

## Merit System or Spoil System? Recruitment Process of Structural Officer in Gorontalo-Indonesian

Sastro M. Wantu

Faculty of Social Science, State University of Gorontalo, 96128 Gorontalo, Indonesia

---

**Abstract:** The phenomenon of the politicization of the bureaucracy is very influential in the administration of government bureaucracy, especially in recruitment mechanisms officials have a negative impact on the structuring and development of civil servants who are employees or officials of bureaucratic career. Tendency like this is very difficult to implement in the promotion by using the merit system. This study used a qualitative approach naturalistic. The results showed that the highly developed political bureaucracy in local government bureaucracy Gorontalo particularly in the application of recruiting officials who violate many basic normative rules as *rekrutmen*. In the implementation of recruitment in the province of Gorontalo in fact based on a closed system and that the system is identical to spoil recruitment or promotion of employees to be based on the official patrimonial relationships and nepotism. The study recommends a model recruitment system that does not conflict with the rule of law and implementation of recruitment based on merit system that emphasizes professionalism, competence, capability, accountability and mandate.

**Key words:** Recruitment, officer, merit systems, spoil systems, local bureaucracy

---

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian government program in decentralization case according 1945 Constitution of Indonesian Republic stated that every province in implementing the entire household affair itself based on people initiative and aspiration aims to create efficient government. However, in its implementation there still have many problems. One of main problem is the implementation of government institutional management which related to the management of employee recruitment based on meritocracy standard (Tanku and Imeri, 2014). It can avoid culture strength process that affect civil servant recruitment strategy which conducted by the government.

The policy about human resource recruitment of apparatus or government regional officer such what's been regulated in the Act No. 5 year of 2014 about State Civil Apparatus as replacement for the Act No. 43 year of 1999 about Employment Principal where in the substance that civil servant supervising conducted based on combination of research achievement system and career system. And then it strengthened by Government Regulation No. 13 year of 2002 about civil servant appointment in structural functions.

At those regulations they give very powerful authority to political officer (Aritonang, 2013) in Gorontalo as regional employment supervisor to conduct

intervention and regulation to the civil servant career pattern. This space absolutely gives effect to the selection and career level of political civil servants or government regional officer in which with absolute power (Fan *et al.*, 2009) in conducting civil servant recruitment and government functional officer mostly underestimate the existence rules.

The condition above in this era indeed will be contra productive with bureaucracy reformation that been implemented by Indonesian government (Akadol, 2015; Tjipjoherijanto, 2010). Bureaucracy in local level of Gorontalo must stay neutral to the political interest. However, empirically, for instance in recruitment problem or officer promotion, there is still dominated by political interest (Woo, 2015) from regional leader as political officer in local level, even in determining recruitment process of civil servant. While career or functions promotion of civil servants or structural officer determined by regional secretary who have higher authority.

Management of regional officer institution in Gorontalo Province for recruitment process of officers in regional level still intervened by practical political aspiration from political leader which functioned as regional leader such as employee recruitment by prioritizing nepotism, corruption and relation interest. The effect of problem that caused by this type of policy and bureaucracy implementation such as affected to the civil servant management especially related to recruitment process politically and to bureaucracy career functions

(Dahlstrom *et al.*, 2011) which results in ignoring meritocracy principal based on officer research achievement and the development of connection practice and recruitment practices based on relation process and promotion based on ascriptive factor (Alhaddad, 2014).

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research used naturalistic qualitative approach (Agustinho, 2005; Golafhani, 2003) to describe and find a phenomenon which has unique character in the implementation of employee recruitment policy, officer appointment and regional officer institutional management related to civil servant due to Human Resource development is main priority of Gorontalo Province.

**Data collection:** Data was collected integratively (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005) as follow main data source comes from bureaucracy scope of Gorontalo Province by conducting observation and direct interview to the related governmental institution such as Regional Civil Service Agency and Law Firm of Gorontalo Province to find basis regulation which becomes guidance and mechanism of officer recruitment in regional government bureaucracy scope, promotion rule and employee degradation. Data source was obtained through available data and document study both regulation which is acts and government regulation.

**Data analysis:** After it was conducted by data collection then it was conducted by data analysis by using interactive model analysis (Miles, 1992) which consists of three analysis components, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing. Data analysis based interview result and filed note also other material was studied especially related to recruitment problem of bureaucracy in Gorontalo Province which then analyzed systematically.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Recruitment normative basis in bureaucracy politicization arena:** To obtain good human resource in bureaucracy then it needs recruitment process in order to improve service quality. Employee professional attitude is really necessary in order to achieve organization effectiveness. Therefore, to be officer in regional government bureaucracy sure it needs correct recruitment to get professional officer as what’s been mentioned by Collins (Pramusinto, 2009) which stated “people are not your most important asset. The right people are”.

