

The Changing Promotion Patterns of Bureaucratic Officials and the Direct Local Elections in Indonesia

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Indonesia aims to earn a strategic position through its bureaucratic governance and merit-based recruitment and promotions of its officials, including the efforts made by the Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN). This study sought optimally to portrait and analyse the promotion pattern of bureaucrats and other political officials soon after the direct local elections for positions such as regional head. The results showed that the pattern of patronage system (spoil system) in the official promotion of bureaucracy was more dominant than Skills System (Merit System). This is a significant proof of the political official's strong interest, political forces and successful team in determining promotion. As a consequence, a lot of mindsets, attitudes, and acts of political officials penetrated into the system. A few of these, directly contrary to the pattern of merit system (skills), observed during this explorative qualitative research included: nepotism and primordialism, self-interests, and infidelity (mutualism symbiotic relationship) between official of political and bureaucracy. The right man at the right place was neglected and a lot of unqualified bureaucratic officials were promoted because they were the members of the winning teams during the local elections.

Key words: *Promotion pattern, bureaucrats, merit system, petronik system, and direct election.*

Introduction

Ever since the independence, Indonesia has been striving to gain a strategic position through its bureaucratic governance and merit-based recruitment and promotions of its officials. The Indonesian Civil Service Commission (KASN) holds the responsibility to regulate the performance of the public and private sectors. The KASN has although attempted to take away the bureaucratic system from a spoil system to a merit system but in the absence of legal



mandate and challenges, it has not been able to establish the merit system in both recruitment and promotions. For instance, Law Number 5 of the year 2014 on the Civil Service (UUASN) aimed at providing a professional, transparent and highly neutral Civil Service (ASN). The ASN attempted to set up an administrative foundation through implementation of a merit system, using the performance-based approach and human capital development.

However, with the advent of the era of regional autonomy and electioneering, supported by Law No. 22 of 1999, replaced by Law No. 32 of 2004 (revised as Law No UU / 9 of 2015), the meritocracy was shadowed under elections of governors, regents, and mayors (one man one vote). These direct local elections required high political costs either from the State Budget and Expenditure (APBD) or by the candidate. It was money politics while candidates played all tricks to win elections. This did not require any meritocracy but political education and manipulation of public votes, by creating friction between people in order to win elections. To win the elections, the candidate would carry out any means such as formulation of a successful team, fund raising in very large values, campaigning via mass media and printed media such as printing banners, billboard, and stickers, etc.

Once the candidate is elected, he becomes a prominent and respected individual, with all those people around him who had helped him to win elections. The candidate also tries to restore maximally his capital investment in the elections, for which he renders support to his team of supporter and also involve some of them as partner in the bureaucratic governance. He sometimes acts as a coach of bureaucracy, a custodian of governance, and therefore enjoys the freedom to select and assign anyone who would be the member of his or her cabinet (echelon I / II, III and IV). He also determines who should be recruited or get promoted or subjected to mutation and demotion. As the regional head, the autonomy comes in his hands, and he holds all power in his region, including upon businessmen (entrepreneurs), societies, and bureaucrats.

In such a condition, many bureaucrats compete to get closer to the such successful politicians (e.g. regional head) for their personal chores such as recruiting on new jobs or securing the present ones, promotions and transfers. Such bureaucrats due to their vested interests gained both material and non-material benefits from such regional heads. Such practices of getting benefits through political connections became gradually stronger among the bureaucrats and got more rooted among them as well as the wider community around them. The rank of success got viewed and rated not on the basis of merit but in terms of financial position. For that reason, many bureaucrats approached their higher officials to get benefits or to gain structural positions such as Echelon I, II, III or IV. Table 1 exhibits such structural, tantalizing, and contested positions in various locations.

Table 1: The number of bureaucracy positions gained through regional head

No	Location	Position Echelon IV	Position Echelon III	Position I and II Echelon	Total Positions	Total Government employees
1	West Kalimantan Province	737	277	55	1069	6021
2	Bengkayang Regency	379	144	26	549	4282
3	Sambas Regency	550	165	30	745	7415
4	Kubu Raya Regency	296	134	31	461	5542
5	Melawi Regency	338	141	31	510	3662
6	Sintang Regency	531	171	34	736	6122
7	Kapuas Hulu Regency	441	148	25	614	5676
		3272	1180	232	4684	38,720

Source: West Kalimanta in 2014, the Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) of West Kalimantan Province, and the Regional Personnel Agency (BKD) of several regencies (January 2016).

