

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MERITOCRACY IN STRUCTURAL PROMOTION AT THE CENTRAL STATISTICS AGENCY (BPS) IN EAST NUSA TENGGARA (A STUDY AT THE CENTRAL STATISTICS AGENCY IN MAINLAND TIMOR)

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Abstract:
 One of the efforts to strengthen institutional governance and drive bureaucratic reform at the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) is the implementation of a meritocracy system. This system aims to build competitive and professional human resources within the framework of good governance. In the bureaucratic reform agenda, meritocracy is crucial for promoting fairness and competence while minimizing nepotism, corruption, and transactional practices in job promotions. This study examines the effectiveness of the meritocracy system in promoting structural positions within BPS East Nusa Tenggara, focusing on echelon III and IV roles. It also explores supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, using observation, document review, and interviews for data collection. Data analysis included reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. Duncan's theory – goal achievement, integration, and adaptation – was used to assess effectiveness, while Grundmann's merit principles – recruitment, selection, equity, retention, neutrality, and public interest – were applied to identify influencing factors. Findings indicate that the meritocracy system in BPS East Nusa Tenggara is still relatively ineffective. Key inhibiting factors include the absence of formal regulations at the echelon II level, inadequate assessment of non-technical qualifications, lack of interest in echelon IV roles, and limited budget to support merit-based practices. Suggested improvements include broader use of assessment centers, proposing additional budgets for external selection processes, and revising job profiles and allowances to enhance role attractiveness and employee welfare.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Meritocracy, Promotion, Structural Position

INTRODUCTION

Meritocracy theory is a social theory first proposed by Michael Dunlop Young (1958) in his book, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*, where merit is conceptualized as a combination of Intelligence (I) and Effort (E), symbolized by $I + E = M$. Young stated, "Intelligence and Effort together make up merit. The lazy genius is not one." This means that even if someone is a genius without the support of effort, they do not fall into the category of meritocracy.

As stated by Widodo (2005), meritocracy is a system of employee recruitment or promotion that is not based on kinship or patrimonial ties (children, nephews, relatives, alums, region, group, etc.) but rather on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience possessed by the individual concerned. Therefore, those involved must be professional in carrying out the tasks and responsibilities assigned to them.

The placement of civil servants through promotions is essentially aimed at providing the right position (The Right Man in the Right Place) so that, in carrying out their duties and functions, they

can provide benefits and achieve success as outlined in the objectives of each bureaucracy. The placement of civil servants through promotions must, of course, begin with appropriate and targeted human resource management to achieve the organization's goals. Therefore, civil servants are required to excel in their work so they can occupy higher positions within their agencies. Hidayat (2002:46) states that promotion and rotation decisions made by management are rewards for career development programs. Programs such as training and technical guidance will be meaningless if not followed by promotions. Education and training are intended to achieve efficiency and work effectiveness for the benefit of the bureaucracy, both now and in the future.

Referring to the above, the Government has issued a policy that supports this through Government Regulation Number 17 of 2020 concerning Amendments to Government Regulation Number 11 of 2017 concerning Civil Servant Management, namely in Article 162 it is stated that Career development, competency development, career patterns, transfers and promotions are PNS career management that must be carried out by applying the principles of the Merit System or Meritocracy. Furthermore, Meritocracy in the above regulation is a policy and management of PNS based on qualifications, competencies and performance in a fair and reasonable manner without distinguishing political background, race, skin color, religion, origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability conditions. The implementation of PNS Management based on meritocracy aims to produce PNS who are professional, have basic values, professional ethics, are free from political intervention, are clean from the practices of corruption, collusion, and nepotism in the context of carrying out public service duties, government duties and certain development tasks. The presence of this meritocracy is certainly not free from opposition in society, where meritocracy is considered a discriminatory system or a form of injustice that provides little space for those who have less outstanding abilities.

The meritocracy system has been widely used by government agencies as mandated in Law Number 5 of 2014 as revoked by Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning State Civil Apparatus that filling of high-ranking and middle-ranking positions in ministries, secretariats of state institutions, non-structural institutions, and Regional Agencies is carried out openly and competitively among civil servants by taking into account the requirements of competence, qualifications, rank, education and training, track record of position and integrity as well as other requirements required in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations and is carried out at the national level. Meanwhile, filling of high-ranking pratama positions is carried out openly and competitively among civil servants by taking into account the requirements of competence, qualifications, rank, education and training, track record of position and integrity as well as other requirements in accordance with the provisions of laws and regulations which are carried out openly and competitively at the national level or between districts/cities in 1 (one) province.