Table 1: The number of civil servant in Gorontalo Province based on level, occupation, and gender

Occupation level	2012			2013		
	Man	Woman	N	Man	Woman	N
1/a	8	0	8	5	0	5
1/b	12	0	12	12	0	12
1/c	12	0	12	7	0	7
1/d	9	0	9	6	0	6
2/a	240	143	383	146	73	219
2/b	259	110	369	289	116	405
2/c	109	175	284	78	112	190
2/d	55	75	130	58	114	172
3/a	333	405	738	310	348	658
3/b	205	244	449	255	326	581
3/c	116	133	249	142	137	279
3/d	142	116	258	129	123	252
4/a	80	48	128	70	45	115
4/b	75	26	111	90	44	134
4/c	22	4	26	13	5	18
4/d	15	0	15	27	1	28
4/e	0	1	1	0	1	1
Nominal	1692	1490	3182	1637	1445	3082

Promotion and officer recruitment process in Gorontalo Province should be conducted through effective recruitment process mechanism with requirements that been established as ruled in the “rule of game” of a civil servant. To reach certain function, every civil servant must fulfill parameter which not only demanded about the professionalism in working but also must have certain nomothetic requirements or normative rule that been regulated by government. Rule of game in the form of Act or Government Rule are used as barometer which made as normative guidance in conducting government officer recruitment in Gorontalo Province.

Bureaucracy condition in Gorontalo Province if it is compared between the number of citizen and civil servant ratio, then it is imbalance with the number of citizen which reaches up to 1.1 million and the number of civil servant which reaches 3000 employees such what’s been outlined in Table 1. The number of citizen is very abundant than the number of Regional Work Unit (SKPD-Satuan Kerja Perangkat Daerah). As with Minister Regulation (Minister Regulation of State Apparatus Empowerment No. 26 year of 2011) which rules that the number of employee in occupying functional position related with administration problem is maximal for 7 employees with occupation level of 4th echelon and 5th echelon whereas for functional position which not directly related with society is maximal for 5 employees with occupation level of 4th echelon and 5th echelon.

Data showed that in Gorontalo Province the number of civil servant which meets criteria to occupy public occupation is very numerous, however this data also like “double-edged sword” where the higher number of competent employee results in many bad practices in selecting public officer such as practice to choose the

relation and peer (nepotism), choose based on group interest (spoil system) and choose due to like or dislike (Sundel, 2014).

Recruitment process of public officer in Gorontalo Province should be conducted in regional government organization structure which must be suitable with merit system (Rauch and Evans, 2000) hold on to prevailed principle and mechanism and has law rule. The implementation is adjusted with governor's will to do rotation, replacement and officer appointment. Governor in conducting officer recruitment based on regional government organization needs. Thus whoever selected to occupy public occupation must be conducted by subordinate started from regional secretary to the lower officer, including in the implementation of recruitment mechanism through Occupation and Position Consideration Agency (Baperjakat). The governor's will as user in determining public occupation for a civil servant especially to the echelon officer indeed has very strategic role in running the government wheel.

Law rule or normative rule in determining public occupation such what's been mentioned in the Act No. 5 year of 2014 about State Civil Apparatus, clearly stated that mechanism of public officer recruitment more open and wants merit system but for Gorontalo Province, it has not been fully implemented as with the rule of game. It is caused by the legal basis is still new and can't be implemented fully by regional government. However, government of Gorontalo Province has implemented new policy of occupation refreshment which in the beginning was conducted by an occupation tender but actually it is only job replacement.

It is in line with the emergence of government regulation (Minister Regulation of State Apparatus Empowerment No. 13 year of 2014) about Appointment Administration of High Leader Occupation, then this regulation has been suitable with process that implemented by government of Gorontalo Province. Appointment of High Occupation in the province must implement Open Bidding which is kind of occupation tender, thus the role of Occupation and Position Consideration Agency (Baperjakat) was no longer needed but it goes through occupation selection team which been established for 5-9 people where 45% from its member is regional government employee and 55% involves outside party (expert from university). Method, selection, step and final result of occupation tender will be announced to the people. This process is in line with interview result with (SU-61 years old), ex officer in Gorontalo Province.

"Talking about occupation fulfillment, although it is very open but the obstacle that faced by occupation applicant such as she/he wants 2nd assistant position

and the result will be in other position. I think it is the weakness, although the position was in one group but it becomes a problem due to the applicants have known their ability are on the position that they wanted and in fact they are recruited for other position. Thus, the research effectiveness is not suitable with their will or skill. Therefore there is a gap of politicization".

