Research Article

Strengthening the Merit System in Accelerating Bureaucratic Reform in Tangerang Regency

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Abstract.
Bureaucratic reform is a key innovation aimed at enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in government operations. A critical component of this reform is the merit system index, which serves as one of the key indicators in evaluating the success of general bureaucratic reform. This study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the merit system assessment indicators in Tangerang Regency, Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach and the Root Cause Analysis (RCA) method, the research investigates the underlying causes of challenges in implementing the merit system. The findings reveal that a major issue in strengthening the merit system lies in the continued occurrence of promotions that are not based on competence and performance. To address this issue, a SWOT analysis was conducted to identify opportunities and formulate action plans for improvement. The study proposes integrating a Career Pattern System based on job competency development needs as part of the bureaucratic reform roadmap to reinforce the merit-based system.

Keywords: bureaucratic reform, merit system, career patterns, root cause analysis, Tangerang Regency

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Bureaucratic reform is one of the strategic efforts made to increase efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability in the administration of government. In Tangerang Regency, the acceleration of bureaucratic reform is very important to ensure better public services and be responsive to the needs of the community. One of the key aspects of bureaucratic reform is the strengthening of the merit system, which aims to ensure that filling positions in the bureaucracy is based on competence and performance, not on proximity or

personal relationships. However, despite the various policies that have been implemented, there are still significant challenges in their implementation. This includes issues in performance appraisal, transparency of the recruitment process, and capacity building of human resources. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the strengthening of the merit system in Tangerang Regency is needed to identify existing obstacles and formulate effective strategies in order to accelerate bureaucratic reform in this area.

Bureaucratic Reform which has been widely discussed in various literatures illustrates a paradigm shift as well as a change in the organizational structure, management, policies, mindset and work culture of human resources, which is directed to save the state budget, improve the quality of public services and encourage a more efficient and effective government work mechanism (Dwiyanto, 2010).

In depth, the discussion of bureaucratic reform not only covers organizational aspects, but also covers things covered in administrative reform as stated (Daraba, 2019) that "administrative reform is a planned innovation to improve the ability of the administrative system as a more effective social agent, a better instrument to organize political democratization, social justice, and economic growth, which is the most important element in the the process of nation-building and development." The definition of bureaucratic reform as a tool is a means to create a more effective administrative system for social change, a better instrument to bring about political struggles, equality, social justice and economic growth. As a process, bureaucratic reform can also be seen as a change in behavioral practices and established bureaucratic structures (Romli, 2008).

In order to realize good and clean governance in Tangerang Regency, Bureaucratic Reform (RB) is one of the strategic priorities that must be accelerated. However, the results of the evaluation show that the implementation of RB in some aspects is still not optimal, requiring immediate attention and action to improve this condition. There are several fundamental problems that are the main obstacles in achieving the Bureaucratic Reform target in Tangerang Regency.

Bureaucratic Reform (RB) in Tangerang Regency is a planned and systematic effort to create fundamental changes in governance, work processes, and organizational culture. The goal is to create an adaptive and innovative government that can increase effectiveness and efficiency, produce continuous improvements in government performance, and involve the community in the development of Tangerang Regency. This process

involves structural changes, the use of information technology, increasing employee capacity, and collaboration between the government and the community. With strong collaboration, the government ensures policies and programs that are relevant to the needs of the community.

One of the critical issues faced is the low strengthening of the merit system. The implementation of the merit system in Tangerang Regency still faces various challenges, including resistance to change, lack of understanding among Civil Servants about the importance of the merit system, and limitations in terms of adequate supporting infrastructure and regulations. In addition, objective and transparent performance appraisals are still a problem that needs to be overcome to support the optimal implementation of the merit system.

The achievements of the implementation of the Tangerang Regency General Bureaucratic Reform in 2023 in each assessment indicator in accordance with the results of the evaluation of the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Based on the issue of these problems, sourced from the 2023 LKE of the Ministry of Agriculture, the System Merit Index assessment indicator has an index score of 3.42 with a weight of 4. This needs to be improved regarding the mapping of employees in competence and potential as well as succession plans in accordance with national regulations (KemenpanRB Team, 2023).

