



Paradiplomacy for Educational Development: The Case of Jakarta and New South Wales

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Abstract

The cooperative relationship between Jakarta and New South Wales can be categorised as paradiplomacy, given that both are sub-state actors within their respective countries. By emphasising development in the education sector, both actors occupy an equal position and derive mutual benefit from this cooperation. This research aims to examine how the outcomes of collaboration between these two regions have contributed to the development of education in each. The research employs a qualitative method, using internet-based research as its data collection technique, drawing on scholarly articles, journals, and news reports. The findings indicate that paradiplomacy between the two regions has contributed to improved social welfare in the field of education for both sub-state actors, manifested in the exchange of knowledge, teaching staff, and scholarships, as well as expanded opportunities to develop the capabilities of young people in both regions.

Keywords: *Paradiplomacy, Jakarta, New South Wales, Education*

INTRODUCTION

Paradiplomacy refers to the authority granted by a national government to sub-national or city governments to establish international relations with sub-state actors of other countries in pursuit of their respective regional interests (Tavares, 2016). This research examines the paradiplomatic cooperation between the city of Jakarta and the Australian state of New South Wales (NSW) as an illustrative case of this phenomenon. The cooperation between these two sub-state actors spans several sectors, including agribusiness, technology and innovation, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), infrastructure, and education (Gold, 2023). The conceptual framework used to characterise this relationship is the *sister city* model a form



of paradiplomatic cooperation between two cities that share certain similarities and collaborate across a range of sectors extending beyond the economy, including education, trade, tourism, industry, technology, and culture (Indah & Puspa, 2022).

Education has been identified as the priority sector within the Jakarta–NSW partnership, as it is one of the areas in which the collaboration has produced the most concrete outcomes; from 2015 to 2023, education has consistently remained among the priority sectors of cooperation between the two regions. As education constitutes an important dimension of a country's *soft power*, educational diplomacy is considered a strategic instrument, believed to foster mutual interest, respect, understanding, and a deeper level of trust between the parties involved (Soesilowati, 2015).

Sub-national paradiplomacy is generally driven by specific regional goals and interests. Some regions pursue paradiplomacy sometimes referred to as *protodiplomacy* as a means of seeking political recognition, while others pursue it chiefly to improve the welfare of their societies through various forms of exchange. The cooperation between Jakarta and NSW falls into the latter category: both actors aim to improve social welfare through education and technology, using paradiplomacy as an instrument for the exchange of knowledge and mutual assistance.

This research aims to investigate how the outcomes of the Jakarta–NSW collaboration have contributed to improving the quality of education in both regions, with particular attention to how this collaboration has strengthened the broader paradiplomatic relationship between the two cities. The significance of the educational dimension of this partnership is illustrated by the fact that, as of 2021, approximately 55 percent of Indonesian students studying in Australia had chosen to study in NSW (Mirage News, 2021), reflecting substantial interest in advancing educational quality in both regions and the considerable potential of paradiplomacy as a vehicle for achieving this goal.

ANALYSIS FRAME WORK

The Concept of Paradiplomacy

Contemporary international relations scholarship increasingly recognises that global

affairs are shaped not only by states but also by a broader array of actors, including international organisations, multinational corporations, and sub-state entities. Cooperation conducted by sub-state actors in the international arena is generally termed *paradiplomacy*, a relatively recent field of inquiry within international relations literature. Wolff (2007) defines paradiplomacy as the involvement of regional or sub-state governments in independent international policy activity, undertaken to advance their own regional interests. Building on this, Fathun (2022) characterises paradiplomacy as both an actor-level phenomenon in international relations and, more specifically, as the diplomatic activity conducted by sub-state entities.

The term “paradiplomacy” is a combination of the prefix *para* and *diplomacy*, denoting an extension of traditional diplomacy in which the principal actors are no longer states alone but also sub-state entities (Fathun, 2022). The emergence of paradiplomacy is closely associated with globalisation, through which regions have gained greater visibility and agency in the global arena as part of efforts to accelerate national development and prosperity (Gunawan, 2019). Michelmann (1990, p. 177) offers a complementary perspective, describing paradiplomacy as a process of decentralising political authority within a state, whereby sub-state actors participate directly in the implementation of public policy. Tavares (2016) similarly emphasises that paradiplomacy is generally undertaken to promote regional interests with the ultimate aim of improving the welfare of the local population.

According to Indah and Puspa (2022), paradiplomacy can be classified into four types:

1. **Ceremonial paradiplomacy**, in which regions establish international relations formalised through sister-city agreements, primarily to promote and exchange their respective cultures.
2. **Single-themed paradiplomacy**, which focuses on one specific issue of shared concern for example, the cooperation between Jakarta and Rotterdam on flood mitigation.
3. **Global paradiplomacy**, distinguished by a broader scale of cooperation involving multiple sub-state actors within a shared agenda and formal cooperation frameworks, as exemplified by C40 and Urban 20.
4. **Sovereign paradiplomacy** (or protodiplomacy), which functions as a form of diplomatic preparation aimed at achieving separation from, or the establishment of, a new state.

