THE ROLE OF E-LEARNING IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT APPARATUS IN PUBLIC SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

Since decentralization has been practiced, the quality of public services in Indonesia is still not good. In this sense, people still face the illegal administration fee 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 it was hoped. This is because the lack of competencies or skill 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 obliged them to utilize the distance learning system through e-learning.

Keywords: *public service, human resources quality, e-learning*

Preface

Indonesia has entered local autonomous era since 1999. The main purpose of the implementing of local autonomy is to increase welfare society. It could be accomplished by improving public services; therefore, societies will obtain better services which reached, transparent, cheap, and quickly. Since the local autonomy has been practiced, the qualities of public services have only showed a little progress. According to Mohammad (2003), public services still have various weaknesses as the apparatus 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 human resources

competencies. Kinanto (2006) expressing that among three dimensions which relate to public services, one of them is human resources who have certain competencies. Istianda (2006) also said that the reason of *e-government* (usage of ICT in government institute) did not work in optimal way is because the operators who run the program are lack of competencies in information technology. In this case President of Republic Indonesia realizes that the weaknesses of Indonesia to e-government are: the concept has not yet comprehended correctly, government apparatus has not ready to use ICT, e-literate of Indonesia society to information technology is still high. (http://www.eii-forum.or.id/eII2007/content/?download=AcceptedPapers.xls).

Derived from the problems above, this paper will discuss the effort in improving human resources quality in ICT through e-learning. As we know, local government apparatus 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 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. *Second*, e-learning provide tools to enhance conventional learning value, thus it could respond global challenges. *Third*, e-learning is not substitute 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. THonline (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 as Public Serving Media

The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as public serving media is based on INPRES No. 3 year 2003. This regulation is formed for because of the

society's demands on clear governance system, transparent, and able to follow the globalization effectively. Relating to the demands, ICT is used to achieve the goals they are: 1) Forming information net and public serving transaction with a satisfaction space and quality to the society and can be accessed any where and any time with cheap expense; 2) forming an interactive relationship with business field to improve the national economic growth and to strengthen the ability in facing the international changing and competition; 3) Forming mechanism and communication with countries' elements and providing public dialogue facilities as a medium for public to participate in making national policies; 4) Forming a management system and a transparent, efficient working process and doing the transaction by serving inter the countries' elements and territorial autonomy government well.

The thoughts of using information and communication technology as public service media produce new concept called e-government. According to 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 apparatus, 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 given to a governance who 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 government apparatus which is as their main duty as public servant, hence e-government itself will not mean something but only mean just as medium. Therefore, with e-government existence the public services must regularly progressively with quality.

Public services are services which given by state and state-owned corporation 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 truly aimed for public interest?
2. Institute: do institutes formed by local government requirement by public? Institute also concerning organizational structure, and value;
3. Human Resources: do human resources who giving services have owned selected competencies? Because today the value have changed where public seems to have right to get better service.

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

Local Government Resources in the Information Technology (IT)

The capable and potential human resources in the Information Technology are as the significant and important factors in the 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 as a key of the success in implementing and developing 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 are such as: a) insufficient wages and facilities (55, 2%); b) human resources development programs are more as an 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 analysis position such as application maker (68, 7%); d) there is no special treatment (47, 8%) in the 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. By e-learning, human resources will be more capable and can implement their knowledge in the Information Technology aspects.

The seriousness of the government in the human resource development is implemented by making a human resource development strategy and improving e-literacy for society. To achieve these goals, the government makes a comprehensive planning in the human resource aspects by doing the activities continuously. This plan will use a formal and non formal education, or develop a standard of competence required in the developing and implementing e-government. As stated by INPRES Number 3/2003, the strategies in improving human resource competences to support e-government are:

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a) to improve awareness and comprehension about 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 or non government institution including information and communication technology aspects;

c) to develop education and training guidance for government institutions so that education and training outputs are suitable with the needs of the development and the implementation of e-government;

d) to administer education and training in information and communication technology for staffs who managing information and communication aspects and serving public sectors, top level managers, educator and trainer candidates, or potential staff in the information technology and communication, needed to transfer their knowledge or skill to society;

e) to enhance distance learning capacities by using information and communication technology optimally for supporting 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 success of e-government implementation;

g) to enhance motivation by giving rewards for the innovative officers in the information and communication technology in central and local governments and also society. Their works will be useful for the development and implementation of e-government.

Supported by the government stated in the INPRES Number 3/2003, it is possible for e-learning as a 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 media of technology and communication. According to Blurton (in Tinio, without year), ICT stand for *information and communication technologies* and are defined, for the purposes of this primer, 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 on-line learning, virtual classroom and virtual learning (Darmayanti, Setiani, Oetojo, 2007). The definition of e-learning as mentioned by learnativity.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).

If it is 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 study.

The role of e-learning in improving the quality of apparatus 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. Eliminates 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. Makes learning pervasive, continuous and relevant.

3. Propagates 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 is help 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 apparatus government performances, so it can also improve the quality of public services.

Conclusion

One of the alternatives choosed by the government in achieving faster, cheaper, and transparent services successfully to public is by maximizing information and communication technology. The local government officers' knowledge in information and communication technology should be increased so the use of information and communication technology can be most favorable.

To enhance the government officers' skill in the information and communication technology caused by limited time in attending trainings, seminars, or workshops about information and communication technology, so it is important to use e-learning methods. By using e-learning, the local government officers have knowledge about information and communication technology and they can improve their skill to use information technology without leaving their works.

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