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PUBLIC SECTOR INNOVATION IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN THE COMPETITION FOR PUBLIC SERVICE INNOVATION IN INDONESIA

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Abstract. *Innovation is complicated and understudied in developing countries such as Indonesia, which has run a public service innovation competition since 2014 as part of its governance reform. Therefore, this study examined the dynamics of innovation in the Indonesian public sector by applying the content analysis method to these competitions from 2014 to 2019. The results showed the progress of innovation by the increasing number of entries, the variation of public sector typology in winning the competition, and competitiveness. However, some challenges remain, including: the limited number of institutions that successfully participate in the competition; domination by some public sector organizations; dependence on the innovative leader; uneven innovation capacity; and the problem of sustainability.*

Keywords: *innovation, governance reform, public service innovation competition*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *inovacijos, valdymo reforma, viešųjų paslaugų inovacijų konkurencija.*

Background

Both developed and developing countries are faced with the emergence of uncertainties related to the age of disruption. The need to build strong competitive advantages in all sectors by exploiting innovation is ubiquitous in most organizations. However, only a few studies have been carried out on innovation in the public sector in developing countries, and this tends to be complicated due to various factors. Preliminary studies reported that innovation is essential for governance (Farazmand 2004). According to Muluk (2008), innovation is a priority for seeking a competitive advantage; it boosts public satisfaction and the interests of constituents in an organization (Kaplan and Norton 1996; Budiarso 2013). Furthermore, in the public sector, innovation relies on people's activities (Farazmand 2012). Osborne and Brown (2013) reported that innovation has frequently featured in discussions related to theories concerning the public sector. In addition, innovation has become an inseparable part of such organizations (Osborne and Brown, 2005), as well as being perceived as a strategy adopted by countries (Jing and Osborne 2017). Osborne and Brown (2013) reported that several innovative studies overlook the public sector, and it is therefore essential to carry out further studies. Meanwhile, countries with high indexes of innovation in the Global Innovation Index (GII) are concerned with public service innovation, and some are extremely competitive (Dutta, Lanvin, and Wunsch-Vincent 2019).

In terms of innovative power, Indonesia has historically fared quite unfavorably. Figure 1 shows that from 2014 to 2019 the country was ranked between 85th and 97th out of 126 to 143 nations in the GII. In 2019, Indonesia was ranked 7th out of the 8 ASEAN member countries surveyed, including Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, which ranked 1st, 35th, and 42nd globally, respectively. Therefore, a public service innovation competition was first held in 2014, which was regarded as part of governance reform. This competition is held annually by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (MOAR), and has been organized from 2014 to 2019 at the national and local government levels.

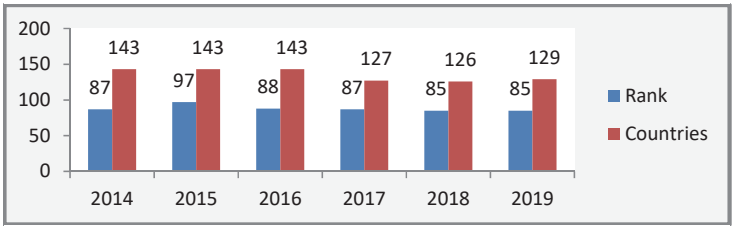

Figure 1: **Indonesia'sn rRank in the Global Innovation Index**
Source: GII 2014–2019

The Public Service Innovation Network carried out some studies limited to the East Java region (JPIP 2014), and Abdullah et al. (2016) researched innovation typologies in local government (Gowa Regency). Meanwhile, Ramadani et al. (2020) studied the public service

innovation model in Bandung Local Government. These studies were limited to small cases, but it is important to analyze broader situations such as in Indonesia's central government. This study explores the dynamics of public service innovation competitions in Indonesia and identifies the progress made and challenges which contribute to its development.