In an effort to create clean, effective, and accountable governance, the implementation of the merit system is one of the key elements. The merit system is an approach in human resource management that emphasizes the principles of equality, competence, and professionalism in the process of recruitment, development, and placement of employees. This system is designed to ensure that each position is filled by individuals who have the appropriate qualifications and competencies, so that it can improve the overall performance of the organization.

In Tangerang Regency, strengthening the merit system is becoming increasingly relevant considering the challenges faced in managing human resources in the public sector. Problems such as nepotism, corrupt practices, and lack of transparency in the recruitment process often hinder the creation of a clean and efficient government. Therefore, the Tangerang Regency Government is committed to strengthening the implementation of the merit system as part of broader bureaucratic reform.

TABLE 1: Achievement of the 2023 Tangerang Regency RB General Assessment Indicator.

No.	Assessment Indicators	Weight	Score	Index Score
1.	Bureaucratic Simplification (Simplification of Structure)	2	97.41	1.95
2.	Implementation of the New Work System with a flexible model for Civil Servant Officers	2	3	1.2
3.	Implementation of the National SPBE Architecture	2.5	1	0.5
4.	Implementation of an Integrated Government Agency Performance Accountability System	4	73	2.92
5.	Implementation of Digital Public Services		4.08	1.22
6.	Development of Integrity Zones in work units	3.5	0.5	0.5
7.	Strengthening the implementation of the government's internal control system (SPIP)	4	3.016	2.41
8.	Strengthening the Management of Community Complaints	2.5	4	2
9.	Strengthening Corruption Prevention Efforts			
10.	Implementation of Public Policy Governance	2.5	-	-
11.	Implementation of the Formation of Laws and Regulations	2.5	86.73	2.17
12.	Implementation of Digital Archives	2.5	43.29	1.08
13.	Implementation of Sectoral Statistical Data	2.5	3.27	1.64
14.	Strengthening Government Procurement of Goods and Services	2.5	87.36	2.18
15.	Strengthening Financial and Asset Management	5	5	5
16.	Functional Position Arrangement			
17.	Strengthening Civil Servant Talent Management			
18.	Civil Servant Employee Performance Management			
19.	Merit System Strengthening	4	350.5	3.42
20.	Implementation of Civil Servant Core Values	4	63.3	2.53
21.	Implementation of Excellent Public Service	1.5	4.08	1.22

Source : (KemenpanRB Team, 2023)

Another urgency is that strengthening the merit system in Tangerang Regency has a high urgency considering its important role in improving the quality of governance and

public services. With the increasingly complex challenges of regional development, local governments are required to have state Civil Servants who are not only competent, but also professional and have integrity. The merit system ensures that the appointment, placement, and promotion of Civil Servants are carried out based on qualifications, competence, and performance, so as to create a bureaucracy that is able to respond to the needs of the community quickly and appropriately.

Without the implementation of a strong merit system, Tangerang Regency is at risk of facing various problems such as low quality of public services, lack of public trust in the government, and the occurrence of corruption, collusion, and nepotism. This can hinder local governments' efforts to achieve the vision of inclusive and sustainable development.

In addition, in the current era of globalization and digitalization, competition between regions is getting tighter. Tangerang Regency needs to ensure that its human resources are able to compete and adapt to rapid changes. Strengthening the merit system is the key to creating human resources who are able to present innovation and make a real contribution to regional development.

Failure to strengthen the merit system can have a direct impact on the effectiveness of local government programs, considering that Civil Servants that is not in accordance with their qualifications or performance will be difficult to provide optimal services. Therefore, strengthening the merit system must be a priority in the bureaucratic reform agenda in Tangerang Regency to ensure the achievement of the expected good governance.

This urgency is also supported by the demands of increasingly stringent national regulations on the implementation of the merit system at all levels of government. Tangerang Regency must move quickly in adopting and implementing meritocracy principles to not only meet national standards, but also to ensure the sustainability of regional development oriented towards community welfare.

