









Academic Paper

# Mentoring relationship and mentoring model of micro, small, medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Mentoring relationships play an essential role in supporting the success of the "Batik" MSME's learning group as part of the creative sub-economy in the fashion field in Indonesia. This qualitative study aims to explore the mentoring process of Batik in the MSMEs community. The results showed that mentors and mentees had the same values during the process, namely cooperation, friendship, mutual help, and complementarity. Furthermore, sustainability tends to exist when the mentor has a close relationship with the mentees. This finding provides recommendations to stakeholders that the mentoring program is effective when the mentor comes from the MSMEs community.

## Keywords

mentoring model, relationship mentoring, MSMEs

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## Introduction

The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play the largest role in the absorption of labour in the private business sector. Almost 100% of businesses formed in Indonesia are MSMEs, which contributes between 58 to 61% of Gross Domestic Product (Tambunan, 2019). According to Wymenga, Spanikova, Barker, Konings and Canton (2012), this is also applicable in European countries.

The ability to learn continuously is a crucial determinant of success in any competitive business (Sullivan, 2000). The challenges faced by MSMEs in the industrial revolution 4.0 era are getting tougher, therefore there is a need for adequate commitment, adaptability to change, and a strong will to learn (Darmasetiawan, Winarto, Mutiara, & Christy, 2020). MSMEs prefers informal learning

that is generally cheaper and takes place at the right time and place. Anderson and Boocock (2002) and Keskin (2006) stated that informal and work-based learning are dominantly applied to small companies because they are more flexible and increase adaptability. Furthermore, MSMEs often feels that formal training is irrelevant to their highly contextual needs, with a disconnection between what is learned in the formal classroom and its application in the workplace (Byrne et al., 2002; Westhead & Storey, 1997). Recent studies showed that informal and in-house training is suitable to be applied in accordance with the conditions faced by small businesses. This is because the results are effective in improving company performance (Rowden, 1995).

According to Byrom, Harris and Parker (2000), small businesses need a more informal face-to-face mechanism as opposed to the conventional training method, which is still formal. Thus, mentoring is an alternative solution for MSMEs with limited time and resources since it pays attention to the continuum of the conformity level in various conditions based on the context (Bisk, 2002). Mentoring is also used as an alternative to applied, just-in-time, and experience-based learning (Burgoyne & Hodgson, 1983).

The stakeholders' roles in academia, government, and the private sector in the MSMEs development have been widely studied. However, the government's mentoring programs in licensing, improving human resources, finance, production, and marketing known as PLUT (Integrated Business Service Center) have not fulfilled expectations. One of the contributing factors, apart from several other weaknesses found in the business incubation program, is that the consultants on the program did not receive a positive response from MSMEs actors (Arifin, 2017).

Moreover, the collaboration between stakeholders is still partial because the local government only has the ability to provide one of the needs of MSMEs actors (Fitria, 2012). The existing mentoring models do not yet have an ideal business model due to limited funds for business incubator managers (Hasbullah, Surahman, Yani, Almada, & Faizaty, 2014). Therefore, there is no sustainable program measured by the mentoring sector. Rosyadi, Kusuma, Fitrah, Haryanto, and Adawiyah (2020) reviewed an integrated mentoring model involving stakeholders known as pentaholix, including academics, business practitioners, local governments, community leaders, and mass media. However, the model failed to mention the mentor's role in supporting the success of a program. Peel (2004) stated that the MSMEs cultural prevalence needs to be the core of specific coaching and mentoring strategies.

According to Ardhi et al (2021), the mentoring process will run smoothly if the mentor and mentee have a good relationship. The training model carried out by giving lecture material, question and answer, simulation, and practice are not sustainable because the supervisor is not from the Batik community (Novitasari et al., 2020; Wijyaningputri et al., 2021; Herawati et al., 2019). The mentoring approach through groups and individuals significantly increases Batik competence.

Considerations in the mentoring program are associated with the terms of the content being taught and the mentor's interpersonal skills and attitude. A mentor's ability to solve "just in time" problems is a key factor to providing the most meaningful added value (learning from experiences and critical events) (Burgoyne & Hodgson, 1983). Furthermore, the mentor's personal character is one of the factors that influence the program's success. Meanwhile, its effectiveness is influenced by the mentees' honest and trustworthy personalities with good listening skills (Straus, Johnson, Marquez, & Feldman, 2013). Mentors can identify goals that match the mentees' problems by being good listeners. Properly pairing mentors with mentees does not only ensure a healthy bond rather it also leads to fulfillment and ultimate success (Catanese & Shoamanesh, 2017).

