

Implementation of Thematic Bureaucratic Reform: Level of Understanding and Realization in Local Government

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ABSTRACT

Thematic bureaucratic reform is a program initiated by the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan-RB) to accelerate the improvement of efficiency and accountability of public services in Indonesia. This research aims to elaborate on the level of understanding of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) and the realization of the implementation of thematic bureaucratic reform at the local government level. A descriptive qualitative method is used in this study. The data was obtained based on an in-depth interview technique with a resource person from one of the employees in the City Government who has credibility in the preparation of bureaucratic reform. The results obtained in this study show that thematic bureaucratic reform is indeed the right step in the acceleration program to improve public services. In addition, there is a focus on the theme of bureaucratic reform, which is divided into 4 (four) categories: poverty alleviation, increasing investment, digitizing government administration, and increasing the use of domestic products. However, in reality, in the field, there are still several obstacles to preparing the thematic bureaucratic reform roadmap, the main obstacle being the need for more understanding of ASN in preparing the thematic bureaucratic reform roadmap.

Keyword: Understanding ASN, Regional Government, Thematic Bureaucratic Reform



INTRODUCTION

The term bureaucratic reform has been a common topic of discussion in recent years in government agencies in Indonesia, both at the central and local government levels. Bureaucratic reform is the government's effort to increase public administration efficiency, transparency, and accountability. This is related to the community's demand that the government immediately reform its agencies'

service and management patterns. Bureaucratic reform is included in one of the 5 (five) visions of Advanced Indonesia as the basis for the government's efforts to realize good governance. President Joko Widodo hopes that this vision will help Indonesia face the dynamic, fast, complex, risky, and surprising global phenomenal challenge known as VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity) (Nugroho et al., 2021).

Max Weber stated that bureaucracy is an organizational system whose implementation is based on the goals to be achieved. Bureaucracy is closely related to the organizational system and has a specific purpose (Beetham, 2018) In other words, bureaucracy is defined as a system of authority rationally determined by various regulations to organize the work done by many people. If the word "reformasi" is combined with "bureaucracy,"

The Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan-RB) defines bureaucratic reform as an effort to reform and make fundamental changes to the system of government administration, especially related to the aspect of implementing excellent service. Thus, bureaucratic reform can be defined as the government's efforts to improve the system of government administration. This theory focuses on understanding bureaucracy as a system based on the principles of rationality and hierarchy. Max Weber identified the characteristics of bureaucracy, such as a clear division of tasks, hierarchy, written rules, and specialization. Bureaucratic reform in this framework aims to strengthen efficiency, predictability, and rationality in decision-making (Sedarmayanti & Nurliawati, 2012).

Bureaucratic reform involves restructuring, eliminating convoluted bureaucracy, and simplifying public service procedures. This reform aims to reduce bureaucracy that slows decision-making and improve community services. The use of modern technology, employee training, and improving service quality are the main focus in the implementation of bureaucratic reform. In addition, bureaucratic reform also promotes ethics, integrity, and transparency in the actions of government employees. The main goal is to create a responsive, adaptive, and innovative bureaucracy to support economic growth and community welfare in the face of changing times. To focus on improving the efficiency and quality of public services in specific sectors, it is necessary to have an approach to bureaucratic reform so that the realization roadmap can be achieved to alleviate a specific problem or phenomenon. This approach can be in the form of thematic bureaucratic reform, the implementation of which has an untamed locus as the target of the program realization objectives. According to the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan-rb), thematic bureaucratic reform allows the government to be more focused on overcoming challenges in particular sectors so that the public can feel the results directly. The existence of thematic bureaucratic reform aims to adapt bureaucratic reform to the specific needs and characteristics of the sector.

