

Research Article

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Implementation of Bandung – Suwon Sister City Cooperation to Improve the Quality of Education in Bandung City

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Abstract: Bandung and Suwon sister city cooperation with the primary activity started from the Suwon City Government who wished to set up a city accomplice with Bandung City. The cooperation covers the fields of Economy, Trade, Tourism, Science and Technology Investment, Education, Culture, Welfare, Youth and Sports. However, given the number of areas of cooperation between the two cities and the relatively long period of time, this study identifies the actual results or impact of the implementation of programs that have been carried out in the sister city cooperation between Bandung and Suwon. Focusing on the field of education, this study uses a qualitative field research method to collect and analyze data or the object of the research written. This study found that the sister city cooperation between Bandung and Suwon in the field of education is still not optimized. This is due to the lack of role of the local government in this sister city cooperation to bridge the sister city cooperation program.

Keywords: international cooperation, sister city, Bandung (Indonesia), Suwon (South Korea), quality education.

Introduction

Bandung in Indonesia is one of the cities that has a lot of Sister City cooperation with cities in various parts of the world, among others are Seoul and Suwon (South Korea), Fort Worth (Texas, USA), Kawasaki (Japan), Petaling Jaya (Malaysia), Braunschweig (Germany), and Namur (Belgium), [1]–[8]. One of these cities is Suwon in South Korea. Since the signing of the Letter of Intent on August 5, 1997, between Suwon City Government of South Korea and Bandung City Government of Indonesia, the sister city cooperation has spanned approximately 27 years [9]. It commenced with Suwon's initiative to establish collaboration with Bandung, reflecting the mutual commitment between the two cities [10].

There are numbers of study regarding the Sister City program. Among others, Mayangswari et al. (2022) concludes that the program was founded due to camaraderie between mayors, shared goals, and similar geographic, demographic, educational, and cultural characteristics [11]. Through paradiplomacy

approach [12]–[14], the factors affecting the sister city cooperation between Bandung and Suwon City, revealing external and internal challenges, suggesting a shift in the national paradigm into a more transnational people-to-people relations, especially to evaluate such kind of cooperation forms [15]. By 2018, more than two decades after the initial agreement was signed, the implementation of the Bandung-Suwon Sister City Cooperation would be realized in 2018 to 2021 [16], [17]. Another research discovered that there is still a disconnect between the intention of collaborating for societal improvement and the perception, knowledge, and attitude of Bandung City residents concerning their city's cooperation with Suwon City [18]. Thus, no research has attempted to evaluate the implementation of the Sister City program in the time span since 2018. Moreover, the research was conducted in a participatory manner in the form of an internship at the Bandung City government institution. Hence, this study aims to evaluate the actual result and impact of the sister city cooperation between Bandung and Suwon, specifically analyzing the

accomplishments of the Bandung City Government in executing the cooperation program, with a primary emphasis on the education sector.

Through identifying the cooperation carried out by Bandung and Suwon, this study hopes to be useful for the Bandung City Government and Suwon City Government so that it can be used as input and consideration to improve good relations, development, exchange of information, and cooperation between the two parties.

Method

Using a qualitative field research method [19]–[22], this study conducted qualitative interviews and focus groups to identify the implementation of cooperation programs between Bandung and Suwon with different forms of research efforts [23]. The research was conducted over a period of two months in 2023, in conjunction with the first author's internship at the Bandung City government agency under the guidance of the second author. Qualitative interviews were conducted with one part of the local government of Bandung City who has authority to the sister city cooperation with several focuses of the interview discussion regarding the implementation of the sister city cooperation program carried out. Meanwhile, there were frequent focus group discussions conducted which focused on the impact or benefits felt by the people of Bandung City.

Results and Discussion

This study explored the outcomes of the sister city cooperation program between Bandung and Suwon. It identified a lack of optimal cooperation implementation between the two cities. An interview with a local government member revealed that the cooperation was primarily ceremonial, lacking substantial implementation. Consequently, the collaboration between Bandung and Suwon was concluded to

be primarily symbolic, with minimal tangible effects observed.