With this in mind, this study explores the mentoring process for the Batik Citra Gendhis UMKM group (where Batik is a cloth with symbolic motifs and patterns as the nation's cultural heritage). Batik is one of the creative economic fields in the fashion sector. The mentor is an actor from the SME group. The goal is to know what the mentoring process is based on a good relationship

between the mentor and mentee; what are the values that grow in society and what benefits do members get during the learning process, informally and formally.

## Literature Review

### 1. MSMEs Characteristics

Based on several literature studies, MSMEs have the following characteristics.

- a. Focus more on business sustainability and independence than company expansion (Westhead & Storey, 1997; Gray, 1998).
- b. It has no power to influence the environment to increase profits.
- c. It is motivated to provide guidance and assistance for skill development to ensure business sustainability amid high competition.
- d. MSMEs is reluctant to take part in paid training from external parties and prefers to use networks to cover the need for skill development (Gibb, 1997).

According to Peel (2004), it may be irrational for the MSME's development to use a formal training approach. This is supported by the studies carried out by Bramley (1999), Centre for Enterprise (2001) which stated that the norm in MSMEs is practical and experience-based informal learning rather than formal or accredited interventions.

### 2. Mentoring for MSMEs

Mentoring is a popular employee development tool in the public and private sectors. This relates to more and less experienced mentors and, according to Ragins (2016), mentees or learners learn from mentors in order to promote their careers. Generally, there is a certain satisfaction associated with helping others with a feeling of value as a role model and appreciation.

Bozeman & Feeney (2007) defined mentoring as a process by which an experienced person shares knowledge and ideas with individuals, or a group of people, integrated into the organizational community. In Europe, this process has been used for a long period in the form of guidance or advice for professional development, skills, and confidence (Brien & Hamburg, 2014). Generally, the mentee's self-development is in line with the organizational management skills (Ritchie & Genoni, 2002). For women, career development and psychosocial benefits occur through honest discussion, counselling, friendship, and advice (Tabbron, Macaulay, & Cook, 1997). Informal relationships are driven by the need for early career development, where mentors or mentees choose each other (Dymock, 1999).

Generally, there are two types of mentoring, categorised into formal and informal. The goals of formal mentoring programs are in formal education, graduate studies, new professional career development, and career advancement within an organization (Ritchie & Genoni, 2002). These programs usually last more than a year, while informal mentoring spans from 3 to 6 years (Blake-Beard, 2001).

The formal and informal mentoring process emphasizes short and long-term career goals, respectively (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Informal mentoring occurs when two people with a good relationship come together to share ideas and learn and one acts as a teacher or mentor, the other as a student or mentee (Hamburg, 2014). Based on the principle of informal mentoring, learning occurs incidentally. This form of peer mentoring usually occurs between experienced people (mentors) and those new to the context. Peer mentoring is different from classical mentoring because the mentor and mentee are within the same age range, education level, etc. Furthermore,

it comprises a semi-structured program planned with specific guidelines, several activities, and meetings within a predetermined timeframe.

In the formal mentoring approach, a mentor teaches the mentee ways of the business world. Most companies are considering implementing a formal mentoring program in the near future. This is because it aims to achieve a specific purpose, such as transferring knowledge, advancing career goals, studying business management, or addressing performance deficiencies. Special cases occur when the goal is less structured, which is determined by mentors and mentees during the mentoring process (Hamburg, 2014).

According to Geroy, Wright and Anderson (1998) and Alder (1992), the mentoring program's core objective is associated with the principles of modeling, which is a combination of skills-based training. Other facilitative techniques include discussion, demonstration, and feedback. This serves to address concerns on external consultants that do not understand their business problems (O'Brien, McCarthy, Hamburg, & Delaney, 2019).

