

The Leadership Role of Pratama Officials in Facing the Salatiga Government's Bureaucracy Simplification Policy

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of government bureaucratic services in various sectors is the external face of the performance of the government in power, it can reflect how leadership practices are implemented. This study was conducted with the aim of uncovering the processes, obstacles, and problems encountered in the implementation of bureaucratic simplification in Salatiga City Government and the role of high-ranking officials in each regional apparatus in its implementation. This research is a qualitative research using phenomenological study. The data used are primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through interviews with twelve participants consisting of heads of work units (high-ranking officials) and functional officials resulting from the simplification of the bureaucracy in the relevant work units in Salatiga city government, while secondary data was collected through observation, and documentation on Salatiga city government documents during a certain period. The data analysis technique used was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Based on the analysis, it is found that bureaucratic simplification still faces many obstacles, especially in the adaptation and technological knowledge of officials. In addition, the simplification of bureaucracy in Salatiga city government raises concerns about career paths coupled with a decrease in employee performance, the head of the field or leader in Salatiga city government plays an important role in dealing with bureaucratic simplification policies to maintain a conducive atmosphere in the organisation and encourage increased employee competence, but the competency improvement program has not been implemented optimally.

Keywords: Leadership, bureaucracy simplification, employee performance

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucracy is the turbine engine of Indonesian governance. The implementation of government bureaucratic services in various sectors is the outermost face of the performance of the ruling government. How public services are implemented and public satisfaction will be the simplest measure of whether a regime is considered a failure or success in running its government (Tabuni, 2020). President Joko Widodo during his term of office, 2019-2024, has a work programme related to bureaucratic simplification policies. During the presidential inauguration, Joko Widodo gave directions to simplify structural or echelon positions to two levels. The implementation of bureaucratic simplification policies is applied in almost all government agencies in Indonesia, the government has been committed and consistent to carry out bureaucratic reform through bureaucratic simplification both in central and regional agencies.

Bureaucratic reform is a process of changing the paradigm and policies of the Indonesian government in order to create a professional, integrated, free and clean government bureaucracy, good at public service, and able to uphold the basic values and code of ethics of the state apparatus (Minister for Empowerment of State Apparatus for Bureaucratic Reform, 2023). According to Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 81 of 2010 Concerning the Grand Design of Bureaucratic Reform 2010-2025, bureaucratic reform is a process of reorganising positions from the highest to the lowest level by taking new steps that are realistic, concrete and have out of the box ideas. The reform aims to simplify local government in accordance with its function, size, and financial capacity by promoting the principle of efficient regional apparatus organisation (Akib & Ihsan, 2017; Supardal et al., 2022). The most effective implementation of bureaucratic reform for local governments is through institutional structuring or restructuring. This is done

by eliminating one or more types of work, nomenclature, and organisational functions carried out through equalising structural positions into functional positions.

The scope of bureaucratic simplification is carried out through organisational transformation, position transformation, and performance management transformation. David Osborne's Model of Bureaucratic Entrepreneurship explains the wave of bureaucratic cuts and privatisation in the UK by prime minister Margareth Thatcher, which also hit and was piloted in Indonesia's privatisation in the privatisation of Indonesian SOEs (Situmorang, 2021). In the implementation of public services in Indonesia, this was addressed by simplifying the bureaucracy by eliminating echelon III and echelon IV positions and the two positions were equalised into one functional position. In accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative Reform and Bureaucratic Reform Number 7 of 2022, in the process of equalising the bureaucracy carried out by central and regional ministries/agencies/institutions, it is accompanied by adjustments to the work system in each agency.

Work system adjustments are carried out with the aim of achieving work efficiency, achieving expectations, plans, & capabilities in the organisation, optimising human resources and information & communication technology. For local governments, these conditions pose challenges and problems that must be addressed by both the central and local governments, and Salatiga City Government is no exception. The elimination of Echelon 4 and Echelon 3 civil servants to functional positions has caused turmoil among stakeholders. High-ranking officials in Salatiga City Government are faced with the challenge of coaching echelon 4 civil servants as a result of the implementation of bureaucratic simplification that has placed echelon 4 civil servants into functional positions, due to the many systems that must be adjusted in relation to these positions. Issues that are often encountered in the implementation of bureaucratic simplification in the position equalisation program include the pattern of relationships in the organisation that have not been designed to accommodate the work of functional workers, in the institutions assisted by functional workers are still not professional, there is no clear division for functional workers, gapcv, not optimal working relationship patterns, not in line with the assessment of individual work with organisational work (Rusliandy, 2022).

