

# HUMAN RESOURCES AS A FACTOR SUPPORTING THE SUCCESS OF THE COOPERATION “SISTER CITY” SEMARANG-BRISBANE

**Albert<sup>1</sup>**

Faculty of Economics, Semarang University

**Thomas Budi Santoso**  
**B. Irmawati**

Faculty of Economics, Soegijapranata Catholic University

## **ABSTRACT**

*Sister city collaboration is an activity carried out based on cooperation agreements between city governments in Indonesia and city governments abroad to mutually improve relations of friendship and understanding between the two countries. The Semarang Government on 11 January 1993 signed the first Sister City Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Lord Mayor Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. Unfortunately, this MoU of cooperation was halted in 2005, and although the MoU was still ongoing the implementation of the program activities stopped in 1997. The results of previous studies showed several factors as factors supporting the success of sister city cooperation. One of the supporting factors is the factor of human resources (HR). The purpose of this study is to identify aspects of the human resource factor that can support the success of the Semarang-Brisbane sister city activity.*

*Primary data collection in this study was in the form of a questionnaire and interview to eight respondents from various backgrounds. The analysis in this study was carried out using descriptive analysis to describe the opinions of respondents about human resource factors that support the success of Semarang-Brisbane sister city.*

*The results of the study show that the important HR competency factors are those who have an understanding of the culture and language of the partner countries. Whereas according to its importance the competence of human resources is mastering English or other relevant languages, understanding partner countries, experts in the field of international agreements and mastering foreign policy.*

**Keywords:** *Sister City Collaboration, MoU, HR, Funding, Infrastructure, Institutions, General Public, Sister City Partners*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Semarang Government on 11 January 1993 signed the *Sister City Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* first with Lord Mayor Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. This signing between the Mayor of Semarang and Lord Mayor Brisbane marked the beginning of a form of collaboration between the two cities in various fields. The cooperation includes in the fields of education, agriculture, technology and others. At that time, the hope of these two cities was to establish a friendly relationship that could strengthen the cooperation between the two countries.

---

<sup>1</sup> [albertekonomiusm@gmail.com](mailto:albertekonomiusm@gmail.com)

As stated in the *MoU* that both parties "recognize the importance of the principle of equality and mutual benefit; Desiring to enhance and encourage good faith and mutual understanding and cooperation between residents of both cities. " Judging from the citation of the contents of the *MoU* , it is clear that the cooperation relationship *sister city* was made so that the two cities can be mutually beneficial. In line with the time, the activity *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane gradually began to vacuum and finally the program activities stopped in 1997 (Farida *et al.*, 2004) and the *MoU* of this collaboration was stopped in 2005 without any extension efforts. From the results of the study by Farida *et al.* (2004), it was stated that the Semarang City Government seemed unprepared in the face of the implementation of the collaboration. This lack of readiness is due to the unpreparedness of human resources that carry out the collaboration *sister city*, as well as the lack of readiness of the City Government itself to face this collaboration. Similar analysis is also provided by LAN (2004) which states that there is a need to improve the quality of implementing personnel *sister city* such as improving English language skills and increasing knowledge about international relations knowledge.

The main problem in this study originated from the evaluation of the cessation of the cooperation program *Sister City* between Semarang-Brisbane in 1997 and the end of the *MoU* in 2005 and compared it to other cities in Indonesia that succeeded in running the collaboration *sister city*. From a number of references that have conducted research on *sister city*, it was concluded that one of the reasons for the cessation of the program *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane was because its human resources were unprepared in facing the implementation of such cooperation (Farida *et al.*, 2004). Furthermore, from LAN (2004) in the evaluation report *sister city* in Indonesia, it is suggested that the success of cooperation *sister city* needs to improve the quality of personnel or human resources who directly handle and manage activities *sister city*. In connection with the above problems, this study aims to analyze the factors of human resources that influence the success of Semarang - Brisbane *sister city* cooperation.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Definition *Sister City*

It is often heard that there is a cooperative discussion about sister cities between two countries and two cities in the same country. But what is thereally *sister city* ? Farida *et al.* (2004) mention *sister cities* in their research as twin cities. From here it is impressed that the two cities that cooperated were twins so that of course many had similarities.

According to Yanuar (2010: 1) that "*Sister City/Twin Cities* is a term used to describe cooperation agreements between cities or provinces between two countries to improve the economy, promote culture and establish cooperation in various other fields closely", while LAN (2004 : 3) defines *Sister City* as "is a collaborative program implemented by the City Government in Indonesia with City Governments abroad in order to establish friendly relations and foster mutual understanding among communities in both Cities". From the two definitions above, *Sister City* in this study can be defined as an activity carried out based on a

cooperation agreement between city governments in Indonesia and city governments abroad to enhance mutual friendship and understanding between urban communities in both countries through the implementation of activities in the field fields agreed upon.