Tam and Gray (2016) conducted a study on the most preferred approach by successful MSMEs. The study found that 1) individual learning is the most common form of learning in the workplace, 2) MSMEs employees prefer inter-institutional learning, and 3) successful or high-growth companies adopt a more collaborative organizational approach to learning. MSMEs actors often view training as a necessity, not as a process to improve skills sustainably (Barrett, 2006).

### **3. Mentoring Relationship**

Values play a significant role in the mentoring relationship, especially in the selection of students or mentors. It is one of those characteristics where commonality is critical to a successful mentoring relationship. Eby, Butts, Lockwood and Simon (2004) stated that value mismatch leads to negative mentoring experiences such as communication difficulties. Similarly, Hale (2000) stated that shared values, beliefs, and life goals are needed in mentoring activities. Values are important because they serve as the foundation for how people and situations are viewed. For instance, those with similar values tend to agree on the right strategies needed to evaluate people and situations.

Schein (1985) further argued that values are related to communication systems. Those with similar values tend to communicate easily, know what needs to be done, how it should be carried out, and experience less frustration when working together because they evaluate things in the same way. Overall, the congruence found by similar values helps build stronger interpersonal relationships. Müllen and Noe (1999) stated that developing strong bonds is essential for the creation of a successful mentoring relationship. Therefore, value alignment assists in developing deeper bonds between learners and mentors than other forms of commonality, such as gender or interests. The close relationship between mentor and mentee and shared values that grow (Hale, 2000) is important to study.

## **Methodology**

This study explores the mentoring process in a study group for Batik craftsmen in Malang Regency, Indonesia. It consists of 33 Districts with a focus on study groups in 14 villages in the Gondanglegi sub-district. The key informants from the Gondanglegi sub-district consisted of 11 Batik makers with one mentor who served as a community leader. The informants were chosen because the supervisors have passed the competency test conducted by government agencies and have worked in Batik UMKM for eight years, as well as those who work in the local community to improve their welfare in community empowerment programs.

This community was not fostered by the government but on a joint initiative to form a Batik group

called the Gendhis image community. The membership system is voluntary without collecting fees. Learning programs are carried out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, the group was studied using a case study methodology.

This study uses a qualitative design approach with a Batik community group. Denzin and Lincoln (2017) stated that qualitative research emphasizes the social construction aspect of reality. This method seeks to reveal the meaning and socio-cultural experience of the subject towards non-numeric phenomena. Case studies are used to provide in-depth investigation on the various actor perspectives regarding the assistance model needed. Simons (2009) stated that qualitative case studies explore the complexity and uniqueness of a particular model from multiple points of view. This study uses in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, observations, as well as documentation as data collection tools. Table 1 shows details of the informants.

**Table 1: Identity of Informants**

Key informant identity	Position	Age	Year Joined the Community	Other ventures
AD	Community leader	50	2017	Batik mentor
DW	Treasurer	46	2017	Bridal makeup
KU	Member	48	2017	housewife
NA	Member	32	2019	employees
JU	Member	45	2017	beverage business
AN	Member	40	2017	eatery
SA	Member	42	2020	housewife
SU	Member	35	2019	housewife
AV	Member	20	2019	housewife
SR	Member	36	2017	housewife
JA	Secretary	49	2013	housewife

Focus group discussions were conducted to explore members' perceptions while participating in study groups. Furthermore, the data credibility was tested using a triangulation technique, i.e., questionnaires were also used to ensure that the data collected through the focus group discussions aligned with the results of the distributed questionnaire in an open-ended form.

The questions used were as follows.

1. How long have you been in the Batik Community?
2. What prompted you to join this Community?
3. What benefits do you get after joining this Community?
4. What is the learning model used by the mentor during mentoring in the Batik group?
5. What values did you feel while joining the Community?
6. Give Impressions and Messages for the Community?

Miles and Huberman's (1994) model consisting of several stages, such as data reduction, presentation, and conclusion/verification, was used for data analysis. Furthermore, data coding was carried out using NVivo 12 program tool. The themes that emerged based on the research objectives were related to the learning process in the community. The axial and opening coding processes were also carried out before the process was regrouped to remove unnecessary data, thereby making the new theme more conical. Finally, selective coding was carried out with data reduction to get an ideal theme or concept according to the conditions in the field. Ultimately, a pattern in accordance with the learning process in the community of Batik craftsmen was found.