Total positions in the locations of survey, starting from the lowest (echelon IV) up to the highest in the province (Echelon I), were 4,684 positions from the total employees 38,720 people. This condition illustrates that many employees did not have a position and these positions were not served. Even though their bureaucrats were great in number, but they were very dependent on the head of the region because he was decisive. The occupancy of these positions through direct recruitment or promotion actually begins from the day direct local elections end up and the regional head is elected. The pattern of recruitment and promotions of bureaucratic officials is thus decided during the elections. Often the outcome of the elections decided this actual pattern of recruitment and promotion.

Problem statement

In a civil society, bureaucrats hold a respectable position; therefore, if they stoop to local and undignified measures to get promotions, it is a shameful act. In the Indonesian local government structure, the regional head holds an important position. This position of regional head in a bureaucratic organisation however is linked with the local elections. The candidate having the largest support of staff of bureaucracy in the local government system has greater potential to win the elections. Therefore, after elections, the elected regional head regional head is morally bound to create a kinship network of all those bureaucrats who had assisted him to win the elections. The regional head thus becomes a vehicle for opportunity to gain better career and position.



The current study is based on the issue of proximity of a bureaucrat with the head of the region and how this proximity is seen as an opportunity by bureaucrats to develop their career or at least to get good access to the power in the region. The research problem formulated is: what is the pattern of recruitment or promotion of bureaucratic officials in the era of direct local elections at the site of the study? The problem gets worse when there are clear evidences that a close proximity of bureaucrats with the regional head leads to out of the turn recruitments and promotions within the government structure.

Literature Review

Recruitment of bureaucrats

The recruitment of bureaucrats is supposed to be through an objective examination of competences, qualifications and other requirements of the candidates. Several other values are required in the candidates to ensure their professionalism such as to avoid corruption, collusion, and nepotism. For implementing these values, the management of ASN should be carried out with the merit system in which the policy and management of ASN should be based on qualifications, competence, fair and reasonable performance and not on the basis of political background, race, colour, religion, origin, gender, marital status, age, and condition of disability.

Rush and Althoff (1983; 175-222) observed that there are two patterns of political recruitment, which were applied in the recruitment of administrative positions that have already existed since 18th century. These two patterns are the patronage system (spoil system) and system of usability (merit system). The patronage system originated earlier and became the general basis of recruitment. This system encouraged favouritism in recruitment to a large extent. It meant that promotions could be purchased by people who were looking for positions. This system did not look whether the recruits were qualified for the positions or not, but it only ensured that such aspirants could be persuaded to act something as a reward, which was another type of bribery or corruption. Such a system came from the developed countries and its eradication also started in the developed countries.

Recently, several developed countries have started the practice of replacing patronage or favouritism (spoil system) with the system of usability (merit system). This new system is based on merit and requires specific education, standards and specific requirements (competency). The recruitment is carried out by open competition, through an open exam followed by intensive interviews. Based on recruitment theory of political officials and administrative officials as had been revealed, mainly through patronage system and the merit system so, the researchers would conduct an analysis of promotions pattern of bureaucratic officials in the local elections era where the research conducted. The results of this analysis were expected to capture the promotion pattern that actually applied.

Promotion patterns

The subject of official promotion is a prominent part of human resource development which is widely studied in personnel management. Siagian (1996: 169) states that personnel activities include promotion, transfer, mutation and demotion. Promotion occurs when an employee moves from a higher position in his job, gets higher salary, higher subsidy, and higher level in the organisation. Hence, getting promotion is the desire of any bureaucrat. The promotion is based on objective criteria and requirements, arranged in officialdom law and assigned through meritocracy system. Besides, the promotion is also an appreciation and recognition of work achievements in carrying out duties and functions (Ngusmanto, 2009: 6) in Indonesia, there exists a fundamental placement principle to place qualified civil servants (PNS) in the right place (the right man in the right place) as well as the fulfillment of the criteria. This breaks down the criteria of the placement process into: (1) the assessment of the work implementation, (2) Expertise, (3) Attention (interest), (4) List of rank order, (5) Loyalty, (6) Experience, (7) Trustworthiness and (8) probability development. While Nitisemito (1982: 136) postulates requirements of placement as: (1) experience, (2) Level of Education, (3) Loyalty, (4) Honesty, (5) Responsibilities, (6) Associate Skill, (7) Achievement of work, and (8) initiative and creative. The law of officialdom No. 8 in 1974, converted into Law 43 of 1999 and the Law No. 5 of 2014 on Appliance Civil State (ASN) have adopted these requirements, suggesting the imposition of a merit system. The bureaucrats who get promoted by considering the above criteria definitely bear high merit, motivation, dedication, responsibility, pride, and supportiveness.

