

Capacity Development Strategies for Village Apparatus in Improving The Quality of Public Services in Villages Within The Administrative Area of Sumowono Subdistrict, Semarang Regency

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ABSTRACT: This research examines the capacity building strategies for village officials in improving the quality of public services in the administrative area of Sumowono District, Semarang Regency. Capacity development of village officials is a key factor in effective village governance and quality service delivery to communities. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation studies in five sample villages in Sumowono District. The results show that the capacity development strategies implemented include administrative technical training, mentoring, technical guidance, and village information system development. Supporting factors for capacity development include local government commitment, budget support, and village apparatus participation, while inhibiting factors identified include infrastructure limitations, educational background differences among officials, and personnel turnover. This research recommends strengthening continuous training programs, improving inter-institutional coordination, and enhancing monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure the effectiveness of village officials' capacity development.

Keywords: capacity development, village officials, public service, village governance, Sumowono

INTRODUCTION

Village development is an integral part of national development and plays a strategic role in realizing community welfare. As the front line of government that directly interacts with the community, village apparatuses play a vital role in the implementation of development and public service delivery. Along with the implementation of Law Number 6 of 2014 concerning Villages, the demand for the capacity of village apparatus has increased, particularly in the areas of governance, village financial management, and public services (Solekhan, 2014). Sumowono Subdistrict in Semarang Regency is a region with mountainous geographic characteristics, comprising 16 villages spread across an area of 55.63 km². Its geographical conditions and uneven population distribution require public service delivery strategies that are suited to field conditions. In this regard, capacity development for village apparatus is non-negotiable to realize quality public services (Widodo, 2018).

Several issues encountered in the governance of villages in Sumowono Subdistrict include limited administrative technical capabilities of village officials, suboptimal understanding of regulations, and inadequate infrastructure to support public services. These conditions have implications for the quality of services provided to the public (Haryanto, 2020). Therefore, efforts to develop the capacity of village apparatus are a critical focus in improving the quality of public services. This study aims to analyze strategies for developing the capacity of village apparatus in enhancing the quality of public services in villages within the

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administrative area of Sumowono Subdistrict, Semarang Regency. In addition, this study also identifies the supporting and inhibiting factors in village apparatus capacity development and formulates policy recommendations for optimizing future capacity development efforts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Capacity Development Concept

Capacity development is a process carried out to improve the abilities of individuals, groups, organizations, and systems in achieving predetermined goals effectively and efficiently. According to Soeprapto (2010), capacity development is an effort to strengthen the capacity of individuals, groups, or organizations, reflected in the development of abilities, skills, potential, talents, and mastery of competencies so that they can adapt and overcome various changes. Grindle (1997) states that capacity development can be carried out at three levels: (1) the system level, related to regulations that support the achievement of certain policy goals; (2) the institutional or organizational level, related to organizational structure, decision-making processes, procedures, resources, and management style; and (3) the individual level, related to personnel skills and qualifications, awareness, and accountability. In village governance, the development of village apparatus capacity is essential, given the significant responsibilities assigned to village governments under current regulations. As stated by Sulistyani (2017), developing the capacity of village apparatus involves improving the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors of village officials so that they can carry out governance and service duties effectively.

Public Service in the Village Government Environment

Public service, according to Law Number 25 of 2009, is an activity or series of activities carried out to fulfill service needs in accordance with statutory regulations for every citizen and resident regarding goods, services, and/or administrative services provided by public service providers. In the context of village government, public services include administrative services such as the issuance of certificates, licensing services, and other basic services. Dwiyanto (2015) states that the quality of public services can be measured through five dimensions: (1) tangibles, including physical facilities, equipment, and communication tools; (2) reliability, or the ability to provide promised services accurately and satisfactorily; (3) responsiveness, or the willingness to help and provide services promptly; (4) assurance, which covers knowledge, competence, politeness, and trustworthiness; and (5) empathy, which refers to ease of communication, personal attention, and understanding customer needs. In relation to public services in village environments, Nurcholis (2019) asserts that the village government, as the smallest unit in the national governance system, is tasked with delivering services to the community within its authority. High-quality public services are a right of the community and an obligation of the village government to fulfill.

