

INNOVATION FOR BETTER PUBLIC SERVICES: LESSONS FROM THE REGENCY OF BONDOWOSO AND THE REGENCY OF BARRU

Antun Mardiyanta

Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia

antun.mardiyanta@fisip.unair.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to show the importance of innovation for better public services. The method that was used in this paper is library research method. The findings that were found in the examples that were used in this paper, showed how innovation on public services had brought such positive impact on society.

Keywords: Innovation; Best Practices; Public Services

1. INTRODUCTION

In fulfilling the needs of society, public services cannot be static or stagnated. Instead, innovations have to be made, in order to fulfill the needs of society which always change overtime. Public services have to accommodate the needs of society, in which fulfilling these is the obligation of the governments. In short, innovation in this dynamic world is urgent. The needs to innovate is not limited for progressive purposes only, but also for fulfilling the needs of society, which have not yet fulfilled. For instance, the needs of policies which are able to accommodate the needs of those who have not been facilitated with effective and efficient policies.

The main objective of making innovation in public service is to improve the way how the services would give positive impacts on society. Innovations are also the answers for many existing problems in in public service, that is whether in the way of how public services are planned, organized, executed, or evaluated. The urgency of innovation in public sector is in line with the dynamic and fast-changing public sector management and reforms, especially in recent era of digital transformation and disruption. According to Borins (2000:467), innovations in public services take three prominent types, these are politically led responses to crises, organizational turnarounds engineered by newly appointed agency heads, and bottom-up innovations initiated by frontline public servants and middle managers.

Among the approaches for innovations in Public Services, the New Public Management (NPM) is an approach that is massively used. More specifically, NPM is used for diagnosing problems in public service provision. NPM is used in representing the relationship between political science, public policy, and public administration, which it proposed a view of public management and service delivery organizations as “a chain of low-trust principal – agent relationships (Dunleavy and Hood,

1994:9). Moreover, NPM principles and practices have been widely used as remedies for public sector performance weaknesses in developing countries (Manning, 2001; OECD, 2005).

According to Good Practices and Innovations in Public Governance, released by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the scope of innovations in public governance and the good practices can be divided into several areas. For instance, according to the United Nations Public Service Award, there are five different categories, namely: Preventing and Combating Corruption in the Public Service, Improving the Delivery of Public Service, Promoting Whole-of-Government Approaches in the Information Age, and Promoting Gender-Responsive Delivery of Public Services. The numbers of categories which have been described shows the scope of the innovations in public governance, along with the good practices.

In Indonesia, particularly, as released from the reports of KINERJA, One of the Programs of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which concerns on improving public services; . There have been numerous examples on how public services have been improved, and how innovations in Public services have affected numerous aspects of society and community in positive ways. The examples were including the improvement on health-care services provided by the government, education environment, or even improvement in the number of people's participation in government's program. This paper presents some of these best practices, by examining the real practices of innovations in public services. The aim of this paper is to show the reasons, the urgencies, and the examples of how innovation plays such important role in the improvement of people's quality of life, through public services.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research used library research method (Zed, 2008). Library research is used in this article, as this article aimed to combine the related literatures and data, to create such comprehensive paper. As the source of the literature, this research used various data from various literatures, which are consisted of various books related with the topic of this study and digitalized scientific literatures. Furthermore, previous researches which are relevant, such as about performance-based public management reforms and innovation in the public sector. Reports from KINERJA - USAID Programs also used in this research, as they provided relevant information regarding this research. This article tries to amend these deficiencies by presenting the results of a comprehensive literature survey.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Innovation

In the literatures of public services, the terms of innovation, has been variously defined and described. Innovation should have been started with a comprehensive way in finding the problems that occur throughout the process of public services, whether planning, implementation, or evaluation. In creating innovation, there is a theory which stated how innovations are consisted of three phases – infection, inspiration, and implementation. (Stewart-Weeks, 2015). As if innovation is identified as something which would infect, the first thing that needs to be done is catching the virus, which in this term is how to cultivate it. There are three conditions which could increase the chance of becoming infected, which is exposure, willingness, and lowering the organization's immune

system (Stewart-Weeks, 2015). These three conditions have to be achieved in order to make sure that innovation, which in this term is analogized as virus, would be well spread, and “infectious”. Through those phases, it is hoped that the organization would become inspired to get involve in creating such innovation, in order to solve problems that occur upon those public services.

As important as the other phases, getting it done also plays integral role on creating or even enhancing innovations upon public services. By getting the organization inspired, the process of creating innovation would be able to be done. As in the phase of infection, turning innovation into inspiration would take further steps, which consisted of certain sets of conditions. For instance, permission, courage, and opportunity (Stewart-Weeks, 2015). After getting inspired, then the last thing left to be done is getting it done, which is about the way how those innovations are implemented. The result that these innovations are going to obtain, will be one of the most influential part which will determine whether those innovations are successfully made and done, or not.

3.2 Improving Public Service Through Innovations

The fast-changing condition which also occurs in society, push the needs of public services to cope with it, through innovations. The needs of innovation also happen to be the answers towards questions and problems that rose up. As it has been stated, the way innovations take place could be variated. Brinkerhoff and Wetterberg (2013) stated in their paper, about pathways to improved service delivery, which are decentralization, standard-setting, result-based management, performance-based payment, information flows and transparency, and citizen participation. Those are the pathways which could be pursued in forming innovations on public service.

