

Capacity Building for Local Government Apparatus in Implementing Public Service Digitalization: A Study on Human Resource Development at the Public Service Mall of Lamongan Regency

¹Shofiah Nurhayati, ²Sumartono, ³Mohammad Rozikin, ⁴Firda Hidayati

¹Doctoral Program, Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University Malang, 65145, Indonesia
shofiahnurhayatifaub@gmail.com

²Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University Malang, 65145, Indonesia
sumartono_fia@ub.ac.id

³Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University Malang, 65145, Indonesia
mail.rozikin01@gmail.com

⁴Faculty of Administrative Sciences, Brawijaya University Malang, 65145, Indonesia
firda_fia@ub.ac.id

Abstract

The digital transformation of public services necessitates the strengthening of local government apparatus capacity as a critical factor in the successful implementation of e-government. This study aims to analyze the capacity-building process of government personnel in the digitalization of public services in Lamongan Regency, with a particular focus on human resource development at the Public Service Mall (MPP). Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal persistent challenges in capacity building, including non-merit-based recruitment, insufficiently comprehensive training programs, and low levels of digital literacy. Despite the presence of political will and policy support, digital service system integration remains suboptimal due to sectoral egos and infrastructural limitations. The study recommends fostering a collaborative work culture, reforming recruitment and training systems based on innovation, and enhancing cross-sectoral policy synergy. These findings underscore that the digitalization of public services requires a systemic and sustainable capacity-building strategy to produce a responsive, inclusive, and adaptive bureaucracy capable of meeting evolving public needs.

Keywords

Capacity Building; Human Resource Development; e-Government; Digital Public Service; Public Administration Reform; Local Government

1. INTRODUCTION

Governance transformation in post-Reformasi Indonesia has ushered the country into a new era of decentralization, where regional autonomy serves as a mechanism to bring public services closer to citizens while enhancing local government responsiveness and efficiency. As articulated by Turner and Hulme (1997), decentralization involves the devolution of authority from the central government to entities closer to the public. This concept reinforces the role of local governments not merely as administrative bodies, but as pivotal agents in fulfilling citizens' fundamental rights.

Nonetheless, the anticipated improvements in public service quality under decentralization remain only partially realized. Local government bureaucracies continue to be hampered by low levels of professionalism, weak accountability, and limited adaptability to strategic environmental changes, particularly those driven by digitalization. Drawing on Hegelian thought, bureaucracy embodies the public interest; hence, inefficiency in bureaucratic performance directly undermines public trust in the state (Tjokrowinoto, 2001). Bureaucratic reform thus becomes imperative to establish effective and efficient governance.

Amidst global dynamics, the digitalization of public services has emerged as a strategic and inevitable agenda. E-Government, representing the application of information and communication technologies in public service delivery, is believed to address the challenges of effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency

in bureaucracy. As cited in Indrajit (2002), the Harvard JFK School asserts that e-Government is not merely a tool for modernizing service delivery, but also a medium for democratizing access and participation. Carter and Belanger (2005) further emphasize that e-Government enhances the efficiency of service delivery to citizens, civil servants, and businesses alike.

However, the implementation of e-Government in Indonesia faces both structural and cultural challenges. These include limited digital literacy, uneven technological infrastructure, and resistance to change within bureaucratic environments. Although Indonesia has shown improvement in the UN's E-Government Development Index (2022), the persistence of the digital divide and urban bias remains a significant barrier. In this context, digitalization is not solely a matter of technological adoption but requires comprehensive human resource capacity development.

Capacity building becomes a critical concept in addressing this need. Grindle (1997) defines capacity building as a set of strategies to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of government performance. The three core dimensions outlined by Grindle include: (1) human resource development, (2) organizational strengthening, and (3) institutional reform. Specifically, human resource development refers to enhancing the competence, integrity, and technical capacity of civil servants through merit-based recruitment, adaptive training, and performance-based management systems.