The implementation of various educational programs under the sister city collaboration between Bandung and Suwon is expected to foster increased interaction and cooperation. However, limitations in infrastructure and a lack of government involvement in providing a platform for follow-up plans for educational cooperation hinder the effectiveness of collaboration in this field. Limited of necessary infrastructure and government support was observed to impede the seamless continuation of educational cooperation initiatives. Consequently, the effectiveness of educational cooperation between Bandung and Suwon is compromised, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure and stronger governmental support to facilitate ongoing collaboration in this area.

The decision to uphold the sister city cooperation program between Bandung and Suwon in 2018 was made by Mayor Oded M. Danial of Bandung, along with South Korean Ambassador to Indonesia, Kim Chang-beom [24]. Both parties reached an agreement to sustain the existing sister city collaboration between Bandung, Seoul, and Suwon, aiming to enhance cooperation between these cities. This decision reflects the commitment of both Bandung and Suwon to further develop their collaborative ties, as well as their shared aspiration to strengthen sister city relations between the two municipalities.

The final decision to sustain the sister city cooperation program between the two cities resulted in the implementation of various educational activity programs. These programs were designed to enhance educational collaboration between the two countries. The activity programs spanned from 2018 to 2021, signifying a multi-year commitment to fostering educational exchange and cooperation. The initiation of these programs underscores the dedication of both cities to nurturing educational

partnerships and underscores their mutual desire to strengthen ties through collaborative educational initiatives.

Table 1. Implementation of the Education Program of the Sister City Cooperation between Bandung and Suwon City in 2018 – 2021

No	Implementation date	Name of activity	Executor	Remarks
1	April 2018	Education Fair 2018	Bandung and Suwon City Government	In this education fair, Suwon brought in three university representatives, namely Kyunghee University, Ajou University, and Sungkyunkwan University. Meanwhile, Bandung presented three universities, namely Universitas Padjadjaran, Universitas Kristen Maranatha, and Telkom University [25].
2	23 – 31 August 2018	The opening of the Korean language training program for Bandung youth.	Suwon City Students and Suwon Center for International Cooperation.	This activity was conducted at the Fealac Youth Center secretariat.
3	14 – 17 November 2018	Organized an activity called Bandung Encouragement on Health and Leadership Forum (Belief).	Bandung City Government	This activity is one of Bandung's efforts to align itself with other cities in the world. A total of 47 participants from 4 countries attended this event. They came from three countries that have sister city cooperation with Bandung, namely Suwon, South Korea; Petaling Jaya, Malaysia; Liu Zhou, China [26].
4	20 – 26 May 2019	International Korea Youth Expo 2019	Suwon City Government	In this activity program, nine Bandung students were selected as Bandung delegates in the 2019 Korea Youth Expo international youth meeting. The students consisted of four students from State High School 1 Bandung, four

No	Implementation date	Name of activity	Executor	Remarks
				students from St. Angela High School Bandung, and one student from State Junior High School 2 Bandung [27].
5	27 October 2021	Student Exchange MoU Signing	Two elementary schools from Bandung City and Suwon	This is a program of Gagas Ceria Elementary School, Bandung City and Gumho School, Suwon City.

The establishment of sister city cooperation between Bandung and Suwon aims to enhance the potential of both cities. This cooperation was initiated with the intention of boosting economic development and advancement in various fields [28]. Since the signing of the agreement in 1997 [29], efforts have been made to implement this cooperation program, indicating a commitment to realizing its objectives. To ensure the success of this cooperation, it is essential to devise a structured program outlining the fields of cooperation, set objectives, allocate costs, and determine the duration of activities.

Sister city cooperation programs should be comprehensive, with permanent and planned activities to ensure tangible results and the realization of cooperation objectives. Without structured and ongoing programs, there is a risk of failing to achieve the desired outcomes of sister city cooperation. Interviews conducted after the implementation of activity programs reveal a lack of follow-up plans for subsequent actions. Often, there is a gap of several months to years after the completion of one program, leading to a discontinuation of efforts. It is imperative to establish a framework for continuous and structured activities within sister city cooperation, ensuring that progress is sustained over time and objectives are effectively realized.