Strategy for Developing Village Apparatus Capacity

The strategy for developing the capacity of village apparatus needs to be systematically designed by taking into account local needs and conditions. According to Milen (2006), capacity development strategies can be implemented through several approaches, including: (1) education and training; (2) providing opportunities to participate in decision-making processes; (3) coaching and mentoring; (4) developing management systems; and (5) strengthening cooperation networks. In the context of village government, Anwar (2018) explains that the capacity development strategy for village apparatus can be carried out through: (1) improving knowledge and technical skills through training; (2) mentoring by experts; (3) comparative studies and experience sharing; (4) developing village information systems; and (5) strengthening coordination with regional governments. Based on this literature

review, it can be synthesized that the strategy for developing the capacity of village apparatus must be systematically designed by considering the local context and specific capacity development needs. This serves as a foundation for analyzing the strategy for developing the capacity of village apparatus in Sumowono Subdistrict, Semarang Regency, in an effort to improve the quality of public services.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the consideration that this research aims to obtain a comprehensive picture regarding the capacity development strategies of village apparatus in improving the quality of public services. A qualitative approach allows researchers to understand phenomena naturally by immersing themselves intensively in the studied situation (Creswell, 2014). The research location is in Sumowono Subdistrict, Semarang Regency, focusing on five sample villages selected purposively by considering variations in village characteristics, namely Candigaron Village, Kebonagung Village, Pledokan Village, Sumowono Village, and Ngadikerso Village. The research informants include: (1) the subdistrict head and apparatus of Sumowono Subdistrict; (2) village heads and officials from the five sample villages; (3) representatives of the Village Consultative Body (BPD); (4) representatives of the community receiving services; and (5) other parties involved in the capacity development of village apparatus such as village facilitators and the Department of Village Community Empowerment of Semarang Regency.

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews with research informants to obtain information regarding the implemented capacity development strategies, supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as their impact on the quality of public services. Second, observation of public service activities and capacity development activities being implemented. Third, documentation studies on relevant documents such as work plans, capacity development activity reports, and public service data. Data analysis uses the interactive model developed by Miles et al. (2014), which includes: (1) data condensation, which is the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming data; (2) data display in the form of narrative text, matrices, or charts; and (3) drawing and verifying conclusions. To ensure data validity, the researcher uses source and method triangulation, member checking, and peer discussion techniques.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Overview of Sumowono Subdistrict and the Condition of Village Apparatus

Sumowono Subdistrict is located in the western part of Semarang Regency, covering an area of 55.63 km² at an altitude of 900–1500 meters above sea level. This subdistrict consists of 16 villages with a total population of 31,248 people based on 2023 data. As an agricultural and plantation area, the majority of the population works as farmers and farm laborers. The hilly and mountainous geographical conditions create accessibility issues between villages, which is one of the challenges in delivering public services. The number of village apparatus in the five sample villages varies between 9–11 individuals, consisting of the village head, village secretariat, heads of affairs, and heads of sections. Based on educational background, the majority of village officials have a high school or equivalent education (63%), followed by Diploma/Bachelor's degree holders (25%), and junior high school or equivalent (12%). In terms of years of service, 45% of village apparatus have less than 5 years of service, 32% between 5–10 years, and 23% more than 10 years. These data indicate that in terms of

educational qualifications, village apparatus in Sumowono Subdistrict still require improvement, considering the increasing responsibilities in accordance with the Village Law mandate. Furthermore, the regeneration of village apparatus is evident from the dominance of officials with less than 5 years of service, indicating the importance of sustainable capacity development programs.