In line with the objectives above and as a form of human resource management, the filling of high-ranking leadership positions and structural positions, up to echelon II, within the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) has been carried out based on meritocratic principles. This system has been subsequently adopted at the regional level, including within the East Nusa Tenggara Regional Statistics Agency (BPS). The open bidding system demonstrates this for echelon III positions. Echelon IV positions are generally filled through closed selection (direct appointment). Open selection for echelon IV positions was conducted only once, in 2016.

The implementation of meritocracy within Statistics Indonesia (BPS) is one effort to strengthen institutional governance and bureaucratic reform, aiming to achieve superior and competitive statistical human resources within an institutional governance framework. To achieve this, the



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policy and management system of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is directed towards transforming from a closed career system to an open career system, with the hope of accelerating the implementation of bureaucratic reform.

As one of the agendas in bureaucratic reform, the implementation of the concept of meritocracy is intended to create justice and competence, minimize the practice of nepotism, corruption and buying and selling of positions. Meritocracy is a system that emphasizes healthy and fair competition, open selection, critical evaluation of a person's quality and the importance of qualification standards in a good recruitment process (Wijaya et al, 2019). The merit system is a system of recruiting or promoting employees that is not based on kinship, patrimonial relationships (children, nephews, relatives, alums, region, group and others) but is based on the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience possessed by the person concerned (Widodo, 2005). Thus, in a merit system, a person's placement in a position does not depend on factors of closeness to the authorities, but because they meet the qualification and quality requirements according to the needs of the organization. Quantitatively, the level of professionalism of ASN can be measured, which is then known as the ASN Professionalism Index (IPASN). The ASN Professionalism Index is regulated in Regulation of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform Number 8 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for Procedures and Implementation of IPASN Measurement. The IPASN measurement will produce a map or snapshot of the level of ASN professionalism in government agencies and ASN itself, and serve as a basis for mapping ASN competency development, which is expected to enhance the value of bureaucratic reform.

At the NTT Regional Statistics Agency (BPS), the 2023 ASN Professionalism Index (IPASN) was 75.61, or in the moderate category. Details of the values for each dimension are shown in the following table:

Table 1. 2023 ASN Professionalism Index, NTT Regional Statistics Agency

Dimension	Maximum Value	2023 IPASN Score
Qualification	25	20,97
Competence	40	25,08
Performance	30	24,58
Discipline	5	4,98
Total	100	75,61

Source: Human Resources and Legal Team, BPS NTT Province, 2025

Assessments for each of the above dimensions indicate that improvements are needed in the qualifications, competencies, and performance dimensions. This can be done by updating education data, training/course history, and performance assessments in the BPS Simpeg and KipApp applications. However, not all employees have fulfilled this mandate.

Referring to the above conditions and according to research results at the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for the East Nusa Tenggara Region, it shows that the pattern of filling structural positions at the echelon III level is generally through open selection, while at the echelon IV level, it is generally through closed selection. This phenomenon is certainly not in accordance with the ideals of the organization, especially as stated in Regulation of the Head of the Central Statistics Agency Number 4 of 2022 concerning Amendments to Regulation of the Head of the Central Statistics Agency Number 36 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Central Statistics Agency for 2020-2024, where one effort to improve the individual career planning system is performance-based



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(Merit System). However, in practice, closed selection still occurs where those selected are due to a lack of interest in the position. So, if there is a candidate who has met certain criteria, such as rank, good SKP assessments over the past two years, then they will be appointed to the position. This condition is particularly common in filling structural positions at echelon IV. Meanwhile, these structural positions play a very important role in the sustainability of the organization.

Based on the above phenomena, improvements are needed in terms of meritocracy-based selection stages to create transparency and fairness for participants. The selection stages are important, as found in the research of Riyan Afrianto and Eko Prasajo (2020), which showed that competency measurement through the assessment stage is incomplete because the competencies measured only basic and managerial competencies, while technical competencies are not carried out, so it is not fully based on the principles of meritocracy.

