The Role of the Merit System in Improving the Professionalism of ASN

Astrid Indah Maretha Dewi*[1] , Lalu Tirangga Aji Wangsanegara[2]

[1]Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mataram, Indonesia

[2] Regional financial and asset agency, North Lombok regency government

Email: astridindah@gmail.com

Abstract

This study discusses the application of the merit system in an effort to improve the professionalism of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in Mataram City. The merit system is an important instrument in realizing a bureaucracy that is professional, accountable, and free from non-professional intervention. This study found that the implementation of the merit system in Mataram City has encouraged the improvement of the quality of civil servants through a more objective and performance-based process of recruitment, promotion, and career development. However, there are still a number of challenges, such as the limitations of independent assessment centers, the lack of optimal digitization of SIMPEG, and organizational culture that does not fully support meritocracy. For this reason, there needs to be policy support and comprehensive system improvement so that the implementation of the merit system can run more effectively and sustainably, so as to be able to strengthen the performance of civil servants and the quality of public services.

Keywords: Merit System, ASN Professionalism, Mataram City

Introduction

Human resource management (HR) is the main foundation in supporting government performance, especially in providing effective and efficient public services (Hermanowicz, 2019). The existence of apparatus with high competence is needed so that the bureaucracy can run professionally and focus on the interests of the wider community (Everett P. Wheeler, 1919). Transformation in the public administration system is an important thing to do so that employees who serve in the public service sector are able to work optimally according to their abilities. It also supports the creation of a government that is run in a transparent, accountable, and engaging community participation in the three main principles in the concept of good

governance. In this context, bureaucratic reform is a strategic step that the Indonesian government continues to push to improve the state administration system (Setyowati, 2016).

One of the key components of the bureaucratic reform effort is the implementation of the merit system, which is a human resource management system based on professional aspects such as competence, qualifications, and real work results. With this system, the process of appointing, promoting, and developing employees' careers is based on abilities and achievements, not due to personal proximity or subjective interests. A government that is managed in an accountable and transparent manner is able to create a conducive investment climate and contribute to economic growth indirectly (Son Hing et al., 2011). On the other hand, if government practices are filled with acts of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN), it can lead to a decrease in investment interest, weaken the effectiveness of state spending, and cause distortions in the management of available resources. The end result is a slowdown in economic development (Sary et al., 2024).

To answer these challenges, the implementation of the merit system is very relevant because it emphasizes the principles of objectivity, transparency, and accountability in every personnel management process. With this system, it is hoped that a work culture that is oriented towards performance and professionalism will be created, which will ultimately be able to improve the quality of service to the community. This system is believed to be able to answer various problems in the traditional bureaucracy that are often inefficient and open up opportunities for irregularities such as corruption and favoritism practices. As part of bureaucratic reform, the merit system plays an important role in improving the quality of state apparatus because the process of appointment and career development is based on abilities and achievements, not personal relationships (Darmawan et al., 2023).

Article 27 of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes that every citizen has the right to obtain a job and a decent life as part of the fulfillment of human values. This provision indicates that the state is responsible for creating

adequate employment opportunities for its people, one of which is through the provision of positions in government structures. State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is a form of position given by the government to individuals who are trusted to carry out administrative functions and public services. ASN plays a central role in supporting the implementation of national development so that their existence becomes an inseparable part of the state's efforts to realize community welfare (Rubin, 2012).

In the fourth paragraph of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, it is also emphasized that to achieve national goals, professional human resources are needed, not influenced by politics, and free from corrupt practices, collusion, and nepotism in the implementation of public services. This is in line with the values of Pancasila and its role in strengthening the unity and unity of the nation in accordance with the principles contained in the 1945 Constitution (Putra et al., 2020).

The merit system is a way of managing personnel that assesses a person's performance based on work results and their ability to carry out tasks. This system aims to ensure that employees who have the best performance can provide maximum service to the community. Some of the things that make employees able to work well include a comfortable work environment, the existence of appropriate rewards (rewards), abilities or competencies owned, and services that are carried out continuously (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Basically, the merit system is used to appoint, promote, or make decisions related to staffing based on ability and work achievement, not due to other factors. McCourt mentioned that merit is a way to put the most appropriate person in the appropriate position (Kane et al., 2016).

In Indonesia, strengthening the merit system is the main focus in bureaucratic reform that continues to be intensified by the government (Kurniawan & Suswanta, 2022). This was strengthened through the ratification of Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus, which emphasized the importance of implementing a meritocracy-based system. This law regulates various aspects, ranging from the needs of civil servants, the supervision system, employee welfare, to

the digitization of human resource management. In addition, ability-based selection through the Computer Assisted Test (CAT) system as well as job promotions that consider individual performance and capacity are part of the implementation of this principle.

