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The Effectiveness of Civil Servant Competency Development Policy Implementation in Balangan Regency

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Abstract : *This study aims to analyze the implementation of Balangan Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 concerning Civil Servant Competency Development within the Balangan Regency Government, to identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and to assess its effectiveness. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach using Edward III's policy implementation model, which includes four variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving ten key informants. The findings indicate that, in terms of resources and bureaucratic structure, the policy has been implemented with adequate budgetary support and comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Leadership disposition reflects strong commitment to competency development initiatives. However, communication remains a challenge, particularly regarding data synchronization and inter-agency coordination. The main supporting factors include leadership commitment and regulatory legitimacy, while the inhibiting factors consist of inaccurate competency data and limited compliance among several regional work units (SKPD). Based on the indicators of policy accuracy, implementation accuracy, target accuracy, and environmental suitability, the implementation is categorized as effective. This is evidenced by the significant increase in civil servant participation in competency development programs, from 12.6% in 2021 to 72.3% in 2023.*

Keywords: *Policy Implementation; Competency Development; Effectiveness; Merit System*

1. Introduction

The development of modern public governance requires a professional, adaptive, and competency-based bureaucracy. In Indonesia, bureaucratic reform has placed the strengthening of the merit system as a key instrument for developing a high-performing and integrity-driven civil service. Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus (*Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN*) stipulates that civil service management must be based on qualifications, competencies, and performance in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. One of the principal manifestations of the merit system is the implementation of structured and continuous competency development policies for civil servants.

Competency development constitutes both a right of civil servants and an organisational obligation, as stipulated in Government Regulation Number 17 of 2020 concerning Civil Servant Management, which requires every civil servant to receive a minimum of twenty learning hours of competency development annually. Conceptually, competency refers to the underlying characteristics of individuals that are causally related to effective job performance and encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). In public organisations, competency development represents a systematic process aimed at enhancing employees' capacities in accordance with job requirements and organisational needs. Therefore, competency development serves as a strategic mechanism for improving public service quality and strengthening bureaucratic competitiveness.

As an autonomous region established in 2003, Balangan Regency has sought to reinforce the merit system through the enactment of Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 concerning Civil Servant Competency Development. The regulation provides a normative framework for the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of competency development programmes within the Balangan Regency Government. This policy is aligned with the regional development vision for 2021–2026, particularly the mission of improving bureaucratic quality and public service delivery.

Despite the existence of this regulatory framework, several implementation challenges remain evident. Prior to 2021, budgeting for competency development had not been centralised under the Regional Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency (BKPSDM) as the leading sector. In 2020, the total expenditure on human resource development within the Balangan Regency Government amounted to IDR 5,947,704,951, of which only IDR 1,862,900,000 (31.32 per cent) was allocated to BKPSDM, whilst the remainder was distributed across various regional apparatus organisations (SKPDs). Such budget fragmentation contributed to weak coordination and limited control over competency development programmes.

Nevertheless, employee participation in competency development has shown substantial improvement in recent years. The proportion of civil servants participating in competency development programmes increased from 12.6 per cent in 2021 to 47.6 per cent in 2022 and further to 72.3 per cent in 2023. Although this trend reflects progress in policy implementation, it does not necessarily indicate alignment between competency needs assessments, programme implementation, and the outcomes achieved. Furthermore, the equalisation of 253 Echelon IV structural positions into functional positions, together with adjustments to the regional organisational structure, has generated increasing demands for more systematic and integrated competency development initiatives.

The effectiveness of competency development policies cannot be separated from the policy implementation process. Within public policy studies, implementation constitutes a critical stage that determines whether a regulation can achieve its intended objectives. Edwards III (1980) argues that successful policy implementation is influenced by four principal variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Communication concerns the clarity and consistency of policy information conveyed to implementers. Without effective communication, policy objectives and procedures may be misunderstood or distorted. Resources encompass the availability of adequate budgets, personnel, information, and authority required for policy execution. Disposition refers to the attitudes and commitment of implementers towards policy objectives, whilst bureaucratic structure concerns task allocation, coordination mechanisms, and standard operating procedures that facilitate implementation.