METHODS

In this study, the researcher used descriptive research with a qualitative approach in which data were obtained through informant interviews, observation, and document analysis. The research location was at the Central Statistics Agency of NTT Province. Fourteen informants were purposively selected based on their understanding and ability to provide information related to the research problem. Data sources consisted of primary data (results of interviews and direct observation) and secondary data (documents, official reports, and academic literature). To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation techniques were used, both in terms of sources, methods, and time of data collection. Data analysis was carried out through a process of categorization, thematic interpretation, and inductive reasoning, in order to formulate collaboration patterns so that the results of this study were presented systematically and could be scientifically accounted for.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Meritocracy in Structural Promotion at the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in the East Nusa Tenggara Region (Study at the Central Statistics Agency in Mainland Timor). Meritocracy is a system based on ability or achievement, rather than kinship. However, the definition above does not specifically explain the concept of meritocracy. Meritocracy is a contingent concept that depends on what society deems good (Amartya Sen, 2000). This means that a merit system is highly dependent on the environment in which it is implemented. The definition of merit within a particular social group or organization may differ from another. The organization's value system and goals can further define the concept of merit based on the needs of that organization.

In a meritocracy, the priorities are healthy, fair, and open competition, sound recruitment, clear qualification standards, and quality evaluation. A person will be deemed worthy of a position if they possess the skills or achievements that align with the position's requirements. Meritocracy in human resource management is nothing new. It has been implemented in the private sector. In the public sector, especially in Indonesia, this system has only been implemented since the enactment of Law Number 5 of 2014, which has now been revoked by Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the State Civil Apparatus. Furthermore, the formulation of this meritocracy is most recently regulated through Government Regulation Number 17 of 2020 concerning Amendments to Government Regulation Number 11 of 2017 concerning Civil Servant Management.

The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) is a government agency that uses a merit-based system in its civil servant (ASN) management. The merit system implemented is also periodically evaluated. This assessment is not conducted independently, but through an official institution formerly known



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as the State Civil Service Committee (KASN). However, with the merger of KASN's duties and functions with the State Civil Service Agency (BKN) and the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PAN-RB), the BKN will now handle the merit system assessment.

The merit system assessment results for 2022 and 2024 indicate that BPS is in the very good category. With this score, BPS has the right to fill positions through talent management, where transfers, rotations, and promotions can be carried out independently, especially for administrator positions and below. Meanwhile, for Senior Leadership Positions (JPT Pratama), it can be done separately or through open bidding. However, BPS policy is that JPT Pratama positions are filled through open bidding because talent management is currently still evolving. Talent management at BPS is still being refined, so open bidding has been determined to continue, especially for JPT Pratama positions.

In the 2022 and 2024 assessments, the score decreased by 5 points, from 341 to 336. Two aspects still require attention: career development and promotion, and transfer. For career development, BPS has a regulation regarding the career system, but it still requires supporting evidence that it has been consistently implemented. Meanwhile, promotion and transfer also remain a challenge for BPS. Efforts have been made to organize both aspects as optimally as possible. However, there are still some concerns from the assessors. This aspect also remains a challenge in the regions. One example is in the BPS of NTT Province. Although promotions have been provided through talent management, they have not been implemented yet due to the ongoing refinement of talent management. Therefore, the open bidding system remains in effect.

Quoting Sen's (2000) previous statement that the merit system is highly dependent on the environment in which the system is implemented, where the definition of merit in a particular community group or organization may differ from another. Therefore, in this study, 5 indicators of meritocracy were used according to Grundmann in the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (2016), which consist of (1) Recruitment, Selection, and Advancement, (2) Equity, (3) Retention, (4) Neutrality and (5) Public Interest.

Recruitment, Selection, and Advancement. Recruitment, Selection, and Advancement are the processes of selecting employees based on their abilities, fairly, through open competition, to achieve a representative workforce. Furthermore, in relation to the merit system, selection criteria must be established and structured, valid and reliable assessments must be used, in accordance with the merit-based civil service management system. In the context of meritocracy, job qualifications are the primary basis for assessing and selecting the most suitable individuals for a position without regard to discrimination such as political background, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability. Practices at the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), particularly in the East Nusa Tenggara region, demonstrate that the application of the meritocratic principles of Recruitment, Selection, and Advancement has outlined the qualifications required for each position.

