

Chapter 18

The Curbing of Corruption by Formal and Informal Accountability at the Indonesian Local Governments: Learning from Yogyakarta City

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ABSTRACT

According to the compilation of Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International Indonesia on 2006, 2008 and 2010, 85 percent of the Indonesia local governments got a score less than 5 with meaning highly corrupt. However, there are exceptions such as Yogyakarta City. Yogyakarta is one of the areas with relatively low levels of corruption in its local governments in 2006 (5.59), 2008 (6.33), and 2010 (5.81). So, what does Yogyakarta do differently? One of the reasons for the differences in corruption level might be that, where it is widely supposed that corruption is negatively related to accountability, increased accountability is mostly implemented by formal mechanism. Special for Yogyakarta is that it, next to such formal ways of accountability, makes extensive use of informal ways to improve accountability. As such, the success of Yogyakarta as one of the Indonesian regions with the lowest levels of corruption is interesting to study in that it might provide additional insight in existing theoretical perspectives on accountability.

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INTRODUCTION

In the development of public administration science nowadays, it appears that there has been a gradual increase in the experts' attention associated with the development of government accountability conception. There have been diverse studies that have been conducted by the experts and can be seen in several examples such as the implementation of accountability in some countries (de Vries, 2007; Dunn & Legge, 2001; Hanberger, 2008); horizontal accountability (O'Donnell, 1998); accountability and democracy strengthening (Schielman, 2008) and public accountability (de Vries & Sobis, 2012; Cameron, 2004; Bovens et al, 2008). Diverse studies in the realm of accountability conception in public administration science at this time indicate indirect agreement from experts on the importance of this concept. Furthermore, all disputes relating to efforts to improve or reform governments' role to be better are strongly associated with accountability (Yang, 2011). This is the reason why the study of accountability is so important to do. As a result, more in-depth concerns from experts are required to explore and develop the concept of accountability.

The author argues that the study of accountability is a research that still requires further investigation. Facts on the ground indicate that within less than five years there has been an increase in publications on accountability in the leading journals in the domain of public administration studies. On the one hand, it is encouraging because it shows the seriousness of experts to develop a massive accountability conception. However, an increase in this publication also presents an obstacle where experts are often still hesitant to formulate a concrete definition of accountability. As a result, there are some experts who say that accountability is a broad, biased and ambiguous concept (Mulgan, 2008). This opinion is reinforced by other experts underlining the presence of five threat of public accountability that often arise, namely increased administrative costs, lack of information in the accountability process, the potential bias in control, inability to impose sanctions on an actor who has the responsibility and not accommodated values and norms of accountability (de Vries, 2013). Various common obstacles that arise in the study of accountability are often accompanied by casuistry constraints.

In Indonesia, one of the obstacles that seems to be clearly visible from accountability conception failure is to create appropriate mechanisms to prevent and combat corruption at the local government level. The phenomenon of corruption that often arises from abuse of power shows urgency on accountability to address the problem of corruption (Ackerman, 1999). This makes the concept of accountability unable to answer the question of corruption in Indonesia, which is currently one of the most important issues to be studied more deeply. The author believes in the importance of this issue to be studied more deeply because accountability as a response to the corruption resistance may be a concept that is not useful in practical level.

Several important questions, thus, appear: First, "how the concept of accountability be defined in practice in the Indonesian local governments?" This first question is closely related to how the local governments are able to interpret various existing concepts of accountability into practice. Second, "what are the actions of the local governments in Indonesia to develop a conception of accountability?" The second question is related to the efforts to prevent and find solutions to accountability weakness when practiced in the level of local governments. This is reinforced by a case study related to the local government experience in overcoming obstacles in accountability mechanisms that exist in practice. In this case study, the author will explain the Yogyakarta as one of areas with a high score based on a survey of Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International Indonesia and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) integrity survey.

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