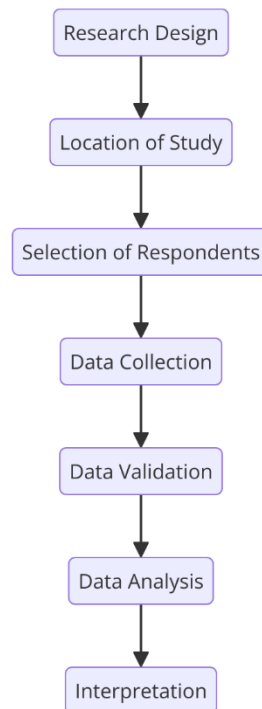
In thematic bureaucratic reform, concrete steps are taken to address existing problems in the sector, thereby creating more measurable and significant changes. According to (Ramadan, 2023) the implementation of thematic bureaucratic reform includes efforts and means to unravel and answer or overcome root problems in governance that are directly felt by the community. This aligns with the opinion of the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan-rb) that thematic bureaucratic reform allows the government to be more focused on overcoming challenges in these sectors so that the public can feel the results directly. Overcoming this in root problem realization

accelerate. In addition, the implementation of thematic bureaucratic reforms also helps to maximize the use of resources and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach. Thus, thematic bureaucratic reform can effectively improve the quality of life and public services. Through concrete steps such as improving public facilities, infrastructure development, improving the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) quality, and positive changes that can be directly felt by the public and their influence in daily life. Thus, the expected output is better public services, broader access, and an overall improvement in quality of life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with an exploratory approach. The study was conducted in the Organization Section of Mojokerto City, East Java, as one of the OPDs (Regional Apparatus Organizations) that has implemented thematic bureaucratic reforms. The selected respondents are the heads of subdivisions in preparing bureaucratic reform. The data collection technique uses the interview method through FGD (Focus Group Discussion) to obtain complete and detailed data. For the validity of the data, the researcher considers the data obtained to meet the criteria because the resource person understands and is directly related to the action plan and the realization of thematic bureaucratic reform in the Mojokerto City Government.

Figure 1. Reasearch Flow Method



Source: Author, 2024

Therefore, the data obtained is valid, reliable, and based on reliable sources. Data Analysis uses content analysis through grouping and categorizing responses to identify common patterns and themes. Content analysis is contextually defined as deductive/directed content analysis (Monggilo, 2020) It aims to thoroughly understand the content being researched by focusing on crucial meanings related to the research question, objectives, and framework. An in-

depth interpretation is carried out through the data obtained regarding identifying understandings, views, patterns, behaviors, and actions toward a problem (Monggilo, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of Thematic Bureaucratic Reform and the Level of Understanding of ASN

Bureaucratic reform focuses on changes, including institutional (organizational), administration, laws and regulations, apparatus human resources, supervision, accountability, public services, as well as the mindset and culture of the apparatus (Dwiyanto, 2021) Thematic bureaucratic reform is the government's effort to improve efficiency, transparency, and public services by focusing on specific sectors. This thematic approach allows governments to identify specific sector problems and design more targeted solutions. In this reform process, the government usually thoroughly evaluates the administrative system, reduces excessive bureaucracy, and introduces information technology to facilitate public access to services (Rohman & Kurniawan, 2023) As a result, it is expected to create a more responsive, innovative, and effective bureaucracy that meets the community's needs and encourages economic growth and sustainable development.

Since the end of 2022, the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan-RB) has issued a new policy related to bureaucratic reform that focuses on specific themes as a reference for program preparation. The program is a thematic bureaucratic reform. The government creates thematic bureaucratic reforms that focus on poverty alleviation, encourage policies that support investment, create digital structures, cultures, and competencies to create an agile bureaucracy and excellent public services, and the President's priority programs to unravel and concretely solve the root causes of problems related to governance in the government's priority problems or programs (LAN, 2022). According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, thematic bureaucratic reform is divided into four main themes, namely 1) poverty alleviation programs, 2) increased investment, 3) digitization of government administration, and 4) acceleration of actual presidential programs (Ramadan, 2023).

In its implementation, the preparation and implementation of thematic bureaucratic reform programs is an obligation for each OPD, but the focus of the areas that will be promoted for development goals remains the authority of OPDs in each respective region. However, the theme reference must still focus on 4 (four) main themes that the Ministry of PAN-RB has determined. For comparison, the results of research conducted by (Sabtian et al., 2022) which discussed thematic bureaucratic reform in Ngawi Regency, East Java, show that bureaucratic reform efforts taken by the bureaucracy are carried out through strategies by carrying out thematic development by the region's superior potential. Where the superior potential is realized in the industrial, trade, and agricultural sectors, in its implementation in the Mojokerto City government, according to the results of interviews conducted with resource persons from the Mojokerto City Government Organization Section, are as follows.

"Thematic RB is seen as an obligation, but its implementation depends on each person's creativity" (Resource person).

