THE USE OF LAPOR! AS A MEDIUM FOR DELIVERING CITIZEN CONCERNS ABOUT PUBLIC SERVICES TO GOVERNMENT

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Abstract

The development of information and the rapidly growing digital world have affected all aspects of life, including the public service sector. To make public services more accessible to the community, the Indonesian government has implemented LAPOR!, an e-government application. Citizens can use LAPOR! to submit concerns or complaints regarding public services to the government. The present qualitative study examined the use of LAPOR! as a tool for delivering information to the Indonesian government, using a review of relevant literature and secondary data. The study explores how LAPOR! functions, what features are provided, how citizens have responded to the availability of this tool, and how LAPOR! has served as a form of e-government that promotes good governance. LAPOR! has been used by 80 government agencies and five local governments. It fulfills both top-down and bottom-up management principles through an integrated system based in the central government that disseminates reports on complaints and investigations to related institutions, local governments, and citizens. Surveys have found that LAPOR! is generally viewed as effective and reliable, with 70% of users indicating that they would continue to submit concerns through this system.

Keywords: LAPOR! e-government, good government, information management, public service, complain handling

I. INTRODUCTION

The explosion of digital connectivity, significant improvements in communication and information technologies, and the growth of global competition are revolutionizing the way business is performed and how organizations compete (Ndou, 2004). This trend has also penetrated the public sector, even though governments do not have competitors as private businesses do. Government organizations have been implementing information and communication technology innovations to encourage good governance, to build better relationships with citizens, and to engage in partnerships with communities. These practices are often referred to as e-government or e-gov.

A paradigm shift has been occurring in the realm of public service delivery, from the bureaucratic paradigm to the e-government paradigm. The main features of this shift are summarized in Table 1.

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<th>TABLE 1. FEATURES OF THE BUREAUCRATIC AND E-GOVERNMENT PARADIGMS</th>
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The e-government concept is connecting the old world of conventional bureaucracy to the new world of good and citizen-responsive governance. One e-government initiative undertaken in Indonesia is LAPOR! (Layanan Aspirasi dan Pengaduan Online Rakyat), a tool that permits citizens to convey their desires, complaints, and information requests to government by electronic means. LAPOR! is managed in an integrated manner between federal government ministries, agencies, and local governments through various channels such as a mobile app, SMS 1708, and a website (https://lapor.go.id). LAPOR! is an interactive medium intended to help community members access and monitor government functions, thereby enhancing good governance.

Through the variety of channels available, users of LAPOR! can submit complaints, after which an administrator confirms their receipt and forwards them to the relevant ministry, agency, or local government, as well as connecting the complainant to that office. LAPOR! advises the citizen also of any reports or other information relevant to the complaint. The government entity involved is expected to respond within five working days. If further investigation or research is required, the government office will inform the complainant by means of an interim report. The case is deemed complete after a response has been provided if neither the citizen initiating the concern nor the LAPOR! administrator has entered any further response via the LAPOR! follow-up portal within 10 working days.

Innovation in public service is part of a broader trend among governments to build closer connections with their people. In this regard, LAPOR! serves as a medium of delivering information to the public. The theory of “exit and voice” (Hirschman, cited in Jones, 1994) explains that the performance of public services can be improved if there are “exit” and “voice” mechanisms. An exit mechanism is a way of permitting users of public services to choose other options if they are disappointed by certain providers; a voice mechanism gives users the right and opportunity to voice dissatisfaction with existing public services. In this theoretical understanding, LAPOR! can serve as a powerful voice mechanism.

Quite often, citizens are reluctant to make an effort to express concerns about government because they believe that they will not receive any response. Through LAPOR! the Indonesian government is trying to give the general public a convenient, credible pathway both to express opinions and to monitor follow-up and responses to complaints that have been submitted. In this study, we explore how LAPOR! is actually functioning as a medium of delivering information to the government.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

E-gov can mean different things to different people. Some describe it as a digital medium for communicating government information or carrying out transactions in the public sector; others think of it as referring to websites created by governments to provide users with online information about policies and public service delivery. In this paper, we conceptualize the e-government framework as encompassing three main components:

1. The scope of transformation (e.g., international, external, relational).
2. Users, customers, actors and their inter-relationships (citizens, businesses, government organizations, employees).
3. E-government application domains (e-services, e-democracy, e-administration)

While the challenges that must be faced in E-government implementation, including:

1. ICT Infrastructure (e-readiness, computer literacy, telecommunication equipment).
2. Policy issues (legislation).
3. Human capital development and life long learning (ability, capability, education, learning).
4. Change management (culture, resistance to change).
5. Partnerships and collaboration (public and private partnerships, community and network creations).
7. Role of leadership (motivation, participation, influence, and support).

