

CONTINUITY OF TRADITION DANCE: ACEDEMICIANS' INTERVENTION ON ARTISTS AND PERFORMING ARTS GROUPS

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Received: November 19, 2015. Revised: November 29, 2015. Accepted: December 4, 2015

Abstract

This article intends to uncover a concept of developing tradition-art groups in West Sumatra, which is considered that they have been left behind by modern-art groups in terms of packing aspect, presentation, and technical skills. Hence, this article reveals intervention of the academicians in developing and providing support in the forms of improving skills and knowledge of the artists and art groups. The support includes improving skills and knowledge of expressing arts through giving packing techniques and arranging art performance, orientated toward educational and social extension actions. The knowledge may consist of techniques for developing movements, dance music, costumes, and make-up affecting skills of arranging and packing performance arts that can be divested in art industries. The method used in this investigation was games that aimed to cope with boredom and improve new awareness of concepts of how to pack performance arts. In addition, the case study was employed to solve problems faced by partners in the field. Moreover, practices about how to pack the arts were critical to be done through brainstorming, discussing, and lecturing.

Keywords: performing art groups; packing; performing art industry

How to Cite: Indrayuda, I. (2015). Continuity of Tradition Dance: Acedemicians' Intervention on Artists and Performing Arts Groups. *Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education*, 15(2), 138-143. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15294/harmonia.v15i2.4454>

INTRODUCTION

Performing art groups are places to manage kinds of performance arts. This group, in West Sumatra, can be found in every level 2 region which consists of regency and city, such as Tanah Datar, Agam, Padang Pariaman, Padang, and Bukittinggi. On average, performance groups in West Sumatra are spread across the province in every regency controlled by the state government. In cities, performing art groups are not owned by state government, but they belong to individuals or particular artists.

For the time being, even though development and management have been conducted by the state government or the local one by the art department, the development is still not able to make the groups pack or arrange their performances according to the performing art contexts. Whenever they put on performances, thus, they are still not able to be categorized as the realizable value of entertaining consumption.

According to survey results of Performing art Investigation Team of Drama, Dance, and Music Department of Languages and Arts Faculty, Padang State Uni-

versity (2011), it was shown that performance arts experienced some problems making them difficult to compete in the art industries nowadays. Those problems were: (1) lack of knowledge and skill mastering in generating economic potency of art performances; both dance and music, (2) lack of knowledge and skill mastering in techniques of organizing dance and music forms that can be sold as performance arts in entertainment and tourism industries, (3) lack of knowledge and skills in arranging and packing shows for entertainment industry, (4) lack of knowledge and skills in utilizing technology to provide support in production process and performing art shows in entertainment industry. Besides, their capability to publish their productions and analyze the market are included, as well.

In addition to the increase of performing art development which becomes more popular in West Sumatera, drawback faced by most of performing art groups in various regions is that they are still not able to compete against urban performing art groups. A great deal of alumni from art academic institutions and colleges enrolling in performing art groups in the cities has made such groups either semi-professional or professional. Those groups have received the knowledge of choreography and composition, harmony, techniques, performance arrangement, make-up and costumes as well as management orientated toward performing art industries. Urban performing art groups in turn are able to arrange their shows to enhance the quality and generate audience's interest, particularly performing art industries.

Lack of knowledge and skills in most of performing art groups, especially the ones related to science and technology underlies perspective of performance-art, performing art industries, or marketing problems. There are, in fact, many performing art groups in regions marginalized by performing art industries. In the shows organized by Department of Tourism and Regional Creative Economy, performances of the concerned groups were less satis-

factory in terms of visual, audio, and the arrangement. In turn, many tourism organizers were dissatisfied with the performances, so the consumers watching them voiced a complaint to the Department of Tourism and Culture. Although they are traditional performance arts, they contain lots of unique things. Uniqueness, however, is not enough to satisfy art-lover's taste.

Talking about shows, there are a lot of aspects needed to be taken into account by both performers and art organizers – ones of which is packing. Aspects of skills and presentation are included, as well. In terms of those aspects supporting performances, in order to place practical, artistic, and aesthetic values on the performances, it is needed to be trained and learned through learning those aspects. As skills and knowledge do not come naturally – without efforts and learning, the performing art groups in rural area are still not able to compete against urban performing art groups. This can be confirmed since rural performing art groups do not master the skills and knowledge of performing art aspects very well, which nowadays become industry commodity.

Looking at the importance of skills and knowledge for society, particularly performing art society, one of the means needed to be carried out is giving meaningful and valuable contributions to the society. Knowledge and skills, in turn, are able to be utilized to improve their insight and knowledge as well as skills which are orientated towards their life welfare at the time being and in the future. Contribution given is making up for their lack of knowledge and skills to the aspects which becomes their weaknesses in presenting performance art. According to the field observation, the basic one becoming weaknesses of performing art groups is packing, presentation, and their capability in doing and arranging the composition.