In choosing fields that can be mutually agreed upon, both parties chose fields that could benefit both countries. So that in its implementation not only one party benefits. For example, in carrying out cooperation in the field of education, the Indonesian and foreign parties must get balanced benefits such as student exchanges from abroad to Indonesia and vice versa.

It was also stated that the benefits of co *sister city* (Government of Surabaya, 2010) include:

1. Exchanging knowledge and experience of development management areas for cooperation
2. Encouraging the growth initiative and the active role of local government, public and private
3. Improve management optimization potential of the region
4. Deepen friendship both the government and society
5. Exchange cultural in order to enrich regional culture

From the benefits mentioned above it is clear that this collaboration *sister city* leads to increased friendship between the two countries through the exchange of knowledge, experience and culture.

### ***Sister City Semarang-Brisbane***

According to the *Brisbane City Council* (2010), a *sister city* with Brisbane was formed so that Brisbane people can exchange knowledge and skills with other cities that face similar challenges, such as management of population growth, transportation, *urban planning* and the environment.

While the cooperation agreement *Sister City Semarang-Brisbane* was first signed in 1993. After going through several extensions, in 2005 the MoU of Semarang-Brisbane *sister city* cooperation was stopped.

### **The Semarang City Human Resources (HR)**

Condition of human resources in Indonesia is still a concern. According to Imron (2001), Indonesia's HR ranking ranks 102 out of 174 countries in the world. Furthermore, it was also stated that a few decades ago HR in Indonesia was superior, as evidenced by the many foreign students (especially Singapore and Malaysia) who studied in Indonesia. But at this time, the opposite was happened. This condition is very unfortunate, especially when considering that Indonesia is the fifth largest country for the population, but it is not followed by good quality of human resources.

Muluk stated in his paper that "Human Resources (HR) Apparatus in Indonesia has received much criticism, not because the quantity is large but the quality is doubtful" (p. 1). Budiyanto (2005) states the same thing that the quality of Indonesian human resources is very lacking and is still less competitive than other countries. Nasution (2006) also expressed his opinion that there are three fundamental weaknesses in Indonesian HR, namely mastery of *skills*

inadequate, narrow insights and knowledge, and the weak ability of Indonesian human resources to deal with work problems. Based on several reports on the current condition of Indonesian HR, it is necessary to improve the quality of HR management in Indonesia. HR Management as quoted from the book Simamora (1997: 3) is "utilization, development, assessment, rewarding and management of individual members of organizations or groups of workers". Whereas Fathoni (2006: 9) defines HR management as "a control process based on management functions on human-sourced power". By improving HR management means improving individual management so that an organization/company becomes better.

The human resources (HR) that handles the cooperation activities *sister city* in the Semarang municipal government are the municipal civil servants. In connection with the activity *sister city* Semarang – Brisbane which has been running for more than a decade, based on an evaluation from LAN (2004) regarding the obstacles faced in managing cooperation *sister city* in Indonesia, one of them is "Need to increase institutional capacity and regional personnel in managing cooperation *sister city*, in order to facilitate and provide facilities the implementation of cooperation *sister city* better. Enhancing the ability of personnel, for example in terms of English language training, technical guidance on procedures for international relations, etc. " From the evaluation, it is clear that one of the biggest obstacles is the limited ability of government employees to manage cooperation *sister city*. As a result, the *MoU* signed by the two countries could not work properly due to a lack of knowledge in *managing* the activities *sister city*. This may be closely related that the government has not specifically recruited employees with appropriate capabilities to manage cooperation with foreign countries. For this reason, it is necessary to consider ways to improve the quality of civil servants by improving and perfection the HR management system (Budiyanto, 2005).

### **Human Resources (HR)**

Human resources in Indonesia are still a problem. Not in terms of quantity, but in terms of quality. Likewise, in running a *sister city* in various cities in Indonesia, the quality of human resources is one of the most important problems. As said by Supriyanto (2004: 54) that "everywhere in the territory of our country almost all lack quality human resources. In order to be able to organize international cooperation *sistership* (KIS), at least experts in the field of international agreements are needed, negotiators who master English and other relevant languages. In addition, experts are required to master foreign policy and understand cooperation partner countries". According to the statement, the human resources managing the *sister city* should have competence in the field of international agreements, have the ability to communicate in English well and master the techniques of foreign negotiations and at the same time understand the culture of the country concerned.