## Findings

The Citra Gendhis Batik Community is a community of Batik craftsmen founded in 2017. This Establishment Community is an early Batik initiative with concern and interest in Batik culture.

Therefore, this community is not a government program but is formed as a joint initiative, especially among the founders. In this community, there are mentoring activities. The community leader acts as a mentor. Learning programs are carried out both formally and informally. Informal learning in the form of joint education is carried out when members have difficulties carrying out independent learning. Independent learning occurs both self-taught and after training from the stakeholders.

Member recruitment is open to anyone; there is no selection or fees. The point is who is interested in directly joining the learning program in the community. The convenience provided to members can attract more Batik artisans in the context of cultural preservation.

### **a. How is the mentoring process in the Batik community study group?**

The learning process is based on member requests about a Batik competency that is currently trending in the market. Mentors who come from community members, in this case, the head of the community, gives members the freedom to determine the learning program, such as accommodating the learning themes that will be carried out, how long the duration of time, and the determination of places and other facilities. This statement can be seen in in-depth interviews with the following mentors.

The Question begins, "how do mentors acquire the knowledge that is taught to their members?". The following are questions asked by mentors in in-depth interviews.

*Have you recently attended training? No, this is the result of my experiment, which turned out to be good. Furthermore, I invited my friends to study together, and someone also educated them on "ecotik", because it is a new trend in Batik. Then, I asked the members, "Whose house are you going to study? Because the "mondeng" process requires a large area. (AD)*

During lessons, the mentor applies a democratic attitude and accommodates all the opinions of the mentee in the group study planning process. The mentor was not arrogant towards the fellows despite passing the Batik competency certification test. The result of an interview with a mentor that shows this attitude is as follows.

Interview results suggest it is known that the mentor is self-taught and acquires knowledge on his initiative through experiments that have been carried out. Then the knowledge gained by the mentor is shared with members according to member requests, like the demand for "ecotik" Batik skills that were trending at that time. Ecotik is one type of Batik technique that combines two Batik techniques.

Democracy in learning can be seen in members' freedom in choosing topics and looking for facilities and infrastructure tailored to learning needs. Such as "mondeng" activities when Batik requires a large land area. Mondeng is a way of making Batik by bringing out the natural color of the leaves, which is used as a pattern on a long piece of cloth by hitting it with a tool such as a hammer. The process of using the word "friend" between the mentors to the mentee indicates a close relationship.

The application of informal learning occurs without planning. When experimenting with problems, community members immediately come to the mentor's house, and mentors are happy to accept members' complaints or difficulties. From the mistakes that have been made, the mentor provides examples of finding the right one, then giving an evaluation after rework. According to Bandura (1977), MSME actors prefer social learning by providing examples from mentors and mentees, with feedback at the evaluation stage.

The following is an excerpt from one of the following mentees during a focus group discussion during an internal community learning activity at one of the mentee's houses. A question was asked to a community member with the initials "DW," beginning with the question, "How do you learn to make Batik fast?"

*It is a shame for someone to ask without putting it into practice. Yes, that is right, and I sometimes practice this activity. However, if you want to learn, ask questions, and do it quickly. Really, is that the right process? Yes. This is because only theories make one dizzy without adequate knowledge. But utilizing both theory and practical enables retentive memory. Moreover, if it is wrong, it becomes more memorable and not repeated." (DW)*

From the conversation, if you want to be able to learn quickly, then after theory into practice immediately. From the mistakes we make, it will be a lesson so that it doesn't happen again. Memory will be stronger through training. In learning in the community, mentors carry out strategies with more practice. Learning for new materials is always ongoing and depends on market needs and mutual agreement between mentor and mentee, in line with the excerpt of an interview with one of the focus group members.

*...JU: There is a new model that lets us learn together, thereby leading to new developments. DW: Sometimes, during a meeting, we evaluate embedding, and coloring, which enables us to learn especially Batik... (JU; DW).*

Incidental learning occurs when members conduct experiments at home and fail. In this case, informal learning occurs because it is not planned but will occur suddenly. For example, when a mentee encounters a failure, they will ask the mentor for advice by visiting his house. The following focus group discussion snippet shows this.