Due to the fact that performance arts in rural area are lack of science and technology aspects, attitude and behaviors as a group of performance arts orientated

toward art industries are taken into account that they are needed to be revised – the concerned performing art groups so that the performance arts contain holistic quality in aspect of attitude as an artist who are able to service art lovers, aspect of skills in playing or presenting the performance, and aspect of knowledge in organizing self, works, and things related to the works. Aspect of attitude frequently becomes unnoticed weakness for performing art groups – both in urban which are developed area and in rural area. Thus, behavior as the one serving many people is required to give knowledge of how to serve society well in order to make them enjoy the dances presented.

The results of such investigation function as a gate to conduct social and cultural intervention in order to make social and cultural changes in artist society as a means to improve knowledge, skills, and their prosperity. Therefore, the effort carried out is knowledge and social interventions by giving knowledge of organizing arts – technique developing movements, music, costumes, and makeup – which affect skills of organizing and packing performance arts which become value for money in art industries. In addition, it also gives knowledge of performing art management that is beneficial to produce, organize, publish, and analyze market in performance arts.

DISCUSSION

As an academician, we are under obligation to carry out *tree Dharma perguruan tinggi* (three missions of the university), and one of which is providing social services. In this context, an academician is supposed to be perceptive into the surroundings; both social and cultural environment, as the one that happened in regions of West Sumatera. It has been explained in the background that many rural performing art groups are still not able to compete against the urban groups. This threatens development of traditional dances as performance art in those regions. In

fact, there are endangered traditional dances as performing art groups are still not able to pack and develop the traditional dances into the new ones. They, later on, will be gradually ignored by the society.

In relation to those problems, it is urgent that traditional dances and performing art groups need to be preserved. One of the means is by academician intervening since through exchanging knowledge and skills, traditional artists will acquire insight, knowledge, and skills. As a result, they are able to improve endangered traditional dances. One of the academician's responsibilities is giving socialization to the surrounding.

Nowadays, there recent phenomenon in which academicians are engaged in college or studio, ignoring the development of traditional arts and artists in the regions. They at least want to take advantage of such situation for research purposes without intending to develop the artists as well as performing art groups. As a matter of fact, developing artists and traditional performance arts affect the continuity of their research objects. This is still not realized by most of academicians both in West Sumatera and in other provinces.

Looking at the issues that occur in most of performing art groups and artists in West Sumatera, it is important that academicians give intervention in knowledge and skills of performing arts. Those artists and performing art groups will be dropped behind by the more-modern ones if academicians do not give intervention in knowledge and skills. Later on, inability of traditional performing art groups influences the continuity of traditional-dance development in West Sumatera.

In giving knowledge to the artists or traditional-dance groups, it is better to begin with various methods that are able to encourage and motivate them in order to acknowledge academicians. If it is not based on the characteristics of society in a rural area of West Sumatera, they will be sceptical about the academicians once they build relation for gathering or giving information, even though the information

accommodates the society. Consequently, the way of taking part in traditional artists and performing art groups should be done using appropriate methods. In the following, it will be explained kinds of method to exchange knowledge and skills in traditional artists and performing art groups which consists of games, case study, modelling, brainstorming, discussion, and lecture.

Games were carried out to develop a fresh situation in transferring knowledge and skills of performing arts, so the knowledge given would be easily understood by them without feeling inferior to the academicians. Giving materials of performing arts also overcame monotonous situation and increased new awareness of concepts in performing arts which was able to be economic potency in the entertainment industry. It was predicted that this method developed sense of familiarity with the academicians.

Case study was conducted by investigating cases, particularly the ones faced to discuss how to solve problems faced by traditional artists. It was suggested that solving such problems employed persuasive approach. This approach was considered to be able to appreciate them as ego of traditional artists was commonly difficult to conquer. Thus, to break down their cases, it was needed persuasive approach.

Practice or modelling was processed in one of the indicators which would be carried out by academicians in exchanging knowledge and skills in performing arts by artists and traditional performing art groups. To stimulate the imagination and motivation of traditional artists in order to make them able to understand the knowledge such as packing creation dances based on the traditional ones, it was needed academicians who demonstrated the skills transferred such as developing movement motifs, music motifs, and constructing dance organization as well as accompanying music of the dances. This practice was carried out for material concerning on skills and the way to solve them.

Brainstorming is the process of col-

lecting ideas collectively and compiling them into an inventory of the stated ideas. Brainstorming was carried out for specific science materials. Traditional artists preferred voicing opinion in solving problems since they did not want to be degraded. Exchanging knowledge in improving dance organization in West Sumatera done by academicians was sometimes failed since there was no discussion.

This problem was triggered by the characteristics of West Sumatera people who were independent and democratic. They preferred discussion, sitting at low or standing equally high. People of West Sumatera or Minangkabau were people who never wanted to be patronized, so they lived in a rural area, particularly traditional artists who were sensitive. Therefore, brainstorming method was a correct choice in developing their motivation in order to make them accept the knowledge of performing arts given by academicians.