The same thing about the need to improve the quality of human resources for managers was *sister city* also stated by LAN (2004: 9). "It is necessary to increase the capacity of institutions and regional personnel in managing cooperation *sister city*, in order to facilitate and provide facilities the implementation of cooperation *sister city* better. Enhancing the ability of personnel, for example in terms of English language training, technical guidance on procedures for international relations, etc. "The statement also leads to improving the

quality of human resources managing sister city. With the existence of qualified human resources and experts in the field of cooperation and international negotiations, it is hoped that cooperation sister city can succeed well.

## **METHOD, DATA AND ANALYSIS**

### **Research Methods The**

Method in this study uses qualitative methods, where problems will be analyzed in depth through interviews with various respondents who are considered closely related to the collaboration *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane.

### **Population and Samples**

The population in this study is the Semarang city community and Government Institution staff who are directly or indirectly involved in activities *sister city* in Indonesia. To be able to conduct research on the entire population, researchers experienced constraints of time, cost and energy, so researchers used a portion of the population referred to as the sample.

The sampling technique used in this study is *purposive sampling technique*, which is the determination of samples with certain considerations. In this study the consideration was to find respondents who had backgrounds in academia, government institutions and business people who were both directly and indirectly involved in activities *sister city* in Indonesia. The respondents chosen in this study are as follows:

1. Semarang municipal government elements, namely staff of international cooperation, because they are directly involved in handling the *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane.
2. Element academics namely Unika and Undip lecturers because they are considered to have a good understanding of activities *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane.
3. Another government institution elements, which in this case was initiated by respondents from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Politics and Law and KPPU, because it was considered to have good knowledge about the *sister city* in general.
4. The private element/entrepreneur of Semarang, because business people are considered to be able to support activities *sister city* from the economic field.
5. Elements of partner countries, namely from *Lord Mayor* Brisbane staff because they are cities that will collaborate with the city of Semarang.

### **Data Types and Data Sources The**

Types and sources of data to be used in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data in this study were obtained through interviews, while secondary data were obtained from references regarding the collaboration *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane that had already been and become supporting information when needed in this study.

### **Data Collection Tool**

Primary data collection in this study is a list of interview questions that ask for the core information of the study. This information is a core part of the research to describe the factors supporting the success of the collaboration *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane.

### Data Collection Techniques Data

Collection techniques are carried out through interviews with eight respondents who are considered to understand about cooperation *sister city*. The interview was conducted by referring to the list of questionnaires that had been prepared in advance.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Human resources (HR) is one of the factors supporting the success of cooperation *sister city*. At the interview, the respondent was asked "How do you think the HR competencies needed to manage cooperation *sister city*?" Respondents' answers can be seen in Table 1:

**Table 1. Competency requirements for HR management of *sister city***

HR Competencies	Respondents								Number of respondents
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Understanding the culture of partner countries	*	*				*	*		4
Understand the language of the partner country			*				*	*	3
Having the same vision and mission				*					1
Following the quality of human resources in developed countries					*				1
Understanding of foreign policy							*		1

Source: research results

Description:

1. Academics (Unika lecturers)
2. Academics (lecturers and mediators *sister city*)
3. Business people (members of Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association)
4. Government Institutions (Semarang City Government)
5. Government Institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia)
6. Government Institutions (Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security of Indonesia)
7. Government Institutions (Business Competition Supervisory Commission)
8. Businessmen (people who are not members of Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association)

Regarding the human resources that can support the success of *sister city*, from the results of this study it can be seen that the most important HR competency requirements according to respondents are human resources who have the ability to understand the culture of partner countries and understand the language of partner countries. The understanding of the culture of this partner country includes the ability of human resources to be able to harmonize the workings of the partner countries (Australia), which are fast and *on time*. Human resources who are able to "follow" the work rhythm of partner countries can support the success of the *sister city* because human resources can meet the expectations of partner country human resources so that overall it can support the success of the collaboration

itself. Although specifically the HR requirements are not listed in the *MoU*, this is supported by Supriyanto (2004) who stated that HR managing the *sister city* should have a high understanding of partner countries, because this can launch activities *sister city*.

The ability to understand this partner country, for example is the ability of HR to quickly respond to or answer partner country questions submitted to the Semarang City Government either via *email, fax or telephone*. Human resources of the City Government must be able to quickly provide responses and decisions so that partner countries do not wait too long. Australians have a fairly high standard of work, including in responding to incoming mail. The average sets the standard that within one time 24 hours, the letter has been answered, or no later than three working days. With the existence of these standards, it is better for managing HR to have the same standard of work as HR in Australia.