*DW: In ecotik process, mine has been processed 6 times. Anyway, if you have free time, kindly do it again.*

*AD: Please do not hesitate to report when you fail. DW: In the end, it is beautiful...(DW; AD)*

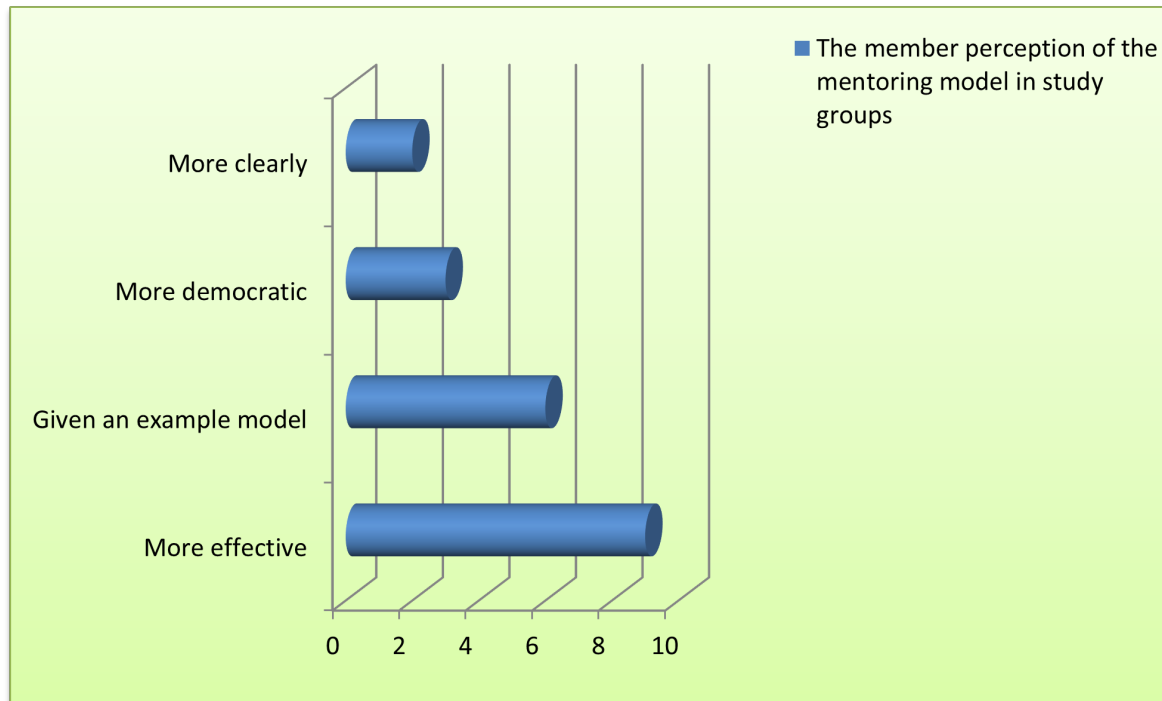
## **b. What values and benefits did you get were obtained while joining the Batik community?**

The values in the Batik community provide many conveniences for its members in terms of ease of learning Batik. The results of the questionnaire and in-depth interviews have been conducted and can be seen in Figure 1.

Based on members' perception that during the learning process, the mentor provides an example followed by the mentee according to the theory of Batik. Furthermore, the mentee is free to ask as many questions as they want and at any time because members as mentees feel more transparent and more effective. Learning through the mentoring system in the community is more effective than formal learning from local government agencies marked by 100% completeness for one competency. The following is an excerpt from one of the members during an interview during the "ecotik" training (one of the Batik motifs). The first question was whether, after receiving the training, did you enjoy sharing it with other friends?

*After carrying out training, I help those with difficulty completing theirs. The point here is cooperation, and in a situation whereby I experience difficulties, I contact the mentor personally. Answers are sometimes shared in WA groups. (JU)*

**Figure 1: Members' perceptions of the mentoring model in the Batik community**



These conversations show that the value of cooperation and mutual assistance in community members is upheld. Because of these values, all members benefit from each other because the comfort level of being a member of the community is felt by every member, especially in increasing Batik competence after joining this community. The following are the benefits obtained by members based on the questionnaire distributed. The essence of collaboration among members is seen from the opinions of the following members. To explore the values in the community, we asked the question in the focus group session, “did you also teach other friends who were left behind after the training?”