The merit system itself originally developed in the world of private corporations, where employees were recruited and promoted based on ability, rather than personal relationships. This concept was then adopted by the public sector to create a more professional bureaucracy that was free from unethical practices. Supervision of the implementation of the merit system at the national level is carried out by the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN), which is responsible for ensuring that each agency applies the principle consistently. As the center of government of West Nusa Tenggara Province, Mataram City has shown its seriousness in implementing the merit system within the scope of ASN. One of the indicators is the Good Category Meritocracy Award received by the Mataram City Government in 2022. On various occasions, the Mayor of Mataram emphasized the importance of placing officials based on qualifications, competencies, and performance, while avoiding political intervention in the process of mutation and promotion of positions (Reddick, 2002).

Despite the challenges, LAN managed to obtain an excellent predicate in the Merit System Index in 2019, which indicates the success of the policy. Therefore, it is important to examine more deeply how the implementation of the merit system in Mataram City contributes to improving the professionalism of ASN, as well as identifying the challenges that still have to be faced in the future. This article aims to analyze the role of the merit system in improving the professionalism of civil servants in Mataram City, so that the results can be policy recommendations and lessons learned for other regions that are implementing similar bureaucratic reforms (Malik & Prasojo, 2023).

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to understand in depth how the merit system is applied in the management of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) in Mataram City. The data collection technique used is a literature review, namely by studying academic books, scientific articles, the results of previous research, and regulatory documents such as Law Number 5 of 2014 concerning ASN and Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning ASN. This research also studies technical policies and implementation guidelines issued by related agencies such as the State Civil Apparatus Commission (KASN), to find out the extent to which the merit system has been implemented in Mataram City.

The data analysis technique used is qualitative analysis, which is by grouping, organizing, and interpreting the data that has been collected. This analysis was conducted to provide a clear picture of how the implementation of the merit system works, what factors support or hinder it, and how this merit system has an impact on the professionalism of civil servants in Mataram City.

Findings and Discussion

Implementation of Merit System in ASN Management in Mataram City

The mechanism for implementing the merit system in the management of ASN in Indonesia refers to Law Number 5 of 2014, which emphasizes that ASN policies and management must be based on qualifications, competencies, and performance, and free from political, racial, religious, and other discrimination. The implementation of this merit system includes eight main aspects that support each other. First, the planning of ASN needs must be prepared based on an analysis of positions and workloads, but in many regions it is still unsustainable and often not supported by accurate data from personnel information systems. Second, the ASN procurement process is carried out openly through Computer Assisted Test (CAT) to ensure

objectivity, although the limitations of information systems that have not been integrated often make it difficult to synchronize applicants' data with the needs of the position (Oliveira et al., 2024).

Furthermore, career development and position promotion should be carried out through competency tests. However, in many regions, the promotion process is not fully competency-based because SIMPEG has not been able to present ASN performance and competency data in real time. ASN performance assessment through e-Performance should also be the basis for providing allowances and promotions, but the implementation of e-Performance in many districts/cities is still not integrated with SIMPEG so it has not run optimally.

The information system aspect (SIMPEG) itself is the foundation for the implementation of the merit system, but digital infrastructure that is still weak and not yet integrated is a serious challenge. Based on the evaluation of KASN until 2021, of the 347 government agencies evaluated, the average achievement of information system aspects nationally only reached 51%, while the achievement in regency/city governments was only around 41.2%. This gap of almost 10% shows that there are still great challenges in building an integrated SIMPEG and supporting the effective implementation of the merit system in all regions.
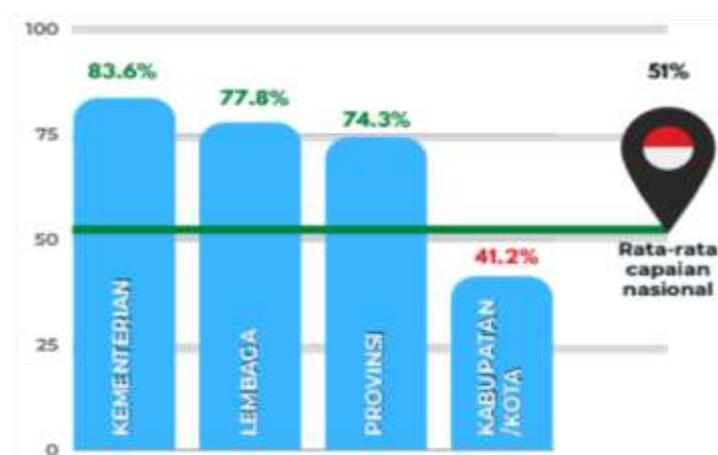

Figure 1. Results of Evaluation of Aspect 8 (Information System) in the Implementation of the Merit System in 2021

Source: https://meritopedia.kasn.go.id/pusat-pengetahuan/kajian-kebijakan

The merit system is an important element in bureaucratic reform in Indonesia, regulated in Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus. This regulation affirms the principle of meritocracy with a focus on transparency, accountability, and selection based on competence and merit. The real implementation of the merit system in Mataram City can be seen in the filling of Primary High Leadership Positions (JPT) through an open, competitive mechanism, and prioritizing qualifications, competencies, and track records, in accordance with the Mayor of Mataram Regulation No. 39 of 2017.