Top officials in Salatiga City Government are facing challenges in responding to changes in the work system following the bureaucratic simplification policy implemented by the central government in all government agencies. Top officials in Salatiga City Government face challenges in providing guidance to Echelon IV Structural Officials who are appointed to Certain Functional Positions due to the implementation of bureaucratic simplification. In dealing with the turmoil caused by the bureaucratic simplification policy in Salatiga City Government, it is necessary for the highest leader in the public sector work unit, in this case the head of the agency/office, to manage and reduce the turmoil and become the foundation for all employees in the work unit, especially for officials affected by bureaucratic simplification. Leaders are expected to be able to take a balancing role and create harmony in the organisation so that structural officials who experience bureaucratic simplification into functional positions can still maintain their performance.

METHOD

This research method is a qualitative method with a phenomenological study approach, to examine how the role of leadership in contributing to the practice of bureaucratic simplification policies within the Salatiga City Government. Phenomenology is research described as a case study of phenomena that manifest in our experience, the way we perceive and understand phenomena, and the meaning of phenomena in subjective experience (Smith, 2018). The data collection technique used is by conducting participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, and triangulation or combining data. The data used in this study are primary data and secondary data, where primary data are obtained through interviews with 12 (twelve) participants consisting of heads of work units (high-ranking pratama officials) and functional officials as a result of simplifying the bureaucracy in the relevant work units then the instruments used in this study are recording devices and interview sheets, secondary data are obtained through documentation of Salatiga city government publications.

In this study, the analysis technique used is the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method, this technique focuses on the researcher's exploration of how research participants interpret unique personal experiences. Data from interviews with participants from the head of the work unit (high-ranking officials) and functional officials resulting from the simplification of the bureaucracy in work units related to the Salatiga city government were transcribed, and interesting things were noted which were then developed into themes and saw the relationship of each theme that had been obtained. The next stage is data processing and also data validation, where data processing is carried out with several stages, namely coding, data classification and categorisation, and data validation in this study is carried out by triangulation, use of reference sources, and member checks. The data processing technique in this study is by coding, namely reviewing the informant's answers after conducting interviews, then classifying the data by grouping the codes to see the relationship between the meaning of one and the other, so that categorisation can be built from each code. Classification, and categorisation, namely making subcategories of the data that has been obtained. In qualitative research, validation is able to provide strength in this study because the research is conducted with a direct approach to participants, a long period of time, and detailed descriptions, at this stage the trying to cross check the statements made by each of the other participants so that the researcher was able to capture some of the translations of the interview results that the researcher analysed from the interviews with the participants, namely the head of the work unit (high-ranking pratama officials) and functional officials as a result of simplifying the bureaucracy in related work units of the Salatiga city government.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Bureaucratic simplification seems to be a policy that must have deep attention in its implementation so as to reduce the adverse effects of the policy, the bureaucratic simplification policy must be accompanied by adjustments and knowledge development for relevant officials to be able to deal with any rapid policy changes, bureaucratic simplification will affect the performance of functional officials as a result of the policy. Things that are often encountered in the implementation of bureaucratic simplification in the position equalisation program include the pattern of relationships in the organisation that has not been designed to accommodate the work of functional workers, in the fostering agency functional workers are still not professional, there is no clear division for functional workers, competency gaps, not optimal in the pattern of work relationships, not in line with the assessment of individual work with organizational work. The bureaucratic simplification policy in the Salatiga city government has received different responses, where there are pros and cons to the policy, this is in line with what previous research has revealed about optimism and also pessimism from the existence of a bureaucratic simplification policy.