The application of capacity-building principles has proven successful in several countries. Singapore, through its Smart Nation program and digital leadership training, has comprehensively integrated technology into public service reform (GovTech Singapore, 2020). South Korea developed the e-People system as a participatory platform for public services, while Estonia adopted the X-Road system to enable fully digital and integrated public services (Tallo, 2019). These examples demonstrate that effective capacity building in the digital era requires synergy among visionary leadership, technological investment, and strategic human resource development.

In Indonesia, efforts to enhance bureaucratic capacity are mandated by various regulations, including Law No. 25 of 2009 on Public Services and Law No. 20 of 2023 on State Civil Apparatus (ASN), which emphasize the importance of merit-based systems and open career structures in personnel management. Furthermore, Presidential Instruction No. 3 of 2003 on e-Government Development and Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018 on the Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) provide an integrative framework for digital governance.

Lamongan Regency stands out as a region that has progressively responded to the agenda of bureaucratic reform and digital public service delivery. In 2022, Lamongan achieved a Bureaucratic Reform Index score of 70.00 (BB rating) and a Public Service Satisfaction Index of 83.78. One notable innovation is the establishment of the Public Service Mall (MPP), which serves as a one-stop service center integrating various services into a digital platform. However, the success of the digital MPP is contingent not only on technological infrastructure but also on the preparedness and capacity of government personnel to manage and operate the system effectively.

Against this backdrop, this study focuses on analyzing the capacity-building process of local government personnel in the digitalization of public service delivery in Lamongan Regency. It is premised on the assumption that digital transformation can only succeed with competent, adaptive, and integrity-driven civil servants. The primary objective is to evaluate recruitment processes, training, remuneration systems, and working conditions that support the implementation of digital MPP, as well as to identify enabling and constraining factors in capacity development.

Using a descriptive qualitative approach and drawing on relevant theoretical frameworks—Decentralization (Turner & Hulme, 1997), E-Government (Indrajit, 2002), Public Administration (Eaton, 1980; Henry, 2018), and Capacity Building (Grindle, 1997)—this study aims to contribute theoretically to the field of public administration and offer practical recommendations for local governments in formulating sustainable and digitally relevant capacity-building strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The current paradigm shift in public administration reflects a transition toward more open, adaptive, and technology-driven governance. This shift is driven by globalization, technological disruption, and

increasing public demands for faster, more accountable, and transparent services. In this context, public service digitalization has become a strategic priority in establishing a modern and efficient bureaucracy. However, digital transformation cannot be effectively implemented without the support of a well-capacitated human resource apparatus. Therefore, examining the enhancement of local government capacity in supporting digital public services is both relevant and crucial.

The concept of *capacity building* serves as a key theoretical foundation in efforts to improve the quality of public administration. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines capacity building as the process of enhancing the abilities of individuals, organizations, and institutional systems to achieve sustainable development goals. Grindle (1997) identifies three core dimensions of capacity building: human resource development, organizational strengthening, and institutional reform. In the context of public service, capacity building involves not only technical skills training, but also work culture transformation, organizational restructuring, and the creation of an environment conducive to innovation. A holistic approach to capacity building is thus essential in shaping a bureaucracy that is adaptive to change, including digitalization.

As information technology becomes increasingly integral to the public sector, the concept of *e-Government* has emerged as a critical pillar of public service transformation. E-Government refers to the utilization of digital technologies by government institutions to improve service quality, operational efficiency, and bureaucratic accountability. Indrajit (2002) emphasizes that e-Government is not merely the digitalization of administrative procedures, but a fundamental transformation of governance structures. Jaeger and Thompson (2003) further argue that e-Government expands opportunities for public participation and strengthens inter-agency connectivity. In practice, the success of e-Government hinges on human resource readiness in terms of technical competencies, managerial capacity, and attitudes toward change. This aligns with the theory of *Digital Era Governance* by Dunleavy et al. (2006), which advocates for a reconfiguration of bureaucratic structures to become more collaborative, data-driven, and responsive to technological dynamics.