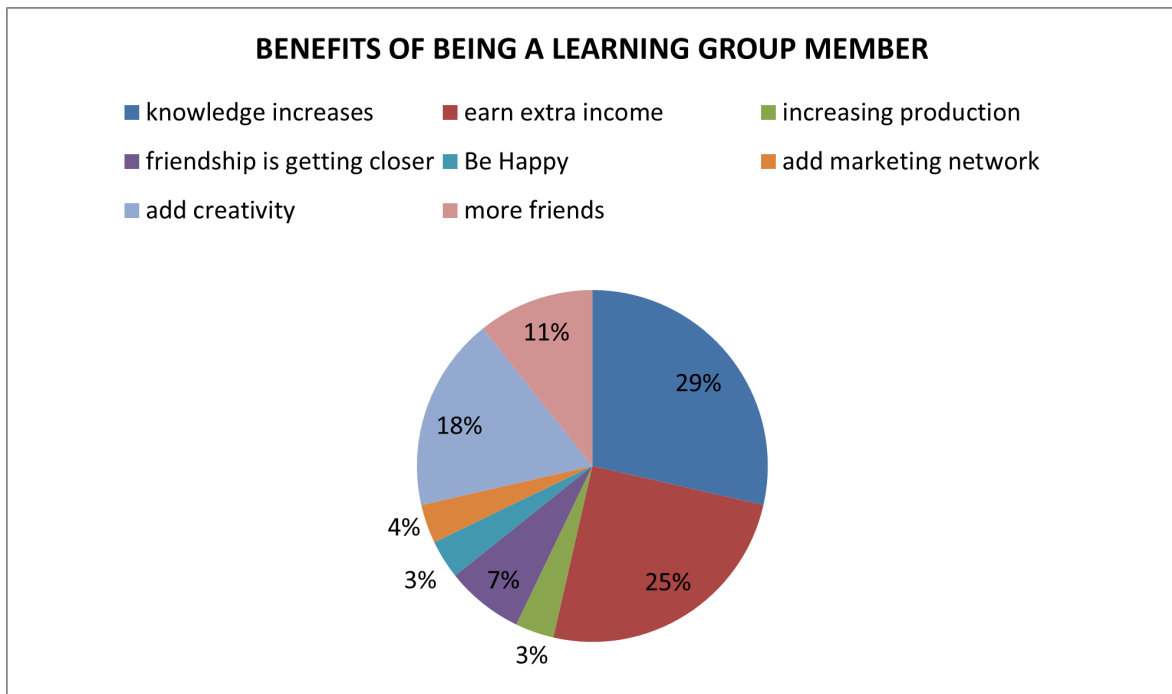
*If you are self-taught, do you share the results with your friends in the group? Yes. Sometimes the work of friends is distributed in groups (JU). This process can add new knowledge for all members (DW).*

Based on interviews with mentors and mentees in the Batik study group, it was successfully revealed that members were comfortable. During the interview session, one of the members stated that the mentoring program is associated with community values in the form of friendship, togetherness, and mutual help.

*Between studying at a training held by government agencies and study groups in the community, which one is easier to understand, ma'am? Learning in the community is easier because of the limited time allocated to the agency. In situations where we don't know after the training from the government, we tend to practice together until three days have passed. Does that mean cooperation? Yes. None of the members are stingy. Yes.*