The Impact of Bureaucratic Simplification on the Performance of Functional Officials of Equalisation Results

The impact of bureaucratic simplification on the performance of functional officials has an effect on reducing employee performance and motivation in carrying out their duties, where this can be seen from the number of functional officials who feel confused in carrying out their duties because they feel that the tasks assigned are not as carried out as before, so that functional officials admit that it is necessary to learn new things in order to carry out their duties, with the demands to learn new knowledge making functional officials feel burdened and actually carry out tasks not optimally due to their lack of knowledge. Bureaucratic simplification also requires functional officials to provide services quickly and precisely, functional officials are given time provisions in each of their responsibilities to be completed in accordance with predetermined targets. This aims to provide acceleration in services, but this is not in line with what is in the field where the simplification of the bureaucracy actually makes functional officials feel that the workload given is inappropriate or excessive, so that functional officials feel that the time given to complete a responsibility is not in accordance with actual needs.

Bureaucratic simplification also affects the loss of certain positions which have an impact on the number of functional officials who lose their positions, with the existence of this policy making functional

officials feel worried that one day they will lose their positions, these concerns arise because they are not ready to lose the facilities and authority they have in running the government system, not only that they also feel worried about losing a social status in society where they are used to a certain social status. Functional officials consider that simplifying the bureaucracy has an impact on the uncertainty of their career path so that this concern creates an atmosphere that is not conducive to an internal government system, functional officials feel that they must prepare themselves to look for opportunities to achieve certain positions which are considered likely to be eliminated relatively small, this competition makes functional officials have the motivation to learn the work system in other positions so that when one day they are placed in that position they are ready to carry out new duties and responsibilities. With the rapidly changing developments, functional officials are encouraged to prepare themselves to be better prepared for future changes.

Functional officials feel that the impact of bureaucratic simplification in field implementation does not have a significant impact where in its implementation the work system which includes workloads and tasks is still the same as structural, and the facilities provided are also not eliminated so that functional officials can still take advantage of previously existing facilities. Bureaucratic simplification has also not been able to have an impact on achieving maximum performance where this is because the individual work system is still very high in a team, besides that functional positions are also carried out in accordance with the structural system as before the simplification of the bureaucracy.

Views on the Implementation of Bureaucratic Simplification Policy

The implementation of the bureaucratic simplification policy in government practice, especially in Salatiga district, is seen as an imposed system, where bureaucratic simplification is not accompanied by careful socialisation, so that when bureaucratic simplification occurs, existing officials are only resigned and accept it as a consequence of the demands of the central government. In the implementation of government as a result of bureaucratic simplification, socialisation and training are considered very important in improving the ability of human resources to carry out their responsibilities, especially in the field of technology, many officials experience problems because bureaucratic simplification is also accompanied by digitalisation so that many officials have difficulty operating digital systems. Officials in the districts feel that they only have to wait for instructions from the central government, where they carry out their duties only based on central orders, not based on the needs that are in the interests of the region.

The readiness of local governments to implement bureaucratic simplification policies is considered very far from being ready, this can be seen from the absence of careful preparation such as socialisation of bureaucratic simplification and the system of government implementation after the policy, not only that the readiness of human resources in welcoming bureaucratic policies is also considered not prioritised where officials are not equipped with qualified knowledge in carrying out these new tasks. The disappointment of local officials over the bureaucratic simplification policy is also driven by the incompatibility of compensation and facilities received by officials when carrying out their duties as local government officials.

How Leaders Respond to Bureaucratic Simplification Policy

The head of the work unit as the leader of the organisation has their own way of responding to the bureaucratic simplification policy, where local government leaders consider that bureaucratic simplification can be faced by increasing the self-competence or competence of each official in the local government environment so that they are able to deal with changes that are happening so quickly. The existence of bureaucratic simplification can also be faced openly by adjusting by continuing to broaden their horizons to be able to keep up with the development of a government system, the best way is to make adjustments to the system rather than having to complain and result in decreased performance, so that leaders consider that officials need to prepare themselves for a better future of government. Local government leaders are aware of the changes in the work climate in the government system. This is due to the simplification of the bureaucracy, so that leaders strive for humane communication when directing tasks to their subordinates.

At the level of the head of the jurstu local government unit, there is a lack of understanding of the

head of the unit about the bureaucratic simplification policy, so this encourages a less conducive work atmosphere. Where there are still many steps that are not appropriate in managing human resources to create conducive and optimal working conditions, the policies carried out by the head of the unit actually confuse existing staff in carrying out their duties due to lack of education related to their duties and responsibilities.

