The implementation of a Merit System in the Selection of Village Officers in the Indonesian Region of Yogyakarta

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Abstract

This article aims to examine the selection mechanism for village officials in the Indonesian Distinctive Region of Yogyakarta. This article will focus on the problem of the differences in the selection mechanism for village officials in Yogyakarta, particularly in Kulon Progo, Sleman, Bantul, and Gunung Kidul Districts. In this study, researchers use the theory of merit system, which means a system working based on competency performance and professionalism, which is open and provides opportunities and supports every employee to develop the best performance for the organization, which is a manifestation of change as well as coaching for every employee to create productivity and competence (Meyrina, 2016). The data are collected from four districts in Yogyakarta by series of observations to the implementation of regional regulations. The data are categorized and analyzed. This study concludes that the implementation of the merit system in the four districts is through open selection, which in practice has differences in the examination mechanism. This shows that in the application of the merit system there are variations from the four districts. Besides, another difference is the neutrality of the selection committee, which has different mechanisms between districts. One of them is collaborating with universities and third parties. This was done to maintain the neutrality of the committee and to create professional, competent, and high integrity of human resources.

Keywords: Merit System; Selection Committee; Human Resources; Open Selection

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia's governmental system, the bureaucratic reform provides changes to the management of human resources in the bureaucratic institution. This change is obvious in the management and recruitment of human resources in the institution. The reason for this change is because human resource management reform is considered to become the basis for creating competent, professional human resources with integrity, responsibility, and good performance (Ashari, 2010).

The manifestation of the change in human resource management reform is the recruitment of employees. This is to find employees who are following the needs of the bureaucracy for competent employees. As Purwanto, Pramusinto, and Indiahono (2018) state that employee recruitment is an important thing for an organization to do, not only to find quality people according to their fields but also to choose someone who is dedicated, honest, and take side to the public and administration. Human resources have a very strategic position in the implementation of governance and development to implement and realize the administration and national development at large. Therefore the governmental institution must be supported by human resources who have competence and professionalism (Atmojo, 2016).

Given that so far there are still many problems related to the quality of human resources, either within the regional government or village administration. Mardiyasari and Supriyadi (2015) state that in reality, many government officials carry out their tasks that are not following the regulations, which particularly are frequent delays in government officials since the officials return home frequently to do domestic affairs during working hours. Feisal Tamin (in Zulchaidir, 2011) says that the recruitment of civil servants based on politics rather than competence is one of the causes of the low quality of public services. An example of the suspicions of people in Tiremenggal village during the recruitment process of the village officers can be one of the indications (Faturahman, 2018). This shows that problems regarding human resources are very complex so that it needs improvement. Aminudin, Sumartono, and Domai (2018) state that accountability is also the main

problem, which still cannot be achieved in the recruitment process and placement of officials.

These problems occur and will significantly disrupt the work of administrative institutions, especially in terms of public services. To solve the existing problems, a good recruitment process model is needed for quality government officials, especially for village officials. The reason for this is because the recruitment process for village officials is considered an important effort to support effective village governance so that the village head can select assistants based on performance-oriented officials (Faturahman, 2018). This can be applied by implementing an open selection or a merit system in the village administration.

Open selection is a selection process for prospective apparatus to occupy vacant positions with a transparent and fair system (Rosmiati, Sumaryana, & Buchari, 2019). The open selection also has a positive value in bureaucratic reform because this mechanism will be able to place employees according to their competence (Herawati, 2016). This is also supported by Law No. 5/2014 on the Civil Apparatus, where the management of the State Civil Apparatus can be done through open recruitment or selection.

Open recruitment is a method of implementing a merit system. According to Meyrina (2016), the merit system is a competency-based performance system, professionalism, which is open and provides opportunities and supports every employee to develop the best performance for the organization. This is a manifestation of the change and development of every employee to be productive and competent. With the implementation of this merit system, it will significantly support the village government in realizing good governance. Given that the merit system has so far only been carried out in the regional and the central government, whereas it has never applied in the village administration. The implementation of the merit system in an open selection has consequences, which is including of the standardization of competency that accommodates the potential to develop either that of *soft competence* or *hard competence* (Daniarsyah, 2017).

Therefore, this new mechanism will help the village government in

realizing quality public services. Moreover, with political decentralization, the village government has the right to organize the Village Apparatus. This is also following Law No. 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, which states that the village head election must go through the General Election stages simultaneously in the regency/municipality area and are held by the Village Head Election Committee consisting of village officials, community organizations in the village and village community leaders. Meanwhile, the village apparatus consists of the village secretary, regional administrators, and other officers.