Capacity Development Strategies for Village Apparatus in Sumowono Subdistrict

Based on the research findings, several main strategies have been identified in the capacity development of village apparatus in Sumowono Subdistrict, described as follows:

1. Technical Administrative Training

The most widely implemented strategy is technical administrative training focused on enhancing the village apparatus's ability to manage village administration. The types of training conducted include training on village financial management, land administration, population administration, and the preparation of village planning documents. This training is organized by the Semarang Regency Community Empowerment Agency and supported by the Sumowono Subdistrict Office. The Head of Candigaron Village stated: "Technical administrative training has greatly helped village officials understand their main duties and functions. After participating in the training, village officials became more knowledgeable about the administrative flow and service procedures in accordance with regulations" (Interview, March 17, 2025).

2. Assistance from Experts

Assistance from experts is a practical strategy that is directly applied in the management activities of village governance. This assistance is provided by Village Facilitators assigned by the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration. The assistance is conducted periodically with a focus on capacity development in governance, development, and community empowerment. The Secretariat of Pledokan Village stated: "The presence of village facilitators greatly helps us in understanding new regulations and applying them in village management. They not only provide guidance but also assist in practical implementation, such as in the preparation of the Village Budget (APBDes) and accountability reports" (Interview, March 19, 2025).

3. Technical Guidance and Regulation Socialization

This strategy is implemented to ensure that village officials understand the latest laws and regulations related to village governance. Technical guidance and regulation socialization are carried out regularly, especially when there are policy changes or the issuance of new regulations. These activities are usually initiated by the regency government through the Community Empowerment Agency and the Village Government Section of the Regional Secretariat. The Head of Sumowono Village explained: "Village regulations often change. Technical guidance helps us keep up with these developments and implement them correctly in carrying out our duties" (Interview, March 22, 2025).

4. Development of Village Information Systems

This strategy aims to improve the ability of village apparatus in utilizing information technology to support public services. The development of village information systems includes training on the use of village financial system applications, village information systems, and administrative service applications. This strategy is supported by the provision of necessary hardware and software. The Head of Financial Affairs of Kebonagung Village stated: "The use of village financial applications greatly assists in more transparent and accountable financial management. Although we initially struggled to adapt, with consistent training, we were eventually able to use it well." (Interview, March 20, 2025).

5. Inter-Village Communication Forum

This strategy focuses on the exchange of experiences and learning between villages. The inter-village communication forum serves as a platform for village officials to share best practices in village governance and public service delivery. This forum is coordinated by the subdistrict office involving all villages in Sumowono Subdistrict. The Head of Sumowono Subdistrict explained: “The inter-village communication forum we facilitate has proven effective in disseminating best practices from one village to another. Villages that have successfully implemented public service innovations can inspire others to adopt them according to their respective conditions” (Interview, March 25, 2025).

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Village Apparatus Capacity Development

The development of village apparatus capacity in Semarang Regency is influenced by various interrelated supporting and inhibiting factors. On the supporting side, the commitment of the Semarang Regency Government through the Village Community Empowerment Agency (Dinas Pemberdayaan Masyarakat Desa) has provided a strong foundation with sustainable capacity development programs. This support is strengthened by the allocation of specific funds from both the Village Budget (APBDes) and Village Funds (Dana Desa), which are specifically designated for the development of village apparatus. The motivation and active participation of the village apparatus themselves are also crucial factors, as their willingness to improve and actively engage in various capacity-building programs demonstrates a positive internal commitment. The presence of village facilitators (*tenaga pendamping desa*) further strengthens this process through the direct transfer of knowledge and skills to the village apparatus. Equally important is the network of cooperation established with universities and professional training institutions, enriching the substance of capacity development programs.