Civil service professionalism is a vital factor in ensuring the effectiveness of digital public services. From a public administration perspective, local government personnel are the primary actors in policy implementation, necessitating systematic and continuous development of their capacity. Henry (2018) asserts that civil service professionalism depends on merit-based recruitment, training aligned with organizational needs, and objective performance evaluations. Dwiyanto (2006) argues that the core weakness of Indonesia's bureaucracy lies not in the lack of resources or regulations, but in the inadequate capacity and integrity of its personnel. Thus, bureaucratic reform must prioritize human resource development, particularly in responding to technological change.

The *Public Service Mall* (Mal Pelayanan Publik/MMP) represents a policy innovation that integrates various services in a single, digitally-enabled location. The establishment of MPP aims to streamline procedures, accelerate service delivery, and enhance citizen satisfaction. According to Ministerial Regulation of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 23/2017, MPP is designed to improve public access to quality, transparent, and accountable services. However, the success of MPP is largely determined by the competence and readiness of frontline personnel in managing information systems, interacting with the public, and handling real-time service dynamics. Asmorowati and Sulistiyani (2022) highlight that successful MPPs are supported by professional frontline staff, needs-based training programs, and strong inter-agency coordination.

Nevertheless, the digitalization of local government services faces several challenges. These include limited digital literacy, bureaucratic resistance to change, and uneven infrastructure. Mutiarin and Erwan (2020) note that regional bureaucracies often cling to conventional work practices and are slow to adopt innovation. Additionally, overlapping regulations and weak performance evaluation systems further complicate the digital transformation process. In this context, civil service capacity development must be adaptive, context-specific, and outcome-oriented. Training programs should go beyond administrative formalities and focus on enhancing competencies directly relevant to technology-based service delivery.

Drawing on the theoretical and empirical insights outlined above, it is evident that the success of public service digitalization is highly contingent on the capacity of local government personnel. Capacity-

building strategies must be strategically designed and sustained, encompassing internal regulatory enhancement, merit-based recruitment and promotion systems, technology-adaptive training, and an organizational culture that fosters innovation. In the case of Lamongan Regency—which has demonstrated progress in bureaucratic reform and digital MPP implementation—this study is significant in providing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of civil service capacity development as a critical driver of successful digital public service transformation.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to analyze the capacity of local government personnel in supporting the digitalization of public service delivery, with a particular focus on human resource development at the Public Service Mall (Mal Pelayanan Publik/MMP) in Lamongan Regency. The chosen methodological approach aligns with the complexity of the issue and the need to explore the phenomenon in depth within the context of local bureaucracies undergoing digital transformation. The conceptual framework draws on Capacity Building theory (Grindle, 1997), the concept of e-Government (Indrajit, 2002), and theories of professionalism and bureaucratic reform (Dwiyanto, 2006; Henry, 2018).

3.1. Research Approach

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using an intrinsic case study design. This approach enables an in-depth and contextual exploration of meanings, perceptions, and strategies employed by actors within local bureaucratic organizations. According to Yin (2018), qualitative case studies are highly relevant when examining contemporary phenomena that are inseparable from their real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are blurred.

The intrinsic case study design was chosen not to generalize findings, but to understand holistically how the MPP in Lamongan develops the capacity of its personnel in the face of public service digitalization. The research investigates practices, challenges, and strategies of capacity building, as well as the relationship between human resource capacity and the success of digital service implementation.

3.2. Research Site and Subjects

The study was purposively conducted in Lamongan Regency, East Java, selected due to its relatively strong performance in bureaucratic reform (Bureaucratic Reform Index score of 70.00, BB category in 2022) and its implementation of an integrated digital Public Service Mall. This setting allowed for direct examination of policy dynamics, personnel roles, and the quality of digital services.

Research subjects included local government personnel directly involved in MPP operations—ranging from policymakers to technical implementers and frontline service officers. In addition, public service users were engaged to capture their perceptions and experiences of digital service delivery.

3.3. Data Collection Techniques

Three main techniques were employed to collect data: (1) in-depth interviews, (2) participant observation, and (3) document analysis.

- **In-Depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including the Head of the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Service Agency (DPMPTSP), heads of service divisions, technical staff responsible for digital systems, frontline service officers, and service users. Interview questions were developed based on Grindle's (1997) capacity-building framework, covering recruitment, training, work systems, incentives, and performance evaluation.