The Special Region of Yogyakarta is one of the regional governments that has implemented an open selection in the recruitment of village officers. This is implemented to increase community participation in the democratic process at the lowest level of the government structure, which is the village. These village officials are appointed by the elected Village Head after consulting the Subdistrict Head (Camat) in the area and on behalf of the District Head. Four districts in Yogyakarta, namely Kulon Progo, Sleman, Gunungkidul, and Bantul have implemented open selection in appointing village officials.

In this context, the open selection for prospective village officials is also able to create transparency from the village government to the community (Faturahman, 2018). However, in its implementation, it has to consider the basic qualifications and the stages of mechanism and procedures. Basic qualifications must be considered since they are expected to be able to recruit village officials who can assist properly in the village administration. Apart from the implementation of the merit system, not all regions can apply according to the principles of the merit system (Noors, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to observe the selection mechanism for village officials in Yogyakarta.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research applies a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research is research that aims to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the researchers as a whole which is presented descriptively in the form of words and language, which is a specific context utilizes

various techniques (Moleong, 2012). The researchers approach the object of the research from the literature review, especially the literature concerning the local regulations and documentation.

This research was carried out in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, particularly in its four districts, namely Kulon Progo, Sleman, Bantul Regency, and Gunung Kidul. This research focuses on the open selection mechanism in the recruitment of village officials, especially those who are under the districts. Given that three of the four districts have made it mandatory for the village government to carry out an open selection, especially in appointing someone to become a village official. Therefore, it is very interesting to study, especially regarding the mechanisms of the three districts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Law No. 6 of 2014, village management decisions have become the full responsibility of the village government. One of the responsibilities of the village administration is the human resources management of the village apparatus. Following Law No. 6 of 2014 on Village, the local government also has a role in controlling the village government, especially in terms of managing the village budget. According to this law, the local governments have the authority to prepare competent human resources, particularly in terms of making policies or regulations. One of the ways to improve the quality of personnel is by applying a merit system in the village government.

The merit system is a new method of increasing the competence of employees, which is particularly by improving employee competence through open recruitment. Since the recruitment of employees through an open selection, those who are qualified for a certain position and professionalism will be selected, which subsequently will affect the employee's performance (Monalisa & Dinata, 2017). The open selection at this time is one of the methods in improving the quality of human resources in governmental institutions, such as the central government, local government, and village administration. Nowadays, in the Indonesian Special Region of Yogyakarta, there have been many local governments that have made

regional regulations regarding open selection for village officials. It becomes mandatory for all villages in the region that the village administration must organize an objectives selection for the village apparatus to improve the quality of village officials.

As a region with educational and tourism purposes, Yogyakarta has become a reference for other villages to conduct comparative studies. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the quality of apparatus resources so that the quality of public services for the community and students can be improved. The increase of quality of the village apparatus is carried out to support quality public services both *offline* and *online* using information technology or better known as the village information system (Sistem Informasi Desa/SID).

One of the ways to improve human resources' quality, competence, and integrity is the open selection, which must be made for selecting village officials. This is one of the methods to improve the quality of human resources at the village government level. With the improvement of the quality of human resources, it is hoped to provide quality public services for the community and be able to utilize the technology as an instrument for public service. Several districts in Yogyakarta upgrade the quality of village officers, namely the village in the districts of Kulon Progo, Sleman, Bantul, and Gunung Kidul.

The four districts realize that improving the quality of human resources is very important. Given that the village administration is the lowest level of government, it will however have a considerable impact on the achievement of national development. Therefore, the three districts have initiated to improve the quality of their human resources in village administration. This is implemented through a regional regulation (Peraturan Daerah/Perda) that regulates the placement for some positions in the village government employing open selection. The regional regulations are namely: Regional Regulation of Kulon Progo No. 3 of 2015 concerning Village Apparatus, Regional Regulation of Bantul No. 5 of 2016 concerning Village Civil Service, Regional Regulation of Sleman No 10 of 2019 concerning Procedures for Selecting Village Apparatus, and District

Head's regulation of Gunung Kidul No 18 of 2019.