How Leaders Manage Human Resources After Bureaucratic Simplification

Bureaucratic simplification that occurs requires leaders to manage human resources appropriately, which aims to make bureaucratic simplification can provide benefits and can achieve the goals of bureaucratic simplification in accordance with the wishes of the central government. The head of the unit makes various efforts to maximise the role of each existing human resource in order to be able to carry out their duties in the government system, where the head of the unit develops the ability of human resources to have competence in accordance with the position being carried out. In addition, the head of the unit also provides motivation and direction related to the clarity of the career path for each functional official as a result of simplifying the bureaucracy so that they have high work motivation in the success of the bureaucratic simplification programme. The head of the government unit makes various efforts where this is important in order to create a conducive organisational atmosphere so as to improve government performance, this can be seen by the actions of the head of the unit by acting as a work friend in order to be able to understand the problems faced by existing staff, besides that the head of the unit also acts as a connecting medium between the leadership and functional officials in implementing the government system.

Discussion

The Impact of Bureaucratic Simplification on the Performance of Equalised Functional Officials

The impact of bureaucratic simplification on the performance of affected employees affects work motivation, career paths, and work systems. Based on the results of the research, the first visible impact of policy implementation is the work motivation of equalised functional officials. Some participants experienced a decrease in performance due to many factors in the implementation of bureaucratic simplification such as confusion about the duties of new positions, still in the process of adapting to new positions, concerns about losing social positions as structural officials. This also led to a desire for a career in other positions because they felt there was no future in functional positions. The influential factor in this case is the sense of security factor because structural officials are forced out of their comfort zone by becoming functional officials. This is in line with Tumanggor & Wibowo's (2021) research which states that echelon III, IV, and V officials affected by bureaucratic simplification are afraid of losing the authority and income attached to structural positions. In addition, administrative officials are accustomed to a dispositional work system so it takes time to adjust to the work climate of functional positions that are accustomed to measurable and definite activity items (Daniarsyah, 2020).

Bureaucratic simplification is carried out in three stages, namely simplifying the organisational structure, equalising positions, and adjusting the work system (Minister for Empowerment of State Apparatus for Bureaucratic Reform, 2023). Although in regulation the work system has been changed with the equalisation of positions, in practice everything attached to structural positions does not disappear. The main tasks & functions, benefits, facilities, and disposition hierarchy are still the same as the old organisation. This is in line with research by Nisa, et al. (2022) that the implementation of bureaucratic simplification in local governments has not been in accordance with the work system. The changed position map has no impact on employee performance and motivation.

Views on the Implementation of Bureaucratic Simplification Policy

In its implementation, the bureaucratic simplification policy presents a variety of views. Opinions regarding the effectiveness of policy implementation also vary. Based on the results of the study, the views of participants are also divided into two, namely that it has been appropriately and not appropriately implemented. Participants who feel that the bureaucratic simplification policy is appropriate are in line with the research of Nurhestitunngal & Muhlisin (2020) who argue that simplifying the bureaucracy will make

the face of the organization lean and professional. On the other hand, the implementation of bureaucratic policies feels inappropriate and forced. Local governments in particular have not been able to implement this policy properly. So that this policy is considered to be at the level of formality and has not touched the substance of the expected changes (Rifa'i & Albetris, 2022). In addition, the readiness of the local government, in this case the Salatiga City Government, to implement the bureaucratic simplification policy also needs to be reviewed. Based on the results of the research, there is disappointment in the implementation because there is no guidance related to the main tasks of newly appointed functional officials. There is no step from the city government to conduct socialization related to how functional officials should carry out their work, starting from the socialization of activity points, fulfillment of credit numbers, and socialization related to the supervising agency. In addition, the city government has not been able to facilitate the fulfillment of allowances for each functional position.

Based on the results of the study, the Salatiga city government is still not ready to implement the bureaucratic simplification policy. There are still many aspects of policy support that have not been implemented optimally. The changed organizational structure did not change anything in the implementation of daily work tasks (Akib et al., 2022; Arhas et al., 2021). New functional officials still carry out administrative work as when they were still structural officials.