1.2. Merit System Strengthening

Based on the PANRB Ministerial Circular Letter No. 10/2021 concerning the Assessment of the Implementation of Civil Servant Talent Management in Government Agencies, one of the important aspects in bureaucratic reform is the strengthening of the merit system. The concept of the merit system emphasizes assessment based on competence, performance, and achievements, not solely political factors or personal relationships. The

merit system is a policy and management of Civil Servant that is based on qualifications, competencies, and performance in a fair and reasonable manner without distinguishing political background, race, color, religion, origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability condition. This is as stated in Article 51 of the Civil Servant Law that Civil Servant management is held based on the merit system. The principle of the merit system aligns the aspects of competence, qualification, performance, fairness, and openness. In the appointment of merit positions, it should be a value that is upheld to obtain Civil Servant professionalism. By implementing a merit system, government agencies in Tangerang Regency can ensure that the promotion, awards, and career development of state Civil Servants are based on objective qualifications and achievements.

In this context, evaluation of the implementation of the merit system is crucial. This assessment involves many parties, including ministers, heads of institutions, and regional heads, who are committed to overseeing the overall implementation of the merit system in their agencies. Thus, strengthening the merit system in Tangerang Regency is expected to bring positive changes in bureaucratic performance and public services.

It is important to identify the factors that support and hinder the strengthening of the merit system in the bureaucratic reform process. Supporting factors include commitment from regional leaders, the existence of supportive regulations, and active participation from various stakeholders. On the other hand, inhibiting factors can be in the form of a work culture that is not fully professional, a lack of understanding of the importance of the merit system, and political intervention in the process of selecting and promoting employees.

Tangerang Regency has taken various steps to strengthen the merit system, such as the preparation of competency standards for positions, the implementation of achievement-based performance evaluations, and employee capacity building through training and development. However, the effectiveness of these measures needs to be monitored and evaluated regularly to ensure that the goals of bureaucratic reform can be achieved.

1.3. Problem Statement

Based on the background narrative with various problem entities raised, the problems in this study can be formulated, namely:

What are the strategic steps and identification of what factors can improve the assessment of the merit system in Tangerang Regency Bureaucratic Reform?

1.4. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to get a concrete overview of the strategic steps of the merit system action plan in the preparation of the Tangerang Regency Bureaucratic Reform Road Map and to find out the problem factors in the assessment of the merit system.

2. METHODES

This study uses a qualitative approach with the Root Cause Analysis (RCA) method to explore and understand the root cause of the problem being studied. Qualitative approaches allow researchers to gain deep insights into complex and dynamic phenomena, which are often not quantitatively quantifiable (Creswell, 2014).

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is a systematic technique used to identify the root cause of a problem, with a focus on eliminating or reducing the impact of the root cause of the problem (Anderson, 2018). In this study, RCA is applied to understand the fundamental factors that cause the problems faced by the research subjects. The stages of RCA include:

1. Problem Identification: Determine the main problem based on preliminary data collected through interviews and observations (Ishikawa, 1982).

2. Data Collection: Conduct in-depth interviews and participatory observations to obtain relevant information regarding the situation that occurs (Patton, 2015).

3. Root Cause Analysis: Analyze the data obtained to identify the root cause of the problem, using techniques such as the Ishikawa diagram (fishbone diagram) (Serrat, 2017).

2.1. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique in this study involves qualitative analysis that is carried out inductively and iteratively. The analysis process starts from interviews, observations, and documents are analyzed in depth to understand the relationship between various

factors that contribute to the problem at hand. Visualization of RCA results in the form of a cause-and-effect diagram helps in mapping the root cause of the problem and directing the development of solutions (Bryman, 2012). The SWOT analysis approach is used to identify opportunities that arise from the data collected (Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L., 2016). The results of the analysis obtained were then compiled into an action plan in the preparation of the Tangerang Regency Bureaucratic Reform Road Map.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

Efforts to accelerate bureaucratic reform through strengthening the merit system in Tangerang Regency are an important step in realizing a responsive, adaptive, and innovative bureaucracy. This will not only improve the quality of public services, but will also build public trust in local government. The success of these reforms will set an example for other regions in their efforts to make similar improvements.

Another role derived from the active participation of the community and other stakeholders is also needed to encourage accountability and ensure that bureaucratic reform actually runs in accordance with public needs. Effective dissemination of the benefits of the merit system and bureaucratic reform can help reduce resistance to change and increase support from all levels of society.

Analysis of the strengthening of the merit system in Tangerang Regency also requires a comprehensive approach, covering aspects of regulation, human resource management, and organizational culture. Thus, the right strategies can be identified to overcome existing obstacles and maximize their potential.

