

# **ARE THERE ANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR HUMANITIES GRADUATES TO DEVELOP A CAREER IN OIL & GAS INDUSTRY?**

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## **ABSTRAK**

Kedudukan ilmu – ilmu budaya di dalam peranannya pada lingkungan bisnis, sangatlah memprihatinkan. Disiplin ini kurang menyumbangkan kompetensi yang memadai untuk dapat memberikan sumbangan yang berarti bagi jalannya roda bisnis yang semakin berputar dengan cepat dalam ketatnya persaingan. Tidak ayal lagi, banyak lulusan ilmu ini hanya berserakan menjadi pengangguran, atau berusaha untuk bekerja apa saja dengan menanggalkan ilmu yang telah dipelajarinya dengan susah payah di bangku kuliah. Di sisi lain, perguruan tinggi menunjukkan kegagalannya di dalam menghadapi masalah ini. Para civitas academica semakin menunjukkan keangkuhan ”menara gading”, yang seolah – olah merasa bahwa mereka bisa memberi sumbangan yang berarti bagi khalayak ramai.

Di lain pihak, para penggiat bisnis terutama industri minyak dan gas, sebenarnya membutuhkan pendekatan sosial dan budaya untuk memperlancar kegiatan bisnis mereka yang banyak berhubungan dengan masyarakat lokal. Dengan pengembangan karir yang merupakan kolaborasi dari manajemen karir dengan perencanaan karir, diharapkan kesenjangan ini dapat dikurangi.

*Kata kunci : ilmu budaya, kolaborasi, perencanaan karir, industri migas*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The growth of knowledge make sciences divided into several disciplines. Humanities as one branch of knowledge has a unique position because of their competencies do not create to patch up directly with business environment. In Indonesia, this disciplines, commonly include on Faculty of Letters, there are Anthropology, Archaeology, History, Language and Philosophy.

However, there is an exceptional for Foreign Language disciplines. Beside to have a good understanding in cultural context, this study also created to facing the globalization environment including business activities.

The problem is, are there any bright future for people who study Indonesian or Indigenous Language such as, Batakese, Minangese, Sundanese, Javanese, Balinese, Old Javanese or Bugisese to build a career in industrial environment? This problem also arises in the field of Anthropology, Archaeology, History or Philosophy.

Another problem is this knowledge is sound theoretical. It is different with Education or Art disciplines that produce their graduates with ability so they have competitive advantage to compete with “premium” knowledge such as Law, Psychology, Communication, Administration, Economics or Exact sciences. This condition is not applicable with Religion or Theology sciences that have purpose in “vertical” ways instead of secular ways such as other sciences. However, if the “vertical” graduates have willingness to work in business activities, they will face the some problem with Humanities.

Besides this, demands for industry also determine which is “marketable” and which is not. That is why, although graduates from Indonesian and Indigenous letter have language skill, however they difficult to compete because the demand is very limited.

When Pertamina publish job opportunity for Public Relation (PR) position, they required only Communication and International Relation graduates who have change to apply. It means that, although this position has a job description to build a good relation with all of public stakeholders including indigenous people, Anthropology graduate can not apply. Perhaps, the Human Resources (HR) Department of Pertamina think that Anthropologist is the same species with indigenous people.

Another example is Conoco Phillips (COPI). While they release job vacation for Business Ethics Specialist, they just give an opportunity for Law, Management or Engineering graduates. Again, although Ethics is directly related with Philosophy

discipline, the philosopher can not apply. Perhaps, business players think that this species is such kind of “lunatic” and can not work normally likes another professional.

If they do not “marketable”, what should they do? Let this knowledge disappear because there is no bright future, try to improve their competencies to facing the life or “waiting for godot”, hope that business players give an opportunity to actualize the knowledge in industry.