The above regulations require the implementation of an open selection for the recruitment of the village apparatus. One of the goals of the open selection process is to improve the quality, competence, and integrity of village officials. Besides, it is also to create public trust in the government, especially in terms of transparency and accountability. According to Law No. 6 of 2014 in Village, transparency in village administration is one of the most important components in governance. Therefore, with an open selection, it will improve the quality of the apparatus who will occupy certain positions in the village administration.

If we look at the regional regulations and the District Head regulations from the four districts, several things differentiate between districts. However, the differences do not reduce the commitment of the regions in realizing quality apparatus. This is obvious in the implementation of a transparent open selection in the four districts, namely Kulon Progo, Sleman, Bantul, and Gunung Kidul. Moreover, the implementation of the open selection is also open for public participation from all groups such as ordinary people, state civil servants, and the younger generation, as long as they meet the prerequisite or requirements.

These regional regulations and district head regulations show that there is a commitment from the Regional Government and the Village Government in improving the competency of the village apparatus by open recruitment. It is believed that quality human resources will be able to provide quality public services for society. This is in line with what Zulchaidir (2011) has stated, that one of the efforts to increase the capacity of apparatus resources is to carry out "bureaucratic reform" in the field of employment, which is believed to result in a condition of government bureaucracy as a public service as the society expects. Bureaucratic reform at the village government can be realized by implementing an open selection for village officials.

This bureaucratic reform has been carried out by the Village Government in Yogyakarta, as part of the implementation of the Law No. 6 of 2014 on Village. However, the local government in Yogyakarta has also the

authority to enact regional regulations following the *local wisdom* embraced by the people in the region. Even though, the open selection system has some differences between the districts. The following explanation will make clear the implementation of the open selection for the village apparatus in the four districts in Yogyakarta.

Figure 1. Flow chart of the open selection process in the district of Kulon Progo

Figure 2 Flow chart of the open selection process in the district of Sleman

Figure 3 Flow chart of the open selection process in the district of Bantul

Figure 4 Flow chart of the open selection process in the district of Gunung Kidul

From the flow chart of the selection process that has been listed above, several things differentiate between regions. The differences are made according to the needs of each region. However, the differences will not **reduce the commitment** to bureaucratic reform at the village level. **It is, therefore,** the purpose of the open selection in achieving quality and professional human resources can be realized.

One of the significant differences in the implementation of open selection is a collaboration with third parties, which is quite an obvious difference between regions that carry out open selection for village officials. **Regional Regulation of the district of Sleman** requires the village to conduct an open selection with cooperation with a local university, specifically the university with the accreditation of minimum B grade. Whereas, the district of Bantul does not explicitly demand

the point of cooperation, but rather requires cooperation with other third parties.

However, **at this point** in cooperation, regional regulations do not require all **stages of the** test to be carried out by a third party. It means, in particular, that the test that can be carried out by a third party is only the psychological and practical skills tests. Whereas, the written examinations and interviews can be carried out independently by the selection committee. Meanwhile, the district of Gunung Kidul's regulation points out that it is only practical skills exams that can be carried out by the third party, so written exams do not require cooperation with a third party. **Moreover,** Kulon Progo district does not obligate the village to cooperate with universities. However, it is allowed for the villages if they want to cooperate with universities in the open selection.

Given that in Kulon Progo Regency alone, there are villages that implement the open selection in cooperation with universities, but there is also open recruitment without the cooperation with the university. For the villages that did not carry out this collaboration, they made standard measurements with the help of the members of the local community, especially those who are educated, such as teachers and retired village officials. Even though they do not collaborate with universities, the selection committee still maintains their neutrality. Therefore, the implementation of the open selection is still going according to the plan and following the goal of improving the quality of the village apparatus.

The points in the implementation of the collaboration are related to the tests, namely written tests, practical skills in operating computer, and interviews. **Principally,** the aim of administering the test from a third party is to maintain the neutrality of the selection committee and to ensure transparency of the open selection of the village officials. **The** implementation of the selection of village officers is to select objectively the candidates that have competence, without any factor of nepotism and favoritism through political connection. This is a very important point in improving the quality of human resources, especially the village officials.

Apart from the cooperation, the other difference is in the written exam. At the written

examination stage, there are several differences between the four districts. In the districts of Kulon Progo and Gunung Kidul, the involvement of the local university in the written examination is not necessary. The exam questions that are given to the participants can be made by the selection committee. However, in the district of Kulon Progo, several villages collaborate with universities such as Bendungan Village, Hargomulyo, Karangwuni, and so on, so that the questions being asked to the participants came from universities, which are also responsible to release the score. Some villages do not involve universities but only involve community leaders and the village community, such as Sedangsari Village. In this village, the processes from the preparation of the question to the final result only involve teachers, retired village officials, community leaders, and the selection committee.