The absence of effective media for connecting citizens with citizens or citizens with the government contributes to the challenge of realizing increased city development as agreed

upon in sister city cooperation. Without a reliable communication platform, citizens are unable to collaborate effectively with each other or with the government to drive development across all fields outlined in the sister city cooperation agreement. The lack of a communication medium results in a disconnect between stakeholders, hindering coordination and follow-up actions necessary for sustained development efforts. Establishing a robust communication channel is essential to facilitate collaboration and ensure active participation of citizens and government authorities in advancing city development goals outlined in sister city cooperation agreements.

The focus group discussions on sister city cooperation involving the city of Bandung primarily revolve around questioning the outcomes of each activity program and the extent of implementation of the applied policies within the sister city program. Stakeholders are interested in assessing the effectiveness and impact of the activity programs and policies to gauge their contribution towards the objectives of the sister city cooperation. The predominant focus of the discussions is on inquiries regarding the outputs of the activity programs and the degree to which the policies within the sister city program have been implemented. The emphasis on evaluating program outputs and policy implementation in focus group discussions underscores the importance of transparency and accountability in sister city cooperation, highlighting the need for continuous assessment

and improvement to align with cooperation goals effectively.

Bandung has established legal frameworks and procedural stages preceding the implementation of sister city cooperation [30]. Evaluation plays a crucial role in assessing and informing further plans for sister city cooperation with partner cities abroad. Evaluation is essential for ensuring the fulfillment of initial goals, as exemplified by the 2018 agreement aimed at enhancing cooperation between Bandung and Suwon. Bandung's sister city cooperation activities are conducted within a structured framework, with evaluations serving as a vital tool for gauging progress and informing subsequent cooperation plans. The incorporation of evaluation mechanisms enables the effective realization of cooperation objectives and facilitates informed decision-making for future sister city partnerships, ultimately fostering mutually beneficial relationships with partner cities abroad.

The focus group highlighted the importance of improving the quality of education in Bandung through sister city cooperation with Suwon City. Bandung's education system is recognized for its quality, prompting discussion on areas for further enhancement. The discussion in the focus group centered on identifying the specific needs and areas where Bandung requires support to enhance its education system. To enhance the quality of education in Bandung, it is imperative to identify the necessary resources and areas for improvement through collaboration with Suwon City in the sister city cooperation program.

Closing

Conclusions

- In conclusion, the sister city cooperation activities carried out by the cities of Bandung and Suwon are foreign policy activities that are synonymous with diplomacy as well as negotiations. Sister city cooperation between

these cities certainly aims of reciprocal benefit that cannot be met from within the country through meeting the needs from outside with its ultimate result in the form of a collaboration carried out by the cities of Bandung and Suwon. This study concludes that the implementation of the cooperation between the City of Bandung and Suwon still has no real impact or results to improve the quality of education in the City of Bandung, it can be said that so far it is still only limited to ceremonial. The study's conclusion is that not every collaboration can function well or according to plan. Usually, there were two reasons for the failure: internal and external influences. The two cities' lack of communication and the lack of noteworthy outcomes from their cooperation were the internal factors that occurred. Afterward, there were a number of external factors that occurred, including changes in the policies of the two regions, which in turn had an impact on state and local government policies [31].

- The lack of tangible outcomes in the Sister City Cooperation between Bandung and Suwon results from two key factors: the lack of media provided by the local government to facilitate communication between the two cities and the absence of a policy focusing on follow-up plans for each cooperation activity. Without adequate media support, communication between Bandung and Suwon is hindered, impeding progress in cooperation efforts. Additionally, the absence of a structured follow-up plan limits the effectiveness of cooperation activities. The analysis reveals that the lack of media channels and follow-up policies has contributed to the lack of tangible results in the Sister City Cooperation. To enhance the effectiveness of the Sister City Cooperation between Bandung and Suwon, it is crucial for the local government to establish media channels for

communication and implement follow-up policies to ensure that cooperation activities lead to tangible outcomes in various fields.

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