The discussion was a process conducted to examine the problems faced. Discussion was carried out in terms of things related to materials given - both knowledge and skills. This was very important to uncover what knowledge they might need to organize and pack performance arts as well as planning effective performance arts.

Discussing intensively enabled giving intervention of knowledge and skills from the academicians, so what was given would be easily absorbed by traditional artists or performing art groups. As a result, intervention of knowledge about composition, choreography, music organization, and performance packing would be able to be well-done.

Lecture was done to give normative material (rules applied locally and nationally). In addition, it also explained activity plan as solution steps on problems accepted by the traditional artists. Lecture, however, did not have to patronise the society, but it gave issues and overview on goal aspect.

The lecture would be able to explain qualitatively about intervention materials

- knowledge of choreography, composition, performing art packing orientated towards entertainment industries. Lecture needed to be supported by analogies related to their experiences, and it should avoid using jargon and academic terms. Academic terms would be confusing, so transferring knowledge and skills resulted in failure. Hence, language choice in lecturing should be contextual and close to their cultures in the form of guiding art creators.

Guiding activities for art creator were skill training and giving knowledge about performing arts orientated towards performing art industries. Skill training and giving knowledge about performing arts consisted of: a) procedures for packing performance-arts that were full of content and form; b) procedures for presenting and organizing shows in terms of place, arts, attitudes to the audience, and expressing self; c) moving skills, playing music, and selecting costumes and make-up; and d) arranging show repertoire.

In the case of the approach in exchanging knowledge in traditional artists and traditional-art groups, we needed to try to engage in dialogue to explain the importance of knowledge about performing arts that had to be mastered by creators and artists in West Sumatera. A performing art group had to be able to change their paradigm, missions, and visions. They are living in the era of information, technology, and science that has been quickly developing. In the past, the roles of dance or traditional arts were related to traditional ceremonies or social and cultural activities. This knowledge has been set for a long time in the society who organized arts, particularly those to whom we referred in the guiding process. Presentation of their works, therefore, was packed tediously, and it seemed to be simple.

According to the dialogue and explanation of the advantages of training program that has been conducted informally, aiming to improve their knowledge about performing arts leading to economic purposes, they were expected to be enthusiastic about such suggestions. Thus, we

needed to begin with giving knowledge about performing arts generally. We then continued on performing techniques - performing dance and music, costumes and make-up, as well as arranging magnificent shows.

It would be better to begin the first session by giving knowledge about organizing dance in choreography perspective that their dances they showed were monotonous. By giving knowledge about choreography guided by performing art groups, it was given knowledge of improving patterns, arranging such patterns into movements. The movements were then organized based on the moving-sentence rhythm - *berner*, *terner*, and *rondo*. The moving sentences were arranged according to AB-AB order (*berner*), ABC-ABC order (*terner*), and ACBAAC-BCCABCCA order (*rondo*).

After the first session discussing about arranging patterns in moving sentences and rhythm pattern of each sentence, the following session was designing stage and room as well as organizing dynamic and dramatic designs. The society was given knowledge about how to design firm and diverse stages in addition to dynamic and dramatic ones. By the dynamic and dramatic examples with graphics, the team gave the explanation that dynamic and dramatic design absolutely determined the unity of dance performances.

In the next session, we gave training on how to design the desired music, especially how to adjust movement-rhythm patterns. By adjusting movement-rhythm patterns to musical rhythm pattern, motif of the music which would be used to accompany the dance could be arranged. In this session, training of designing suitable costumes to the characteristics of dance movements was also given as well as make-up worn. It was explained that costumes and make-up determines dance performance for the audience. Even though the movements and dance organization accompanied by music were considered to be good and attract the audiences, if the costumes and makeup were not well-arranged, the

dance, in terms of its presentation would attract unwanted attention from the audiences as the packing was not able to be completely arranged.

After training has been given to the artists, the instructors needed to do a knowledge test to measure how far those guided artists absorbed the given instructions. Knowledge test was conducted by performing shows – both the ones which have never been guided in terms of performing-arts knowledge and the ones gained such knowledge. By turn, they performed, and it was discussed with the guided artists; both organizers and performers, to ask for comments. This was done as an indicator of success in this activity.

CONCLUSIONS

Activities of knowledge and skill intervention needs to be conducted to assist the society in improving skills and knowledge of arts and performing arts. Performing art groups in West Sumatera are generally lacking of knowledge which guides them to be able to compete and expand cultural heritages they have. In the end, their cultures are gradually degraded and ignored by the development of entertainment industries in West Sumatera.

Therefore, the intervention of academicians in exchanging knowledge and skills has answered suspicion among the society about the degeneration of local dance from the entertainment industries. This intervention has already overcome the inability of local artists to develop traditional dances.

Intervention of knowledge and skills from the academicians is a part of *true*

Dharma perguruan tinggi (three missions of the university) which plays role as one of the means to educate society and assist the society in solving problems, especially cultural problems such as performing art problems. Thus, by educating society and motivating them as well as creating entertainment-spirited society, they are able to have ability orientated towards economic values which can improve their welfare.

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