Overall it can be concluded that E-government innovation brings the potential to improve public service activities and processes, build relationships between government and society, increase transparency, improve governance capacity and provide a "voice" mechanism for those outside the government. Although there are many obstacles to developing E-government in developing countries due to political, social and economic factors, but developing countries can take a valuable opportunity from this ICT revolution.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

We used a qualitative approach, drawing on relevant literature (e.g., books, journal articles, and reports) and secondary data. The data were arranged by category and summarized in a matrix to assist with the analysis.

IV. DISCUSSION

LAPOR! was initiated by the Presidential Unit for Development Supervision and Control (Unit Kerja Presiden Bidang Pengawasan dan Pengendalian Pembangunan or UKP-PPP) to increase citizen participation and interaction with the government in the context of supervision and monitoring of development programs and public services (PIRAC, 2014). As of April 2015, LAPOR! had been used more than 290,000 times and was receiving an average of over 800 citizen reports per day. LAPOR! has become the forerunner of a nationally integrated system of citizen requests and complaints. The work flow of LAPOR! can be seen in Figure 1.

FIGURE 2. LAPOR! WORK FLOW

![ALUR KERJA LAPOR!](source: lapor.go.id)

The LAPOR! process, as described on its website, includes at least three stages:

1. Reporting. Any citizen can submit reports on LAPOR! through various media including the system website, SMS 1708, or a mobile app. The report is verified by the LAPOR! administrator for clarity and completeness and then forwarded to the relevant government agency or office within three working days.

2. Follow-up reporting. As noted above, the government entity is given no more than five working days to conduct its internal review and provide a response, which is communicated to the complainant via the website’s follow-up portal.

3. Closure. Reports are deemed complete if a response has been provided and there has been no further comment by the LAPOR! administrator or the citizen on the LAPOR! follow-up page for 10 working days.

The features provided by LAPOR! include:

1. Tracking ID LAPOR! This is a unique code automatically assigned to every report published on the LAPOR! website. Tracking IDs can be used by other citizens to search for a particular report.

2. Anonymity and confidentiality. Anonymous features permit whistleblowers to avoid revealing their identity, and confidential features can be used to restrict access to reports only to the parties involved. Both features are helpful in encouraging the reporting of sensitive or highly private issues.

3. Maps and categorization. Each report can be labeled with its geographical location, topic, report completion status, and related institutions, so that both government and citizens can monitor issues at varying scales and from various points of view. In fact, a LAPOR! map was used as a key information source during the flood disasters that hit Jakarta in 2012 and 2014, to facilitate delivery of aid to the victims.

4. Policy opinions. Government agencies can use LAPOR! as a medium for public opinion polling. Several polls have been conducted through this feature, such as one in 2013 on plans for a new health education curriculum.

This last application of LAPOR!, public polling, has been used by 80 ministries and institutions and
five local governments (DKI Jakarta, Bandung City, Indragili Hulu, Gorontalo, and Bojonegoro).

Data reported by LAPOR! indicate that the Indonesian people have become increasingly connected to the digital world. As of May 2013, Indonesia had about 18.1 million smartphone users, 35.1 million Internet users, 19.5 million Twitter users, and 49.9 million Facebook users (Infographics LAPOR!, 2013).

Then LAPOR! data processing system reported that through May 2013, 22,954 distinct users had participated by sending 62,527 reports, of which 53% had been completely addressed and another 25% were in the follow-up process (Infographics LAPOR!, 2013). This number rose rapidly in the next 16 months, so that by September 2014 LAPOR! had been used by more than 260,000 people and was receiving more than 1,000 reports per day (PIRAC Personal, 2014). The total number of users reached 290,000 as of April 2015, although daily usage has declined somewhat since then.

The number of completed reports successfully followed up and resolved is a key measure of reliability in the eyes of service users. A LAPOR! user survey in May and June 2013 found that 66.2% of respondents considered LAPOR! reliable compared to other complaint channels, while 69.4% of respondents agreed that LAPOR! could enhance public participation in national development and 70% said they would continue to report complaints through LAPOR! (Infographics LAPOR!, 2013). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of LAPOR! in resolving public complaints is still limited. The PIRAC Report (2014) stated:

LAPOR! has not been effective in resolving public complaints because the settlement of complaints is heavily dependent on the agency about which the report is made. LAPOR! has no authority to resolve the complaint personally, unless the complaint is a question that can be answered by the LAPOR! based on the information it has.