- **Participant Observation:** The researcher conducted on-site observations at the MPP to examine work patterns, technology usage, staff-public interactions, and operational obstacles in real-time digital service implementation.

- **Document Analysis:** Relevant documents included regulations on MPP and e-Government, institutional performance reports, staffing data, training materials, and public service evaluation reports. This analysis aimed to assess the alignment between policy planning and implementation.

3.4. Informant Selection Technique

Informants were selected purposively based on their relevance and expertise in explaining the research phenomenon. Criteria included: (1) holding structural or functional positions in public service units; (2) active involvement in the digital transformation process within the MPP; and (3) representing user

perspectives. Snowball sampling was employed to identify additional informants where deeper and more contextual information was needed.

3.5. Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed inductively using thematic analysis as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved six stages: (1) familiarization with interview transcripts and field notes; (2) open coding of significant data points; (3) grouping codes into conceptual themes; (4) reviewing inter-theme relationships; (5) interpreting findings based on theoretical frameworks; and (6) systematically constructing the research narrative.

To ensure data validity, source and method triangulation were applied, along with member checking with selected informants to confirm interpretations. The credibility of findings was maintained through researcher reflexivity, openness to data deviations, and consistency in drawing conclusions.

3.6. Research Instrument

The primary research instrument was the researcher, as is customary in qualitative inquiry. The researcher was actively engaged in data collection and analysis. To enhance validity and systematization, interview and observation guides were developed based on theoretical indicators from capacity-building, e-Government, and civil service professionalism frameworks.

3.7. Research Ethics

The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of social research ethics, including informed consent, anonymity, data confidentiality, and respect for participant rights. All informants were provided with explanations regarding the research objectives and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The researcher maintained neutrality and integrity throughout the data collection and reporting processes.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study reveals that capacity building for government personnel in the digitalization of public service delivery at the Public Service Mall (MPP) in Lamongan Regency remains suboptimal, despite notable progress. In the domain of human resource development, the recruitment process for civil servants is not yet fully merit-based. Recruitment continues to rely on administrative criteria, with limited consideration of candidates' digital competencies. This has resulted in a lack of readiness among some personnel to operate information and communication technology-based services. These findings reinforce Grindle's (1997) assertion that successful capacity building is critically dependent on selective, competency-based recruitment systems.

Training for MPP personnel has been conducted periodically; however, it remains largely ceremonial and is not specifically tailored to the technical requirements of digital service delivery. Many staff members lack a thorough understanding of the digital platforms in use, leading to a disconnect between digitalization policies and on-the-ground implementation capacity. This gap highlights the weakness of the existing training approach, which fails to adopt a need-based, adaptive, and continuous learning model, as emphasized in capacity-building theory.

Working conditions and incentive systems also present significant concerns. Although workload has increased due to the complexity of digital systems, compensation and reward structures have not kept pace. This mismatch affects personnel motivation and performance, and impedes innovation and service excellence. In line with Dwiyanto's (2006) perspective, bureaucratic reform can only be effective when supported by fair incentive systems and professional work environments.

At the institutional level, organizational structures supporting digitalization remain fragmented. There is overlap in responsibilities among units and ineffective coordination between the MPP and its partner agencies. This indicates an underdeveloped institutional synergy required for electronic public service delivery. Indrajit's (2002) e-Government framework underscores the necessity of integrated systems and institutional coherence as critical enablers of successful bureaucratic digitalization—an area that remains a challenge in Lamongan Regency.

Overall, the study affirms that capacity building in Lamongan still encounters structural and technical barriers in supporting the implementation of digital public services. Strengthening human resource capacity must therefore be approached in a systematic, integrated, and contextually grounded manner to align with the demands of the digital era and public expectations for high-quality service delivery.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the capacity development of local government personnel in the digitalization of public service delivery in Lamongan Regency—particularly through the Public Service Mall (MPP)—continues to face substantive challenges. This underscores that digital transformation is not solely dependent on the sophistication of technology or information systems, but fundamentally on the readiness of human resources as the driving force of the bureaucracy.