In the implementation of the selection process, Sleman District requires the selection committee to involve universities, especially in terms of preparation of exam questions up to score the result. This has been done to maintain the neutrality of the selection committee and to maintain public trust in the village government. In Bantul District, the preparation for exam questions can be done either in collaboration with the university or by the selection committee itself.

Despite differences between regions, the written examination process has the same goal, which is to improve the quality of village apparatus resources. Improving the quality of village apparatus resources is very important since there are still many difficulties in creating quality services for the village government due to the large number of village apparatus resources who do not understand how to provide good service (Taufiq, 2018). **Besides, Taufiq (2018)** also states that the low professional capability of the apparatus as seen from the educational background and work ethic also affects the quality of the village apparatus.

There are differences in the implementation stage, especially in the implementation of practical exams, psychological tests, and interviews. Of these methods, Kulon Progo District is the one that has the simplest selection model. It can be seen that the exam process is only for the written exam. This, of course, is not without reason,

since each district determines its own rules according to the conditions of its territory. Even though Kulon Progo District only implements a written exam, the results **are** announced immediately to keep transparency to society according to the rule. Besides, this also does not give a space for the political and familial connection in determining village officials.

The examination mechanism carried out in Gunung Kidul District is only in terms of written and practical skills examinations. The implementation of practical skills exams must collaborate with third parties, which in this case it can be carried out with local universities or other institutions. These two examination mechanisms are sufficient for the implementation of the open selection in the Gunung Kidul District.

Of all the processes, Kulon Progo and Gunung Kidul Districts are the districts that apply very simple procedures in the implementation of the village apparatus selection. Meanwhile, Sleman and Bantul districts apply a longer selection mechanism. However, if we observe, the selection in Kulon Progo, Sleman, and Gunung Kidul districts applies direct announcements of the result. As for Bantul District, the announcement was made after getting a recommendation from the Head of Subdistrict (Camat). Nevertheless, this recommendation will cause some kinds of perceptions of the intervention of *Camat*. **Despite** various perceptions, the mechanism and the selection process that has been implemented are following the regional regulations.

Despite these differences, they do not reduce the commitment of the village government **to select the quality human resources** following through an open selection according to local regulations. One of the ways of realizing quality human resources is to implement an open selection for village officials. This is part of the implementation of Law No. 6 of 2014 on Village to increase the skills and competence of human resources in the village administration. **Furthermore**, it is **believed** that the implementation of open recruitment with this new model will increase people's trust in the village government.

The mechanisms that the four districts have been implemented are following the regional regulations. The mechanism that has

been implemented, it shows that the village governments in the four districts are committed to improving the quality of human resources. It is this commitment **that** will create an effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable government. The village government will also obtain the public trust from the village community since they are significantly involved in the recruitment process. According to Faturahman (2018), the existence of open selection procedures in government administration at the village level is necessary to maintain social harmony and democratic life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above results, the implementation of a merit system in the village government can be carried out by the open selection of village officials. **The** open selection carried out within the village government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta is one of the manifestations of bureaucratic reform in the civil service sector. The way of the application of the merit system is not merely a discourse but has been implemented to the lowest administrative level such as a village. The aim of implementing this merit system is to improve the quality of human resources in the village administrative institution. Since the bureaucratic reform, the village currently has a large enough burden in the implementation of good governance.

The implementation of the merit system at the village administrative level has a difference in four respective districts. An obvious difference is regarding the examination mechanism. The districts of Sleman and Bantul apply the written examination mechanism, psychological test, practical examination, and interview. Meanwhile, the districts of Gunung Kidul only apply written and practical skills examinations. On the other hand, **the district of** Kulon Progo only uses written exams. Besides, another difference is about cooperation with third parties, which in Sleman the selection process taking place in cooperation with universities with a minimum accreditation **of grade** B. Meanwhile, Bantul cooperates with the third party partially so that not for all stages of selection. Whereas, Gunung Kidul makes a partnership with the third party only for the implementation of a practical skills test. Kulon Progo does not

require the villages to have a cooperate with the third party, but several villages have made their initiatives to cooperate to maintain the neutrality of the selection committee.

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