Literature Review

In developed countries, public sector innovation has been in existence for decades. Borins (2008) stated that the United States had already initiated innovation competitions in the 1980s to optimize public sector performance and economic growth. In Europe, several countries – such as the United Kingdom and Estonia – have developed world-class bureaucracies by introducing radical technological innovations. In addition to this, the public sector is dominated by bottom-up agencies and knowledge scanning rather than policy-dependent organizations (Arundel, Casali, and Hollanders 2015). This simply implies that these countries invest more in human resources and collaborate with other agencies. In Asia, the Chinese government encourages innovation in all sectors, and innovation has become rooted in their culture. China leads public-sector innovation by exploiting management services and encouraging collaboration (Wu, Ma, and Yang 2012). China has also emphasized the importance of innovation in both the public and private sectors and its impact on the economy, encouraged in part by the realization that it leads to competitive advantages (Jing and Osborne 2017). In the Asia Pacific, recent findings show that cultural norms and values either constrain or enable innovative behavior and affect the extent of innovation (van der Wal and Demircioglu 2020). According to Siddiquee (2007), Malaysian experiences in South-East Asia prove that irrespective of numerous efforts and some progress having been achieved, the objective of achieving excellence in public service remains illusory. Innovation in either developed or developing countries is headed towards a dynamic nature in terms of progress and challenges. Many countries have led successful reforms by exploiting innovation, while several others remain stuck in a rut, and the rest have experienced total failure.

Conversely, the understanding of innovation in developing countries is lacking, and several studies have reported that public administration works in different contexts. However, a non-American context is much-needed (Raadschelders and Lee 2011). The most recent research carried out by Berdejo (2019) reported that the field of public sector innovation has hardly been explored. The notion of de-westernizing public administration was also proposed by Drechsler (2015, 2017). Public-service innovation needs to be examined in different contexts as developing countries are reforming their bureaucracies. Meanwhile, a world-class bureaucracy is essential for economic growth and political stability. There are several primary differences between advanced and developing countries in this regard (Berdejo 2019; van der Wal and Demircioglu 2020). Developing nations are less likely to attempt service integration, especially when they are technologically enabled; they concentrate on leapfrogging, rather than leading-edge information technology. In addition, their frontline workers are less empowered, and they possess fewer resources, thereby being less likely to initiate innovations (Borins 2001).

In Indonesia, 4 different studies have been carried out on public service innovation: Amri (2015), Kusumasari et al. (2019), Pratama (2019), and Indira and Kusumasari (2020). These studies provide a number of revelations regarding innovation in Indonesian public service. First, the main focus is on internal business processes rather than inter-organizational collaboration and interactions. Second, there is a lack of interest in the professional development of human resources, which is regarded as a driver of public service innovation. Third, leadership (charisma, commitment, and diverse experiences) and society (norms and values, civil society organization, and history) help to shape innovation in the Indonesian government. Fourth, successful public service innovation needs to be boosted by the developmental process. The supporting factors are the political and legal frameworks, as well as technological readiness. Therefore, several challenges have to be examined to understand the gap between developed and developing countries.

In Indonesia, an innovative culture was built by each institution, such as an agency, and an innovation program to accelerate the quality of public services was established. These reforms were regulated by the Indonesian MOAR Regulation Number 30 of 2014 concerning Guidelines for Public Service Innovation. The first competition was held in 2014, and since then it has been organized yearly. Innovation is assessed based on 5 criteria: novelty (the uniqueness of the ideas, new approaches, or modifications to the existing public service); practicality (the real achievements and solutions); problems (the public service problems solved by the innovation); transferability (the replicability of the innovation for other public sector institutions); and sustainability (the support for implementing innovation). All eligible and excellent ideas are ranked and listed as the Top 99 public service innovations. Then, they are selected in the second step to be nominated as Top of the Top (TOT), obtaining the opportunity to participate in the United Nations Public Service Award. The Top 99 are nominated as ideal innovations, while TOT are considered the best. Since 2018, the TOT innovations have been rewarded by the Regional Incentive Fund for their continuous implementation and improvement.

Research Method

This study combined quantitative and qualitative content analysis to obtain a profound interpretation and other alternatives to answer the research questions (Krippendorff 2004). It offers a better understanding of the dynamic nature of public service innovation competitions in Indonesia. The object of content analysis was the "Top 99 Public Service Innovation Reports" from 2014 to 2019, published by the MOAR. The reports only classified the winners based on the title and brief description of the public service innovation program, the institution which implemented it, and the rank (https://sinovik.menpan.go.id/index.php/unduh). This failed to properly report patterns in Indonesia; the gap was therefore filled by analyzing the content of the reports.

