



Social Construction of Public Administration in Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 11 July 2020

Received in revised form 12
October 2020

Accepted 21 November 2020

ABSTRACT

This study aims to discuss social construction in public administration in Indonesia. This is important because various studies show that the practice of public administration in Indonesia is still full of corruption, policy failures and the inability to solve problems. This research is qualitative research. The data in this study were obtained from a literature review. The results of the study indicate that the failure of public administration practices in Indonesia is because the concept of public administration from developed countries is not adopted in the Indonesian social context. There are three factors, namely the general environment, the special environment, and the structure and culture of the bureaucracy. In an effort to become a centric Indonesia, Indonesia needs to make fundamental changes in adapting local socio-cultural conditions to public administration. Need to explore and develop local genius in creating concepts and practices of Indonesian public administration.

Keyword:

Social construction, Public
Administration, Local genius

INTRODUCTION

Various studies have stated that the performance of public administration in Indonesia is one of the worst, full of corruption, collusion and nepotism. Not to mention when discussing the high rate of poverty, school participation rates, public health, unemployment and many other problems, especially those related to welfare, it has not been completely resolved. The constitutional mandate for the implementation of good public services and policies seems to be impossible to find in practice.

In the practice of public administration in the regions, there is still a lack of quality of public services, such as health services, housing, transportation, drinking water, social facilities, education, and others. The existence of local governments, one of which functions to provide satisfactory public services for the community, in fact the services provided (in the district and city areas) tend to be of low quality. The various services provided by the Regional Government are even unable to compete with services managed by the

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private sector. Flynn (1990) explains that public services managed by the government in a hierarchical manner tend to be characterized by over-bureaucratic, bloated, wasteful, and under-performing. The shift in the role of the Regional Government in accordance with the enactment of laws and regulations certainly demands better quality public services in the area, because the involvement of urban communities that are localities on their own initiative is very strategic and decisive in relation to the quality of services they received (Alford, 2008; Astley, 1985).

There is a tendency that the quality of policies and services is determined by the government or the provider, not jointly between the provider and the user, customer, client, or citizen (Wallmeier, helmig, and Feeney, 2019; Aimo, 2002). Efforts to improve public services are certainly not easy, depending on changes in the vision, mission, strategy, and operations of the Government in administering its government. Public services are strongly influenced by the expansion/realization of market mechanisms, new quality management, and the expansion of the meaning of democracy. Local governments are required to carry out comprehensive development, develop principles of democratization, involve the private sector, and implement quality public management that satisfies the needs of the community (Alford and Hughes, 2008; Talbot, 2011). Therefore, an effective government is needed to produce various innovative public policies that are able to accelerate the role of other stakeholders, namely the private sector, business actors and civil society organizations in the management of public affairs.

However, the impact of Indonesia's modernization and globalization has not been able to match or at least keep up with the progress of the countries it has adopted so far. Then, the question that arises is of

course, "if the paradigm and practice of public administration in Indonesia develops along with what is happening in developed countries, why can the results be different?".

Basically, the development of the paradigm and practice of public administration needs to be adapted to the social construction of a country that will use it (Jun, 2006). The complexity of social conditions will affect the internal and external public administration. This is important considering that the adoption process used has often forgotten the social context.

METHODS

The method used in this research is Literature Review. This research was conducted by searching relevant literature and conducting an in-depth analysis of the social construction of public administration. To test the validity of the data, a data triangulation step was carried out by collecting various data sources for further analysis between the data. The data analysis technique was carried out with the following steps (Jorgensen and Phillips, 2002): 1. Organizing the data, 2. Grouping the data, 3. Testing assumptions or existing problems with the data, 4. Looking for alternative explanations for the data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Social Construction and Public Administration

Social construction can be seen in three important factors; general environment, special environment, structural factors and bureaucratic culture (Hoadley, 2006). The first factor is general environmental factors, namely the environment that influences indirectly such as geographical, demographic and sociological conditions. This aspect reflects the condition of Indonesia which

geographically has more than 17,000 islands. Demographically, Indonesians have the fourth largest population in the world with more than 250 million people. Furthermore, it is sociologically composed of 250 ethnic groups, and speaks a variety of different mother tongues. This has not been added when the political constellation is heating up, promordialism and religious sentiments are getting stronger. Not to mention if it is added with a socio-historical study that will create a tough challenge for public administration experts (Colebatch, 2010). Therefore, the implementation of public services as a measure of the performance of public administration is not an easy job in Indonesia.

