



Decentralization By Local Governments In The Face Of The Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Decentralization that has been running for almost 20 years is now being tested with the presence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation of decentralization has encountered various obstacles, especially in handling Covid-19, starting from the relationship between local authorities and central government, the limited resources of each region, the distribution distances in handling COVID-19 needs, and also the varied responses and understanding of the people of each region towards Covid-19. Therefore, extra efforts are needed from the central government and local governments in making regulations that encourage dialogue and negotiations between the government and regions to handle the pandemic situation more effectively. Necessary consideration that different region has particular requirements that the central authority's policy sometimes failed to meet. Furthermore, government policies should be able to bring out more innovations in handling Covid-19 in each region. This innovation is useful in dealing with the limitations and different contexts of each region in dealing with Covid-19.

Keywords: decentralization,; pandemi; local government

Abstrak

Desentralisasi yang telah berjalan hampir 20 tahun kini tengah diuji dengan hadirnya pandemi Covid-19. Pelaksanaan desentralisasi menemui berbagai hambatan terutama dalam penanganan Covid-19, dimulai dari hubungan pemerintahan pusat dan pemerintah daerah, keterbatasan sumber daya masing-masing daerah, jarak pendistribusian kebutuhan dalam penanganan Covid-19 serta pemahaman masyarakat masing-masing daerah terhadap Covid-19 yang berbeda-beda pula. Oleh karena itu diperlukan upaya ekstra dari pemerintah pusat terutama pemerintah daerah baik dalam pembuatan regulasi yang mendorong dialog dan negosiasi antara pemerintah dan daerah sehingga pandemi bisa ditangani lebih efektif. Pertimbangannya adalah karena daerah memiliki kebutuhan khusus yang tidak selamanya terakomodasi dalam kebijakan nasional. Selanjutnya kebijakan pemerintah sebaiknya mampu mendorong lahirnya inovasi-inovasi daerah dalam penanganan Covid-19. Inovasi ini berguna dalam menyalasi keterbatasan dan perbedaan konteks tiap daerah dalam menghadapi Covid-19.

Kata kunci: desentralisasi; pandemi; pemerintah daerah

INTRODUCTION

Since the fall of the New Order regime with a centralized government design, the high hopes for decentralization have not shown any real results. Even two decades of post-reformation, legislation products have not been able to accommodate a policy that will prosper the people. As it is known, decentralization is an old phenomenon that resurfaces from the need for increased administration, financial complexity and democratization in certain political jurisdictions. Decentralization is also seen by many as having the potential to produce more effectiveness and efficiency in government administrative affairs, especially in local government administration or regional government. This view is based on the fact that local governments are considered to have better knowledge of the needs and desires of their local communities than the central government does. For sure, this also has implications for the provision of cheaper services so that it can shorten the long and expensive procedure of a plan.

After many challenges that hinders the implementation of decentralization, of course, cannot be separated from the complexity of the problems that occur in this country. Indonesia as a country with a large number of Provinces, Regencies, Cities and the distance from one another is also far from each other, as well as local cultures that are also different are a real obstacle to the implementation of decentralization being able to work evenly. In addition, Indonesia and even the world have been hit by the Covid-19 pandemic which has been going on for two years. It is undeniable that the Covid-19 pandemic has knocked down the defences of all countries in the world. Every effort has been made by various countries, including Indonesia. Various legal products related to the handling of Covid-19 were issued which were then disseminated to every region in Indonesia in order to make efforts to stop the spread of Covid-19.

Not only the central government but local governments also issue regional regulations that are adapted to the conditions of each region in handling Covid-19. In its

development there are several rules that are considered to conflict with the central government, but this must be understood in an emergency situation in order to save the people in their area each. Moreover, in the context of decentralization, the local government certainly has a wider authority in determining attitudes and rules which will be looked at more deeply in the next discussion.