The investigation involved 2 main stages. First, the reports were categorized according to the types of institutions in the Indonesian government (Ministry, Agency, Quango, Province, Regency, City, and State-Owned Enterprises – SOE). Second, a new category was created based on the best innovation, which was listed in the TOT from the MOAR

reports. It is the second tier of Top public service innovation that is considered the best; the first tier is acknowledged in the Top 99, and based on this the second one is selected. The number of innovations in this second tier was different each year (Top 9 in 2014, Top 25 in 2015, Top 35 in 2016, Top 40 in 2017 and 2018, and Top 45 in 2019).

After being analyzed quantitatively according to the 2 data categories, the ranks were arranged to uncover a pattern. Finally, these findings were classified into 2 sections. First, the progress of Indonesia's public service innovation competition was explained by exploiting the total number of participants and the types of organizations that usually win the TOT. Second, the challenges were explicated according to the total TOT, and a conjecture of the relationship among the organization, innovation, and leader was made. Both sections were processed to determine an extensive interpretation in terms of enacting several conjectures about public service innovation in Indonesia.

Results

The number of participants featuring in this competition continues to increase yearly, as shown in Figure 2. In 2014, 515 participants competed to produce a Top 9 being classified as TOT, while in 2015 the number increased to 1184, leading to the Top 25 being classified as TOT. Furthermore, the number of participants increased to 2476 in 2016, and the Top 35 were categorized as TOT. Approximately 3054 and 2824 public service innovations were registered under the Innovation Information System application in 2017 and 2018, respectively. Consequently, the Top 40 innovations were selected as TOT in both 2017 and 2018. In 2019, 3,156 participants were recorded, and this resulted in the Top 45 being classified as TOT. From 2014 to 2019, 13,209 innovation reports were sent to MOAR for assessment by an independent review team. This year-on-year increase in participants shows that there was an intense desire from each public organization in Indonesia to make changes through innovation. Based on the number of participants, the average number of innovations yearly was 2,201. Government bureaucracies – as many as 815 institutions – produced an estimated average of 2.7 innovations per year. This is encouraging because the government's target is just 1 innovation per agency per year. There is an ever-increasing trend in the number of innovations driven by this competition.

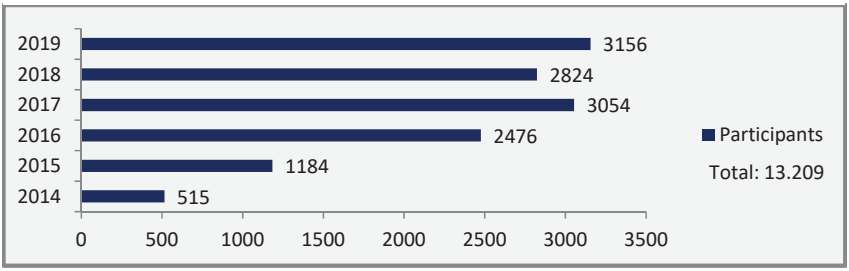

Figure 2: **Number of innovations in the public service innovation competition**
Source: Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucracy Reform Reports

The data were classified into 7 types of Indonesian government institution, namely: 34 Ministries, 27 Agencies, 97 QUANGOs, 34 Provinces, 415 Regencies, 93 Cities, and 115 State-Owned Enterprises (SOE). Based on this, the numbers of innovations are shown in Table 1. The innovations categorized as TOT from 2014 to 2019 were from the following sources: 67 from Regencies, 38 from Cities, 30 from Provinces, 27 from Ministries, 7 from Agencies, 5 from SOEs, and 1 from QUANGOs. Uniquely, Regency institutions (representing the rural type of local government), known to possess sub-optimal economic growth and human resources, have become the most significant contributor. All TOTs initiated by the various public organizations were categorized as the best innovations.

