This is exacerbated by TBM' collection that is irrelevant to the immediate community's activities and development. For the record, each *kelurahan* has different community characteristics, so that the collection must follow the community. Collection in TBM does not support the activities of the surrounding community's small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), as stated by 90% of the SMEs that the TBM collection was neither relevant nor up to date. Therefore, SMEs' activities are stagnant due to limited resources for their products innovation.

A second point is related to the professionalism of TBM personnels; they are mostly just high school graduates trained in simple TBM management, yet managing a TBM is similar to that of libraries but at a smaller scale. Managing does not only mean keeping the collection, but also how to sustain and develop the TBM. To do that, TBM personnels need a basic education in the field of library. The City Library should have prioritized human resources as the main consideration when establishing TBM, because competent human resources will function in accordance with its ideals. The data show that what TBM personnels do are simply opening and attending to the TBM, as well as serving visitors; they hardly have education and economic empowerment programs.

A further point is related to the TBM' location and infrastructure that rarely support community empowerment programs. Data from the field indicate that the TBM share existing spaces in the *kelurahans*; for example, they use neighborhood halls and *kelurahan* halls whose rooms are very narrow, even 50% of them are not comfortable enough for a learning place. The empowerment program is not only done by providing a collection, but also providing a place for people to come together and exchange ideas, and for training purposes. On average, TBM of Surabaya City do not have such facilities. Likewise, information retrieval support facilities such as computers and Wi-Fi connection are also

not available in the TBM, whereas nowadays the internet can be used for such many things as, among others, an interactive learning resource, a business development inspiration, and a medium for products promotion.

## Conclusions

(1) The TBM's role in community empowerment has not been played formally; this is evident from the survey results of fourteen TBM, where twelve of them have conducted trainings, but informally and incidentally. In addition, the TBM' collection also hardly supports the surrounding SMEs' programs, so that the community can not take advantage of TBM as development resources. Moreover, the TBM have also not cooperated with SMEs owners.

(2) The TBM are piloting some empowerment-related programs, such as, among other things, children collective learning and crafting. Meanwhile, incidental and informal programs include trainings in cooperation with NGOs or local SMEs.

(3) Constraints faced by TBM include collection loss, collection procurement difficulties, and difficulties in making programs (i.e., lack of funds), the lack of public awareness for using TBM, and the personnels' divided attention while simultaneously working as school librarians.

(4) Innovation made by the TBM has not been noticeable; it is still limited to promotion, that is, through word of mouth, flyers/posters, and dissemination to the community

## Suggestions

(1) The role of TBM as a real long-life learning place should be maximized by increasing the competence of TBM personnels, so that the public can benefit from the TBM, especially for the improvement of their education and welfare.

(2) The TBM personnels should develop programs that suit the users' needs so that users are motivated to frequent the TBM.

(3) The TBM personnels should conduct knowledge-sharing activities to solve TBM problems by using Monday regular meetings to hear the best practices and lessons learned from each TBM.

### Suggestions for Surabaya city library

As an institution that supervises TBM programs in the city, the Surabaya City Library has contributed a lot to the development and sustainability of TBM in *kelurahans*. The following are our suggestions:

(1) The city library should review the sustainability of the TBM' programs associated with TBM's role in the society. This is because, from the 400 existing TBM, there are only fourteen categorized as "recommended" (i.e., considered the best and have a role in community empowerment), while the rest do not represent that role.

(2) More intensive assistance should be given to the TBM' field personnels in order to develop each TBM.

(3) Personnels of TBM should be motivated with proper rewards so that they keep making innovation in their programs, products, and services.

(4) The City Library should develop programs that hone the TBM personnels' creativity and innovation by holding competitions or building a reward system.

## Notes on contributors

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