Figure 2: Benefits of being a member of a Batik Learning group

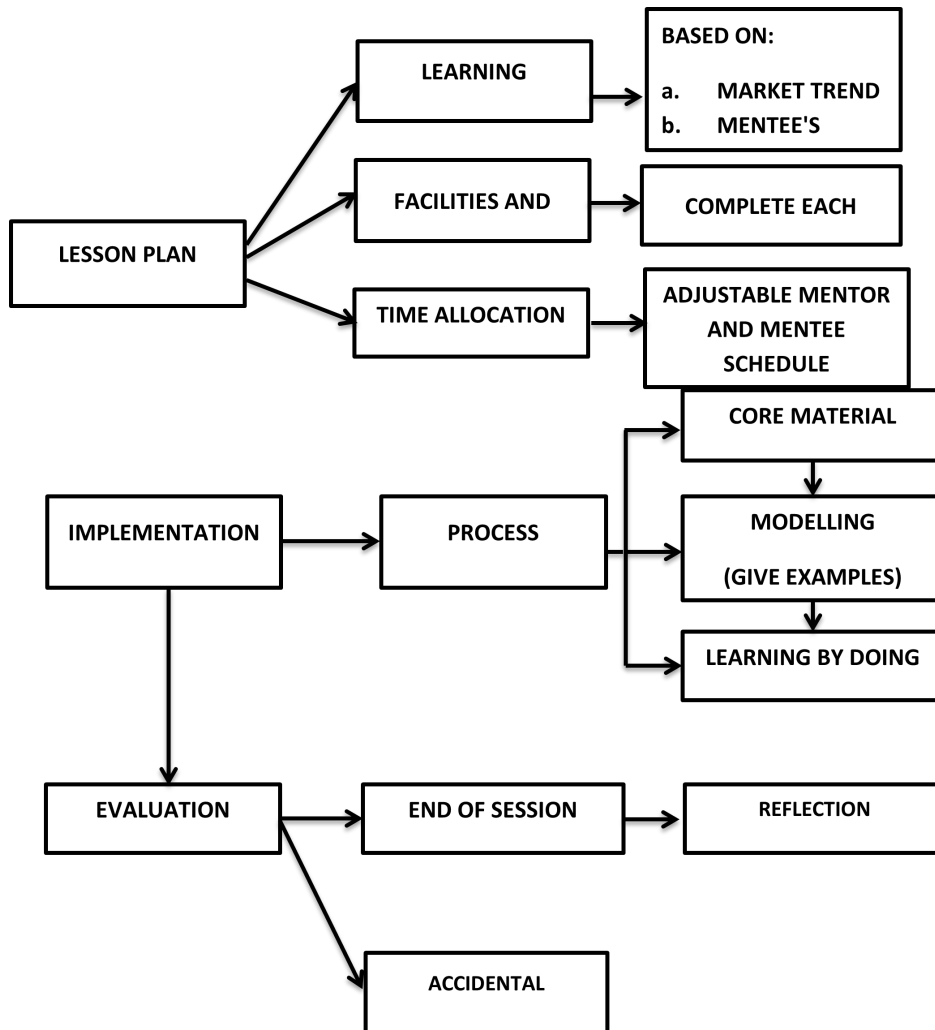


Apart from increasing Batik competence, some of the benefits that Batik members get are the increase in monthly income because, in the community, there is a joint marketing program (Figure 2). Through this joint marketing, the impact is cooperation in meeting customer demands in large quantities, resulting in increased production and marketing network. In addition, because of the closeness between mentors and mentees, they become Happy with many close friends. From the explanation above and the results of coding using NVIVO 12, it can be said that the mentoring model is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 illustrates that the mentoring model in the Batik community consists of 3 stages, namely planning, implementation, and learning evaluation. Learning planning includes activities to determine learning themes, time allocation, facilities and infrastructure. This process is determined by "deliberation". Deliberation is exchanging ideas to produce mutually agreed decisions. The role of the mentor as a facilitator of deliberation activities. The friendly relationship between mentor and mentee is mutual respect and complements each other for the success of mentoring activities.

The learning strategy used is learning by doing, direct practice is more effective than increasing the presentation of material. The last stage is evaluation. Evaluation at the end of learning activities. Another alternative is that the mentee can carry out evaluations outside of learning activities according to the level of difficulty of each mentee. The close relationship between mentor and mentee can increase the effectiveness of mentoring activities.

Figure 3: Mentoring Model in Batik Study Group



## Discussion and Conclusion

The learning plan determined jointly by the mentor and mentee indicates that the learning system is democratic. The emotional closeness between the mentor and the mentee, where the mentor is the head of the Batik community, makes it easy for the mentee to express all the difficulties experienced in learning Batik, which in turn has a significant impact on the results of the mentoring.

Several studies have proven that the role of mentors is one of the success factors in the mentoring process. For instance, the research carried out by Rosyadi et al. (2020) stated that mentors emerge from consultants whose social capacity has not received a positive response among MSMEs actors. Therefore, the mentoring program for MSMEs has not had a significant impact, either in the form of business incubation or formal training from stakeholders.