The understanding of implementation dynamics can be further enriched by the ambiguity–conflict model proposed by Matland (1995), which suggests that variations in policy outcomes are shaped by the degree of policy ambiguity and the level of conflict among actors involved in implementation. When policy objectives are unclear or competing interests exist among implementers, implementation is likely to produce diverse outcomes. In the context of civil servant competency development, differing interpretations among regional agencies and weak inter-organisational coordination may affect policy effectiveness, even when formal regulations have been established.

Moreover, the effectiveness of policy implementation in public administration is generally assessed by the extent to which predetermined objectives are achieved. Grindle (1980) contends that implementation success should be evaluated through two dimensions: the implementation process and the outcomes generated. Consequently, evaluation should not only examine whether programmes have been executed according to established procedures but also determine whether the policy has produced the intended changes. In the context of competency development, indicators of effectiveness may include increased employee participation in training programmes, alignment between competency needs and programme implementation, and contributions to improved public service quality.

Drawing upon these theoretical perspectives, research on the implementation of competency development policies is grounded in three principal foundations: the merit system in civil service management as stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2023, competency theory as a determinant of organisational performance (Spencer & Spencer, 1993), and the policy implementation model of Edwards III (1980), which explains the determinants of successful policy execution. The perspectives of Matland (1995) and Grindle (1980) further enrich the analysis by emphasising the roles of conflict, ambiguity, and policy effectiveness. Therefore, this study seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of the implementation of Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 concerning Civil Servant Competency Development within the Balangan Regency Government, identify factors influencing both the success and constraints of policy implementation, and assess the extent to which the policy has contributed to strengthening the merit system and improving the quality of the regional civil service apparatus.

2. Method

Research Method This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyse the implementation of Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 concerning Civil Servant Competency Development within the Balangan Regency Government. A qualitative approach was adopted because the study sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of the policy implementation process, inter-organisational dynamics, and the factors influencing both the success and constraints of policy implementation within the context of public sector organisations.

The study was conducted within the Balangan Regency Government, with particular emphasis on the Regional Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency (*Badan Kepegawaian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia/BKPSDM*), which is responsible for personnel management and competency development of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN). The research was undertaken between June 2023 and June 2024. Research participants were selected through purposive sampling, whereby informants were intentionally chosen based on their knowledge, involvement, and authority regarding the implementation of competency development policies. A total of ten informants participated in the study, comprising the Head of BKPSDM, the Secretary of BKPSDM, the Head of the Human Resource Development Division, functional officials and human resource analysts, the Head of the General Affairs and Personnel Subdivision, and technical staff members within BKPSDM. The key informants were the Head of BKPSDM and the Head of the Human Resource Development Division, as they played strategic roles in the planning and supervision of policy implementation.

The study utilised both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with informants, direct

observations of competency development activities, and field notes documenting relevant events and practices. Secondary data were obtained from official documents, including Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018, the Balangan Regency Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2021–2026, BKPSDM performance reports, competency development budget reports, and data concerning civil servant participation in competency development programmes during the 2021–2023 period. Data collection was conducted using three principal techniques: semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore information regarding policy communication processes, resource support, implementers' attitudes and commitments, and bureaucratic mechanisms associated with policy implementation. Observation was undertaken to examine the actual practices of competency development implementation, whilst document analysis was used to strengthen data validity and facilitate triangulation.

Data were analysed interactively following the procedures proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction involved selecting, categorising, and focusing on information relevant to the research variables, namely communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure, as conceptualised in Edwards III's policy implementation model. The reduced data were subsequently organised and presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by identifying patterns, relationships, and emerging tendencies derived from the empirical findings. To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, the study employed source and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from different informants and cross-checking interview data against official documents and observational findings. Through this approach, the implementation of Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 concerning Civil Servant Competency Development was analysed comprehensively and systematically in accordance with the theoretical framework of policy implementation proposed by Edwards III (1980).

3. Results And Discussion

Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 was enacted as an instrument to strengthen the merit system through planned and sustainable competency development for civil servants. Operationally, the implementation of this policy is coordinated by the Regional Personnel and Human Resource Development Agency (*Badan Kepegawaian dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia*, BKPSDM) of Balangan Regency, which serves as the leading sector in civil service management and competency development.