Such bureaucrats who get promotion based on the merits really intend to focus on their work. Their staff too is aware of duties and responsibilities of their work. A system of promotion based on merit and achievements can never be biased for gender, social background, race or class. Such a promotion system depersonalises every matter and the bureaucracy set up is freed from any personal or subjective bias.

Research Method

This paper uses the explorative research method for analysing the bureaucracy and the Indonesian local governance, of which the regional head holds an important position. This research was carried out especially in relation to issues concerning the inter relationship between the elections of the regional head and the role of bureaucracy. The objective of this study is to assess the role of the bureaucrats in helping the regional head in the elections and the aftermath of the elections, whether those bureaucrats demands any favouritism from the regional head as a return for the help provided in the elections. By using this objective, the intention was to examine the recruitment and promotion methods used in the Indonesian local government elections.



A qualitative approach was applied in this study while the data analysis was done objectively. Through purposive sampling, participants of focus group discussion (FGD) were selected. These participants consisted of: three regional heads / deputy heads, four regional secretaries who also held the Advisory Board positions (*Baperjakat*), four assistants of administration, four heads of the Regional Personnel Agency (BKD), and six members of successful teams, 12 echelons II, III and IV. There were at least 4 FGDs and each FGD was also attended by 3-5 bureaucratic officials and former officials (retired), in addition to the informants. Some of these informants were also interviewed in depth. Triangulation techniques were used to verify and validate the data collected from informants holding the positions of Echelon II, III and IV or officials who were retired. These techniques served as a cross check of the data gathered. In addition, the documents collected during this research were also used to formulate regulations for the working unit (SKPD). The researchers also conducted an analysis for online printing in the news media such as, AP. Post and Tribune Pontianak.

Results and Discussion

Article 28D paragraph (3) grants every citizen the right to obtain equal opportunities in government recruitments and positions. In the context of the regional Election, in order to achieve the neutrality of bureaucracy, the Indonesian Government even issued a Regulation No. 53 of Year 2010 whose article 4 point 15 states that bureaucrats must not provide support to prospective Regional Head / Deputy Head of Region through open campaigns or offering government facilities in campaign activities. The law also states that the promotion and demotion of bureaucrats will be associated with merits of each candidate and not on the basis of his or her proximity with the Regional Head.

Truly speaking promotion or demotion of bureaucratic officials in the era of direct local elections was based on interviews with Advisory Board positions and accreditation teams. The process occurs twice a year starting from February up to April. If the newly elected head of the region is not the incumbent, he can carry out orders for the official promotion, but a newly elected Regional Head can do so only after occupying the position for six months to one year (Ryan & Robert, 2017). Hence, officials and staff generally know exactly when there would be promotions, especially those who have had a minimum term of four years or never being promoted once. If there is an imminent promotion to happen, it causes anxiety among officials, especially who await invitations of promotions. But if an officer has a strategic position, or is member of a core team or close to authorities, he would not feel that anxiety as his position would never be changed.

The FGD and the interviews that followed contained questions about the participation of bureaucrats in election campaigns. They were asked to assess the extent to which district and provincial bureaucrats support candidates during election campaigns. The informants opined



that between 40–60% of all higher-level district bureaucrats participate in election campaigns for Regional Head and Governor. In cities like Java, Jakarta and Bandung, it was estimated that only 25–50% of senior civil servants involve in campaigning. The respondents from outer-island locations such as Makassar (Sulawesi), Samarinda (Kalimantan), and Jayawijaya (Papua) shared that between 75–100% of bureaucrats engage themselves in politics.

Such revelations could be considered as violation of Indonesian law and require legal prohibition on their involvements in campaigns. But the respondents felt that such campaign support was often considered important for bureaucrats to secure a promotion. Less than 1% of respondents said there were no political appointments in local bureaucracies, while more than half of all informants estimated that 40% or more of all senior appointments are due to the support these bureaucrats offer to candidates during election campaigns. Regarding the question of misuse of facilities, infrastructure and other government owned resources, informants believed that all such discrepancies happen in every election. For instance, the respondents from Lampung, Banten and Central Kalimantan revealed how village heads would place candidate's banners above the village office and also campaign in government vehicles making the propaganda of electrification programs and other developmental projects.