Equity. In a meritocracy, equity is the principle that every individual has an equal opportunity to attain a position, title, or award based on their qualifications, competence, and performance, without discrimination based on political background, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability. As defined by Grundmann (2016), equity means that all employees must receive fair and equal treatment in all aspects of personnel management, regardless of political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, age, or disability, and with reasonable regard for their privacy and constitutional rights. Equity, particularly in terms of equal opportunity, has been implemented optimally, with employees with lower educational backgrounds given the chance to pursue higher education and ultimately qualify for promotions to



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higher levels. Learning programs, such as capacity building, knowledge sharing, and coffee mornings, are also facilitated to improve competency and are accessible to all employees. Furthermore, the transparency and impartiality aspects of meritocracy have not been implemented optimally. This is evident in the assessment stages that have not been openly communicated, thus not optimally ensuring transparency and impartiality.

Retention. Grundmann (2016) states that retention means that employees must be retained based on their adequate performance, inadequate performance must be improved, and employees who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet the required standards must be separated. Retention in meritocracy also refers to systemic and ongoing efforts to retain employees with high qualifications, competencies, and performance so that they remain and develop within the organization, particularly within the government bureaucracy. This retention also serves as an effort to maintain human resources with significant potential and contributions to remain within the organization. At the NTT Province Statistics Agency (BPS), succession planning and career development at BPS in general and BPS NTT in particular need to be improved because they do not meet merit standards. Competencies are still limited to technical competencies, while non-technical competencies have not been optimally addressed and developed. Meanwhile, job rotation at the NTT Regional Central Statistics Agency, in terms of retention through rotation aspects, has been implemented to avoid employee saturation and boredom, as well as a challenge to increase capacity and adaptability to the new environment.

Furthermore, from the aspect of fair rewards, this demonstrates that it has been implemented well, based on justice and adhering to meritocracy. This is shown by the provision of rewards based on performance, competency, and qualifications, as well as the provision of equal opportunity for every employee to participate in the selection process or be appointed to a position one level higher.

Neutrality. Neutrality means that employees must be protected from arbitrary actions, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes, and are prohibited from using their official authority or influence to interfere with or influence the outcome of elections or nominations (Grundmann, 2016). Within the government bureaucracy, it is emphasized that civil servants must be free from political interference in carrying out their duties so that all civil servant management processes are implemented based on a merit system, ultimately producing truly competent and high-performing civil servants. Promotions, whether through open bidding or direct appointment within the NTT Provincial Statistics Office, are carried out with a focus on neutrality.

A professional and independent selection committee is required for job selection. The establishment of a professional and independent selection committee (pansel) must ensure that the entire job selection process is conducted transparently, fairly, and objectively, selecting candidates based on qualifications, competency, performance, and track record without interference from any party. Regarding the job selection process at the East Nusa Tenggara Provincial Statistics Agency (BPS), a committee is formed for each selection period based on a Decree of the Head of the NTT Provincial BPS. The selection mechanism has been designed to be as transparent, fair, and accountable as possible, with the aim of ensuring that each civil servant is selected based on competence and integrity, not political interests or subjectivity.

Public Interest. Employees must be protected from retaliation for disclosing legitimate information that they reasonably believe to be evidence of: violations of any law, rule, or regulation, or mismanagement, waste of funds, abuse of authority, or specific dangers to public health or safety (Grundmann, 2016). Throughout the entire selection process, from the stage of determining which candidates are proposed to the central government, there is room and opportunity for anyone to



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raise objections if they find anything inappropriate in the selection process. However, there are still weaknesses related to the written regulations at the final stage that need to be fixed so as not to arouse suspicion from any party who knows about the selection.

Meanwhile, transparency is stipulated in Presidential Regulation Number 17 of 2020 concerning Employee Management and Law Number 20 of 2023 concerning the Civil Servant Law. The conditions reported by informants indicate weaknesses in transparency, where the entire process has not been communicated transparently, especially regarding final decisions.