## **BACKGROUND**

Oil and gas industry is one of business activity which has opportunity for Humanities to show of their capability although in very limited position. One of the reasons is, this industry has close relation with environmental issues, at this point is indigenous community. They must manage environment professionally, if they want operate the business properly according to the regulations and minimize negative externalities which can disturb the exploration or exploitation phase seriously.

According to regulation in Indonesia, oil & gas company which have upstream activities, operates in the term of Production Sharing Contract (PSC) with Indonesia government. Their activities have monitored and evaluated by Government Executive Agency for Upstream Oil and Gas Business Activities (BP MIGAS). As the consequence, there are many regulations which should be followed by PSC such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Operating Procedure No. 017/PTK/III/2005 concerning in Emergency Crisis Notification, Community Development (CD) and Public Relation (PR) Guideline for the PSC is one of example. With this regulation, PSC should conduct CD program to aware with social environment. To implement a CD program as a part of PR activities, need a competency in social and cultural understanding.

In several PSC, PR department already have establish position, which represented by Vice President (VP) or Senior Manager who directly report to

President or General Manager (GM) and they are only have responsibility to manage external or internal relation activities, such as Amerada Hess, Beyond Petroleum (BP), Chevron, COPI or Unocal (before acquisition with Chevron).

However, more of PSC, take this role integrated as part of other department with relatively has related function. In CNOOC, this is including on Relations, Shipping and Oil Marketing. In Premier Oil, this is under VP General Affairs. In Santos, this is a part of Environment, Health and Safety (EHS). In Star Energy, this is below VP Administration. In Total E & P, this is responsibility of VP HR and Relation.

The various position for PR Department in organization structure, represent about corporate view, importance and sense of urgency of PR function to support core business and maintain corporate image. That is why, PR function develop properly in PSC which already aware about the importance of relation activities.

In organization structure under VP Relation and Development of COPI, there are five managers who have authority to develop PR functions in certain area. These functions are Security, CSR, Communication, Government Relation and Media Relation. As a consequence, in every department there are many positions which are stressing in particular area.

With this condition, corporate awareness about social and cultural issue is arising. The effect is, although is limited, there are any opportunities for Humanities to apply and build a career in oil and gas industry because this job position is close related with their background. For example, as a part of CSR department, COPI need position for CSR Program Development Analyst and Social Assessment / Monitoring Specialist.

Santos Headquarter in Adelaide has a job title in Cultural Heritage. This is a unique fact beside this job is exceptional in industry activities especially in oil and gas, also this title is state together with other 59 jobs and not all of position covered in the list. For example in HR function, Santos just state HR Administrator, HR Advisor

and Training. Another function such as Compensation and Benefit, Industrial Relation or Organization Development is not mention on the list.

This is an evidence, although is uncommon, that oil and gas industry give an opportunity for Humanities. Social Assessment required deep comprehension about Anthropological perspective to mapping the social and cultural condition. Cultural Heritage required competency in conservation technique, which is cover in Archaeological method. Santos Australia also publishes Cultural Heritage Guideline, which can access by their entire employee in the world. Because this guideline produces in Australia, beside an Archaeological knowledge, good comprehension about indigenous culture especially Aborigine issues is required. All of this indication is good information for Humanities to wake up from their nightmare, build their competency and try to facing the reality. There are already an opportunity and they must compete to actualize their knowledge.

However, although those position need deep knowledge about cultural issues, many applicants can apply for this position even they have no directly related background. The reason is experience more valuable than theoretical. Graduates who have deep knowledge about this issue are difficult to compete because they do not have enough experience in extractive industry. In other side, engineers who do not have enough knowledge can face the problem more effectively base on their practical experience.

In BP, the Senior CD officer is from Procurement Department. In CNOOC, Community Relation Superintendent is come from Finance Department. Exxon has a CD Coordinator for Aceh area who has background in Architecture. In Santos, Government Relation Superintendent is a Geologist from Unocal who do not have experience career position in PR. Star Energy has CD officer that has a background in engineering.