METHODS

This research is a literature review as a result of studies and research conducted by researchers while serving as government employees in Local Government. In addition, the research used is qualitative research about descriptive research and tends to use analysis. Process and meaning (subject perspective) are more highlighted in qualitative research. The theoretical basis is used as a guide so that the research focus is in accordance with the facts in the field as long as the author makes observations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Meaning of Decentralization

Decentralization can be defined as the transfer of responsibility for planning. Management and management of resources and allocation of funds from the central government and its agencies to: (a) a field unit of ministry and central government, (b) units under the central government or government level, (c) semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, (d) regional, regional or functional authorities, or (e) private or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Rondinelli et.al 1983:13). According to Rondinelli, Nellis and Cheema (1983: 9-10), decentralization is a hope that will reduce the overload and congestion of administration and communication in government.

The decentralized design is expected to increase the government's response to the public and increase the quantity and quality of services provided. Decentralization is often justified as a way to manage national economic development more effectively and efficiently. Decentralization is often seen as a way to

increase the ability of central government officials to obtain better information about local or regional conditions, to plan local programs that are more responsive and react more quickly to problems. In theory decentralization should allow government programs to be completed more quickly by giving local governments greater authority in decision-making, thereby enabling them to bypass the sluggish procedures often associated with centralized administration.

In addition, according to Rondinelli and Cheema (in Seymour & Turner, 2002: 34), decentralization can be a positive route for developing countries. Decentralization also allows for greater representation of different political, religious, ethnic and tribal groups in the decision-making process. So that it can lead to an equal distribution of resources and government funding. Decentralization can also increase political stability and national unity by enabling different populations to take a more flexible part in decision-making, thereby increasing democratization of the political system.

Basically, the decentralization policy in Indonesia is to bring the government closer to the community by empowering regional and provincial governments, regional legislative councils and local communities, and making the use of public funds more effective and efficient in accordance with regional development needs and improving public services. The decentralization policy has reduced the authority of the central government and extended the authority of the provincial and local governments, thus, the provincial and local governments will be able to initiate policies and bring their regions to better welfare. In other words, decentralization exists to solve regional and local problems, which will free the central government from spending time and energy dealing with problems as it did in the past. In this way, it is hoped that the central government will have more time and energy to deal with globalization, to observe, and creatively promote the interests of the state. The central government is also obliged to maintain national unity, to maintain national

integration, to guide, to supervise and control the implementation of decentralization policies. With this formula, it is clear that the implementation of decentralization policies requires a clear vision, strong leadership, and effective oversight and political authority from the side of the central government (Rasyid, 2006:2).

B. Implementation of Decentralization in the Midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The implementation of Decentralization which has been running for approximately 20 years is now being tested by the presence of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The development of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) outbreak has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). This is considering the spread of Covid-19 not only in mainland China, especially Wuhan, but also in various countries around the world. This is why countries are currently trying to reduce the number of spreads and increase the number of victims (Iswahyudi et al., 2020). To overcome this Covid-19, unusual ways are needed. One of them is where the Indonesian government has designated Covid-19 as a national disaster through Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2020 concerning the Designation of Non-Natural Disasters Spreading Covid-19 as a National Disaster (Samudro & Madjid, 2020).

Previously, the President had also issued a number of regulations and policies, including Government Regulation in Lieu of Law No. 1 of 2020 concerning State Financial Policy and Financial System Stability for Handling the Covid-19 Pandemic and/or in the context of dealing with threats that endanger the National economy and/or System Stability. Finance, Government Regulation no. 21 of 2020 concerning Large-Scale Social Restrictions in the Context of Accelerating Handling (Covid 2019), Presidential Decree No. 11 of 2020 concerning the stipulation of a Public Health Emergency (Covid 2019), Presidential Decree No. 12 of 2020 concerning the stipulation of Covid-19 as a National disaster. Minister of Health Regulation 9 of 2020 concerning

Guidelines for Large-Scale Social Restrictions in the context of accelerating the handling of Covid-19.

A number of the above laws and regulations are important to be issued in dealing with Covid-19. This is considering that some time ago there was a miss-coordination between the central government and local governments in determining policies and responsibilities to local communities. On the one hand, the steps taken by several regions in taking the initiation of policies to overcome the spread of Covid-19 by making "regional quarantine" or "local lockdown" policies independently before the legal protection and central government policies are taken appropriately, yet also need firm and clear policies in responding to Covid-19 in Indonesia (Suherman, 2020).