The values of cooperation and helping each other in community members open the door for informal learning. Providing inputs that occur informally without being planned is one reason to achieve 100% mentoring goals. The advantage of informal learning is that learners are more flexible in asking questions according to their pace and time. Certainly, different when they participate in training held by the government, with mentors they do not know. Based on this statement, formal training from local government agencies is less satisfying for MSMEs actors. This

is because the training does not provide a continuous learning process and is limited in a short time.

According to Bandura (1997), informal social learning is suitable when applied to MSMEs because it has a positive development (Hamburg, 2015). Bramley (1999) reported that the norm in MSMEs is to lean towards practical and experience-based informal learning rather than formal or accredited learning interventions. For women, career and psychosocial benefits arise from honest discussion, counselling, friendship, and advice (Tabbron et al., 1997). Informal mentoring relationships last from 3 to 6 years (Blake-Beard, 2001).

The values of cooperation and mutual help among community members show the close relationship between fellow members, including the mentor as chairman. A close mentoring relationship can facilitate the mentoring process according to its goals. It is proven that every learning program in the community always completes 100% of the expected competencies. Therefore, the close mentoring relationship between the mentor and the mentee affects the mentoring program's success.

Values are one of the characteristics where commonality is critical to a successful mentoring relationship. Hale (2000) stated that learning is optimized through shared values, beliefs, and life goals. In addition, the value of cooperation and complimentary is driven by the concept, which is one of the reasons for a successful mentoring program in the community. There is the concept of "Blessing" which is taken from religious values, which means that God makes the learning process easier when more knowledge is shared.

According to Hasbullah et al. (2014), the assisted MSMEs need to be involved in every decision-making process to overcome business problems and provide solutions). Adults need to know when to learn something to invest a large number of resources, such as in time and energy (Thompson & Deis, 2004).

Mentoring is the process whereby an experienced person shares knowledge and idea with individuals, or a group of people integrated into the organizational community (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). There is a certain satisfaction associated with helping others, feeling valued as a role model, and being appreciated. The core of the mentoring program is the modelling principles outlined by Geroy et al. (1998) and Alder (1992) as a combination of 'skills-based training' and various other facilitative techniques, such as discussion, demonstration, and feedback as has been done in this Batik study group.

The point of solid learning groups for completeness results lies in the essence of values within the community. The values that encourage cooperation are often from religion, sharing of historical experiences, and other deeply embedded cultural traditions formed with great difficulty (Fukuyama, 2002). Successful mentoring relationships are characterized by reciprocity, mutual respect, clear expectations, personal relationships, and shared values. According to Illies and Reiter-Palmon (2018), the mentees that perceive their values to be similar to those of their mentors have more mentoring success. Furthermore, a failed mentoring relationship is characterized by poor communication, lack of commitment, personality differences, perceived (or real) competition, conflicts of interest, and lack of mentor experience (Straus et al., 2013).

The reciprocal nature of dialogue leads to new understandings that cover challenging themes (Round, 2021). The mentees need to be an active listener that is open to feedback. They should also respect their mentor's input and time to be successful (Straus et al., 2013). The ability to learn continuously is a key determinant to succeed in a competitive sector (Sullivan, 2000). Continuous learning for MSMEs actors is possible when mentors in the same field become part of the business.

The benefits most felt by members are the increase in competence and sales, thereby leading to a rise in income. This certainly has a relationship with the effect of increased creativity. Psychologically, members become happier because friends and networks are growing. Therefore, an increase in work and skills leads to a rise in self-confidence. This is in accordance with the research carried out by Barrett (2006), which stated that learning through mentoring increases self-confidence.

In conclusion, mentoring relationships play a significant role in supporting the success of its programs for MSMEs actors (Illies & Reiter-Palmon, 2018; Hale, 2000). These success factors are supported by shared values, including cooperation, friendship, mutual help, and complementarity. The continuous mentoring process tends to occur when the mentor has a direct relationship with the group. Therefore, this research provides recommendations to stakeholders by stating that mentoring programs are more effective when the mentor comes from the MSMEs community. Furthermore, it enables the local government agency to start conducting mentoring training from MSMEs actors with better abilities and experience. The weakness of this study is the use of one "Batik" sector, therefore further studies need to be carried out using other sectors.

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