The importance of human resource competencies that can understand the culture of a very important partner country is also supported by LAN (2004) who stated that in the last activity *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane, one of the activities was the exchange program for Semarang and Brisbane city government staff. The benefits obtained from these activities are the ability of each country's staff to feel the difference in work culture and performance. Semarang City Government staff felt a remarkable comparison between the work culture and performance of Semarang city government officials with Brisbane city government staff. The continuation of the results of the staff exchange program is the promotion of increased work discipline and performance by the Mayor. The review shows how far the differences in the work culture of Indonesian employees with employees in Australia, therefore it is important that HR managing the *sister city* have competencies capable of understanding the culture of partner countries, including following work culture and performance.

HR competency to understand partner country languages is also a competency that can support the success of cooperation *sister city* because mastering partner country languages can facilitate communication so that activities *sister city* can run well. The statement is supported by the opinion of LAN (2004) which confirms that English language skills can facilitate and provide convenience in implementing cooperation *sister city*. The analysis is quite reasonable because when it comes to cooperation *sister city* with Brisbane, the managing HR must have the ability to communicate in English. If HR does not have these capabilities, then the discussion and negotiations with the Brisbane party will be stagnant and not smooth, so that it can hamper the cooperation *sister city* itself.

Respondents also stated that the cooperation manager *sister city* should have the same vision and mission, follow the quality of human resources in developed countries and understand foreign policy. The vision and mission referred to by reponden is that the manager *sister city* should have the same vision and mission as the manager *sister city* in the partner country. This equality of vision and mission will facilitate cooperation because both have the same goals and expectations. This is also supported by the vision and mission theory in the HR journal (2009), which states that "the vision is a statement of *want to be* from an organization or company. Vision is also very crucial for the company to guarantee

sustainability and long-term success. Furthermore, the mission is why we were there (*why we exist / what we believe we can do*)".

Whereas HR competence that follows the quality of developed countries is that HR should have capabilities similar to human resource capabilities in developed countries (partner countries). This respondent's statement is quite logical, because with the equality of quality of human resources, the collaboration will be more smooth because it is supported by human resources of equal quality between the two countries. Respondents also stated that HR needed to have an understanding of foreign policy. This is solely because HR who have knowledge of foreign politics will also understand the procedures for collaborating with outside parties so that they can support the smooth running of *sister city* Semarang-Brisbane.

Furthermore, specifically, respondents gave an assessment of the sequence of HR competencies from the most important to HR (number 1) to those that were less important to have (number 4). In the questionnaire there are four choices of answers for the order of competencies that should be owned by HR managing the *sister city*. The four answer choices, namely: experts in the field of international agreements, mastering English/other relevant languages, mastering foreign policy and understanding cooperation partner countries. The results of the respondent's answers can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2. Sequence of HR Competencies Manager of *sister city***

No.	Competencies	Respondents'								Number of respondents			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1st place	2nd	rank 3rd	order 4th order
<b>A</b>	Expert in the field of international agreements	3	3	3	4	4	2	4	3	0	1	4	3
<b>B</b>	Mastering English / other relevant languages	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	5	1	2	0
<b>C</b>	Mastering foreign policy	4	4	4	3	3	4	2	4	0	1	2	5
<b>D</b>	Understanding cooperation partner countries	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	3	5	0	0

Source: research results

Description:

1. Academics (Unika lecturers)
2. Academics (lecturers and mediators *sister city*)
3. Business people (members of Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association)
4. Government Institutions (Semarang City Government)
5. Government Institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia)
6. Government Institutions (Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security of Indonesia)
7. Government Institutions (Business Competition Supervisory Commission)



8. Businessmen (people who are not members of Indonesian Young Entrepreneurs Association)

Based on the table 2, it can be seen that the human resource competency requirements to support the success of *sister city* in accordance with the opinion of Supriyanto (2004: 54) and can be sorted as follows:

- sequence 1 : Proficient in English/other relevant languages
- sequence 2 : Understanding partner countries
- sequence 3 : Experts in international agreements
- sequence 4 : Mastering foreign policy

Sequence above in accordance with the level of importance with the number 1 as a requirement of competence of the most important and absolutely owned the HR manager of *a sister city* to the success of the cooperation of *sister city* of Semarang - Brisbane are proficient in English/language other relevant followed by understanding partner countries as the 2nd competency sequence. HR competencies that master English or other relevant languages are one of the absolute requirements for HR who manage the *city sister* Semarang - Brisbane because English is the language of instruction for Semarang City Government staff and Brisbane City Government staff. The inability to speak English can hamper the smooth cooperation of *sister city*. Like Javanese who cannot speak Indonesian, if they have to work for people who can only speak Indonesian, it can hamper the smooth running of their work. This is also supported by the opinion of Supriyanto (2004) which states that our country is very short of qualified human resources and one of them is the ability to speak English. Thus, the absolute competence possessed by the HR management *city sister city* Semarang-Brisbane is the ability to communicate in English.

