

Transformation of the Prison Library of Malaysian Integrity

School : A Meaningful Experience

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ABSTRACT

The existence of academic classes at the Integrity School of Correctional Center indirectly encourages juvenile delinquents to use the prison library to obtain information related to their studies. The importance of the prison library, to meet the information needs of prison inmates (including the juvenile delinquents), providing materials for inmates' studies and indirectly supporting the rehabilitation process of prison inmates. The awareness in helping the rehabilitation process of juvenile delinquents through exposure to the use of reading material as a rehabilitation tool; has encouraged the Tun Seri Lanang Library (PTSL), UKM to run a community service program at the Prison Library of Integrity School. PTSL UKM has sought advice from UiTM regarding collections and services in the prison library in order to produce a prison library model that can meet the needs of juvenile delinquents. As a result, a prison library model has been created by providing a bibliotherapy corner, improving the collection based on the needs of juvenile delinquents and brightening the prison library with colors that indirectly help in the rehabilitation process of juvenile delinquents in Malaysia.

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INTRODUCTION

The word prison; we will keep imagining about misery, evil, fear and negative things. Some of us will continue to snicker, insult, curse and even laugh at individuals who are detained in prison for crimes committed. They will continue to describe all the evils of individuals who are detained and imprisoned. The fact is, nobody from us really wants to know about their situation behind the bar. Perhaps only a few are interested to know the methods that implemented by the Malaysian Prisons Department to rehabilitate or change inmates to become better and useful individuals or provide benefits when they released soon.



Figure 1: The staff of PTSL UKM, UiTM and the Malaysian Prison Department

To help the effort to create a civilized generation among juvenile delinquents who will be released later; a program has been carried out by the Malaysian Prisons Department; the Tun Seri Lanang Library (PTSL), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) together with the Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). These three agencies have combined their expertise to hold a community service program at Correctional Center A. This idea was sparked at the end of 2021. Since long ago, UKM has always strived to provide impact and benefit to stakeholders such as students, industry, government and society. In the T.E.R.A.S Strategic Plan UKM 2021-2025 has outlined five (5) UKM Teras Values and 25 initiatives. Under initiative 'Kebitaraan Prihatin', there are Community Initiatives to focus on. And the Tun Seri Lanang Library take this as their mission to provide services to the community.

This community service program is focused on efforts to help juvenile delinquents or also known as young prisoners. Juvenile delinquents are defined as young prisoners under the age of 21. Juvenile delinquents live separately from adult inmates and this will help us to focus on helping them to shape the excellence of their personalities which it will turn to help them to be with society when they are released later.

PRISON EDUCATION

The educational needs of juvenile delinquents (aged 21 and under) are very important to prevent them from returning to criminal activities after being released later. In Malaysia, the educational needs of juvenile delinquents are the same as for children or teenagers outside of prison.

Juvenile delinquents are allowed to obtain formal education and are allowed to sit for important examinations in the Malaysian education system. The educational program is a collaboration with the

Ministry of Education of Malaysia; together with the Malaysian Prisons Department. Teachers are sent to prisons (Integrity Schools) to teach juvenile delinquents for academic purposes as follows :

- a) 3M Class (Basic reading, counting and writing class)
- b) Lower Secondary Class.
- c) Upper Secondary Class (for SPM and STPM preparation)
- d) Higher Education Classes – Long Distance Education (Diploma or Bachelor's Degree)

The importance of education as a component to the rehabilitation of prison inmates has led to the establishment of libraries in prisons. With the role of the library, it is seen as an important driver in the agenda of intellectual freedom and social justice (Šimunić, Tanacković & Badurina, 2016). The existence of academic classes indirectly encourages juvenile delinquents to use the prison library to obtain information related to their studies or their school subjects. According to Conrad (2012), every prison library should ;

- a) Meet the information needs of prison inmates (considering the age of the inmates);
- b) Allow prison inmates to maintain contact with the outside world and improve vocational skills;
- c) Prepare lesson/study materials;
- d) Supporting the rehabilitation process of prison inmates;
- e) Provide leisure/light reading materials to prison inmates for recreational purposes;
- f) Provide information related to employment opportunities, assistance in the community to prison inmates for use when released later.

