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The Role of E-Learning in Improving the Quality of Public Services Skills of Local/District Government Officials

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Abstract

Since the implementation of decentralization, the quality of public services in Indonesia has not been improving. In this sense, people still face illegal practices and inefficiency in governmental bureaucracy. The government has tried to resolve the problems by designing faster, cheaper and more transparent services in public services based on ICT or e-government. However, the implementation of e-government had not worked as expected. This is because the lack of competencies or skills of human resources in managing e-government. To handle such problems, based on President Instruction (INPRES) Number 3/2003, the government tried to improve all of the government staffs quality, and encourage them to utilize the distance learning system through e-learning.

Preface

Indonesia has entered decentralization era since 1999. The main purpose implementing decentralization is to give autonomy to the local authority, and to increase the welfare of the society. It could be accomplished by improving public services; therefore, societies will obtain better services which reachable, transparent, inexpensive, and quick. Since the implementation of local autonomy, the qualities of public services have showed only a little progress. According to Mohammad (2003), public services still have various weaknesses as the government officers are:

1. less responsive;
2. less informative;
3. less accessible;
4. less coordinative;
5. bureaucratic; and
6. inefficient.

Facing that problem, the government has tried to advance public service quality by using information and communication technology (ICT). Unfortunately this attempt has not yet succeeded, because of lack of competent human resources. Kinanto (2006) expresses that among three dimensions which relate to public services, one of them is human resources who are competent. Istianda (2006) also said that the reason of e-government (usage of ICT in government institute) did not work optimally is because the operators who run the program are lack of competencies and skills in information technology. In this case, President of Republic Indonesia realizes that the constraint of Indonesia to implement e-government are mainly because the concept has not been fully and correctly comprehended, government officers are not ready to use ICT, e-illiterate of Indonesian society to information technology is still high. (<http://www.eii-forum.or.id/eII2007/content/?download=AcceptedPapers.xls>).

Derived from the problems, this paper will discuss the effort in improving human resources quality in the area of ICT through

e-learning. As we know, local government officers did not have enough time to improve their education, including technical skills in ICT, though in globalization era they are required. President Instruction (INPRES) Number 3/2003 mentioned that disability to adjust to globalization will bring people into digital divide, which is isolated from global development because of disability using information.

One thing that local government can do to facilitate its human resources to improve their skills in ICT is to educate them through e-learning. Cisco (in Nurhayati, 2007) explains that e-learning philosophies are: first, it is transformation of information, communication, education, training through online medium. Second, e-learning provide tools to enhance conventional learning value, thus it could respond to global challenges. Third, e-learning is not a substitute to the conventional learning method but strengthen it through enrichment of content and development education technology. Forth, student capacities are depended on content form and delivery method. Hotline (in detikINET, 2008) also mention that students can study online by themselves. Teachers and students can interact online using various applications such as chatting, message board and e-mail.

The Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as Media of Public Service

Officially, Indonesia using ICT as media of public service since INPRES number 3/2003 has been executed. As such, clean and transparent government system is required. The use of ICT is aimed to form:

1. information network and public service transaction which has quality and scope to satisfy public and can be reached in all over Indonesia without time boundaries and high cost;
2. interactive relation with business community to enhance national economy and strengthen the ability in emulation international trade;
3. the mechanism and communication channel with government institutions and also provide facilitation of public dialog for society

- to participate in public policy formulation;
4. clean and transparent management system and also to smooth transaction and service between local government and between institution government.

The thoughts of using information and communication technology as public service media produce new concept called e-government. According to the World Bank, e-government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management.

The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions (go. worldbank.org/M1JHE0Z280).EZ Gov (in Arsyad, 2007) said that definition of e-government is moderation of government practice by using information and communication technology, which from this definition can be divided into two parts: 1) online services, it is show how the government role its external function to fulfill the society and business community needs, such as present the more simply and easier service to those who needed. 2) Government operations, it means some activity conducted by government office, such as electronic procurement, document management based on web, electronic form, and other things which can be simplify by using internet. Conrad (in Rahardjo, 2001) explained that e-government represent a term which is given to a governance adopting technology-based on internet which can provide and improve its services and program. Its main purpose is to give something special to the users. Santoso (2005) mentioned that the development of e-government refers to an effort to develop management of governance based on electronic in order to improve public services effectively and efficiently.

E-government concept applied in order to build governmental link with its society and also with businesses effectively and efficiently. However, if e-government is not intentionally supported by qualified and skillfull government officers as public servant, e-government itself will not gain any meaning beyond being a medium. Therefore, with e-government, the quality of public services must regularly and progressively improved.

Public services are services given by state and state-owned company to society to fulfill their basic requirement in order to creating their welfare. Public services are health services, education, security, orderliness, social aid, and so on (Nurcholis, 2005). To improve them, there are three dimensions that have to be done, which are:

1. Policy: have policy in services been truly aimed for public interest?
2. Institute: are institutions formed by local government required by public? Institution also concerns with organizational structure and value;
3. Human Resources: is the human resources giving services have been qualified, skillfull, and had the necessary competencies?
Today's value have changed that public seems to have and demand right to get better services.

From policy aspect, it is clear that based on INPRES Number 3/2003 the use of ICT is addressed for public interest. From institutional aspect, currently, local government has been developing e-government by organization restructuring (Istianda, 2006). While from human resources aspect, it is also clear that e-government has not been optimal because the operators who run the program lacking competencies in information technology, the concept has not been fully and correctly comprehended, government officers are not ready to use ICT, and e-illiterate of Indonesia society to information technology is still high. According to Albarda (2004), the key success of e-government implementation is the ability of human resources from the organization to maintain and operate the system, so it can continuously function in optimal way. The reliability and capability of system in long term is not having an effect if the capability of its human resources has not been developed.

