PUBLIC LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE AND DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT; AN OUTLINE FOR A COMPARATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME BETWEEN SWEDEN AND INDONESIA

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A Public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional, or national government or through some other form of community organizations. It provides access to knowledge, information, and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationally, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic, and employment status and educational attainment – IFLA/UNESCO.

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to present the conceptual background of collaborative research programme that is currently under development as a joint venture between the Swedish School of Library and Information Science in Boras, Sweden and the Department of Library Science at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The programme, entitled Public Library and Information Services and Democratic Development (PLISADD), is comparative and contains plans for several studies of the role of public libraries in local democratic processes in Sweden and Indonesia. Although the programme is comparative this paper will emphasize the prerequisites of the Indonesian institutional regarding librarianship and library education.

The two departments that share responsibility for the programme are in themselves as different as can be, thus creating specific points of departures for collaborations. SSLIS is one of the largest LIS institutions in Europe with approximately 1500 students and a full postgraduate programme. SSLIS has a long tradition of international collaboration on both undergraduates level and in different research settings. Countries that have been partners are, among others, South Africa, Vietnam and Moldova. The Department of Library Science at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta was established in 1992. Due to lack of funding far no research has been done, although most of the staff is required to carry out research as part of their duties. International collaboration such as the PLISADD programme is a way to inaugurate research and thus increase quality of the department's activity.

PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

Public library and public information services are important features in the structure of democratic societies around the world. The democratic system is dependent on citizens that are well educated and well informed. The democratic society has a responsibility to provide equal opportunities for its citizens to take part in its decision-making processes on local, regional, and national levels. It has also a responsibility to provide education and culture on equal terms for all, regardless of ethnic belonging, religious faith, gender, or economic ability.

To day traditional democracies built on the national state are challenged by the emergence of a new form of

social construction, by many referred to as the "information society". Information and knowledge are seen as keys to social participation and political influence, in a way that is comparable to money in the industrial society and estate in the natural society. In this the motion state is less emphasized, and instead there is more direct connection between global communication and the daily life of people in local communities, at least by the wide spread of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This development places high demands on citizens to be information literate and it request of society that public information is distributed to all of its members equally. Regardless of ethnicity, gender, religion or political preferences.

There is a widespread trust in that ICT will bring new parts of the closer together in a way that has impossible before. An interesting feature in this development is that the potential of ICT lies beyond the reach of governmental control which enables movements of different political, moral and religious standpoints to work globally without the risk of interruption by public officials or censorship. We are seen several examples of this power of ICT during the last decade e.g. in the war at the Balkans, during the political turbulences in Sri Lanka and East Timor and most recently in the war following the 9/11 in New York and Washington.

ICTS provide not only opportunities for new relation and contacts between people and grouping around the world, they also provide threats to the institutionalized order that has been developed in liberal democracies around the world during the last two hundred years. It in therefore time now to re-establish and act upon the new prerequisites that are under rapid development so that democratic ideals are not undermined to such extent that they pose an actual threat to basic human rights and the active political participation of citizens in the social development in countries all over the world. In many countries in.e.g. within the European Union

this is being made at present (Thorhauge et al. 1997), but in many other areas this works is to be commenced. Herein lies a large opportunity for many countries to combine a political development into more democratic systems using the possibilities of ICT in creating locally viable and participatory environments. In this, the established of stable and widespread public library structures are of central concern.

Democracy, literacy and libraries in Indonesia

In new emerging democracies, the establishment of relevant public institutional structures that can support the democratic system is crucial (Held, 1995). In the face of the increased significance of information and literacy, one of the features that must be institutionalized public (and free) library and information service. There are however, in many countries, obstacles to this development, though our knowledge of these is much aspect scarce (Yilmas, 1999).

In Indonesia, about 15% (almost 21 000 000 peoples) of the population is regarded as illiterate by UNESCO (1999). There are a vast number of ethnic groups and some 300 languages are spoken on a daily basis beside the official Bahasa Indonesia. Not only do these conditions lead to consequences for the general democratic development in Indonesia, but they also stress many of the issues that make public library and information services a potentially viable part of this development. Unlike Sweden, with its small homogenous population and high literacy rates, where democratic processes are to high degree decentralized to regional and local levels, Indonesian governmental policies have been characterized by a strong centralization aim at keeping thus huge and diverse country together. It is only recently that political decision making e.g. such that concerns public libraries has been decentralized to regional levels in an attempt to create a more sustainable and stable democratic participation of citizens locally (Indonesia, 2000). One of the main efforts by the Indonesian government is to implement a more accessible general

educational system based a nine year education compulsory program for children. This is seen as the main key to decreases and, in the long run, erases literacy. In the official descriptions of these processes public libraries, school libraries and others are virtually invisible (Indonesia, 2000: 1661).