Moreover, Sub Section Head of CD in BP MIGAS who must controlling, evaluating and monitoring all of CD program in all of PSC in Indonesia is a drilling engineer from Pertamina. In addition, one of his staff is an Accounting graduate from

Tri Sakti. In 2005, CD officer who has Anthropology background from almost 100 PSC is only three people. There are from Unocal, Premier Oil and Santos. Almost all of CD officer in PSC is come from “premium” disciplines such as Law, Management or Engineering. So, where are the Humanities? They still sleep on their habitat until rest in absurdity.

This is a classical problem, that a person come from technical background can manage various job positions smoothly comparing than a person who has social sciences background. In oil and gas with their unique characteristic industry, people who has long experience in this field has more opportunity to develop their career comparing than new comer, although they have experience also but in other field of business.

In another side, Humanities cannot fill other job position such as Drilling, Geologist, Procurement, Finance or HR because business expert think that this “fossil” do not have competency to work in various position. Although there are job rotation in managing career development strategy, HR department seems look these graduates in their weakness instead of their potential factors. Take it or leave it, Humanities must be realize that they competency is not suitable with job demand. Once upon a time, if there is a Pipeline Engineer, who have responsibility to create a tie in from Platform to Trans Java Gas Pipeline and she has a background in Ethnomusicology, perhaps this is a sign that countdown to the Doomsday is close enough.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

With a lot of difficult condition, are there any opportunities for Humanities graduates to build a career, facing a bright future in oil and gas industry, and try to escape from absurd unemployment labyrinth which can ended in countdown to competency extinction, when their time is over?

## ANALYSIS

From the fundamental perspective, we can say that career development derives from getting an occupation, developing a career path and ending with satisfaction retirement. Individuals have needs to occupy their existence as human beings and getting a job is the first critical phase to realize that. In order to essential needs there are (Nadler, Hackman and Lawler III: 228):

1. sex, hunger and oxygen
2. security
3. social relations
4. esteem and reputation
5. autonomy, self control and independence
6. competence, achievement and self realization.

Working environment in oil and gas industry can provide all of these human needs properly. The problem is to get a job in this industry is difficult for Humanities. To face a problem at this stage, Humanities must be increasing their competency. They must be expert on that field with a lot of experience in community facilitator, conduct a research or program implementation. They can get this experience with work in Local or International Non Governmental Organization (NGO), various Consultants or Research Institutes. With this competency, they can compete with another discipline because they have added value. Besides this, they also must know about oil and gas activities properly, because having a deep knowledge about core business is essential benefit if they want to get a job at this industry.

After the first problem is already solving, they must manage their career if they do not want to kick out in advance from the company. The career is the individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviours associated with work related experiences and activities over than span of the person's life (Hall, 1993). Individual competency is the main point to building a good career. Although external factors such as organization structure or working environment can influence a lot to

personal career development, however this is a kind of threat that must be facing to achieve a success. The last three needs (esteem - reputation, autonomy - self control - independence and competence – achievement – self realization) can occupied properly if the employee can develop their career base on their competency.

Maintaining career needs special effort instead of looking for a job, because lay off can result big problem in individual life. It is like from “something to nothing” and their existence as human being is questioned. Individual psychological barrier is big problem that must be solving to reach this goal. They must be having a good commitment, adaptability and flexibility to facing the change of work in various conditions such as team partners, corporate culture or organization structure.

In several PSC, employee must be realizing that the company tend to give them a wider opportunity to build their competency. One of the reasons is, this industry is rather competitive and strategy to hijack the high potential employee from the competitors is common among them. HR meeting for PSC, sometimes is using to give an approach to get deep understanding from each other. In private conversation, one company can explain that they still want their employee contribution and need good will from another company which already give special offer to do not continue their action. That is why, many companies have policy to give a good compensation and benefit to retain their worker from the competitor. However, this is not an easy policy because many factors can influence a lot beside remuneration. Work satisfaction is essential point for employee to build a career and achieve their success.