According to the Malaysian Prisons Act 1995 : Prisons Regulations 2000, there is a statement that says that every prison must provide a library and it is subject to the regulations and to any conditions determined by the Director General (Commissioner General of Prisons) and every prisoner must be allowed to have books library and change it as often as possible (p. 48).

THE NEW PRISON LIBRARY MODEL FOR INTEGRITY SCHOOL OF MALAYSIA

Based on the Prison Act 1995, it is proof that the prison library is very important as one of the components to the rehabilitation of prison inmates. Thus, an efficient prison library model for the use of juvenile delinquents is very necessary. Based on a study that has been carried out in Malaysia; such as a study of information needs among juvenile offenders (Rafedzi & Abrizah, 2013); it was found that the role of the prison library among juvenile delinquents and the relationship between color in the library with the personal formation and attitude of juvenile delinquents, has created a prison library model that has been designed based on to the wishes and needs of juvenile delinquents.

To that extend, PTSL UKM and School of Information Science (SIS) KPPIM have collaborated to redevelop the prison library facilities for the use of juvenile delinquents at Correctional Center A. The Malaysian Prison Department and Correctional Centre A had agreed to allow PTSL and SIS KPPIM to use their prison library to give the prison library the new look and become a model for other Correctional Centers.

The situation and environment for the prison library is different from other libraries behind the bars. There are no cheerful colors, no comfortable sofas or furniture or perhaps no Air conditioning to help library users focus or to enjoy their reading material. If we look at the collection material in the prison library; we will be shocked with dump of reading materials that are more than 30 years old. There are also reading materials that are not suitable for juvenile delinquents to help themselves to be better person when they are released later.

According to Head Librarian, UKM; Miss Rohaya Umar (2023); planning has been arranged to make a site visit to the Prison Library of Integrity School at Correctional Center A on September 21, 2022. In addition, announcements were made through various mediums to obtain donations of reading materials, goods and cash. The donated materials received are selected, classified and the description entered into the library system using OpenBiblio software.

This prison library model has also been equipped with a bibliotherapy corner. Bibliotherapy has started to develop in Malaysia through the Malaysian Bibliotherapy Association. Bibliotherapy or book therapy is a method of therapy through reading using selected materials through mediums such as books, motivational words, scriptures, song lyrics, poems, poems, films and photos as materials to help the community who face psychological problems, emotional and mental disorders. Usually this therapy is combined with writing, coloring, art, music and games. By reading related material, juvenile delinquents can see from : (a) A positive aspect such as they are not the first or the only ones that face the problem; (b) There is another solution to the problem and (c) Help them to face the problem more realistically.



Figure 2: Material selection process by field advisor

Puan Zaidah Sulaiman, as the Prison Library's Community Service Program Advisor added that *"The work of this program involves four (4) phases, the first phase involving a discussion with the Malaysian Prisons Department and a site visit by a field advisor from Faculty of Information Management, UiTM"*.



Figure 3: Student from Library Management Program, UiTM are pasting call number label.

"The second phase is to collect the reading materials, selection of appropriate materials by experts in the field from School of Information Science, separation of reading materials according to subject and the work of pasting call number labels done by students from Library Management Program, Faculty of Information Management and staff from PTSL, UKM."

"The third phase involves library maintenance such as painting and rearranging furniture on March 2 and 8, 2023."

"The fourth phase on March 9, 2023 is related to collection management which involves selecting the existing collection whether to keep or to discard it. Then, separation of materials according to subject, pasting of call number labels, arrangement of materials and demonstration and training on the use of the library system".



Figure 4: Staff from PTSL UKM are pasting call number labels.



Figure 5: Library Management Program students who are involved in the PTSL UKM community service program.



Figure 6: The process of painting the Prison Library by PTSL UKM staff

THE NEW PRISON LIBRARY MODEL AND JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

Mrs. Asmany Aza Ahmad, as Head of the Community Service Program of the Prison Library said that ;

"Before this, juvenile delinquents would mostly complain about the collection of reading materials that do not meet their needs. We have referred this from our program advisor and field expert. Prison library for juvenile delinquents has very small amount of 3M (writing, counting and reading skills) reference materials for them to learn the basics of reading, writing and counting. Lack of reading materials that can increase their motivation, reading materials that can delight them like hobby books and books with interesting pictures from around the world."