The Tangerang Regency Government is committed to implementing General and Tematik Bureaucratic Reform so that it concretely supports the achievement of Tangerang Regency Regional Development. In this case, the Tangerang Regency Government formulated the implementation of General Bureaucratic Reform which focuses on 21 main activities, namely: (1) Bureaucratic Simplification; (2) Implementation of a New Work System with a flexible model for Civil Servant Employees; (3) Implementation of the National SPBE Architecture; (4) Implementation of an Integrated Government Agency Performance Accountability System; (5) Implementation of Digital Public Services; (6) Development of Integrity Zones in work units; (7) Strengthening the implementation

of the government's internal control system (SPIP); (8) Strengthening the management of public complaints, (9) Strengthening efforts to prevent corruption; (10) Implementation of Public Policy Governance; (11) Implementation of Regulation Formation; (12) Implementation of Digital Archives; (13) Implementation of Sectoral Statistical Data; (14) Strengthening the Procurement of Baran and Services; (15) Strengthening Financial and Asset Management; (16) Arrangement of Functional Positions; (17) Strengthening Civil Servant Talent Management; (18) Performance Management of Civil Servant Employees; (19) Strengthening the Merit System; (20) Implementation of Civil Servant Core Values, and (21) Implementation of Excellent Public Service.

Based on the results of the FGD with the Tangerang Regency Regional Apparatus tracing from the root problem in the component of the merit system strengthening indicators, the analysis can be prepared in Table 2 as follows:

Based on the results of the above data distributed to respondents of Tangerang district Civil Servant employees through an online questionnaire distributed in the period of February to March 2024, it can be drawn that the main problem factor in strengthening the merit system is that there are still promotions not because of competence and performance. Then, for the next analysis, SWOT based on opportunity, namely the existence of an employee development plan and career system based on position competency standards by overcoming problem issues through several action plans, namely:

1. Development of a Competency-Based Employee Career Pattern System: Develop a system that emphasizes position competencies as the basis for Civil Servant career development.

2. Civil Servant Competency Development Needs Analysis: Conduct an in-depth analysis of Civil Servant competency development needs to ensure that employees have the necessary skills to carry out their duties effectively.

3.2. Discussion

In the midst of efforts to accelerate bureaucratic reform, Tangerang Regency needs to navigate various obstacles that arise, both from internal and external aspects. Internal obstacles include a bureaucratic culture that is still thick with the old pattern, lack of understanding and awareness of the importance of the merit system, and resistance to changes from some state Civil Servants. Meanwhile, external constraints include

TABLE 2: Identification of Root Problems and Priorities for Bureaucratic Reform of the Tangerang Regency General 2025 – 2029.

Problem	● **Strengthening Merit System**		
	● Low understanding of Civil Servant employees towards the Merit System		
Cause of the Problem	● Personnel management regarding Civil Servant performance is still low		
	● There are still promotions not due to competence and performance		
	● The performance data of existing Civil Servant employees is still not optimal		
	● Inappropriate placement of positions		
CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM	**FACTORS CAUSING THE PROBLEM**	**MAIN FACTOR & ROOT CAUSE**	**SWOT ANALYSE ROOT CAUSE**
There are still promotions not because of competence and performance	● **The promotion process has not been based on the results of an objective performance evaluation and employee competence**	**Main Factor** ● The promotion process is not based on the results of an objective performance evaluation and employee competence **Root Cause** ● Lack of clarity of employee development plans and performance evaluations do not result in a clear employee development plan to assist employees in improving their performance and career development. ● Lack of meritocracy system, where a fair and transparent system for assessing employee performance and competence is not properly implemented.	**Strengths :** There is a commitment of the leadership to strengthen the meritocracy system in the implementation of the Tangerang Regency local government. **Weaknesses :** The organizational culture does not value competence and performance, and places more emphasis on other factors such as seniority or compliance. **Opportunities :** There is an employee development plan and a career pattern system based on position competency standards. **Threats :** Budget limitations in the preparation of development plans and employee career patterns based on position competency standards.
	● Inappropriate organizational culture, the organization has not valued competence and performance, and overemphasizes other factors such as seniority or compliance.		
Action Plan	● Employee Career Pattern System based on position competency ● Analysis of Civil Servant Competency Development Needs		

Source : Data processed by researchers, (2024)

political pressure, budget constraints, and social and economic dynamics that affect the stability and sustainability of the reform program. These things also need to be stated

in the context of the indicators achieved that the problem of Bureaucratic Reform is by making a significant contribution to the target of the Regional Government.