Another marker of progress recorded during this competition is that in 2019 all types of government institutions produced innovations that qualified as TOT. This is a considerable achievement considering that in 2014 only ministries, provinces, and cities did so, as not all government institutions participated. Furthermore, the yearly involvement of these parastatals in the competition indicates wider participation and acceptability. The increase in the number of the TOT shows a significant increase in quality, and the competition grows in intensity every year. In 2014, the TOT tightness level was 1.75%, while by 2019 there was an increase of 1.43%. The progress made by the public service innovation competition is indicated by the increasing number of government institutions and the increasing tightness level compared to that of the participants. This trend sits well with the development of innovation in the public sector.

Table 1: **TOT innovation by type of organization**

	TOT	***Ministries***	***Agencies***	***Quangos***	***Provinces***	***Regencies***	***Cities***	***SOE***
2014	Top 9	2			4		2	
2015	Top 25	3			4	10	7	
2016	Top 35	3	2		4	14	4	3
2017	Top 40	7	1		7	13	8	1
2018	Top 40	4	1		6	14	8	
2019	Top 45	8	3	1	5	16	9	1
Number		27	7	1	30	67	38	5

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

There were many challenges encountered during the competition. Table 2 shows that not all public organizations have been able to achieve TOT-level innovations. Of the 34 ministries, only 14 (41%) institutions were able to produce 27 TOT-level innovations from 2014 to 2019. This means that approximately 20 (59%) ministries have not succeeded in producing any innovation throughout the 6 years of competition. Likewise, the provincial government category has also been competing since 2014. Only 16 (47%) of the 34 total provinces produced 30 TOT-level innovations during this period. This means

that 18 (53%) provinces have not been able to produce innovations during the competition. Similarly, 38 TOT-level innovations were achieved by 27 (29%) cities from 2014 to 2019. Most cities (71%) have not been able to produce innovations of the highest level. Other types of government institutions show more concerning signs, as only 12% of regencies, 11% of agencies, 3% of SOEs, and 1% of QUANGOs have entered the TOT-level category of innovation. Therefore, there is inequality in capacity building because only a small number of government agencies develop the best innovations.

Table 2: **Institution in the TOT of the innovation competition**

	Number of Institutions	*Number of TOT Institutions*		*Best Institution*
Ministry	34	14	41%	Ministry of Law
Agency	27	3	11%	National Police
Quango	97	1	1%	
Province	34	16	47%	East Java
Regency	415	50	12%	Banyuwangi
City	93	27	29%	Surabaya
SOE	115	4	3%	

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

Table 3 shows that several individual organizations have excellent levels of innovation that consistently produce entries into the TOT. The Ministry of Law (MOL) won 5 of 27 TOT-level innovations between 2014 and 2018 at the Ministerial level. The National Police also succeeded in winning 5 of 7 TOT-level innovations between 2016 and 2019 at the Agency level. The East Java Government developed 13 of 30 TOT-level innovations between 2014 and 2018 at the Provincial level, especially in 2016, when it won in a dominant manner. The Banyuwangi Government won 5 of 67 TOT-level innovations between 2015 and 2019 at the regency level. Finally, Surabaya won 7 of 38 TOT-level innovations between 2014 and 2018 at the city level. Irrespective of the fact that the achievements of these organizations deserve some praise, it is also evident that there was an imbalance during the competition: it was dominated by a handful of organizations that consistently initiated excellent innovations.

The dominance of these institutions raised allegations of bias. In addition, Table 3 shows that during the greatest period of innovation (2016 to 2019), the same leaders were in place at the MOL, National Police, East Java Province, Banyuwangi Regency, and Surabaya City. Each of them was competent, thereby portraying a positive image to the public. Therefore, excellent innovation developed by an institution with several years of achievements depends on leadership that is capable of instigating change, as shown in Table 3. This indicates that success is not by chance; rather, it is dependent on the leader's ability to build organizational capacity. Minister Yasonna Laoly's success in enabling the MOL to produce TOT-level innovations, and General Tito Karnavian's ability to build a

police institution that does the same, demonstrate leadership at the national level. Meanwhile, the dominance of East Java shows the influence of Governor Soekarwo in building innovation capacity at the provincial level. Mayors Risma (Tri Rismaharini) in Surabaya and Azwar Anas in Banyuwangi successfully demonstrated leadership in innovation at the municipality level.