The Mataram City Government has implemented a merit system in the management of ASN, with stages of preparation, implementation, and evaluation in accordance with the provisions. Research shows that the merit system increases objectivity and transparency, reduces KKN, and encourages ASN to improve the quality and competence of strategic positions.

Open selection in Mataram City allows competent employees to compete fairly in position promotions. This mechanism was announced through the official BKPSDM portal and online media so that all civil servants meet the criteria to be able to access it. The goal is to prevent nepotism and politicization of positions so that elected officials are in accordance with organizational needs.

Mataram City also uses an assessment center to assess the competence of ASN objectively. However, this process still depends on cooperation with the NTB Provincial Regional Civil Service Agency and is not yet fully independent. However, the implementation of the merit system has a positive impact on the quality of ASN management and bureaucratic effectiveness in Mataram City.

In 2021, there were 4,936 civil servants in Mataram City, consisting of 2,123 men and 2,835 women. The ASN is spread across various work units, including 11 Agencies, 12 Regional Technical Institutions, 12 agencies/offices, 3 institutions at the same level, and 6 sub-district offices, which shows the broad role of ASN in supporting local governments. The level of education of civil servants shows a positive tendency towards professionalism, as one of the indicators of the success of

the merit system. Based on data from the Mataram City BKPSDM, ASN with Diploma IV/Undergraduate/Postgraduate education reached 3,334 people or around 67.5% of the total ASN, much more than the Diploma III level (525 people), Diploma I & II (76 people), and high school graduates/equivalent below (1,023 people).

Table 1. ASN Education Level in Mataram City

Education Level	Sum
Diploma IV/Bachelor/Postgraduate	3.334
Diploma III	525
High School/Equivalent	931
Junior High School/Equivalent	57
SD	35
Total	**4.958**

Source: BKSDM

Obstacles and Challenges in the Implementation of the Merit System

Although the merit system has been implemented in Mataram City, there are several challenges that are still faced in its implementation: Limitations of Assessment Center Facilities: The assessment center process still depends on cooperation with the NTB Provincial BKD. These limitations affect the flexibility and effectiveness of ASN competency assessments. This also has an impact on the mapping of ASN talent which is not yet fully objective. Organizational Culture That Has Not Fully Supported Meritocracy: Some civil servants, especially those who are more senior, still consider promotion based on seniority to be more important than competence. This is an obstacle in creating a professional and performance-based bureaucracy.

Lack of Digitalization of Personnel Information System (SIMPEG): SIMPEG in Mataram City is still not optimally integrated with e-performance. This causes ASN performance assessments to not run in real-time and comprehensively, so that outstanding ASN do not always receive appropriate awards. Limited Budget and Competent Human Resources: Limited budget to build an assessment center independently and improve the quality of SIMPEG is the main obstacle. In addition, experts who master information technology are also still limited, so the digitalization of ASN management is slow (Mutia Ali et al., 2017).

The Impact of the Merit System on the Professionalism of ASN

The implementation of the merit system has a significant impact on the performance of ASN. This system encourages the creation of a professional bureaucracy through recruitment, promotion, and career development based on qualifications, competencies, and performance. Agencies that optimally implement a merit system, such as BKN which received a score of 380 (index 0.93) from KASN and entered the "Very Good" category, have been proven to improve the quality of ASN performance. This success is reflected in the integration of personnel information systems, career development, performance management, and employee protection and rewards. As a result, the process of promotion, mutation, and enforcement of ASN discipline in BKN becomes more effective, accountable, and minimal non-professional intervention.

Figure 2. BKN Achieves Very Good Predicate in the Assessment of the Implementation of the Merit System in ASN Management in 2024
Source: BKPSDM, 2022 www.bkn.go.id

On the other hand, agencies at the district/city level which on average only have 41.2% of information system aspects (below the national average of 51%) often face problems in ASN performance management. SIMPEG in many regions has not been integrated with the e-performance system and discipline enforcement database, so ASN performance data is not documented in real-time and validly. As a result, ASN who perform well do not receive the proper award, while ASN who violate discipline are not immediately sanctioned. This condition has an impact on the work motivation, productivity, and professionalism of ASN in local government

Figure 3. Level of Implementation of Integrated e-Performance in the Merit System in 2021
Source: https://meritopedia.kasn.go.id/pusat-pengetahuan/kajian-kebijakan

The unpreparedness in building an integrated SIMPEG is also evidence of the weak management of ASN in the regions. This problem is not only caused by budget limitations, but also due to a lack of understanding and technical planning regarding the functions and features of SIMPEG needed. This condition is exacerbated by the low competence of ASN who are placed in the field of information technology management. Therefore, without the implementation of a comprehensive merit system and supported by a good information system, efforts to improve the performance of ASN in the regions will be difficult to achieve. This shows that the implementation of the merit system is not just a normative obligation, but an urgent need for civil servants to work professionally, fairly, and results-oriented that have a real impact on society.