Other argument related to occupation selection process that is very political such as interview result with civil servant (MA-49 years old) showed quite interesting phenomena related to officer recruitment process.

"The rule about promotion and degradation of public occupation are quite difficult to be implemented purely, for example, in the recruitment problem for occupation promotion where the leader of selection team is Regional Secretary of Governor which is as employment supervisor occupation and it surely will result political interest" (Interview on August, 17th 2014).

To improve promotion problem of civil servant and career position selection of civil servant then it is used the newest legal basis of Act No. 5 year of 2014 about State Civil Apparatus which explains about employee recruitment mechanism refers to Article 68 that related with occupation and position as follow: subsection. Civil servant appointed to certain occupation and position in government institution; subsection. Civil servant appointment in certain position such what's been mentioned in Subsection 1 determined by objective comparison between competition, qualification and requirement that needed by position with competition, qualification and requirement that owned by employee. Meanwhile, things that related with position promotion in Article 72 Subsection 1 explains that civil servant promotion can be conducted based objective comparison between competition, qualification and requirement that needed by position assessment over work achievement, leadership, cooperation, creativity and consideration from performance assessor team of civil servant in government institution without differentiate about gender, ethnic, religion, race and group. Based on the regulation above, actually government of Gorontalo Province in conducting officer recruitment is not considering about minority ethnic aspect in the regional government.

And then in the Article 72 Subsection 2 explains that every civil servant who fulfills requirement has the same right to be promoted to the higher position level. Article 72, Subsection 3 explains that administration position promotion and functional officer of civil servant are conducted by Employment Supervisor Officer after obtaining consideration from performance assessor team of civil servant in the government institution. In its

implementation, this regulation mostly violated by government of Gorontalo Province in conducting officer recruitment process especially for 2nd echelon position and it was conducted since the previous governor period until this day. They recruit officer not due to the competence but it is due to they have close relation with power, thus this pattern will damage regional bureaucracy ethics.

**Recruitment management of civil servant with merit system or spoil system:** The recruitment implementation which mostly becomes a problem in Gorontalo Province caused by large political intervention from governor in conducting recruitment process without seeing capacity and professionalism from an employee. As explained by Berman *et al.* (2001) cultural forces affecting recruitment strategies, e.g., environmental dimension affecting recruitment is political leadership. The agenda of elected officials and those they appoint is predicated on the electoral cycle; the tradition and culture of agency management is frequently infirm because of short time horizons. Executives generally are unwilling to expend political capital on better management because it is more exciting and politically popular to pursue new ideas and programs than to improve existing ones. This condition is going since the previous governor era to the today's governor where many public officers are selected not based on education background and ability but based on the wills and direct appointment from governor. Most of functional positions are given to new officer who is old colleague (spoil system) when the governor occupied as regent of North Gorontalo. The effect is recruitment implementation can't run well as with the existence law rule, thus the development of regional apparatus is no more suitable with neutral state apparatus management and work as with main task and instruction.

Regional government with all the authority translates the term and condition solely based on political interest point of view. Therefore, in improving civil servant professionalism, it needs legal basis (normative rule) to guarantee the employee recruitment process can be implemented well as with meritocracy system and separated from political power intervention. This time, instruction from federal government to re-implement Act No. 5 year of 2014 about State Civil Apparatus which highlighted to merit system where civil servant must have legal certainty, professionalism, proportionality, integrity, neutrality, accountability, effective and efficient. It is expected to be able to improve recruitment process or position promotion to be better thus it can result professional officer and able to result conducive research situation.

Functional position in Gorontalo Province actually keeps paying attention on requirement that been established as basic of officer recruitment mechanism although it is only limited as formality, however part that also can't be ignored is political consideration which acted by governor that automatically very determines final result of recruitment process in selecting people who will be officer in assisting governor's task to run the regional government. The same thing also explained in the research that was conducted by Hutchinsnson *et al.* (2014) in Australia which explained that there was very big effect from a leader in determining recruitment process of CEO, however those things will make a problem to the people's trust and independency in conducting working process due to political nuance.

Recruitment process has not been fully implemented well, officer recruitment in Gorontalo Province is closer to the relation (closeness) element (spoil system), nepotism and like or dislike feeling, thus it will result in gap between employees. In the research to find strategy in improving employee performance (Richardson, 2014; Munjuri, 2012) explained that recruitment process centered to the organization incentive which means that position or occupation closes to the financial, thus it creates perception in employee's scope that whoever that occupy a position has more authority in managing administration and financial.