Over the promotion pattern, all informants and the interviewees had similar views that a mixed pattern was used. However, all of them unanimously agreed that there was no merit system or the patronage system. The following in the content analysis of the views shared by respondents in FGDs and interviews:

i. Pattern of Merit System

Theoretically, Indonesia follows a merit system or meritocracy for all types of promotion in bureaucracy since such a system was enforced by the Employment Law. This merit system postulates competence, integrity, loyalty, experience, order of rank, and job performance in promoting a bureaucratic official. Unfortunately, the merit system focuses on qualified rank position while, other criteria are construed in accordance with wishes of the political authorities. The experiences and achievements are also more identified with the previous positions that were occupied. A close study of other documents proved that all promoted officials had qualified in terms of rank and did not violate any norms.

With regard to the application of the merit system at the research location, informants enthusiastically responded that the system was good, but it would not be the first choice in the promotion of official pattern. The reason they gave was that the pattern criterion was too general and therefore was interpreted too discretely, by political officials. It means that its interpretations would vary in case of certain officials who want to be promoted and they would manipulate the requirements of this merit system through their subjectivity.

ii. Patterns of Petronik System

On the other hand, the Petronik System (spoil system) was implemented more dominantly than the merit system in terms of promotion of bureaucratic officials. The promotion or recruitment was not conducted transparently as there was no competency test nor there were any standard basic indicators equivalent to desires of political officials. The data collected on this Petronik system depended largely on the interview feedback and the documentation. A few indicators such as contributing factors, proximity, nepotism and primordial, and mutualism symbiosis were revealed that provided a lot of information about this system. To understand the system comprehensively in the context of current research, it is essential to know these indicators in detail.

a. Contribution

Contribution refers to helping or assisting a candidate in the elections, financially or psychologically through advice or ideas, in order to create a winning team in elections. A bureaucrat who has financial means and also the intelligence enough to advise a candidate can only formulate a winning team. Such a team can only participate in elections of the regional head right from proposing his name to the final results. A bureaucrat who fails to create a winning team might be demoted and worst case scenario would be losing the job if he contributes negatively resulting in losing the elections. Thus, bureaucrats in this research context were found to be feeling persecuted, unsafe, and anxious whenever direct local elections were announced

Theoretically and under the Indonesian law, bureaucrats are prohibited to form teams to help candidates in elections. They are required to be neutral and avoid practical politics. However, a few bureaucrats still work secretly even sometimes without any team member thus violating the decree (SK) of a ban on their involvement in direct elections. These bureaucrats still contribute as a successful team member by making visits and providing financial contributions. Finally, they are rewarded by the political officials (e.g. Regional Head) after winning elections for their great contribution.

b. Proximity

Proximity means to be close in the position and order of rank in a successful team. A bureaucrat should be close to the candidate for a political post in order to meet him often, exchange ideas, and know each other very well. In addition, the bureaucrat is also required to contribute with energy, thoughts, and financially in order to be a member of the winning team. In the end, he will be rewarded as a bureaucrat only because he was close to the candidate. If the candidate wins the election and becomes a political official, the political official would soon be rewarded in the form of a bureaucratic position or a promotion.

c. *Nepotism and Primordialism*

Nepotism and primordial originally referred to giving priority to members of the same family or clan like a family member, son or nephew or a relative but a new type of nepotism was seen in elections. The new model was larger in scope and included one race, one religion, one village or region, one alumnus and one party. The political officials believed that such large groups would fight and accept any kind of challenges or hardships. Therefore, if their candidate wins the elections, their whole group will be called a privileged group and would receive remuneration or rewards for their support. A study of documentation revealed that a lot of political officials gained bureaucratic positions as result of nepotism and primordialism.

d. *Mutualism symbiosis*

Symbiotic mutualism means entering into a mutually beneficial relationship by political officials and bureaucrats. This relationship is based on pragmatic interests and mutual benefits, and each party would to protect and secure the other party's interest and benefit. Such a symbiosis may not formulate in all regions since it is built between political officials who win elections and the official bureaucracy. This relationship could be awakened due to the old bureaucratic officials who have had a great influence and links with the political power and a strong networking in Jakarta. Therefore, if any official needs to be replaced or demoted, a political pressure or termination of the project was the easy solution.