Conclusion

The implementation of the merit system in Mataram City has shown a step forward in strengthening the professionalism of ASN through a qualification-based and performance-based recruitment and career development mechanism. However, a number of obstacles still need to be overcome, such as the limited facilities of the assessment center which has an impact on the objectivity of the ASN competency assessment, as well as the integration of information systems that are not optimal so that it affects the speed and accuracy of ASN performance data. In addition, the organizational culture that still emphasizes seniority is also a challenge in realizing a truly merit-based bureaucracy. Therefore, the commitment of regional leaders and efforts to improve the quality of information technology infrastructure are important so that the implementation of the merit system can run effectively and consistently. With continuous improvement, the merit system is expected to encourage the creation of a bureaucracy that is professional, accountable, and adaptive to changing community needs.

References

Darmawan, E., Moenta, A. P., & Ruslan, A. (2023). Effectiveness of the Merit System in Office Administration within the Sinjai District Government. *Legal Brief*, *12*(1), 57–66. https://doi.org/10.35335/legal.v12i1.749

Everett P. Wheeler. (1919). *The Rise and Progress of the Merit System Author (s): Everett P . Wheeler Published by : Oxford University Press Stable URL : https://www.jstor.org/stable/2141688*. 34(3), 486–492.

Hermanowicz, J. C. (2019). The Degradation of Merit. *Society*, *56*(4), 340–347. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-019-00378-1

Kane, S. N., Mishra, A., & Dutta, A. K. (2016). Preface: International Conference on Recent Trends in Physics (ICRTP 2016). *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, *755*(1). https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/755/1/011001

Kurniawan, C., Pribadi, U., & Iqbal, M. (2023). the Role of E-Governance in Improving

Local Governments Performance (Case Study: Sumbawa Regency). *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, *11*(3), 1139–1154. https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v11i3.795

Kurniawan, C., & Suswanta, S. (2022). Implementation of Artificial Intelligence by the Government of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) in Disaster Management. *International Conference on Public Organization (ICONPO 2021)*, *209*(Iconpo 2021), 39–44.

Malik, K. J., & Prasojo, E. (2023). Determinant Factors in the Implementation of Merit System: An Overview of Indonesian Case. *Asian Journal of Social and Humanities*, *2*(03), 1942–1952. https://doi.org/10.59888/ajosh.v2i03.187

Mutia Ali, D., Prasojo, E., & Jannah, L. M. (2017). International Journal of Management and Administrative Sciences (IJMAS) The Transformation of Merit System in Indonesian Civil Servant Promotion System. *International Journal of Management and Administrative Sciences (IJMAS*, *5*(04), 20–28. www.ijmas.orgwww.ijmas.org

Oliveira, E., Abner, G., Lee, S., Suzuki, K., Hur, H., & Perry, J. L. (2024). What does the evidence tell us about merit principles and government performance? *Public Administration*, *102*(2), 668–690. https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12945

Putra, Y. P., Purnomo, E. P., Suswanta, S., & Kasiwi, A. N. (2020). Policy Of A Merit System To Make A Good And Clean Government In The Middle Of Bureaucratic Politicization. *Journal of Government and Civil Society*, *4*(2), 159. https://doi.org/10.31000/jgcs.v4i2.2393

Reddick, M. (2002). Merit Selection: A Review of the Social Scientific Literature. *Dickinson Law Review*, *106*(4), 729–745.

Rubin, E. L. (2012). Public Law and Legal Theory. *Wake Forest Law Review*, *47*(631), 101–145. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2436084

Sary, J. S., Sukmariningsih, R. M., Mulyani, S., & Noor, A. (2024). Enhancing Good Governance through the Implementation of the Merit System in the Placement of State Civil Apparatus. *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences*, *22*(2), 5469–5477. https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.00407

Setyowati, E. (2016). Merit System in Recruitment and Selection Process of Civil Servant Candidate in Malang Indonesia (Implementation of Recruitment and

Selection of Civil Servant Candidate in 2010). *Journal of Administrative Sciences and Policy Studies*, *4*(1), 83–95. https://doi.org/10.15640/jasps.v4n1a5

Son Hing, L. S., Bobocel, D. R., Zanna, M. P., Garcia, D. M., Gee, S. S., & Orazietti, K. (2011). The merit of meritocracy. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *101*(3), 433–450. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024618