Several cases are known as the examples in how innovations have played major roles in improving public services. In Indonesia, as it has been reported by USAID, the stakeholders have realized upon how important it is to make innovations in public services, in order to boost the performance and the quality of the output. For instance, the way how the stakeholders in the regency of Bondowoso have made an innovation on preventing children marriage through reproduction health education for juveniles.

As many sources have reported, children marriage in the regency of Bondowoso have become an issue to solve. The rising number of death mothers and babies during labor process is one of the reasons upon why children marriage is seen as a problem in a society, especially in the regency of Bondowoso. Not only in terms of health, but also in terms of wealthiness. As a matter of fact, the number of children marriage have influenced the decreasing in the wealthiness in average. Furthermore, in long term children marriage will play major role in bringing Bondowoso to become the least developed regency, from 38 regencies in East Java.

The innovation that took place was the involvement of juveniles itself in creating campaign about reproduction health, which has raised their awareness upon this problem. Moreover, religious leaders also have significant role on this innovation, as people in Bondowoso put massive respect on them. Not only the juveniles and the religious leaders who played significant role, but also other stakeholders who has helped the planning, organizing, and the implementation of this innovation, for instance the non-governmental organization.

The result was quite satisfying, as the awareness of juveniles about how children marriage would cause tons of problems, have been raised. It can be seen in the decreasing of children marriage by



around 14%. The decreasing number of girls who decided to get married earlier than they should be, also contributed to the rising of wealthiness level of people in the regency of Bondowoso, as the participation level of girls in education has risen up significantly. Furthermore, the number of people's involvement in the implementation of this policy also has shown how the awareness have been well-spread. Not only about children marriage, but people's awareness, especially juvenile, about how important the reproduction health itself has been significantly risen.

3.3 Reasons Why Public Sector Should Innovate

The three prominent types of public sector innovation (Borins, 2000: 467) has shown upon how the innovations in public sector could be diversified. The crisis response, is a kind of rare situation which could become a reason upon a public sector have to create such innovations in tackling those crises. In responding such turbulence, innovations play major role on how they would be able to minimize the negative impact from such turbulences, or even creating positive impact from such turbulences. The other one is an innovation which caused by the growing of involvement and contribution of bottom-up, which are initiated by the frontline public servants and middle managers. Bottom-up innovations also shows the peak of highly innovative public sector organization (Borins, 2002; Mulgan, 2008). The way bottom-up became more favorable rather than the top-down approach, is that because the reason upon the gap that occurs between those who formulate it and those who execute it. (Merchant, 2009). Furthermore, bottom-up also initiates the way how the idea/execution gaps which will be the bottleneck in innovation programs.

The examples which have been implemented in Indonesia, have shown the way how innovations in public sector in Indonesia, has been a massive boost in creating a better output, through better process. In Indonesia, the good governance is the key that have to be achieved, in order to create such ideal condition for creating innovations. The good governance itself has to contain transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and people's involvement. The real example is the way how the number of death mothers and babies during labor process has been significantly fallen, because of the safer labor process, which could not be achieved if the public services which are involved in laboring process, are stagnated.

The way how stakeholders in the regency of Barru did with their equally distributed and regulated teachers through public participation, has shown a real example of how an innovation on public service has brought such great impacts on society. According to the report from USAID, before the innovation took place, the regency of Barru's education index was less than the average of the province of South Sulawesi, and way far below than the average of national's education index, from 2004 to 2007. The greatest factor which influenced the regency of Barru's low education index during those periods were the unequal distribution of teachers in the regency of Barru. Ideally, the distribution of teachers has to be as good as the amount of the teacher itself. The unequal distribution created further problems in terms of the public services in education, which indicated by the lower education index in that region, as the quality of education would be degraded. Not only for the students, but the unequal distribution of teachers also affected teacher negatively, as their hours of teaching would not be able to reach the minimum standardized, so that it would influence their career development.

Through several mechanisms which the stakeholders had implemented together, for instance technical team which was consisted from related stakeholders, such as representatives from

education authorities, regional staffing agency, association of teachers (PGRI), and related non-government organization. The results that have been obtained by the technical team, were some analysis upon the implementation of equally distributed teachers. Furthermore, technical teams were supervised in updating data regarding the number of teachers and their profiles, from elementary level to the senior high school level. This technical team were also trained by the LPKIPI to operate the computer application for processing data about the proportional distribution of teachers. These innovations lead to a great result, where proportionally distributed teachers have played major role in the improvement of the regency of Barru's education quality, by lowering the gap of quality between different schools in that region.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper has presented some best practices in public service innovation, as well as the impacts of the innovations towards the community and society. From all the above discussions, this paper reconfirms that innovations should not, and must not stop. Indeed, policy makers and stakeholders need to keep on being innovative, as the problems in public services as well as the needs for solving these problems will remain to occur in society and community, in which people keep on growing, and the world keeps on changing. In this highly dynamic and demanding world, innovations are not only meant to solve but also to prevent problems. Examples from the regency of Bondowoso and Barru, have picturized the way how innovation would create greater impacts towards society in the most positive ways.

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