Local Government Resources in the Information Technology (IT)

The capable and potential human resources in the information technology are the significant and important factors in public service administration. The qualification of human resources in the information technology (IT) as a planner, an administrator or a user in the e-government is very important and even is the key to the successful implementation and development of e-government. Purbo (2000) said that limited human resources in the information technology are the main barrier faced by the most government institutions (70%). Related to the limited human resources development in this technology, Purbo also stated that problems faced by government in the human resources development include: a) insufficient wages and facilities (55, 2%); b) human resources development programs are more of internal training (89,6%) or administering seminar (67%) not making scholarship programs, for example; c) most jobs are for the operator level position, mainly for data and application maintenance (82,1%) or training for users (79,1%). However, there are also jobs for the analyst position such as application maker (68, 7%); d) there is no special scheme(47, 8%) for additional benefits or carrier development.

From the Purbo's findings, related to the education of the information technology, government (89, 6%) facilitates their human resources by internal training and seminars or workshops. This model of education is ineffective in developing skilled human resources in the information technology aspects. E-learning method, however, can support the education model carried out by the government at the moment. Through e-learning, human resources will be more capable and can implement their knowledge in aspects of information technology.

The serious commitment of the government in the human resource development is implemented by making a human resource development strategy and improving e-literacy level for society. To achieve these goals, the government makes a comprehensive planning in the human resources aspects by carrying out the activities continuously. This plan will use a formal and non formal education, or develop a

standard of competency required in development and implementation of e-government. As stated by INPRES Number 3/2003, the strategies in improving human resources competencies to support e-government are:

- a. to improve awareness and comprehension on the importance of information and the effectiveness of information and communication technology for government officers and society in developing information culture toward an information society;
- b. to utilize education and training resources in the government and or non government institution including information and communication technology resources;
- c. to develop education and training guidance for government institutions so that education and training outputs are suitable and measurable up to the needs of the development and the implementation of e-government;
- d. to administer education and training in information and communication technology for officers managing information and communication and serving public sectors, top level managers, educator and trainer candidates, or potential staff in information technology and communication, who are needed to transfer their knowledge or skills to society;
- e. to enhance distance learning capacities by using information and communication technology optimally to support the human resources in the information and communication technology in the local regions;
- f. to change the pattern of mind, attitude and work culture of the government officers in supporting the implementation of e-government by socializing the concepts and programs of e-government, and by giving an example of the best practices of e-government implementation;
- g. to enhance motivation by giving rewards for innovative officers in the information and communication technology, both in central and local governments, and also in the society. Their works will be useful for the development and implementation of e-government.

Supported by the government statement in the INPRES Number 3/2003, e-learning is a potential tool for transferring and synchronizing the government officers' knowledge in the information and communication technology.

The Role of E-Learning

Learning based on ICT is learning that use various media of information and communication technology. According to Blurton (in Tinio, without year), ICT stands for information and communication technologies and are defined as a "diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information." These technologies include computers, the Internet, broadcasting technologies (radio and television), and telephony. In education, the development of ICT provides the development of "e-learning". E-learning or electronic learning is a new concept of learning experiences by using ICT especially Internet-based media. The term e-learning has similar meaning with some terms such as online learning, virtual classroom and virtual learning (Darmayanti, Setiani, Oetojo, 2007). The definition of e-learning as mentioned by learnactivity.com is as follows:

- The convergence of the Internet and learning, or Internet-enabled learning.
- The uses of network technologies to create, foster, deliver, and facilitate learning, anytime and anywhere.
- The delivery of individualized, comprehensive, dynamic learning content in real time, aiding the development of communities of knowledge, linking learners and practitioners with experts.
- A phenomenon delivering accountability, accessibility, and opportunity to allow people and organizations to keep up with the rapid changes that define the Internet world.
- A force that gives people and organizations the competitive edge to allow them to keep ahead of the rapidly changing global economy.

In brief, Simamora (2002) explained the definition of e-learning as a kind of distance learning that use telecommunication technology and information, such as: internet, video/audio broadcasting, video/audio conferencing, CD-ROM (synchronous or asynchronous).

Seen from the learning system, e-learning is compatible to be practiced to improve the knowledge and skills of government apparatus in ICT, because its study form is flexible and also the staffs are not necessary to leave their work while studying. The role of e-learning in improving the quality of government officers in public services can be seen when they have competencies in information technology. According to Braim (2004), the advantages of e-learning to e-government are:

1. Eliminating the barriers that have historically prevented people in different government departments acquiring, on an equal basis, high quality education and support services involving e-government technology, applications development, e-government strategic direction and cultural change.
2. Making learning pervasive, continuous and relevant.
3. Propagating knowledge sharing through access to expertise and collaboration between employees and partners, and improving the performance and productivity of employees.

E-learning is also helping to transform governments. It helps to transform workforce, because e-learning can provide professional and fundamental skills training, develop competency, leadership and management, performance support, and new process training. E-learning can also optimize services, where it can support citizen service transformation (Braim, 2004). Thereby, obtained knowledge and skills through e-learning can improve the quality of government officers performances, thus it can also improve the quality of public services.

Conclusion

One of the alternatives chosen by the government in achieving faster, in expensive, and transparent services successfully to public is by

maximizing the use of information and communication technology. The local government officers' knowledge in information and communication technology should be improved so that the use of information and communication technology can be most favorable.

To enhance the government officers' skills in the information and communication technology constraint by limited time in attending trainings, seminars, or workshops about information and communication technology, the use e-learning methods is highly important. By using e-learning, the local government officers can acquire knowledge on information and communication technology and improve their skills to use information technology without leaving their works.

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