So far, the implementation of thematic bureaucratic reform in the Mojokerto City Government has been carried out as a whole, in the sense that the Mojokerto City Government takes the entire theme of thematic bureaucratic reform. However, the main focus of its implementation is on strengthening MSMEs. Meanwhile, in the service and trade sectors, existing bureaucratic reform groups such as MSMEs have constrained the mayor's support through licensing, mentoring, funding, and the creation of patents. So, the Mayor of Mojokerto City fully supports the development of MSMEs, which are currently advancing very rapidly.

"Because it is a small city, the thematic implementation of RB is grouped by theme and taken by all so that they complement each other. The implementation is more focused on strengthening MSMEs", than in the realm of services and trade. RB is supported through licensing, mentoring, funding, and making patents (Resource Person).

The tourism sector is the priority program that is then used as a focus in the preparation of thematic bureaucratic reform. According to the Mojokerto City Government, this program has been included in the Special Allocation Fund (DAK) since 2019. The government hopes that with the inclusion of tourism sector development in the DAK, development can be carried out optimally, which can later improve the economy of the people of Mojokerto City. The thematic focus is on increasing investment and poverty alleviation in this case. As conveyed by the following speakers.

"One of the priority programs of Mojokerto City at this time is tourism, which received DAK starting in 2019, with the search for a budget for the development of riverside tourism. The plan is that this tour is designed like a Balinese market. This tourism development is related to thematic RB, and the development process is managed by DISPORA" (Resource person).

Seeing these conditions, the relevant agencies need synergy and full commitment to make regional flagship programs able to bring better bureaucratic reform by increasing the accountability value of regional performance. Synergy is needed to build creative collaborations by respecting differences, building strengths, and compensating for weaknesses (Kusuma et al., 2022) Therefore, there is an improvement in public services to achieve success from bureaucratic reform (Hakim, 2016; Winaldi, 2020) (Haning, 2019) in his research found that efficiency, accountability, and quality of public services will increase through effective implementation and increased cross-sectoral collaboration. The government will become more responsive and results-oriented if thematic bureaucratic reforms go well.

According to Article 10 of the State Civil Apparatus Law (ASN) No. 5 of 2014, the purpose of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is to implement public policies, provide public services, and connect and unite interconnected nations. As public servants, the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) can provide professional and quality public services while strengthening the unity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Khobiburrohman et al., 2020) Therefore, the Ministry of

Education and Culture Employee Training Center is responsible for creating a State Civil Apparatus (ASN) with these abilities and competencies.

In terms of government and state development, the understanding and perception of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) about the reform program is fundamental (Afriyana, 2022; Thamrin, 2021; Theresia et al., 2019). Efforts and means to unravel and answer governance problems directly felt by the community are known as thematic bureaucratic reform. The resulting impact is the focus of this reform. One of the essential components in the implementation of Bureaucratic Reform that has an impact on society is the thematic RB action plan. The main goal of bureaucratic reform that directly impacts society is excellent public service. The planned action should be a concrete and implementable program so that efforts to achieve the success of the program can be carried out efficiently. Because they are public servants, the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) must work hard to achieve the success of the program to provide the best public services.

2. Challenges in the Implementation of Thematic Bureaucratic Reform

According to (Al-Barbasy et al., 2020) the success of reform can be seen from the ability of the bureaucracy to formulate, implement, and evaluate policies that are more effective and relevant to the needs of society. In this case, cross-sector collaboration is essential, considering the ability of the bureaucracy to collaborate with other relevant agencies and parties, such as the private sector, civil society, and international organizations, to achieve the set goals (Thamrin, 2021). The success of thematic bureaucratic reform is not always easy to achieve and often takes a long time.

Careful evaluation and involvement of relevant actors in the reform process are essential to ensure the reform goals are successfully achieved (Adi, 2018; Al-Barbasy et al., 2020). The most important thing in thematic bureaucratic reform is the success related to the theme locus, which is used as a reference in preparing the roadmap. In essence, it will be successful if the problem that is the main focus of handling the problem can be solved properly.

However, in its implementation, of course, each OPD has limitations in implementing thematic bureaucratic reforms. Since bureaucratic reform is also a concept triggered this year by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there are expected to be various obstacles in its preparation and implementation. The obstacles experienced by the Mojokerto City Government in the preparation of thematic bureaucratic reform include the following.