Although Wilfred Plumbe (1987) describes Indonesia as a "land of libraries" very little is known about the conditions for librarianship and public library and information service in Indonesia, at least from a scientific point of view. The development has, surprisingly enough, taken place a bit beside the general discussion of library and information development in developing countries, even when this has focused on South East Asia. Extremely few studies even touches upon the condition in Indonesia (Retno Prabandari, 1993, Annuar 1985). Today Indonesia has some 8 600 publicly funded libraries, The public libraries are organized under 304 regional library systems, there are 25 "national libraries" on provincial levels and one national library, of Indonesia, located in Jakarta. Furthermore there are about 930 public ally funded special libraries. There are 13 departments that offer programmes in Library and Information Science at university levels. However, all the way up to 1998, many librarians were not educated as such. Instead there was a system in Indonesia, which allows civil servants working in libraries funded by the government for at least two years to be credited as librarians (pustakawan). As stated in a degree from the minister of Civil Servant Empowerment 1n 1988, the only prerequest in that they have a formal education minimum at senior high school level (SK MENPAN Number: 18/1988). In 1998 this was changed as new governmental deccess emphasized the professionalism of librarianship (SK MENPAN Number 33/1998). To become a librarian today, one has to hold a diploma (2 years) in Library and Information Science. This has mean that a distinction has been made between those who have diploma degree in library, and those who work in libraries but have no such. The latter group is today called Librarian Assistant/Asisten Pustakawan. The Indonesian research activity within LIS is scarce. In 1998 there were 52 publications in Southeast Asian journals on librarianship and LIS by Indonesian researchers, all of them written in the official Bahasa Indonesian Language (Jaffe Yee Yeow-fei, 1999).

RESEARCH IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

The relation between librarianship and political development is well known and research has been carried out in settings in many, mostly developed and industrial, countries (Roberts, 1992). However, studies on the prerequisites and possibilities for public library and information services in more unstable political conditions such as those in young, developing democracies in undeveloped countries are less known to us. Because of these researchers have often failed to explain and be a part of the development of library and information services and librarianship in developing countries, not least when it comes to issues of equality and multiculturalism (Byrne, 1999).

In LIS a number of areas have been highlighted as specifically important in the analysis and development of librarianship in developing countries (Ruhig du Mont, Butlar & Caynon, 1994).

- Library use studies
- Barriers to service
- Special services for culturally diverse users
- Information literacy and gender equality
- Ethnic/minority group research

This present research programme direct its interest to these issues. In establishing research and educational collaborations between LIS institutions in Sweden and Indonesia issues of public library and information services may be focus for analysis in relation to the general development of

information and cultural infrastructures supporting democracy in one oft the largest countries of the world.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND GENERAL THEMES OF PLISADD

The prime objective of PLISADD is to analyze the relation between public library and information resources and services and democratic development in two distinctly different political contexts, Indonesia and Sweden. Special emphasis is put on issues regarding gender and ethnic equality in access to these resources and services. Scientifically, the programme spans over several problem areas and methodological approaches a currently in use with Library and Information Studies. The overall methodological strategy of the programme is a model for naturalistic case study inquiry with emphasis on qualitative analyses in local and regional settings (Ellon, 1990).

The programme will be implemented through empirical studies concentrated around the following three themes:

1. *Institutional Prerequisites of Public Library and Information Services on Local, Regional, National, and Global Levels*

. The main issues in this theme are to survey and analyze the publicly funded infrastructure of library and information services in Indonesia and is Sweden. Comparisons will be made in order to access the potential of these service and resources as aids to c\schools and other institutions that increase information literacy among the population in a way that is beneficial to the specific prerequisites of Indonesian and Sweden democratic development. The main methodologies will be:

a. Document analyses of gathered statistics and policy statements on different political levels and professional statements within the library and information sector, both on national and international levels.

b. Interviews with agents in relation to the theme, for example, local and national politicians responsible for library and information issues, librarian in different kinds of publicly funded libraries and owners of Internet Café, among others.

2. *Availability of public library and information services and resources to marginalized groups in society.*

Democratic development demands equal rights to social information. This is a general prerequisite for a broad popular engagement in society's decision-making processes. Equal access to information through public library and information services is, however, not obvious in most societies. Sweden and Indonesia represent two different democratic settings in which marginalized groups must be treated in different ways. The aim of this part of the programme is to identify such marginalized groups and analyze the relation between their position in society and the availability of public and information resources. . Beside the various groups that be identified in the course of the programme special focus will be put on gender analyses of the availability of and access to public library and information resources. Methods used will, primarily, be interviews with relevant professionals such as librarians, and focus group interviews with representatives for different groups in society. Based on the knowledge gained under theme one a case study setting will be constructed focusing on one chosen city or region in Indonesia and in Sweden.

3. *Barriers towards equal access to public and information services and resources.*

This theme will develop the previous two by analyzing specific barriers towards equal access to public library and information services in a case study setting in one chosen city or region in Indonesia and in Sweden. Comparisons of how professionals within public library and information services deals with the questions of inequality will be made.

Methodologically a case study model will be used in order to identify local public library and information resource and service infrastructures and place them in relation to experiences of library and information professionals and representatives for different groups in society. An intervention will be made in a chosen area in Indonesia that elevates the professional's practices in relation to woman and information access through public library. The design of the intervention will depend on the local environment.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE PROGRAMME

The relation between public library and information resources and services and the development of a viable democracy will be emphasized. Through the comparative imperative we can be able to formulate knowledge from the experiences made in two very different political and demographic contexts of Sweden and Indonesia. This knowledge can be utilized on both Sweden and Indonesia when developing librarianship and adjusting professional practice to:

1) The requirements of equal access to information and culture on a local community level,

2) The participation on an international level within the emergence of a global information society

The case study setting will be implemented and discussed as a way of developing methodological tools in LIS and librarianship. This is particularly of value in the comparative environment of the programme, where differences due to environmental and contextual factors may be approach.

The emphasis on gender issues in regard to the main objective of the programme will provide knowledge that can be utilized in practical librarianship in Sweden as well as in Indonesia. The intervention in Indonesia or gender equality and information access through public libraries will also provide professional tools for professional library practice.

The study of the relation between public library and information services and democratic development from an information literacy point of view will allow the programme to develop tools and recommendations for the library profession on how to work with these issues pointing at the potential of the libraries as complementary institutions to schools in the work of increasing literacy in local community settings.

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