The findings indicate that the implementation of the regulation has contributed positively to improving employee participation in competency

development programmes. Since the centralisation of competency development budgeting under BKPSDM during the 2021–2023 period, the participation rate of civil servants has increased substantially. This trend suggests an improvement in policy implementation and demonstrates the local government's commitment to strengthening the merit system and enhancing the professional capacity of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN). The content of policy dimension encompasses the interests affected, the types of benefits generated, the degree of change expected, the location of decision-making authority, and the availability of resources.

Table 1. Civil Servant Participation in Competency Development (2021–2023)

Year	Number of civil servants	Following Competency Development	Persentase
2021	2.933	370	12,6%
2022	2.927	1.394	47,6%
2023	2.855	2.065	72,3%

Source: BKPSDM Balangan Regency, 2023.

The increase in civil servant participation in competency development programmes indicates improvements in policy implementation. However, the effectiveness of implementation cannot be measured solely by participation rates but must also be assessed through the dimensions of communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure proposed by Edwards III (1980).

Policy communication was conducted through circular letters, coordination meetings, socialisation activities, and personnel information systems. In general, policy transmission has been implemented adequately; however, discrepancies in competency development data among regional apparatus organisations (SKPDs) remain evident. These findings indicate that, although the policy has been communicated, the clarity and consistency of information have not yet been fully optimised. The principal issue concerns the integration of training data generated by SKPDs outside the direct coordination of BKPSDM, which has complicated the monitoring of the annual twenty learning hours requirement mandated by Government Regulation Number 17 of 2020. From a theoretical perspective, this condition reflects weaknesses in the dimensions of clarity and consistency in policy communication, as inadequate data synchronisation may lead to distortions in implementation monitoring and evaluation processes (Edwards III, 1980).

With regard to resources, significant improvements have occurred since 2021. Previously, competency development budgets were dispersed across multiple SKPDs. In 2020, the total expenditure on human resource

development amounted to IDR 5,947,704,951, of which only 31.32 per cent was allocated directly to BKPSDM. The centralisation of budgeting during the 2021–2023 period increased BKPSDM's capacity to coordinate and supervise competency development programmes. In addition to financial resources, the quantity of personnel responsible for policy implementation was considered adequate, although further enhancement of technical capabilities remains necessary. According to Edwards III (1980), resource adequacy constitutes a critical determinant of policy success, as policies are unlikely to be implemented effectively without sufficient financial and human resources. The findings therefore indicate that resource availability has become one of the principal supporting factors in the implementation of competency development policies in Balangan Regency.

The disposition of policy implementers demonstrated strong commitment, particularly among regional leaders and BKPSDM management. All competency development plans require formal approval and support from organisational leaders, either through facilitation, financial contributions, self-managed implementation, or independent funding mechanisms. Leadership commitment is further reflected in support for the merit system and the integration of competency development policies into the Balangan Regency Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) 2021–2026. Nevertheless, variations in compliance with regulatory provisions remain evident across certain SKPDs, indicating differences in understanding and organisational priorities among implementing agencies. Edwards III (1980) argues that a positive disposition among implementers increases the likelihood of successful policy implementation. Consequently, supportive leadership attitudes represent a significant enabling factor, whilst variations in commitment at the operational level may constitute a potential barrier to implementation effectiveness.

Regarding bureaucratic structure, BKPSDM has established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) covering training needs assessment, programme planning, implementation, and evaluation. The organisational structure is relatively well defined, with clear divisions of responsibility between the Human Resource Development Division and other organisational units. However, fragmentation of responsibilities remains evident when individual SKPDs independently organise training programmes without full coordination with BKPSDM. Such fragmentation creates challenges in data integration and programme quality control. According to Edwards III (1980), bureaucratic fragmentation may weaken implementation effectiveness when coordination mechanisms are inadequate. The findings suggest that, despite the existence of formal procedures, inter-agency coordination still requires considerable strengthening.