The emergency conditions due to Covid-19 within the framework of a unitary state are not only the responsibility of the central government, but also the roles and responsibilities of the central government, but also the roles and responsibilities of local governments (Ariyanto, 2020). It is important for local governments to innovate policies to handle the Covid-19 pandemic without overriding the policies that have been issued by the central government. Furthermore, in the course of nearly two years, the central and local governments have initiated the implementation of the adaptation of a new custom order or new normal in society (Mardiana et., al.2020). This is due to Indonesia cannot linger in the Covid-19 situation, with the economic and social aspects of society decreasing due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, there needs to be a strategic policy developed by the central and local governments in response to the new normal order in society, while still prioritizing health protocols and preventing the spread of Covid-19 (Ilham & Renyaan, 2012).

C. Local Government Policies in Handling Covid-19

Regarding the policies that must be made by the government in terms of services, it must adhere to decentralized management and

coordination. Decentralization is the process of distributing government power and authority to regions. The opposite of a centralized system of government, the decentralization process describes the authority that was originally centralized to one point to several points. The points in question are autonomous regions.

In addition to decentralization in facilitating public services, government officials must carry out their duties in accordance with SOPs and coordinate with relevant agencies. Coordination is a process of a series of activities in the context of integrating and aligning the goals and work plans that have been set for all elements, functional areas and departments to produce a uniform and harmonious action effectively and efficiently. In an organization, coordination must be given by superiors in completing tasks so that the delivery of information becomes clear and the distribution is clear work to subordinates in accordance with the authority received.

The condition of the Covid-19 Pandemic that is endemic throughout the world, Indonesia in the era of decentralization and Regional Autonomy has given authority to local governments to improve the quality of public services, especially in the health sector. In connection with the current conditions, the spread of Covid-19 throughout Indonesia certainly requires a quick response from the government, especially local governments.

Several regional heads have taken the initiative in advance to anticipate the increasingly widespread spread of the virus, for example by implementing regional quarantine policies (lockdown) and large-scale social restrictions (social distancing, physical distancing). This policy limits the movement of people by closing schools, asking employees to work from home or known as work from home (WFH), limiting religious activities to limiting the use of public transportation. However, in its development, the regional government's policies are considered not in line with the policies of the central government. The initiative carried out by the regional head was actually annulled by the central government

because it was considered to have overstepped the central authority.

Whereas according to the Regional Government Law (UU No. 23/2014), regions have the responsibility to provide basic services, particularly in improving health services. The affairs that are the authority of the regions are very clearly regulated in this law where the central government has the authority in six affairs, namely foreign policy; defence; security; justice; national monetary and fiscal; and religion. Apart from these six affairs, local government can make their own policy.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made local governments increasingly strengthen their roles and authorities in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic quickly and precisely. Local governments are given the authority and task to deal with the Covid-19 problem. The establishment of the Covid-19 Task Force at the Provincial and Regency/City levels provides a signal that the regional governments, both provincial and district/city levels, have fully implemented the principle of decentralization in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. The principle of decentralization allows local governments to quickly and precisely take strategic steps in accelerating and breaking the chain of any cases of the Covid-19 pandemic that arise.

The principle of decentralization must be strengthened with the support of the authority given by the central government to local governments. Basic services in the form of health are matters that must be given full authority to local governments to implement them. There are several regional government affairs, namely basic services other than health, education, public works and spatial planning, public housing and residential areas, peace and public order, and community and social protection.