How Leaders Respond to Bureaucratic Simplification Policy

In responding to the bureaucratic simplification policy, the head of the work unit makes capacity adjustments to help smooth the implementation of the policy. Based on the research results, the head of the work unit tries to understand the policy direction and implementation mechanism of bureaucratic simplification. In addition to the head of the work unit, the head of the field who is currently the sole administrative official in the field under his charge also increases his capacity by trying to master the technical competencies that were previously held by the structural officials below him. This is because it has become difficult for the head of the field to distribute work tasks with the elimination of the organizational structure under him (Nisa et al., 2022).

The adjustment of the competence of the head of the field can be interpreted as a positive impact on how the leader responds to the bureaucratic simplification policy. However, it turns out that on the other hand leaders also become maladaptive to the changes that occur. The results showed that the head of the work unit did not pay special attention to functional officials who needed direction related to their new duties. The head of the work unit continues to dispatch tasks as usual without evaluating the leadership communication hierarchy.

How Leaders Manage Human Resources After Bureaucratic Simplification

The head of the work unit as the holder of leadership in a work unit has an important role in managing human resources (HR) after the implementation of the bureaucratic simplification policy. When a leader is able to manage HR in accordance with the policy direction, the course of the policy and organizational goals will be carried out properly. Based on the results of this study, after the implementation of the bureaucratic simplification policy, the head of the work unit encourages HR affected by bureaucratic simplification to develop competencies to suit the position occupied. This can be seen from the head of the work unit who provides direction to new functional officials, encourages them to improve their competence, strives for clarity in the career path of functional officials, and bridges the relationship between functional officials and all stakeholders. The head of the work unit plays a role in encouraging functional officials to continue to adapt to the changes that occur. This will be optimal if the local government also provides opportunities and facilitation for all functional officials to attend training according to the needs of the position (Awaluddin et al., 2021; Lee & Braham, 2020; Tangi et al., 2021).

The changes that occurred after the simplification of the bureaucracy were a big culture shock for the new functional officials. This is because not all are familiar with the job duties of functional officials. In this

study, it can be seen that the head of the work unit always provides reinforcement to new functional officials. This is indicated by the provision of motivation, protection, and the head of the work unit who takes the role of being a place to complain for new functional officials. This is in line with research by Nisa, et al. (2022) that the head of the work unit should be able to proactively motivate and internalize employees so that the bureaucratic simplification policy can be implemented more quickly. The things done by the head of the work unit also show that the leader as an authoritarian figure in the organization is expected to provide protection and take on the role of "father" for his subordinates. The role taken by the head of the work unit in this study as a protective figure is characteristic of the application of paternalistic leadership. Paternalistic leadership style encourages subordinates to obey the leader so that the leader is more dominant and authoritarian and provides less space for employees to actively participate in the organisation (Soomro et al., 2021; Yao & Hao, 2023; Yeşiltaş et al., 2022). This research also reveals that paternalistic leadership is a suitable approach for work communities that have high collectivist values such as in Asian countries, especially Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that most participants, both heads of work units and functional officials, accept the bureaucratic simplification policy even though the implementation of the policy seems forced. However, the local government is expected to execute the policy better. Some aspects that need to be evaluated in the implementation of the bureaucratic simplification policy include the guidance of functional officials related to career paths, promotions, promotion opportunities, and socialization of main tasks & functions as well as the fulfillment of credit numbers as a functional official. In addition, the fulfillment of benefits in accordance with the position of functional officials is also something that needs to be reviewed by the local government. Second, in responding to the bureaucratic simplification policy, the head of the work unit as a leader takes an important role in maintaining organizational stability in achieving its goals. Based on the research results, it was found that the head of the work unit always provides motivation, protection, and protection to his subordinates who are affected by the bureaucratic simplification policy. The head of the work unit convinces his subordinates that change is a certainty and all those in the system must follow it. The head of the work unit also fights for the career path of functional officials who lose their careers in structural positions. In addition, the head of the work unit also constantly encourages functional officials to adjust and develop their competencies in accordance with their positions. Third, the study results also show that although the head of the work unit encourages functional officials to improve their competence as functional officials, this has not been followed by changes in the work system. The head of the work unit still imposes the work of structural officials on functional officials, the facilities obtained by functional officials obtained when they became structural officials were also not revoked. In addition, the communication hierarchy is still the same as when the old organizational structure was implemented so that the work system has not changed.

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