

CULTURAL LITERACY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS THROUGH BATIK

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has a diverse cultural heritage, one of which is batik, recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage. In the era of globalization, cultural literacy is crucial for introducing Indonesian culture to the world, especially to international students, in order to strengthen national identity and promote Indonesian culture globally. One effective method is through a batik workshop for international students, aimed at enhancing understanding of the cultural values embedded in batik. This Community Service Program was conducted using a participatory approach, combining theory, demonstrations, and hands-on practice. Participants were introduced to the history, philosophy, and techniques of batik, and then created simple batik artworks on tote bags, allowing participants to experience the creative process while deeply appreciating Indonesian culture. The workshop results demonstrated that this method effectively fosters appreciation and interest in batik among international students while strengthening cross-cultural communication. Through the batik-making experience, participants not only gained technical skills but also understood the philosophical values within each batik motif. Positive responses from participants affirm that this approach can serve as an effective strategy for cultural diplomacy and the preservation of batik on an international scale.

Keywords: Batik; cross-cultural communication; cultural literacy; workshop

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country rich in cultural diversity. Data collected from 2013 to 2024 shows that Indonesia has 1,941 intangible cultural heritages out of 8,065 cultural works (Pusat Data dan Teknologi Informasi, 2024). With such a vast array of cultural diversity, Indonesia possesses a strong identity as a nation. This identity needs to be reinforced so that it becomes more widely recognized internationally. One way to strengthen Indonesia's cultural identity is through cultural literacy. Cultural literacy is defined as the ability to recognize and understand culture as an inseparable part of a society's identity. Today, literacy encompasses a much broader scope than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. Literacy must also be realized through direct practice in everyday communication (Triwardhani et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2020).



Figure 1. Developments in Data Validation of Cultural Heritage Sites, Museums, and Intangible Cultural Heritage

Today, the world is entering an era of globalization, which allows information to spread rapidly across the globe. Globalization encourages the interaction and exchange of cultures from various countries. This leads to cultural convergence. Cultural convergence refers to the meeting of different cultures that then assimilate and give rise to a new culture as a fusion of various cultural elements. Cultural convergence brings positive impacts, as it can help Indonesian culture gain more international recognition. However, on the other hand, it also poses a threat, as it may marginalize local cultures due to the dominance and popularity of foreign cultures that become global trends (Swastiwi, 2024).

This situation highlights the importance of promoting cultural literacy to the international community. In the education sector, cultural literacy can be implemented by targeting international students as its participants. Through cultural literacy, international students can gain a deeper understanding of Indonesian culture, particularly in terms of the values embedded within it. The hands-on experience gained through cultural literacy activities can leave a lasting and memorable impression on the participants.

One of Indonesia's cultural elements that is well known globally is batik. Batik is a technique, symbol, and art form of decorating fabric using wax, featuring a wide variety of motifs rich in deep philosophical meaning. In the past, batik was typically worn only by the royal aristocracy of Javanese palaces, with strict rules regarding its use—particularly for certain motifs. Over time, the use of batik has expanded beyond the elite and is now worn by people from all walks of life. Batik has become one of Indonesia's national attires, worn by Indonesians on various occasions (Wulandari, 2022). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added batik to the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2003, strengthening batik's position as a symbol of Indonesian identity in the global arena. Support for the cultural value of batik was further reinforced through Presidential Decree No. 33 of 2009, which designated October 2nd as National Batik Day (Natalie, 2020). This recognition reflects appreciation and acknowledgment of batik as an authentic Indonesian cultural heritage that must be preserved and safeguarded.

In the era of globalization, intercultural interaction has become increasingly dynamic, and introducing batik to international students is a key strategy in promoting cultural literacy. Through batik, international students not only learn about the methods and processes involved in its creation but also gain an understanding of the meanings and significance of each motif, which often carry moral, spiritual, and local cultural messages. The workshop method is chosen as a strategic activity

format to allow participants to engage directly in hands-on experiences and immerse themselves in the creative process while learning about the cultural context of batik. The urgency of introducing batik through this method lies in its ability to foster meaningful cultural communication. This activity not only teaches technical skills but also provides international students with opportunities to learn about Indonesian cultural values, build empathy, and develop an appreciation for diversity. Therefore, the batik workshop serves as an ideal bridge for building intercultural communication (Oktyajati et al., 2023; Thamrin et al., 2024).