Many requirements have been made in employee recruitment process to occupy career position in government institution such as merit system implementation. This process is expected to make the selected governmental officer, besides having professional attitude in working, responsible and also not stand up solely to the leader policy because of practical politics and avoiding corruption such what's been mentioned by that one of main factor in assessing good leader's performance is strong mental and resistant to any influences. A leader is expected to have strong mental in taking the tasks as public officer, strict and discipline in conducting the works, calm in facing the pressure, loyal and have high dedication and also can protect the subordinates.

## CONCLUSION

Law rule as main requirement for the needs of recruitment process in the regional realized as a standard because legal basis that regulate about civil servant management mostly contains multi-interpretations which affected to the various practices, for example to the officer recruitment in regional level included in Gorontalo Province. Normative rule, although it has made as guidance in recruitment process, however in its implementation it is still mostly ignored.

Officer recruitment process in bureaucracy of Gorontalo Province basically still hold on the rule which related to the requirement, however in the mechanism, it is actually only limited to the formality. And even the more prominent is political consideration that acted by governor as regional employment supervisor officer. Recruitment implementation or position promotion in Gorontalo Province expected can be conducted as with merit system.

#### REFERENCES

- Agostinho, S., 2005. Naturalistic inquiry in learning research. *Int. J. Qual. Methods*, 4: 13-26.
- Akadol, J., 2015. Bureaucracy reform: A dilemmatic bureaucratic law politic. *South East Asia J. Contemp. Bus. Econ. Law*, 8: 81-86.
- Alhaddad, M., 2014. Career self-management in ascription culture. Ph.D Thesis, Brunel University Research Archive, Uxbridge, England, UK.
- Aritonang, D.M., 2013. The model of public official dismissal to eradicate corruption in indonesia. *Int. J. Administrative Sci. Organ. Bisnis Birokrasi*, 20: 23-28.
- Bartone, P.T., J. Eid, J.B. Helge, L.J. Christian and S.A. Snook, 2009. Big five personality factors, hardiness and social judgment as predictors of leader performance. *Leadersh. Organ. Dev. J.*, 30: 498-521.
- Berman, M.E., J. Bowman, P.W. Jinathan and V.W. Montgomery, 2001. *Human Resource Management in Public Service*. Sage Publication, Thousand Oaks, California.
- Dahlstrom, C., V. Lapuente and J. Teorell, 2011. Dimensions of bureaucracy ii: A cross-national dataset on the structure and behavior of public administration. *QoG Working Pap. Ser.*, 6: 1-48.
- Fan, J.P., R. Morck, L.C. Xu and B. Yeung, 2009. Institutions and foreign direct investment: China versus the rest of the world. *World Dev.*, 37: 852-865.
- Golafshani, N., 2003. Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Qual. Rep.*, 8: 597-607.
- Hutchinson, J., B. Walker and F.H. McKenzie, 2014. *Leadership in local government, factors affecting the appointment of CEOs*. Australian Centre for Excellence in Local Government, Australia.
- Miles, H., 1992. *Qualitative Data Analysis a Sourcebook of New Methods*. Sage Publication, London, England, UK.
- Munjuri, M.G., 2012. Workforce diversity management and employee performance in the banking sector in kenya. *DBA. Afr. Manage. Rev.*, 3: 1-21.
- Pramusinto, A., 2009. *Developing Cultural Leadership Professional Bureaucracy, the Agus Wahyudi Pramusinto and Meleod, Governance Reform in Indonesia*. Gava Media, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
- Rauch, J.E. and P.B. Evans, 2000. Bureaucratic structure and bureaucratic performance in less developed countries. *J. Public Econ.*, 75: 49-71.
- Richardson, F.W., 2014. *Enhancing strategies to improve workplace performance*. Ph.D Thesis, Walden University, Minnesota, USA.
- Sundel, A., 2014. *Nepotism and Meritocracy*. University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden.
- Tanku, G. and S. Imeri, 2014. Meritocracy the only criterion to have a professional public administration in the civil service. *Mediterr. J. Soc. Sci.*, 5: 165-165.
- Tjiptoherijanto, P., 2010. Trust in government: The Indonesian experience. *Int. Public Manage. Rev.*, 11: 132-138.
- Whittemore, R. and K. Knaf, 2005. The integrative review: Updated methodology. *J. Adv. Nurs.*, 52: 546-553.
- Woo, K.H., 2015. Recruitment practices in the Malaysian public sector: Innovations or political responses?. *J. Public Affairs Educ.*, 21: 229-246.