The second factor is a special environmental factor, namely the factors that directly affect it, such as the political and legal system. This factor is decisive because the political system in which public administration is rooted, and the legal system (the constitution and the statutory system) which is a normative reference and guarantees legal certainty for the implementation of policies and the public administration system is carried out. Viewed from these two sides, Indonesia's political system is still relatively young for a country and is still very vulnerable. In fact, the concept of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which became the foundation for the establishment of the state, is still widely debated, not only among academics, politicians, and even the public. Many groups, commonly called "right and left" or most recently groups that want a change in state ideology, there are even separatist movements that take up arms that want their territory to be separated from Indonesia for various reasons. In terms of laws and regulations, the legal system in Indonesia is a legacy of the Dutch colonial era, many of which are not relevant to the development of Indonesia in the modern era of independence.

The third factor is the centralized structure and culture of the bureaucracy and the perpetuation of power rather than service. After being a Dutch colony for a long time, and living in a fairly strict social stratification, including during the kingdom period or certain religious and cultural doctrines, Indonesian people still carry out the same character. The bureaucratic structure adheres to strict lines of command, even after the era of decentralization, with different interpretations of each leader. The bureaucratic structure supports the preservation of the regime's power rather than being devoted to the administration of public services (Belsey, 2002). Likewise, in terms of organizational culture, Indonesian public administration is still strongly colored by a culture of power rather than a culture of service, both implicit in the basic assumptions and values adopted, as well as those revealed in various rituals and symbols and the behavior of public officials from decision makers. to street bureaucrats (street level bureaucracies) who spearhead services. Of course, there are some additions such as the absence of figures who can be used as role-models and management processes in organizations that are still traditional, project oriented, reward oriented, and sectoral ego.

Identification of the social constructions that shape, influence, and produce such public administration as described earlier is absolutely necessary. Although of course it cannot be described in depth in this short article, at least it will lead the reader and further research in an effort to go towards re-acquainting Indonesian society, and answer whether the adoption or even the process of imitating Western scientists, both theory and practice, is problematic, or not. suitable for the Indonesian people, as well as to further examine Indonesia's potential.

Towards Indonesia-centric

Institutional change is often carried out through a process of modification, not

through innovation (Kelly, Mulgan, and Muers, 2002; Meynhardt and Diefenbach, 2012). This condition also occurs in Southeast Asia where the values of their philosophies or local ideas do not provide a practical supply of thought (Hoadley, 2006). The scarcity of such ideas causes the state to filter foreign/foreign ideas to suit local needs and values, and claim them as genuine. This is like what happened to the claims of some cultural products such as temples or other relics whose macro values are actually taken from India, but everyone considers them unique from Indonesia. In particular, the religions of Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, whose existence is widely recognized in Indonesia, undergo a similar process. In another sense, can the administrative methods or social sciences that have been "imported" so far also be claimed to be Indonesia-centric? If the answer is no, of course, Indonesia will face disaster because it follows an opaque imitation of European/American principles until finally Indonesian society is Westernized. This effort has not yet achieved the desired success.

The dream of an Indonesian-centric administration is applied to both issues concerning territorial management, for example between centralism versus decentralization, as well as to basic concepts such as the rule of law. Efforts are needed to combine elements of the original Indonesian administration, customs which are more relevant in the administrative field than in the legal aspect as the main element in building an original, or Indonesia-centric administration. However, ideas such as decentralization are good, being the goal of the process to bring government closer to the people through better public services.

Concepts such as public services that are more in line with the customs and norms of Indonesian society will be put forward. A soviet-style bureaucracy for

example, however effective and efficient they are, will not be able to improve the function of public services and policies within the scope of administration in Indonesia. With the same logic, such as that the American or European system does not automatically offer a better alternative system. With just a little imagination, one can see that the application of administrative methods from foreigners into the Indonesian environment will be inefficient and ineffective even though it is successful in other places.

Fukuyama (2005) points out the elements that can be transferred or adopted. In terms of public administration and organizational management, organizations can be changed, destroyed, created early, or managed for better or worse in a way that is related to the historical experiences of different countries. To the extent that public administration theory can be formalized, it can be transferred. In institutional elements at the system level and especially for democratic or even strong political systems, since the cold war, there have been many wars, economic crises, revolutions or reforms that allow for major changes or major institutional reforms. The last element is social and cultural which can be manipulated by public policy. These values are derived from education, leadership, and relationships with other communities. Absorbing professional values in terms of transparency and accountability, for example, has far-reaching impacts in some developing countries, but it takes time for the whole society to change over a long period of time.