The study further reveals that internal organisational factors are relatively strong, particularly leadership commitment, centralised budget

allocation, regulatory legitimacy through Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 and the RPJMD, and the existence of clear bureaucratic structures and standard operating procedures. Nevertheless, several inhibiting factors persist, including inconsistencies in competency development data, uneven compliance among SKPDs, suboptimal inter-agency coordination, and differences in understanding and priorities among stakeholders. These issues indicate that administrative and coordination-related challenges remain the principal obstacles to effective policy implementation.

The effectiveness of policy implementation was also assessed using the four-appropriateness approach, encompassing policy appropriateness, implementation appropriateness, target appropriateness, and environmental appropriateness. The findings demonstrate that the regulation is highly relevant to the implementation of the merit system and addresses the competency development needs of the State Civil Apparatus. Implementation has been supported by adequate budget allocations and clearly defined standard operating procedures. Furthermore, employee participation in competency development programmes increased substantially, from 12.6 per cent in 2021 to 72.3 per cent in 2023, whilst the policy remains consistent with the objectives of the Balangan Regency Medium-Term Development Plan and broader bureaucratic reform initiatives.

Overall, the implementation of Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 can be categorised as structurally and quantitatively effective. The substantial increase in participation rates indicates improvements in managerial capacity and organisational support. However, substantive effectiveness still requires further enhancement, particularly with respect to data integration, consistency of policy communication, and inter-SKPD coordination. The findings reveal a predominantly top-down implementation pattern characterised by strong leadership commitment and adequate resource support, whilst challenges remain in achieving horizontal harmonisation among regional apparatus organisations. These findings are consistent with Edwards III's (1980) proposition that policy implementation success is determined not only by the quality of the regulation itself but also by communication consistency, resource adequacy, implementers' commitment, and coordinated bureaucratic structures. Therefore, although the policy has been implemented effectively from administrative and quantitative perspectives, strengthening coordination mechanisms and integrating information systems remain essential prerequisites for improving implementation quality and reinforcing the sustainability of the merit system within the Balangan Regency Government.

4. Conclusion

The implementation of Regent Regulation Number 41 of 2018 concerning Civil Servant Competency Development within the Balangan Regency

Government has generally been effective, particularly in improving the coordination and management of competency development programmes. This progress is reflected in the substantial increase in civil servant participation in competency development activities, rising from 12.6 per cent in 2021 to 72.3 per cent in 2023. From the perspective of Edwards III's policy implementation model, the variables of resources and disposition emerged as the dominant factors supporting implementation success. Adequate budgetary support, the existence of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and strong commitment from regional leaders constituted the principal enabling factors of policy implementation. Nevertheless, challenges remain in the communication dimension, particularly inconsistencies in competency development data among regional apparatus organisations and suboptimal inter-agency coordination. The fragmentation of training activities conducted outside the full coordination of BKPSDM has created difficulties in ensuring data integration and maintaining consistency in fulfilling mandatory competency development requirements. Overall, the policy has been aligned with the principles of the merit system and has contributed to strengthening the capacity of the regional civil service apparatus. However, substantive policy effectiveness still requires improvements in information system integration, harmonisation of implementation across government agencies, and the development of a shared understanding of regulatory provisions.

Based on these findings, several strategic recommendations can be proposed to enhance future policy effectiveness. First, the Balangan Regency Government, through BKPSDM, should develop an integrated and fully digitalised competency development information system capable of recording all competency development activities implemented both by BKPSDM and by individual regional apparatus organisations. Such a system would minimise data inconsistencies and facilitate accurate and sustainable monitoring of the annual twenty learning hours requirement. Second, inter-agency coordination mechanisms should be strengthened through periodic evaluation forums and the preparation of competency development plans based on job analysis and workload analysis. This approach would ensure that training programmes not only increase participation rates but also correspond to competency requirements and organisational performance objectives. Third, the capacity of personnel management officers across regional agencies should be enhanced to ensure a uniform understanding of competency development regulations. Continuous socialisation and technical assistance programmes would improve regulatory compliance and reinforce the implementation of the merit system within local government institutions. Finally, policy evaluation should extend beyond administrative indicators and participation rates to include the substantive impact of competency development on individual civil servant performance and public service quality. Through these measures, competency development can function

as a strategic instrument for supporting bureaucratic reform and promoting professional, accountable, and performance-based local governance.

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