The Effectiveness of Meritocracy in Structural Position Promotions at the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in the East Nusa Tenggara Region (A Study at the Central Statistics Agency in Mainland Timor). BPS Head Regulation Number 36 of 2020 concerning the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan of the Central Statistics Agency states that one strategy for improving the Career Planning, Transfer, and Rotation System is performance-based individual career achievement (the Merit System). This merit system continues to be enhanced as it is one way to achieve talent management. BPS, in general, is already in the very good category in implementing the merit system. However, because talent management is still evolving (still being refined) and at the discretion of the leadership, the filling of positions, especially JPT Pratama (Primary) positions, is carried out through open bidding.

Meanwhile, for lower levels, open bidding or direct appointment can be used. Regarding the implementation of the merit system at BPS NTT, which has been in place for several years, its effectiveness will be described using Duncan's theory of organizational effectiveness. Duncan, as quoted by Steers (1985:53) in his book "Organizational Effectiveness," proposed indicators of organizational effectiveness.

Goal Achievement. The indicator for goal achievement refers to how BPS NTT views the merit-based structural position filling process as an ongoing process, not an outcome. In this aspect, the entire process is implemented systematically and in stages to ensure that meritocracy in structural position promotions is optimally achieved. The structural position filling pattern, which involves open bidding and direct appointment, has been based on merit. However, a weakness is the lack of a definite timeframe. According to BPS Regulation Number 1 of 2020, echelon III and IV positions have been delegated to echelon II for selection. However, to maintain transparency and fairness, BPS NTT's policy is open bidding for echelon III and direct appointment for echelon IV. Written regulations do not accompany this policy; thus, there is no certainty about the implementation timeframe. The legal basis is also crucial in achieving objectives. This legal basis provides legitimacy and certainty for the organization to achieve its goals. The implementation of meritocracy within BPS NTT has been implemented in accordance with regulations issued by both the government and internally. However, a weakness is the lack of written rules issued by BPS NTT regarding the implementation of meritocracy policies, making its sustainability uncertain, both in terms of the position filling mechanism and requirements.

Integration. Integration in organizational effectiveness relates to measuring the organization's ability, in this case, the BPS NTT Region, to implement a meritocracy system for job promotions in an integrated and coordinated manner for all employees and other relevant parties. Within integration, two factors require attention: procedures and the socialization process. Procedures relate to clear procedures or mechanisms for implementing meritocracy in structural position promotions at BPS NTT Region, thus facilitating coordination and cooperation between institutions. Meanwhile, the socialization process reflects BPS NTT's ability to disseminate information, build consensus, and communicate the merit system program or policy to all employees and other relevant parties. Regarding the procedure for filling structural positions, as previously explained, echelon III



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positions are filled through open bidding, and echelon IV positions are filled through direct appointment.

Adaptation. Adaptation relates to the organization's ability to adapt to changes in the external and internal environment. In the adaptation indicator, human resource capacity development can be achieved through formal and non-formal education. Furthermore, within the career system, promotions, rotations, and transfers are also tools for improving employee capacity and competence.

CONCLUSION

The application of meritocracy in structural position promotions at the BPS-Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in East Nusa Tenggara remains ineffective in terms of goal achievement, integration, and adaptation. Efforts that need to be made include: involving external parties in the selection process to ensure independence; establishing written regulations regarding the mechanism for filling structural positions at the BPS-Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in the NTT Region, both at the echelon III and IV levels, to ensure sustainability and consistency; adding non-technical qualifications to produce the best leaders; and improving the job profile, particularly at the echelon IV level, to increase job attractiveness.

Supporting factors for the implementation of a meritocratic system in promotions at the echelon III and IV levels at the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in East Nusa Tenggara include: a commitment from the leadership to implement objective, fair, and transparent merit-based promotions through open bidding; the availability of adequate human resources with the competencies to occupy structural positions at both echelon III and IV; opportunities for career development through training, technical guidance, and study assignments; adequate IT-based facilities and infrastructure, particularly related to employee management, and providing opportunities for all employees with the required qualifications to participate in the selection process for structural position promotions. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors include: There is no written regulation regarding the implementation of the merit system in structural position promotions that guarantees its sustainability and consistency; the profile of echelon IV positions has not been considered in terms of official welfare with workload; non-technical competencies have not been adequately measured; the assessment center is intended for middle functional; the selection committee is limited to internal parties or does not involve external parties; Not yet supported by an adequate budget and geographical conditions that are not all in demand by employees.

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