The government's fiscal decentralization as soon as possible takes concrete steps and realizes extraordinary fiscal decentralization which aims to increase regional financial independence so that they are free to manage regional finances in dealing with and anticipating the spread of COVID-19 and its

implications. Fiscal decentralization is the transfer of fiscal authority from the central government to regional governments. The spirit of decentralization is the handover of government authority by the central government to autonomous regions, to regulate and manage government affairs, especially in the face of Covid-19 but still within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

What has become a phenomenon in the field is that there are several things that can be considered regarding decentralization and coordination in dealing with Covid-19. First, the problem of central and regional relations is multidimensional in nature related to mindsets, regulations, and the existence of coordinating institutions, to issues of supervision, norms, and ethics. The problem of coordination, communication and synergy at the beginning of this pandemic was admittedly lacking. However, regarding the mindset problem, the government must respond quickly to the pandemic which ultimately affects the entire handling process. The government is increasingly concerned and realizes that coordination is important. One of them is reflected by the existence of a task force. The local government itself has interpreted several policies and as far as possible made a quick response for the common interest without intending to violate the rules.

Second, related to supervision by the House of Representatives, it is recommended not to be loose. However, it is also necessary to exercise policy discretion in order to create an accelerated tactical response by the regional government regarding this pandemic. For this reason, it is hoped that in the future the pattern of relations between the center and the locals will be more tactical and harmonious.

Third, general government affairs are one of the keys to strengthen and coordinate between the central and local governments. For this reason, the follow-up can be stated in a Presidential Decree related to Public Health Emergency Management related to COVID-19 as a national disaster.

Fourth, in handling COVID-19, the relationship between the center and the regions must still be in norms and ethics. Both the central and local governments must properly understand the authority they have. On the other hand, both must appreciate each other by sharing the burden and the spirit of continuing to synergize and work together for the benefit of the nation.

Based on the concept of decentralization and coordination as described above, it can be understood that the central government gives full authority to local governments in dealing with problems in the regions, especially in dealing with Covid-19 through the heads of task forces, starting from the center, provinces, districts/cities and sub-districts. In the sub-districts, the sub-district heads continue to coordinate, consult and communicate among district leadership communication forum and leaders at the district level. In addition, coordinating and monitoring the handling of Covid-19 at the village level with all the preparations.

To speed up the handling and prevention of Covid-19, the government has formed Task Forces from the central, provincial, district/city levels to the sub-district level. This task force team involved all elements of the sub-district and village, as well as the district leadership communication forum and the head of the hamlet as well as the head of the neighborhood. As for the decentralization and coordination carried out in the response to Covid-19, it is to give full authority to the sub-districts to accelerate the handling and control of the spread of Covid-19 and distribute assistance to the community to manage the people's economy due to the impact of Covid-19.

Subdistrict Head coordinates with village officials in collaboration with all related elements including Chief of District Police, Commander of Military District, and Head of Public Health Center and so on including all village heads in the sub-district area. The steps taken by the Subdistrict Head are as follows:

1. Establishing a task force that handles covid-19 at all levels from the village, hamlet and neighborhood;
2. Delivering information on the prevention and control of Covid-19 to the entire community by using existing communication channels in the community;
3. Facilitating and encouraging headman, village head, neighborhood, hamlet, Head of Public Health Center, and community-based social institutions to be active as an effort to prevent the transmission of Covid-19;
4. Encouraging community participation in personal hygiene and home health efforts as a manifestation of Healthy and Clean Living Behavior (PHBS);
5. Encouraging and overcoming the community in implementing restrictions physical contact with existing facilities such as in sub-districts, local/village markets, places of worship, sports facilities, and recreational facilities;
6. Establishing and activating food barns in neighborhood association and citizens association to overcome the social impacts that occur due to the spread of Covid-19; Utilize village budget funds to provide support to communities affected by Covid-19 in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

Delegation of most of the tasks of the central government to local governments is an important matter in the implementation of regional autonomy as a whole. Decentralization means the handing over of government affairs from the government or the upper level regions to the regions that are their household affairs. In terms of granting authority, the principle of decentralization is the principle that gives local governments the authority to regulate and handle certain affairs as their own household affairs, in this case health.