"The obstacle in the preparation of the thematic RB is the external understanding, and the implementation is not in accordance with the stages because it starts with action first. The understanding of BPD and other agencies is still shallow, but the added value is not involved in the preparation of the road map because there are also obstacles in the preparation of the plan" (Resource person).

In general, the obstacles experienced are related to the understanding of ASN and its implementation, which is diffusely event from the stages of bureaucratic reform preparation. Usually, the preparation of thematic bureaucratic reform begins with action first. Meanwhile, the preparation of bureaucratic reform usually begins with a *grand design* for mapping bureaucratic reform every 5 (five) years through setting goals first, then followed by an action plan to be carried out

(Ganwarin et al., 2021) For comparison, a case study on the Malang Regency Government written by (Ristanti, 2021)), where when the bureaucratic reform roadmap was prepared, no one considered prospects. At the beginning of the drafting process, only the goals were set by following the directions from the central government. While preparing the bureaucratic reform roadmap document in the Malang Regency Government, the external and internal environmental assessments, which can be used to explore and anticipate environmental trends and developments, failed. Therefore, the first step that the Malang Regency Government must take is to study and estimate changes that can impact policy goals that still need to be achieved.

The next obstacle is the existence of diverse apparatus power in the legislative group. Therefore, the focus is not on thematic bureaucratic reform, but only on the progress of work programs that are commonly carried out, such as health services. As for work programs outside of this, ASNs are reluctant to do it. The reluctance is caused by concerns about new programs whose implementation could be more successful. As mentioned in (Ristanti, 2021) research, changes can have an impact on policy goals that still need to be achieved. Thus, it can be concluded that apparatus resources greatly affect performance in preparing bureaucratic reform, especially thematic bureaucratic reform with a particular focus. Apparatus resources that have minimal capabilities in understanding bureaucratic reform can affect the quality of government administration and services (Juliani, 2019; Purwoko, 2017) Therefore, there needs to be a change in the capabilities and competencies of apparatus resources to obtain professional employees (Zulfia & Frinaldi, 2023).

"There are diverse human resources in the legislative group, so the focus is only limited to the progress of safe programs such as in health services, while related to RB only processes the information obtained" (Resource person).

Then, the last obstacle experienced by the Mojokerto City Government is the existence of a specific goal that cannot be identified because there are still many apparatus resources that need to be understood in the concept of thematic bureaucratic reform. This is natural, considering that the Ministry of Internal Affairs held a socialization of the concept of thematic bureaucratic reform at the end of 2022. This is expected to be an evaluation for the Ministry of Internal Affairs to always routinely hold socialization and technical guidance to members of Regional Government agencies. However, thematic bureaucratic reform must be understood immediately behind the norm so the Regional Government can make reasonable adjustments. The full opinions of the speakers are as follows.

"The specific purpose cannot be identified because members of the Regional Government still do not animate and understand the thematic RB. The Regional Government is still new to and implementing it for just fulfillment" (Resource Person).

3. Hopes and Suggestions for the Future of Thematic Bureaucratic Reform

The main goal of bureaucratic reform is to build good governance. A strong reason for pursuing this is because bureaucratic reform is a plan to build the state apparatus to be more effective and efficient in carrying out government tasks and national development. In addition, rapid shifts in technology, information, and

communication, as well as strategic changes in the environment, demand reform and adjustment of government bureaucracy to meet the demands of society (Bustamin et al., 2022) Therefore, basic, thorough, and systematic steps must be taken immediately to effectively and efficiently achieve the goals and objectives.

In this regard, reform is defined as a process carried out gradually and continuously to achieve excellent and clean governance in the sense that reform does not involve radical and revolutionary efforts or actions. In order for the bureaucracy to realign its role and true purpose as "public servants", it must have the ability and desire to carry out bureaucratic reform. Behavior change prioritizes "neutrality, professionalism, democracy, transparency, and independence," as well as improved work morale, work methods, and performance, especially in terms of policy management and the provision of public services. In addition, bureaucratic reform requires the right leaders (Mufti et al., 2019; Yasa et al., 2021) This includes creating an agenda and implementing government and development policies that support the people's resilience, competitiveness, and interests (Mufti et al., 2019).