Based on this typology, the cooperation examined in this research the Jakarta–NSW sister-city relationship is best classified as an instance of ceremonial paradiplomacy. The concept of paradiplomacy thus provides the overarching lens through which this research analyses how Jakarta and NSW collaborate to advance welfare in their respective regions.

The Sister City Concept

Sister city is the term commonly used in Indonesia to describe cooperation between an Indonesian city and a city or region in another country, generally formalised through an official, long-term agreement covering a broad range of sectors (Gunawan, 2019; Mansyur, 2021). Such cooperation typically arises from similarities in governance structures, territorial characteristics, socio-cultural conditions, and the nature of the challenges faced by the partnering regions, as well as from complementary strengths between the two parties (Patrechia, 2019; Mansyur, 2021). The underlying objective is to build relationships through official and business-level engagement that can, over time, develop into broader partnerships involving the exchange of goods, services, and expertise. Jacques Santer, as cited in Purbaningrum (2023), further observes that sister-city cooperation reflects the desire of local actors to work across borders and reduce barriers between countries; while not the only available mechanism for international exchange, it provides an important and enduring framework for sustaining one-to-one relationships between cities in different countries.

Drawing on this literature, the *sister city* concept is applied in this research as the analytical framework for understanding how Jakarta and NSW have structured and sustained their paradiplomatic cooperation.

The Concept of Community Welfare

Improving community welfare is among the principal objectives of inter-city cooperation and paradiplomacy more broadly. Within the *sister city* framework, cooperation is often motivated by shared or complementary challenges faced by the partnering regions; in the case of DKI Jakarta and NSW, both parties share an interest in improving the welfare of their respective populations, and their collaboration particularly in the field of education is designed to generate mutual benefit toward this end.

Community welfare is a widely used concept in the social sciences, encompassing multiple dimensions and indicators. Todaro and Smith (2006) define welfare as a condition in which a society's basic needs are met, including adequate housing, sufficient clothing and food, accessible education and healthcare, and the capacity to maximise well-being within existing resource constraints encompassing both material and non-material needs. This is reinforced by Indonesian Law No. 11 of 2009 concerning Social Welfare, which defines social welfare as a condition in which the material, spiritual, and social needs of citizens are fulfilled, enabling them to live decently, develop themselves, and carry out their social functions. Taken together, these definitions indicate that community welfare encompasses the fulfilment of economic, educational, health, and social needs.

In this research, the concept of community welfare is used to assess the benefits generated by paradiplomacy between DKI Jakarta and NSW, with particular emphasis on the education sector, which both regions have identified as a shared priority. Community welfare therefore serves as the principal indicator against which the benefits of this paradiplomatic relationship are evaluated.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative methodology, aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study through the collection of detailed and comprehensive data (Adawiyah, n.d.). Qualitative inquiry is well suited to this purpose, as it enables an accurate and nuanced description of complex social phenomena such as paradiplomacy.

The data collection technique used in this research is internet-based research, involving the analysis of secondary data sourced from academic journals, scholarly articles, official documents, and credible news reports relevant to the issue of paradiplomacy. This approach included a review of prior academic literature addressing paradiplomatic practice in New South Wales and Indonesia, situated within the broader conceptual framework of international paradiplomacy described in the preceding section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Historical Development of the Cooperation

The paradiplomatic relationship between Jakarta and New South Wales was established in 1994, coinciding with a period of active engagement between Indonesia and Australia under Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating (Gold, 2023). Although the partnership has continued for more than three decades, its trajectory has not been without disruption. Most notably, in 2007, the relationship came under significant strain following a diplomatic incident involving then-Governor of Jakarta, Sutiyoso. During an official visit to Sydney, New South Wales police officers entered his hotel room in order to deliver a summons requiring him to testify before a coronial inquest into the killing of the “Balibo Five” five Australian-based journalists killed during Indonesia’s 1975 invasion of East Timor. Sutiyoso was not arrested; he regarded the incident as a breach of diplomatic courtesy, cut short his visit, and returned to Jakarta, prompting a formal apology from the NSW state government (Saul, 2009).

Despite this episode, the paradiplomatic relationship was not terminated. In 2022, then-Governor of Jakarta, Heru Budi Hartono, renewed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) with NSW for a further five-year period, reaffirming cooperation across four principal areas: agribusiness, education and tourism, technology, and MSMEs (Faruq, 2023). The primary objective of this renewed cooperation is to strengthen relations in the tourism and education sectors, an emphasis reflected in the fact that, as of 2021, approximately 55 percent of Indonesian students studying in Australia had chosen NSW as their destination.