The analysis of strengthening the merit system in the context of bureaucratic reform in Tangerang Regency not only includes the evaluation of existing policies and regulations, but also strategies for increasing the capacity of Civil Servants, changes in organizational culture, and the integration of technology in human resource management. Thus, this accelerated bureaucratic reform can run more effectively, efficiently, and sustainably, and be able to have a real positive impact on the people of Tangerang Regency.

The first strategic step is the implementation of the competency-based career pattern in Tangerang Regency that needs to be strengthened in various aspects, especially in terms of integrating competencies with the performance management system and human resource development. Strengthening strategies can be through the development of more structured training programs, the implementation of mentoring systems, and increased socialization regarding the importance of competencies in career development. The formulation of a position competency dictionary according to organizational needs can improve sustainable competency development programs, strengthen competency-based performance appraisal systems, and encourage active participation of employees in career development.

The next step is the Analysis of the Needs for Civil Servant Competency Development in Tangerang Regency. Through the analysis of the Competency Gap by comparing the competencies possessed with the competency standards required for each position. By ensuring more effective and targeted Civil Servant competency development both in the form of internal and external training (sourced from private partnership partners), in accordance with the needs of the organization. Proper implementation can support the improvement of Civil Servant performance and public services in Tangerang Regency.

In facing these challenges, Tangerang Regency needs to adopt various innovative and sustainable strategies. First, increasing the capacity of human resources through training and competency development must be a top priority. Second, the application of information technology to support the merit system and employee performance management can help increase transparency and accountability. In addition, there needs to be a strong commitment from regional leaders to oversee this reform process, ensuring that every policy implemented is in accordance with the principles of good governance.

In addition, the implementation of the merit system in Tangerang Regency also requires the support of qualified information and communication technology. The use of this technology is expected to facilitate the selection process, performance evaluation, and career development of Civil Servant in a more objective and transparent manner. However, adaptation to this technology also requires an increase in digital capacity and skills among Civil Servants, which is still a challenge in itself.

Through these steps, Tangerang Regency is expected to accelerate bureaucratic reform oriented towards improving the quality of public services. This analysis of strengthening the merit system is an important foundation for evaluating the success of reforms and setting strategic steps forward. Thus, Tangerang Regency can be an example of a region that has successfully implemented bureaucratic reforms effectively, provided excellent services, and improved the welfare of the community as a whole.

4. CONCLUSSION

The importance of Bureaucratic Reform Management (RB) based on the root of the problem and the principle of priority is undeniable. With a focus on Tangerang Regency Bureaucratic Reform (RB) 2024-2029, this approach is a critical cornerstone in efforts to improve the effectiveness of public services and bureaucratic governance. The Principle of Focus on the Root of the Problem is the main principle that teaches the importance of identifying and addressing the root cause as the first step in achieving an effective and efficient solution. This ensures that each intervention is carried out thoroughly and has a long-term impact, with programs focused on solving problems permanently.

The implementation of an effective merit system not only aims to improve the quality of public services in Tangerang Regency, but also to create a work culture with integrity and professionalism. Thus, strengthening the merit system is a crucial step in efforts to realize a better government that is responsive to the needs of the community.

In the long term, strengthening the merit system in Tangerang Regency is expected to be a model for other regions in managing human resources in a professional and accountable manner, as well as supporting the achievement of the vision and mission of sustainable regional development.

Through the action plan program for the Development of a Competency-Based Employee Career Pattern System: Developing a system that emphasizes job competencies as the basis for Civil Servant career development and Civil Servant Competency

Development Needs Analysis is expected to be an effort to strengthen the merit system in Tangerang Regency.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Based on the author's correspondence from this article, the role of each author can be explained as follows:

Ardy Firman Syah : Drafter, Introduction, Methodes and Result

Marsono : Conclusion and Parafrase

Slamet Rahmat Topo Susilo : Abstract and Plagiarism Checker

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