The performance of LAPOR! in settling public complaints does not appear particularly good based on its own statistical data. Of a recorded 44,985 incoming cases as of October 2014, 17,828 had been completed, 6,007 were in the settlement process, and the agency or office involved had been unresponsive in 21,150 cases (PIRAC Personal, 2014).

A. LAPOR! as an Example of Good Governance Implementation

As Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) pointed out (cited in Dwiyanto Dkk, 2006) regarding the shift in the paradigm of public administration, governments should now be turning to the New Public Service approach, a paradigm that emphasizes serving the public interest as a result of a dialog on values. In this approach, community members are treated as citizens and not simply customers, and emphasis is placed on accountability, which comprises multiple aspects such as accountability to law, community values, political norms, professional standards, and, of course, the public interest.

In harmony with this idea, public service has become the center of gravity in governance. However, recently, the demand for public services has become more complex. The delivery of services is no longer characterized by rigid bureaucracy or strict and tightly defined organization of government apparatuses. Today, with the advancement of technology, the influence of globalization, and access to progressive ideas implemented in other countries, society wants its government bodies not just to provide public goods and services, but also to display a mission of service. In other words, service should not be limited to transactional response to public demands; rather, government representatives should also exhibit a desire to provide the best possible service.

In the context of this mission to deliver excellent service, LAPOR! has been seen as possessing positive value. Through its implementation, the government has shown that it fulfills three indicators of quality public service identified by Levinne (1990), namely responsiveness, responsibility, and accountability. The community perceives LAPOR! as enhancing government responsiveness to public complaints and to the expectations, desires, aspirations, and demands of service users. In addition, the government has also established a measure that indicates to what extent the process of providing public services is in accordance with proper principles of administration and organization. The tracking ID feature makes both report processing and public access to reports easier, contributing further to government accountability. In addition, this application enables the government to implement top-down and bottom-up principles in public service, since it is overseen by the central government and since reports are shared with relevant agencies and
citizens through an information system that allows relevant parties to track and respond to reports.

B. LAPOR! as an E-government Implementation

According to the World Bank, e-gov represents the use of information technology to transform relationships between government, business, and society. E-gov has at least three common features: publication of information by the government, interactive opportunities for citizens to express their desires and opinions, and transactional exchanges by which services needed by citizens are actually provided. Given this variety of e-gov applications, a clear conception of e-gov implementation and adequate support from human resources are needed.

LAPOR! is an innovative system that falls largely into the second of these three categories, primarily facilitating the delivery of citizen information and requests to the government. This particular innovation has been of great value to many citizens and has gained widespread recognition. It won a Government Web Award nomination at version 08 of the Bubu Awards (an award program for Indonesia’s digital industry) in June 2013, placing in the top three. LAPOR! was also recognized as one of the world’s best initiatives in e-government at the Open Government Partnership Summit 2013 in London. Surely these are impressive steps for an Indonesian breakthrough in good governance.

Meanwhile in Indonesia, e-gov has experienced many obstacles, the most fundamental of which is the need to secure local governments’ commitment to its implementation. E-gov applications require substantial resources and do not necessary deliver any tangible benefit to the government itself, so many local governments have overlooked this priority in favor of addressing deficiencies in other areas such as health and education. Where the head of a local government exhibits commitment to the program, however, these obstacles can be resolved. Just as in other fields such as infrastructure procurement, there exist various forms of free, open-source software relevant to e-government that do not require complicated licensing arrangements, and solutions developed by local startup companies have also been used and found quite applicable. As for hardware, many technology companies can be recruited as program sponsors so as to keep the budget from becoming too large.

V. Conclusion

LAPOR! was developed by the Indonesian government as a medium for facilitating citizen communication with government. Thus far it has been used by 80 government agencies and five local governments. The main work process of LAPOR! consists of three stages: reporting, follow-up and investigation, and closure. Through these three stages, the principles of both top-down and bottom-up management of public services can be fulfilled through an integrated system based in the central government and entailing decentralized report submission to related institutions and local governments. LAPOR! is an innovative form of e-government that uses information technology to gather information from citizens. It has generally been considered quite effective and in accordance with recent developments in public administration. Although some barriers still exist in e-government in Indonesia, this innovation should be viewed as an expression of the government’s desire to achieve the best possible quality of public service.

REFERENCES