Actors Involved

Two principal actors are involved in the Jakarta–NSW paradiplomatic partnership on education: the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government and the New South Wales State Government. Cooperation between the two governments, formalised through an MoU first signed in 1994, was renewed for a further five-year term in 2022 (Nurhaliza, 2023). The partnership is underpinned by structural and functional similarities between the two regions, including their status as major economic and administrative centres within their respective countries.

The **Jakarta City Government** plays a central role in planning and implementing educational initiatives within this paradiplomatic framework, representing the region's interests in improving educational quality and expanding paradiplomatic engagement. According to Azzahra (2023), cooperation between the two cities in the education sector has included teacher-training programmes, through which Jakarta has drawn on New South Wales' pedagogical approaches to inform its own teacher-training practices.

The **New South Wales State Government**, as the partner in this collaboration, provides support and resources for the joint educational programmes conducted with Jakarta. NSW is home to a number of internationally recognised universities, several of which rank among the world's leading institutions. As part of this partnership, the NSW government has organised education expos to inform Indonesian secondary school students of available scholarship opportunities and other educational facilities (Azzahra, 2023).

Nature of the Relationship

Jakarta and NSW each derive distinct benefits from this cooperative relationship in advancing educational development. Jakarta has benefited from access to teaching staff and instructional materials on digital design, including proprietary design applications made available by NSW at no cost. Conversely, NSW has positioned Jakarta as a destination for developing the interests and talents of its own teaching staff and students (Nurhaliza, 2023). This pattern of reciprocal benefit, sustained since 1994, characterises the relationship as one of mutual advantage for both parties (Suranto, 2023).

Given that the implementation of paradiplomacy focused on education has been widely regarded as successful and mutually beneficial, representatives of the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government have expressed their intention to sustain this cooperation with NSW over the long term (Dewi, 2023). This intention is reinforced by the continued availability of high-quality educational institutions in NSW, including universities with recognised international standing (Nurhaliza, 2023).

As noted above, the long-term trajectory of this cooperation has not been entirely free of difficulty. The 2007 diplomatic incident involving Sutiyoso represented the most significant test of the relationship, arising from an underlying dispute over his alleged involvement in the 1975 Balibo killings rather than from any disagreement regarding the substance of the paradiplomatic partnership itself. Notably, this episode did not result in the termination of cooperative relations between Jakarta and NSW; the partnership has otherwise been characterised by consistent and constructive engagement since the signing of the original memorandum of understanding in 1994.

Analysis within the Research Framework

Read through the analytical framework developed in Section 2, the Jakarta–NSW partnership demonstrates how paradiplomacy and the sister-city model can be applied to accommodate concrete forms of educational cooperation. The collaboration arose from a shared desire by both parties to improve the welfare of their respective populations, with both regions making substantial and mutually beneficial contributions toward this goal, particularly in advancing educational outcomes.

Specific initiatives undertaken within this cooperation including student exchange programmes, joint curriculum development, and teacher-training schemes illustrate the practical application of the paradiplomacy and community-welfare concepts outlined earlier. The fact that approximately 55 percent of Indonesian students studying in Australia have chosen to study in NSW reflects the tangible outcomes of this educational partnership, while the transfer of pedagogical knowledge to NSW teaching staff including, in several NSW schools, the incorporation of Indonesian-language instruction into the curriculum demonstrates the reciprocal nature of the collaboration. Taken together, these outcomes suggest that the Jakarta–NSW partnership has been substantive and comprehensive in scope, consistent with the ceremonial paradiplomacy and sister-city frameworks used to analyse it.

The analysis also suggests that cultural and contextual factors have shaped the implementation of this paradiplomacy in significant ways. Differences in local governance norms, educational systems, and political dynamics between Jakarta and NSW have, at times, presented challenges to the pace and scope of cooperation, while also creating opportunities for cross-cultural learning between the two regions. Understanding these dynamics is valuable not only for assessing the effectiveness of the existing partnership but also for informing policy recommendations aimed at strengthening similar paradiplomatic initiatives in the future.

CONCLUSION

The paradiplomatic cooperation between Jakarta and New South Wales in the field of education represents an important and mutually beneficial undertaking for both parties. Through initiatives such as student exchange programmes, joint curriculum development, and teacher training, this cooperation has helped expand access to, and improve the quality of, education in both regions. Government institutions, together with private and civil society actors, have played an important role in sustaining and strengthening this partnership over time.

Cultural and contextual factors including differences in educational systems, governance structures, and political dynamics have shaped the course of this cooperation, presenting both challenges and opportunities for cross-cultural learning. Notwithstanding the 2007 diplomatic disruption, the Jakarta–NSW partnership has, on balance, achieved its stated objectives in educational development without compromising the quality or capability of the teaching staff and institutions involved on either side.

Ultimately, paradiplomatic cooperation between Jakarta and New South Wales extends beyond the implementation of concrete programmes; it also constitutes an ongoing exchange of knowledge and mutual learning, through which both parties continue to draw on each other's best practices to develop more effective strategies for educational advancement. This cooperation has thus generated significant and continuing benefits for both regions.

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