Table 3: **TOT-level innovations produced by institutions and their leaders**

	TOT Period	***Number of TOT Innovation***	***Leader***
Ministry of Law	2014–2018	5	Yasonna Laoly
National Police	2016–2019	5	Tito Karnavian
East Java Province	2014–2018	13 (dominant in 2016)	Soekarwo
Banyuwangi Regency	2015–2019	5	Azwar Anas
Surabaya City	2014–2015, 2017–2018	7	Tri Rismaharini

Source: Data Analysis, 2019

This leadership factor needs to be considered because it relates to the issue of innovation sustainability, which is hugely dependent on the leader rather than the organizational system's capacity. However, the concern lies with post-leadership succession, because this situation can weaken innovation capacity. The fact that sustainability is being questioned leads to a decline in public service innovation in the institution. This is an important lesson for Indonesia because it relates to the experiences of several government institutions which were initially known to be innovative, but a change in leadership brought about a lack of innovation in these parastatals. This has affected several areas of the public sector, such as Governor Fadel Muhammad in Gorontalo Province, Regent I Gede Winasa in Jembrana Regency, and Regent Agus Fathur in Sragen Regency.

Another interesting fact is that the East Java Province, including Surabaya city and the Banyuwangi Regency, dominates TOT-level innovation at the local government level. This dominance is also exhibited at the provincial level – where Surabaya city shows excellence and Banyuwangi also wins TOT-level innovations almost every year – and this marks a distinct advantage over other local governments. This condition shows the maturity of one region compared to the other, which is a challenge that needs a more equitable capacity for public service innovation.

Discussion

This study discovered significant progress in making innovation commonplace, which is part of governance reform in Indonesia. A selection of phenomena indicated that innovation increased participation, fostered the expansion of various public institutions that promote the quality of innovations, and improved competitiveness. This progress provides encouragement for the possibility of using a public service innovation

competition to improve performance (Ashworth, Boyne, and Entwistle 2010). These results are consistent with the research carried out by Pratama (2019), which used the Top 99 as a database to disclose the growth of public service innovation in Indonesia. Meanwhile, this study is based on TOT-level innovations, which have a higher level of selectivity. Alongside this study, the research carried out by Pratama (based on the data acquired from 2014 to 2016) disclosed the dominance of local government over other institutions. This is useful when considering the strategic importance of local government in relation to budget and public services to the community (Turner, Prasojo, and Sumarwono, in press).

Table 4: **Progress and challenges of the innovation competition in Indonesia**

Main Issue	***Phenomena***	
Progress	• Making innovation commonplace	• Increased number of public service innovations • Increased variety of institutions included in the TOT • Increased competitiveness to be nominated in the TOT
Challenges Sustainability of innovation	• The innovation capacity gap	• Gaps in innovation capacity between institutions • Regional disparities in public sector innovation capacity • The dominance of certain institutions in producing the best innovations
	• The capacity to innovate is influenced by leadership	

Source: Data Analysis 2019

There are 2 kinds of challenges related to innovation. The first is centered on the issues related to the capacity gap in promoting innovations, which was indicated by several phenomena, and is evidenced by the fact that only a small number of public organizations were able to create TOT-level innovations. This phenomenon shows that there are 2 kinds of disparities. The first is the diversity between public sector organizations, while the second is the difference between regions. This research further narrows the results of the studies carried out by Kusumasari et al. (2019) and Pratama (2019), which stated that most innovations in Indonesia take place on the island of Java. In addition, it was further revealed that government institutions dominate the achievement of TOT-level innovations in specific areas, such as East Java. This shows the existence of inequality as well as the need to ensure replicability in other regions, thereby spreading the capacity to innovate throughout other areas. This replication is needed to avoid innovation failure, which leads to demotivation. Chung and Choi (2016) stated that there are no easy innovations, and around 90% of innovations are usually not implemented. Therefore, all of the achievements of the various public sector institutions deserve to be appreciated, although this requires further policy frameworks to be more effective.