Based on the interview results conducted by the author, the resource person said there are more or less two hopes and suggestions related to bureaucratic reform, especially thematic bureaucratic reform. Most speakers mentioned the need for socialization and technical guidance carried out by the Ministry of Internal Affairs as the organizer of the bureaucratic reform assessment system. As explained in the previous section regarding the obstacles faced by ASN when preparing and implementing thematic bureaucratic reforms, many human resources were found to need help related to the mechanism for preparing thematic bureaucratic reforms. The first hope is that there will be solid regulations and synergy starting from the central agencies so that they are clear for the regions in the implementation of existing regulations, with the existence of regulations and rules that tighten the occurrence of apparatus fraud. Law enforcement will be able to be carried out when it is supported by the legal rules that govern it.

Second, the existence of a forum for assistance and technical guidance in the context of thematic bureaucratic reform has an important role in encouraging the effectiveness and success of reforms by the Ministry of Bureaucracy. The Ministry can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices among stakeholders involved in the reform process. The forum helps ensure that reforms are implemented correctly, follow the guidelines, and minimize the risk of errors. In addition, the Ministry of Internal Affairs can provide direction and technical support to parties involved in the implementation of reforms, increase their capacity, and identify solutions to obstacles that may arise (Nugroho et al., 2021) Thus, the mentoring and technical guidance forum is important to achieve better results in thematic bureaucratic reform efforts. Thus, the *expected impact* of thematic bureaucratic reform is that no separate program of activities is expected to align with implementing bureaucratic reform. The information about the resource person is as follows:

"Forums and assistance from the center should be carried out because there are differences in the implementation of work in each deputy, the impact that is expected through the implementation of thematic RB, there is no separate activity program, and it is expected to be in line with the implementation of RB," (Resource person).

Thematic bureaucratic reform has the potential to integrate all government or organizational activities into one specific theme or goal. With this approach, all departments or work units can work together to achieve common goals related to the theme. This integration helps avoid the isolation of sectors operating independently, optimize resource usage, and reduce duplication and duplication of efforts. Additionally, a thematic approach can allow for a sharper focus on specific issues that need improvement, facilitate monitoring and evaluation, and improve coordination and collaboration between the parties involved. Thus, thematic bureaucratic reforms can strengthen synergies and ensure that different efforts work together to achieve more integrated and efficient outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion presented in this study, thematic bureaucratic reform is a critical approach to improving government and organizations' efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness at various levels. This approach integrates all activities related to a specific theme, which can involve different sectors and departments in a single joint effort. Thematic bureaucratic reform accelerates national development, which is realized through thematic focus as the object of roadmap preparation and program realization. Thematic bureaucratic reform has 4 (four) thematic focuses, namely poverty alleviation, increasing investment, digitizing government administration, and accelerating the President's priority, namely increasing the use of domestic products. This aims to increase synergy and collaboration between each Ministry/Institution through improving business processes, data, regulations/policies, and information technology, as well as improving programs that are more targeted, according to the theme that has been chosen.

Based on interviews with the Mojokerto City Government in implementing thematic bureaucratic reform, the results were obtained that every ASN must have high knowledge and integrity about making a thematic bureaucratic reform roadmap. However, it is still often found that existing programs must align with collaboration and synergy efforts between regional apparatus. Furthermore, this is an obstacle to the process of drawing up a plan for thematic bureaucratic reform. However, to ensure that the program achieves the desired objectives, the level of planning, implementation management, and monitoring evaluation can mitigate these challenges. In terms of the implementation of thematic bureaucratic reforms, what needs to be improved is that local governments must cooperate to cooperate and support each other, especially in programs that cover more than one region.

Suggestions that can build on advanced research on how to create a technical roadmap for thematic bureaucratic reform. Research shows that many civil servants need help understanding how to compile a roadmap for thematic bureaucratic reform properly. As a result, the documents prepared sometimes seem perfunctory just because of the completeness of the documents. Then, a forum was held for assistance and technical guidance in the context of thematic bureaucratic reform, which has a vital role in encouraging the effectiveness and success of reform by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Ministry can facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices among stakeholders involved in the reform process. Thus, the effect is expected through the implementation of thematic bureaucratic reform; there is no separate activity program, and it is expected to align with the implementation of bureaucratic reform.

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