Within Grindle's (1997) capacity-building framework, human resource development encompasses merit-based recruitment, adaptive training, innovation-friendly work systems, and supportive institutional reforms. However, this study finds that recruitment practices in Lamongan remain insufficiently oriented toward digital competencies. This represents an initial barrier to ensuring that newly recruited personnel possess the technological readiness required for digital service delivery.

The training programs implemented by the local government do not reflect the characteristics of need-based training that align with the specific challenges of digital transformation. Training activities remain largely ceremonial and fail to address the technical substance of digital systems used in service delivery. This finding aligns with Dwiyanto (2006), who argues that bureaucratic reform often fails because training does not meet the real needs of a modern bureaucratic work system. The consequence of inadequate training is a lack of practical competence among personnel in operating digital service systems, thereby limiting service effectiveness.

In terms of working conditions, there is a mismatch between the increased workload associated with digitalization and the incentives received by civil servants. This disparity undermines staff motivation and loyalty to service innovation. Henry (2018) emphasizes that a professional work environment requires a fair reward and incentive system as part of performance enhancement strategies. Such imbalances risk fostering resistance to digital transformation among government personnel.

Institutional aspects further emerge as a critical point in this discussion. The organizational structures supporting digital public services in Lamongan exhibit signs of fragmentation, overlapping functions, and weak inter-agency coordination. Yet, as Indrajit (2002) posits, the success of e-Government heavily depends on system integration, institutional consistency, and regulatory continuity. The findings indicate that efforts to digitalize public services have not been fully accompanied by strategic and adaptive institutional restructuring.

Theoretically, this study affirms the importance of integrating structural, technical, and cultural dimensions in building bureaucratic capacity. It is not sufficient to merely provide training or digital systems; a comprehensive strategic plan is required—targeting the individual level (competence and attitudes of personnel), the institutional level (organizational structure and regulation), and the work environment (incentives and service culture). When these three dimensions are developed in a balanced manner, the digitalization of public service delivery can proceed effectively and sustainably.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to analyze the capacity-building process of local government personnel in the digitalization of public service delivery, using the Public Service Mall (MPP) of Lamongan Regency as a case study. Based on empirical findings and theoretical analysis, it can be concluded that while there is a clear commitment to digital transformation in Lamongan, the implementation still faces interconnected structural, technical, and cultural challenges.

Overall, the recruitment of personnel has not yet fully adhered to meritocratic principles, particularly in recognizing digital competence as a key prerequisite for technology-based public service delivery. Training programs are not adequately need-based and have yet to effectively address the demands of continuously evolving digital systems. Furthermore, the current incentive structures and work environment do not

sufficiently respond to the increased workload arising from digitalization, thereby weakening personnel motivation and performance. Institutionally, the study found ongoing task fragmentation, overlapping authorities, and suboptimal coordination between the MPP and partner agencies, all of which directly impede effective digital service integration.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce Grindle's (1997) argument for a holistic and integrated capacity-building approach encompassing individual, organizational, and institutional development. They also affirm Indrajit's (2002) proposition that the success of e-Government depends not only on the availability of digital infrastructure but also on human resource readiness, institutional support, and sustained leadership commitment to digital reform.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed for local governments: First, the recruitment system must be restructured to emphasize digital competencies and civil service professionalism. Strengthening a merit-based approach will ensure that personnel possess capabilities aligned with contemporary public service demands. Second, training programs should be designed based on specific needs and performance evaluations, with adaptive curricula that reflect technological developments and best service practices. Third, incentive systems and work environments must be improved to foster motivation, loyalty, and innovation among personnel.

Fourth, institutional structures and inter-unit coordination mechanisms should be reinforced to support efficient, collaborative, and sustainable digital public service delivery.

Through these measures, Lamongan Regency is expected to emerge as a model for building an adaptive and professional civil service in the digital era, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of local bureaucracy in delivering effective, responsive, and inclusive public services.

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