The research team did not find many officials who had pursued a symbiotic relationship at the location of the study due to the presence of *Baperjakat*. But its role and function was only a formality; *Baperjakat* was in fact taken over by a sort of symbiotic team, a mutual team of the winning candidates and political officials. They worked as a guerrilla team behind the scenes and kept *Baperjakat* only to meet formal requirements of promotion such as competence, qualification, experience, seniority, performance, and like.

The data gathered and conclusions drawn are consistent with the findings of Mariana and Paskarina (2008: 152) who asserted that "the determination of selection or promotion was influenced by the behavior of the political elites. The tendency of these elites is to fight for their own sake which was not a new phenomenon in this era of transition". Similarly, Muchlas (2005: 12) too agreed with this thought and stated that a person's behaviour does not happen by accident, but it due to certain considerations. In psychological perspective, every behaviour has a reason associated with human needs. These views are similar to those expressed by Firmer Winardi (1992: 140) and Hersey and Blanchard (1995: 16) who stated that in order to understand or predict human behaviour one should observe the motif or the person's needs, which gave rise to an activity while the motifs remain only expressions of those needs.

Taking a hint from these findings, it can safely be concluded that it is important to know the motive of political officials, why they adopted the *Petronik* pattern for promotion of bureaucratic officials. A few motives can be explained as follows:

- a. The *Petronik* system provides more opportunities to political officials to accommodate the interests of those who became a winning team; those who are bearers of political forces or those who have contributed in terms of financial, energy, and ideas.
- b. Political officials, who acted as the advisors of bureaucrat, had the motive to strengthen, develop and maintain a political base in the bureaucracy, in the form of loyalty, fidelity, obedience and bureaucratic support through mutualism symbiotic relationship. In this way, they could create “yes men” attitude in the bureaucrat’s horizon.
- c. Another motive was that of nepotism and primordialism’s to benefit family and relatives, friends and party. After winning elections, as rewarded for their support and struggle, a few of these members would be placed in various SKPD as temporary employees, and others would be entrusted to manage some projects which would strengthen their economic status.
- d. Political officials also had a vested interest to restore large capital expended in the process of running for a political office, seeking financial benefits from a large investment (political cost), as well as finding and raising capital for candidature. Therefore, one of the motives was to restore all the investments through the support of the official bureaucracy (projects SKPD), and employers (barons).

Hermawan (2013: 104) asserts that political bureaucracy is increasingly "rampant" playing in the political arena, thus giving rise to the practice of "power seeking politicians and rent-seeking bureaucrats”, whereas officials in the bureaucracy play the position, authority, and influence to achieve power, and "capture" economic benefit in a variety of political and business transactions. The rent seeking behaviour was very easy in state institutions like, executive, legislative, and judicial. This occurs because due to political processes and mechanisms, a person is loaded with high transaction costs prior to even entering into the public office. Therefore, after entering the public life, such persons exploit their position to accomplish private motives.

Conclusion

To concludes, the findings of this research confirm that the application of *Petronik* System (nepotism or spoil system) was practiced very strongly by political officials who collaborated with the winning teams in recent local elections. Such practices foster: (1) nepotism and primordialism, (2) development of upside down paradigm (the less competent get promoted before the more competent ones), (3) The emergence of mindset, attitudes and acts of political officials who are against the patterns of merit system (proficiency), (4) the emergence of rent-seeking bureaucrats, (5) the proliferation of like and dislike attitudes in the corner interests of



political officials, (6) a significant symbiotic mutualism between political officials with the bureaucracy to be mutually reinforcing, beneficial, protected and secured, (7) a pragmatic interest growing, (8) the principle of the right man on the right place was neglected, (9) Many bureaucratic officials are confined to incompetent situation, lack of initiative, and fear of being risk takers, (10) the lack of functioning the Advisory Board positions and rank (*Baperjakat*) because it was replaced by the dominance of a successful team and the power of political bearers, (11) the signs or rules of the game were largely ignored in the promotion (merit system), provided terms of rank are met, and (12) whenever there would be a promotion or a reshuffle of officials bureaucracy always raised concerns, behaviour machination, feeling persecuted, jealous, frustrated and low morale.



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