The subsequent phenomenon is the domination of innovation by several institutions. This tends to hamper future innovative activities initiated by other institutions. For ex-

ample, in private sector in the United States, technological dominance by large companies has hindered the development of start-up firms (Relihan 2018). Domination destroys other organizational entities, and innovation supremacy in the Indonesian context showed sharp differences in the capabilities of each institution (Sthyre 2013). This is consistent with the research carried out by Berdejo (2019), which stated that developing countries lack the capacity to innovate. Generally, the dominance of several institutions in producing the best innovations shows the differences and the inability of most public sector organizations to compete. Furthermore, Berdejo recommended using knowledge sharing as a means of learning innovation to create a balance for all public sector institutions.

The final challenge relates to the sustainability of innovation capacity. This issue arises because the institution achieves TOT-level innovations under the same leader. Innovation capacity depends on leadership succession, although this does not guarantee its sustainability. This finding is consistent with previous studies, which stated that leaders often direct and encourage creative individuals (Hesselbein, Goldsmith, and Somerville 2002). De Vries, Bekkers, and Tummers (2016) also reported that leadership affects innovation as an organizational antecedent factor. Chung and Choi (2016) stated that leaders are perceived as the driving force because they initiate various means to support the implementation of innovation. Subsequently, in the context of the public organization, leadership is also a key factor in unleashing innovation (Kusumasari et al. 2019; van der Wal and Demircioglu 2020). However, in terms of the public sector, the dependence on leaders shows the weakness of bureaucracy as a system which operates on their orders. The success of innovation depends on the leaders and not the system, which is challenging in terms of long-term sustainability. This result is also consistent with the research carried out by Arundel et al. (2015), which stated that the success of innovation is based on policy drivers, whereas other factors or methods are expected to hinder its performance in the future. These results are consistent with the findings of Turner, Prasojo, and Sumarwono (in press), who reported that the old public administration and patronage model still dominates in the Indonesian public sector; leaders play a huge role by using their authority, power, and politics.

Conclusions

1. The public service innovation competition has demonstrated progress in Indonesia's innovative capabilities in the form of a consistent increase in participation and competitiveness in various public organizations in the country. Irrespective of this fact, some challenges still remain, as a result of which only a few public organizations have reached the top levels of innovation, and the emergence of dominant individual institutions has led to inequality in innovative capacity. This occurs between government institutions and regions. Other challenges, such as the dependence on the leader and the subsequent sustainability of innovation excellence, remain.
2. The limitation of this study lies in the limited information obtained from the documentation study. Less in-depth information was collected, especially regarding

the motivation and direct impact of innovation on society. This study also is also somewhat descriptive, and is unable to explore causal relationships.

3. Further studies are encouraged to determine ways to produce sustainable innovative abilities, thereby reducing the heavy reliance on leaders as leadership in public sector organizations changes periodically. The ability to innovate is based on systemic capabilities, therefore its sustainability is possible. Further studies also need to be directed at finding ways to produce more equitable innovative capabilities across regions.

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Viešojo sektoriaus inovacijos besivystančioje šalyje: viešųjų paslaugų inovacijų konkurencijos pažanga ir iššūkiai indonezijoje

Anotacija

Inovacijos yra sudėtingos ir nepakankamai ištirtos besivystančiose šalyse, pavyzdžiui, Indonezijoje, kuri nuo 2014 m. pradėjo taikyti viešųjų paslaugų inovacijų konkurenciją kaip dalį jos valdymo reformos. Todėl šiame tyrime buvo nagrinėjama Indonezijos viešojo sektoriaus inovacijų dinamika pasitelkiant turinio analizės konkurencijas nuo 2014 m. iki 2019 m. Rezultatai parodė inovacijų pažangą atsižvelgiant į jų skaičiaus didėjimą, viešojo sektoriaus tipologijos įvairovę laimint konkurenciją ir konkurencingumą. Tačiau yra keletas iššūkių, pavyzdžiui, ribotas institucijų, sėkmingai dalyvaujančių konkurencijoje, skaičius, kai kurių viešojo sektoriaus organizacijų dominavimas, priklausomybė nuo inovatyvaus lyderio, nelygus inovacijų pajėgumas, taip pat darnumo problema.

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