Individual can said to be involved in their work when the following psychological states exist (Beer and Gibbs, 1993: 3-4):

1. Work is seen as meaningful.
2. Responsibility for outcomes of work is felt.
3. Knowledge of actual results of work activities is provided.

According this point of view, actualization of employee existence in business process is key point for company to build a commitment, loyalty and support their business effectively among the employee. If they can construct “esprit de corps” spirit,



employee will think a thousand times to quit although there are many job offers for them.

However, for Humanities, they should have deep personal introspection that accepted to work in oil and gas is excellent gift from business player and it is a good place to show their capabilities. The reasons are:

1. Their opportunity to get a job is very limited.
2. Their background is not marketable.
3. Their position can substitute from another background easily.

If they feel not satisfied with their work, for example, there are no bright career plans for them, they will facing a serious problem. They can not quit easily because the job demand is limited. If they stay and do not show good performance, company will kick out them cheerfully. Of course, it is not applicable for “ready to fly” group who are having high potential and high performance result. They can hijack from the competitor even their company give special offer to compete. Humanities should aware when the opportunity to actualize their knowledge is open, they must show their commitment, loyalty and improvement to the company. Especially in oil and gas where the remuneration system is higher than another industry, they should focus on their job and not influence a lot by working environment. They must have willingness likes “foreign legion soldier” to locate in remote area following company operation such as Rombebai, Bangkanai or Matak, or international assignment such as Kazakhstan, Nigeria or Bolivia. When they enter the career with third party grade, it will be polite if they do not have big ambitious to be direct contract or permanent status. They must remember that their job position is not in the key function. Their turn will come if they can show higher performance and company will think to retain them with good remuneration and upgrading status.

Honestly, job position in PR Department, especially in CSR can perform by everyone who has deep experience in the industry. If they have a problem to implement a CD program, for example “Fish Aggregating Device Project”, they can hire Universities, Research Institutes or NGO to implement this. It means that,

company can operate properly although they do not have good PR officers. Although this department is kind of support function with the same likes HR, Finance or EHS, however another function is mandatory which is core business can influence a lot if these department can not function properly. PR is likes “supplement” function which has purpose to maintaining between company interest and external stakeholders. PR will be important if there are conflicts among them which can result in emergency condition and will disturb the operation seriously. That is the reason, why PR function just takes a small part in almost all of PSC.

To get a better job result from their sub ordinates, from the management point of view, there are strategy to make a successful initial attempt at upgrading expectations and obtaining a response and then to use this achievement as the foundation for increasingly ambitious steps (Schaffer, 1991: 7-9).

- a. Select the goal.
- b. Specify the minimum expectations of results.
- c. Communicate the expectations clearly.
- d. Monitor the project and delegate responsibility.

With this strategy, manager can monitor, controlling and evaluating the effectiveness of their sub ordinates. For example, if the PR manager hire Humanities graduate to implement CD program which is a new position in this PSC and the manager do not have much experience in this field, he can give an opportunity to the CD officer show her knowledge about CD program and they can discuss the goal oriented together. Plant of Development (POD) and BP MIGAS CD SOP can be as guideline to execute the project. CD officer should also have a deep knowledge about supply chain management system in their company and BP MIGAS SOP. If the manager can give an opportunity for the CD officer to learn about oil and gas operation, specific minimum result can determine. When the project implementation is running, manager can realize the channel of communication to explain the expectation and monitoring the project effectively because his sub ordinate already has an adequate “arsenal” to survive.

Career development also need career management from the company besides individual career planning. With a lot of limitation, a new employee from Humanities background can use HR policy to build their career. However, this is need special attention from management to understanding employee career path from untraditional background. If the company can accommodate them, it will result in win-win solution which gives positive feedback in the working environment.

It is not a big problem if the organization structure is vertical which is contains a lot of layer and the company have a wide structure in PR Department. They can promote or rotate in their function without difficulties because the company already provide any position to support their career path. The problem is rising when the company rather small or have a flat organization structure and the PR function is just like a complement. Although career development is important for satisfaction and to prepare when time to retirement is come, Humanities must aware to build their flexibility to learn various function to adapt with the working environment.