Experts in the field of international agreements and mastering foreign policy are considered as additional competencies that are not absolute but can provide added value if HR has these competencies. This is in accordance with the opinion of Supriyanto (2004) which states that HR who manage the *sister city should* have competence in the field of international agreements, have the ability to communicate in English well and master the techniques of foreign negotiations and at the same time understand the culture of the country concerned.

For the results of research on the problem of human resources (HR), the results obtained that the HR management of *sister city* should have an understanding of the partner culture. This shows that human resources who manage or handle cooperation *sister city* must be able to understand the partner culture. This is in accordance with the opinion of Supriyanto (2004) that HR who manage the *sister city* should be able to understand partner countries. HR who have a high level of understanding of partner countries, will be able to launch activities *sister city*. For example, HR who understand that partner staff, when sending *e-mails*, hope to get a reply as soon as possible, then HR will try to reply to *e-mail* as quickly as possible. Conversely, HR who do not understand the culture may delay procrastinating the *email* so that it can lead to disappointment from the partner country.

According to the interview results, HR competencies based on the order of their interests are:

1. Mastering English or other relevant languages
2. Understanding partner countries
3. Experts in the field of international agreements
4. Mastering foreign policy

The research focus on these four competencies is based on Supriyanto (2004: 54) stating that " anywhere in the region of our country almost all lack quality human resources. In order to be able to organize international cooperation *sistership* (KIS), at least experts in the field of international agreements are needed, negotiators who master English and other relevant languages. In addition, experts are required to master foreign policy and understand cooperation partner countries. " The results of the analysis are very logical if mentioning that mastering English or other relevant languages is an important HR competency that is owned by the HR management of *sister city*. This is because the HR will have a lot of contact and communication with staff from partner countries in international languages, namely English. So that master communication, absolutely owned by the HR.

The fact that there are still many among the management personnel *sister city* who have not mastered English is expressed by LAN (2004) that there needs to be an increase in the quality of regional personnel in managing the *sister city*, including improving English and knowledge of international relations. The other three aspects of HR (understanding partner countries, experts in the field of international cooperation and mastering foreign policy), will be an added value for the success of cooperation *sister city* if owned by the management HR *sister city*.

## CONSLUSION

The results of the analysis in this study indicate that collaboration *sister city* the previous Semarang – Brisbane has not been able to achieve the expected goals of both parties. For this reason, there needs to be improvements to support the success of *sister city*, which is focused on several supporting factors. One of the supporting factors is the HR factor. The management HR *sister city* does not yet have an understanding of the culture of partner countries, and HR competencies based on the order of their interests are: Mastering English or other relevant languages, Understanding partner countries, Experts in international treaties and Mastering foreign policy. Thus, these things must be owned by the manager *sister city* to support the success of *sister city*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Budiyanto, MN 2005, The latest design of the civil service management system in Indonesia (critical review: the new paradigm "The new public service"), *Journal of Policy and Public Administration*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 37-53.
- Farida, E Hartono, D Susetyorini, P 2004, The implementation of sister city cooperation between Semarang and Brisbane in the field of science and technology. Undip.

- Fathoni, A 2006, *Organization and Human Resource Management*, Rineka Cipta Publisher.
- HR Journal, 2011, *Tori vision and mission*, accessed on September 29, 2011, <http://jurnal-sdm.blogspot.com/2009/10/definisi-visi-misi-dan-strategi-dan.html>
- Institute of Public Administration (LAN), 2004, *Executive Summary, Evaluation study of management of sister city cooperation between cities in Indonesia and cities abroad*. Public Administration Institute, Jakarta,
- Surabaya City Government, 2010, *Module Best Practices on Cooperation of Sister City Surabaya*, Government Surabaya City
- Simamora, H1987, *Human Resource Management: Second Edition*, Publisher STIE YKPN
- Supriyanto, A, 2004, *Restrictions and limitations of the region in the implementation relations of foreign*, *Legal Pulpit Journal*, Vol. X, No. 48, Hal 48-55
- Yanuar, 2010, *Sister city in Indonesia*, accessed on September 30, 2011, <http://asikunik.blogspot.com/2010/06/sister-city-di-indonesia.html>