Another challenge that can be added is that it becomes very difficult related to the presence of a supra-government institution that deprives the central government of prerogatives. The interests of IGGI, ICG (paris club), IMF, World Bank, IDB, as well as other Indonesian creditors, intervene in administrative practices and even intervene in legal solutions, especially

those deemed unacceptable by the creditor countries/donor agencies. The existence of ASEAN in the future will also add to a similar burden, limiting administrative processes that are deemed inappropriate or violate mutual agreements.

So, in the future, will Indonesia's administrative system have to become European – it seems impossible as long as the Indonesian people remain Indonesian. In fact, if Indonesia continues to use the model derived from Weber's theory, the New Public Management, the New Public Service, or any other model, all of this must be adapted to the local environment through a process called localization or local genius.

Local Genius

In fact, one of the simplest solutions to the dilemma of public administration in Indonesia is to increase it to a level that is as high as imitation. This system should be scaled up to a universally accepted minimum standard of public administration. The official administrator should be like in a Western country (Europe or America). But of course, social conditions must adjust quickly, and if you remember Fukuyama (2005), these efforts will take a long time if not done.

Many changes with opaque objectives were obtained from the administrative methods factories imported into Indonesia. Without a process of localism, or adaptation to the local environment, the supposedly good goals are often not achieved (O'Flynn, 2007). Although this is at an academic level, where most of these administrative methods are imported, they must be adapted to Indonesian conditions both theoretically and practically, so that they are not merely rhetoric. The values of local administration can be formulated and become a service vision to achieve modern national goals such as those concerning democratization, development and decentralization, which is a very possible

approach in achieving better public administration (Blessett, et al, 2016).

The examples that demonstrate this are numerous. Based on a historical perspective, public administration in Indonesia practically refers to administration in Java, namely the concept of Jawa Agung, an administrative unit that is applied from the western peninsula of Sumatra such as Lampung, to the eastern region such as Lombok Island. This system is applied to reach 70% of the total population of Indonesia, while its influence can be said to reach a much larger population. In the international context, the administration of Java/Indonesia during the reign of sovereign kingdoms was a more Asian-oriented terminology than the deterministic terminology of “pre-colonial era” – in accordance with the general pattern of the Southeast Asian region, namely using foreign ideas and then adopting them according to local conditions. This phenomenon leads to a terminology called local genius. The academic effort to describe a process of Southeast Asianization of the concept, and choosing not to use this dichotomy between East and West, which O.W Walters (1982) later conceptually referred to as the process of localization.

Other examples can be found in terminological pairs such as concentration of power versus decentralization, foreign laws and customs, rule-making people and value-keepers, the state as part of colonial administration with local views on sovereignty and others. Geographical factors as well as historical factors have placed the Indonesian experience as an ideal example, for those who won independence from colonialism in the post-second world war. Greater access and understanding of social construction can provide an understanding of the development of public administration in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Various studies have stated that the performance of public administration in Indonesia is one of the worst, full of corruption, collusion and nepotism. The impact of Indonesia's modernization and globalization has not been able to match or at least keep up with the progress of the countries it has adopted so far. At least this can be seen in three important factors, namely: general environment, special environment, structural factors and bureaucratic culture. The first factor is general environmental factors, namely the environment that influences indirectly such as geographical, demographic and sociological conditions. The second factor is a special environmental factor, namely the factors that directly affect it, such as the political and legal system. The third factor is the centralized structure and culture of the bureaucracy and the perpetuation of power rather than service. Indonesia needs to carry out social construction through a process of modification, policy and innovation.

The dream of an Indonesian-centric administration is applied to both issues concerning territorial management, for example between centralism versus decentralization, as well as to basic concepts such as the rule of law. Efforts are needed to combine elements of the original Indonesian administration to bring the government closer to the people through better public services.

Implicitly, concepts such as public services that are more in line with the customs and norms of Indonesian society must be put forward. Another challenge that can still be faced is that it becomes very difficult related to the presence of a supra-government institution that deprives the central government of prerogatives. Local genius is needed so that public administration can be adapted to the local environment. Although this often occurs at the academic level, where most of these

administrative methods are imported, they must be adapted to Indonesian conditions both theoretically and practically. The values of local administration need to be formulated and become a service vision to achieve modern national goals such as those concerning democratization, development and decentralization, an approach that is very possible in achieving better public administration.

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