If they still want to stay because there are no job opportunities in out there, they can take an initiative to propose another new position in their department or creative to make job enrichment to show that their position is important. For example, if the company just have a PR Manager and one officer, the sub ordinate can make initiative to show that PR function is can develop into five functions such as Security, Government Relation, Media Relation, Communication or CSR. With appointment from the manager, she can rotate to another function and develop this new job position to establish in the company after her last position can substitute by another person. With this strategy, the employee can show that they have sound deep knowledge about oil and gas industry in certain area, although their background is not applicable.

In a big company, individual career planning for Humanities can apply effectively. While they can show their high potentiality, this company perhaps will give any bright opportunities for them. For example, if Humanities commonly given the job position in CSR area, with a huge of PR function, they can rotate to another

close function such as Security, Government Relation, Communication or Media Relation. Business Ethics or Sustainable Development Department also can accept them happily, if they can show that their capability is meaningful for the corporate strategy. If the PSC have a good willingness and think that this “fossil” has good knowledge about business service, they will given General Affairs, Formalities or Industrial / Employee Relation position which is include in HR Department. When they have experience to implement various CD projects so they have sound deep understanding about Supply Chain Management including BP MIGAS Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) 007/PTK/VI/2004, experience in tender process with conduct owner estimate (OE) and evaluating the project, perhaps they will be assign in Procurement Department. Moreover, when oil price decrease until \$1 per barrel, may be they can assist as Corrosion Engineer, Geophysicist or Subsurface, because there are no engineers who want to paid only Rp 4.852.650 per month base on third party contract.

Willingness to learn about various functions in the oil and gas industry is important point for Humanities to build their career. With flat organization structure, when only limited person can fulfil managerial level, ability to work in various positions is mandatory when many function integrated in one department. Good interpersonal communication is competitive advantage to learn from another employee who has already deep experience. They can also using any opportunity, for example if there are Economic Valuation Technique Training from Ditjen Migas which is mandatory for all of PSC and the company do not have Environment officer yet so they send CD officer to attend the training, although in the limited capacity, this officer can using the environment knowledge to prepare for her career plan, perhaps someday she will be assign in the environment department.

According to Schein, individuals who move horizontally into second careers change their type of work but do not necessarily change the amount of their responsibilities, for example, a person may move from accounting to marketing or from engineering to human resources management and he refers to such career moves

as horizontal or lateral career growth instead of vertical and radial moves (Feldman, 1987).

Horizontal movement or job rotation is excellent strategy for Humanities to build a career in oil and gas, remembering that their background is not applicable directly with job demand and PSC commonly have flat organization structure. Specialist level is one choice to provide personal career development, if managerial level is very limited. With this stage, they can improve their skill in certain area and will be reach a key position in organizational structure. When the time is left and with a lot experience, they can show their professionalism. Perhaps, someday there is an Archaeologist graduate who starts her career as CSR officer and twenty years after that, she become a Procurement Manager and will retired happily.

## CONCLUSION

As a graduate from not marketable discipline, Humanities must be realise to upgrade their competency to facing unemployment problem and accepted in industry demand.

As an industry which has a lot of impact with environment issues, oil and gas should improve their commitment to implement externalities policy more seriously, for an example recruit new employees from Humanities background to execute corporate engagement project in social and cultural aspects.

When, they accepted as an employee, Humanities must develop their career seriously to prepare for the worst if they kicked out in advance from the company and learn of various function in oil and gas industry is mandatory.

Horizontal movement is one strategy to develop career in imperfect condition, at this point is lack of background that is not directly applied with industry demand.

Last but not least, the opportunity to get a job is special reward from oil and gas bourgeois for Humanities graduate, and they must answering this request with full of commitment, loyalty and continuously upgrading their competency.

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