With the new prison library model, juvenile delinquents will appreciate the existence of a prison library with a more up-to-date collection and more enjoyable prison library environment. Juvenile delinquents are also given the opportunity to fill their free time with reading the up-to-date and more entertaining library collections.



Figure 7: PTSL UKM librarians are organizing books according to a special classification system for Prison Libraries



Figure 8: Bibliotherapy corner of prison library for juvenile delinquents

Apart from that, this prison library model has also focused on the selection of colors that are preferred by juvenile delinquents. The influence or impact of colors in the life of juvenile delinquents, needs to be taken seriously considering that color actually affects the learning emotions, thinking process and psychological health of juvenile delinquents, creating harmony and removing negative emotional elements among juvenile delinquents.

Preliminary research on the relationship between color and the emotions of juvenile delinquents was carried out in Malaysia in 2012 - 2014. This research was carried out in five (5) different locations across the country. The results of the research found that juvenile delinquents really hope that the library can help them to cheer up their lives behind the bar. The variety of colors will encourage a feeling of happiness and cheerfulness among juvenile delinquents (Rafedzi, 2015).

"It is true that we are not free because we are here [prison]. But, with the efforts of PTSL UKM and UiTM; we are free with our world in this library. I know... which book I can choose next. Thank you all." Ali [not a proper name] smiled when asked about the library that has been given a new lease of life. Ali spontaneous added, *"Arsenal!"*

"I'm not interested in reading; nor the library. It is impossible for me to go to the library. But, when we were here [prison], the teacher repeatedly invited us to go to the library. I persisted for not going in because the library is a place only for certain people. But, one day. I noticed that the library look difference. It looks lively with interesting colors. So.. one day, I entered the library. Apparently...mmm...it's a waste not to go to the library earlier." Ahmad [not a proper name] looked at the researcher with a smile.

"It should be, this library has always been this cheerful. Nice to sit here. I'm feel happy." Amin [not a proper name] continues to choose a hobby-related books.

"As I live as a free teenager, my sister often told me to go to the library after school. But, I kept detouring with friends. I was involved in a shoplifting case. If I wasn't with them, of course I wouldn't be here." Badrul [not a proper name] bowed his head to show regret for the crime he had committed.

"This is the most fun and exciting place. Like what people say.. Mmm.. what... heaven!" Ah Meng [not a proper name] smiled.

The Deputy Commissioner of Prisons, Tuan Rosoman Bin Abu Bakar @ Che Din also as the Director of Selangor State Prisons & Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, greatly expects assistance and cooperation from any experts to help in rehabilitating these juvenile delinquents that still young and they need to experience so many things for their lives.

"I don't know the current fields. I even don't know that library can help prison with this great prison library. With these efforts, it can ease and make it easier for the prison to help these juvenile delinquents. For others, please help them."

The inauguration program of this new prison library model can finally be implemented on 16 March 2023 at the Correctional Center A and was further enlivened by the presence of the Prison Superintendent, Tuan Mohd Ismawi bin Sulong; Director of UKM Industry and Community Network Center, Dr Aida Hanim A Hamid; Director of UiTM Community Network Center, Associate Prof Dr Mahadir Ladisma @ Awis; Integrity School Head of Education Unit, Correctional Centre A, Puan Hajah Rusmawati Hadi Radzi, Correctional Center A staffs, Integrity School teachers, UKM Tun Seri Lanang Library staff and more than 50 juvenile delinquents.

CONCLUSION

The pillar of well-being in civilized society is related to economic, social well-being and environmental sustainability through the culture of knowledge and diversity of views. To develop civilised generation, focus is necessary in every direction including for those who are behind the bar. Prison libraries play an important role in shaping juvenile delinquents to become a better society. The importance of education and knowledge should be emphasized to this group to prevent them from falling back into criminal activities after being released. This is where the role of the prison library is important to juvenile delinquents. The prison library with the concept of calmness and relaxation is very important to them to encourage them to continue visiting the prison library and then use all the facilities and get all the knowledge from the collection of reading material that has been prepared according to their interests and wishes. Academic libraries and specialized libraries in every organization should take the opportunity to continue helping the Department of Prisons to prepare or donate a collection of reading materials that can help juvenile delinquents become better people before they are released to society later.

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