The authority is in the central command and the authority is given to be implemented by the regional government, in fact this is the implementation of the principle of

decentralization. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced local governments to try to implement the principle of decentralization with all the authority they have in terms of implementing all restrictions both at the provincial and district/city levels. Mandatory affairs in the form of health affairs are the implementation of decentralization. The concept of bottom up planning is the basic concept of complete decentralization, while the concept of top down instruction is more of a centralized principle.

The application of the principle of decentralization is also a pattern of regional development and development. Regional independence will find a natural meaning as long as each region is respected for its independence and freedom to manage all its natural potential and wealth. In addition, the implementation of decentralization is a form of trust in the ability of the region to organize and manage development in the region. Whole and pure decentralization is also seen as an absolute condition for real economic growth, the assumption is that a number of development programs require full participation and support from local communities (Fred W. Riggs, 1984).

Following the model of thinking of Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), a government that does not have the spirit to build government institutions at the regional level is the same as not having the spirit of democracy. A democratic society requires strengthening local government. The decentralization that has been carried out is seen as an effort to build the spirit of democracy. Therefore, the current decentralization is part of the effort to build a democratic society.

Regardless of the Covid-19 pandemic or not, strengthening decentralization is a demand to reform in the regions as well as demands for wider freedom in governance arrangements in the regions. The era of strengthening in the regions must be an urgent and main priority with the aim of inviting the whole community to participate and promote development in the regions according to the concept of strengthening local government. Therefore, the hard work of the central and

local governments as well as the solid support of all Indonesian people will be the only hope so that the strengthening of decentralization will continue even though our country is being hit by the Covid-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

One of the contemporary issues that hinders the implementation of Decentralization in Indonesia is the Covid-19 pandemic which has hit the world for almost two years, affecting all sectors, such as development, economy, politics, and socio-culture. The perceived influence is how effective the changes in central government policies are that are deployed to all local governments in carrying out policies in the midst of society.

In this Covid-19 pandemic era, the situation is still chaotic with public concerns. In addition, the death rate which is increasing day by day causes regulations and policies to be neglected, for example enforcement of restrictions on community activities which require that all citizens are prohibited from leaving the house, except for people who follow prerequisites such as having vaccinated at least the first dose of vaccine, and for people who are out of town, they must complete prerequisites such as PCR tests, antigen tests and others.

Of course, this is not immediately enforced because of the community's difficulties in fulfilling these requirements. Due to multicultural, it will be difficult to accept this kind of thing, because some of them believe that vaccination will only kill them. However, there are also those who follow the policies of the central government to carry out every activity.

From the description above, we can conclude that the implementation of decentralization is still facing obstacles including limited human resources, facilities, infrastructure, management, natural resources, local revenue, use of the budget, including health funds, which have not been fully used effectively and compromised. Depending on needs, whereas the real purpose of health decentralization is an opportunity for the

regions where, in the regions, they can be handled and coordinated more quickly, directed, and on target than the community needs. In addition, the difficulty in changing people's perspective that they are part of the subject of development, is no longer just an object of development for services.

In an effort to deal with Covid-19, the central government implemented decentralization by establishing a Provincial and Regency/City Covid-19 Handling Task Force. The tasks of the regional Covid-19 Handling Task Force include establishing and implementing policies and controlling the implementation of strategic policies related to the handling of Covid-19 in the regions, but the command and control of the regional Covid-19 handling remains under the Head of the National Covid-19 Handling Task Force and Head of the National Disaster Management Authority (BNPB).

Referring to Law Number 23 of 2014, local governments can take advantage of the decentralized space as an autonomous region. The executive and the legislature can make changes to the regional expenditure budget on the grounds of an emergency and/or extraordinary circumstances (article 316). Regarding funding, regions can access the use of emergency funds by proposing emergency funds to the Minister of Home Affairs (article 296). Apart from doing legislation and budgeting, local governments can take advantage of other decentralized spaces. Regions can develop programs or activities that are oriented towards building social, economic, health and food resilience when the large-scale social restrictions is implemented.

Equally important is increasing the synergy between stakeholders, especially at the regional level to maximize the decentralization of handling Covid-19 for the sake of smoothness and maximizing policies for handling Covid-19 in Indonesia.

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