2. METHOD

This Community Service Program was carried out through a workshop that combined theoretical introduction, demonstration, and hands-on practice to ensure a comprehensive understanding for the participants. Initially, the participants were introduced to the history, philosophy, and various batik motifs. After gaining theoretical knowledge, they observed a live demonstration as a guide before engaging in practical work. In the final stage, participants created simple batik artworks on tote bags, expressing their own creativity.

The approach used was participatory and interactive, allowing participants not only to receive material passively but also to engage actively in the practice. Participants were encouraged to contribute directly through discussions, Q&A sessions, and creative exploration at every stage of the learning process. This method enabled participants to immediately apply the concepts they learned in real-life situations, so they did not just understand the theory but also gained meaningful hands-on experience. Moreover, the interactions that occurred during the activity created a more dynamic and collaborative learning environment. This made the activity more effective, practical, and memorable, helping participants develop a deeper understanding of batik (Raflah & Pratama, 2020).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This batik workshop successfully produced simple batik artworks with basic motifs in the form of tote bags created by each participant. These works not only reflect the participants' creativity but also showcase the richness of batik motifs and techniques taught during the workshop. The choice of tote bags as the medium for batik creation was made due to their functional and practical nature, making them easy to carry. This also serves as an efficient strategy for promoting Indonesian culture.



Figure 2. The Batik-Making Process on Tote Bags

The feedback received from the participants, who were international students, was very positive. The participants showed great enthusiasm and interest in the batik-making process, from selecting motifs to the dyeing techniques. This spirit was evident in the dynamics during the presentation session, the dedication of the participants as they tried the canting (batik pen), and the pride they felt when seeing the final result of their batik creations. The participants also expressed their joy and gratitude for being given the opportunity to experience this unique activity. Through the batik-making practice, international students not only learned the batik methods but also gained a deeper understanding of the cultural values embedded in each batik motif. This enhanced the participants' appreciation of Indonesian culture as a rich and valuable heritage.

This workshop plays a significant role in the promotion and preservation of batik. As one of Indonesia's cultural heritage treasures, international recognition of batik is crucial. With global recognition, batik can strengthen Indonesia's image, enhancing the country's appeal as a nation with a diverse culture (Trixie, 2020). Therefore, the involvement of international students as participants in this activity becomes an essential element in the success of efforts to introduce and conserve batik on an international scale. This activity has led participants to appreciate batik not only as an art form but also as an integral part of Indonesia's national identity.

From a communication perspective, this batik workshop also serves as an effective cultural communication medium. It is not just about theoretical understanding; the participants were also given the opportunity to apply their knowledge of batik directly by creating batik motifs. This allowed participants to gain a deeper understanding of the process involved in producing batik, thereby fostering respect for the art of batik-making. This activity represents a small yet impactful step in cultural diplomacy. Through this workshop, participants were able to exchange knowledge with the local batik community, thereby broadening their intercultural perspectives. The intensive interaction that took place between both parties during the activity has created a strong bond, forming a solid foundation for intercultural relations.



Figure 3. Batik Dyeing Demonstration

In addition, the realization of this batik workshop would not have been possible without the university's role and its dedication to community service programs. This activity serves as a manifestation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, which is part of the implementation of the Community Service Program. The activity reinforces the institutional cooperation established between the university, the local batik community, and the international office. Positive impacts were also felt by the campus, as it led to an increase in the university's international reputation, opening up

greater opportunities for international collaborations. The success of this activity serves as a supporting factor for the institution to maintain the continuity of similar events in the future.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, the community service batik workshop activity is considered successful and has served as a cultural communication bridge between the local community and international students. Through this workshop, participants not only learned batik techniques firsthand but also gained an understanding of the cultural values embedded in each Indonesian batik motif. The positive feedback from international students proves that this workshop is effective in enhancing appreciation and interest in Indonesian culture. Additionally, this activity contributes to the promotion and preservation of batik as Indonesia's cultural heritage on the global stage.

The community service team recommends several actions for organizing similar activities in the future. First, the team suggests the development of follow-up programs, such as batik workshops on *centong* (traditional wooden spoon) or seminars on building a batik business in the digital era. Furthermore, the cultural literacy methods used could be improved, such as holding interactive lectures on the history and philosophy of batik and organizing exhibitions showcasing the functional application of batik on everyday objects. Finally, the community service team hopes that the scope of cultural literacy activities can be expanded to reach a larger community, such as business owner groups.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant competing interests to disclose concerning the content of this article.

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