Nevertheless, several obstacles still hinder the optimal development of village apparatus capacity. Geographic conditions and infrastructure limitations—especially internet connectivity—impede the effective implementation of the village information system. The diverse educational backgrounds among the village apparatus create gaps in the ability to absorb capacity development materials. This issue is further complicated by personnel rotations and replacements, which disrupt the continuity of development programs. Additionally, the heavy workload of village apparatus in daily administrative and service tasks limits their available time to participate in capacity-building programs. The final constraint lies in training materials that have not been fully adapted to the specific characteristics and varying needs of each village.

Impact of Capacity Development on the Quality of Public Services

The development of village apparatus capacity has had a significant impact on improving the quality of public services in various villages in Semarang Regency. Based on service data analysis and community perceptions, there has been a clear transformation in the efficiency of administrative services, which previously took 3–4 days and can now be completed in just 1–2 days for various documents and certificates. The accuracy of services has also substantially improved, with fewer errors in administrative processes and the issuance of important documents. The implementation of the village information system has promoted better transparency and accountability, both in public service mechanisms and in village financial management. Positive changes are also evident in the responsiveness of the village apparatus, who are now more attentive in addressing community needs and following up on complaints. Various service innovations have also emerged, such as home services for the elderly and persons with disabilities, as well as proactive services for population administration.

The Head of the Service Section of Ngadikerso Village confirmed this positive impact by stating that after attending excellent service training, they have implemented clear and transparent service standards. The community now has a better understanding of the requirements, costs, and completion times for each type of service, resulting in higher satisfaction levels. A testimony from a resident of Candigaron Village reinforced this finding by comparing the land certificate processing, which used to take more than a week, but now can be completed in a maximum of two days, with village apparatus who are much friendlier and more informative.

Effective Capacity Development Strategies to Improve Public Services

In efforts to improve the quality of public services, several capacity development strategies have proven effective based on the conducted analysis. Approaches combining technical training with direct mentoring show more optimal results in ensuring sustainable knowledge and skill transfer to village apparatus. The utilization of information technology in public service systems has become an important catalyst that enhances the efficiency and transparency of services across various villages. Experience exchange programs between villages have also proven effective in accelerating the adoption of public service innovations through learning from best practices successfully implemented in other villages.

Thematic training designed based on the specific needs of each village shows higher effectiveness in solving concrete problems in the field. Furthermore, an integrated capacity development approach balancing aspects of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of village apparatus has resulted in more sustainable changes in public service patterns. The Village Community Empowerment Agency of Semarang Regency emphasizes that the key to the success of capacity development programs lies in the active involvement of village apparatus in all stages of the program, from planning, implementation, to evaluation. The sense of ownership of the program by the village apparatus themselves becomes a determining factor in the success and sustainability of these capacity development initiatives.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the capacity development strategies for village apparatus in Sumowono Subdistrict, Semarang Regency have been implemented through various approaches, including technical administrative training, mentoring by experts, technical guidance and regulatory socialization, development of village information systems, and inter-village communication forums. These capacity development strategies have had a positive impact on improving the quality of public services, reflected in increased efficiency, accuracy, transparency, responsiveness, as well as the emergence of various service innovations. Village apparatus who have participated in capacity development programs showed improved abilities in carrying out public service tasks according to established standards.

Supporting factors for the capacity development of village apparatus include the commitment of local government, budget support, active participation of village apparatus, availability of mentors, and cooperation with third parties. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include limited infrastructure, differences in educational background, personnel turnover, workload, and limitations of training materials. The capacity development strategies proven effective in improving public service quality are a combination of training and mentoring, IT-based development, experience exchange among villages, thematic training based on needs, and integrated capacity development.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations are proposed as follows: (1) strengthening continuous training programs by intensifying the combination of training and

mentoring methods; (2) improving supporting infrastructure, especially internet accessibility, to support the development of village information systems; (3) developing training modules tailored to the specific conditions and needs of each village; (4) strengthening coordination among institutions involved in village apparatus capacity development; and (5) developing a monitoring and evaluation system to ensure the effectiveness of capacity development programs.

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