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Implementation of Strategic Planning in Regional/Municipal Governments, Obstacles and Challenges

Abstract

This article discusses strategic planning implementation of the public sector within Indonesia's hierarchical administration system. Many studies on public sector strategic planning have been carried out both at the national and local levels. However, the disclosure of various obstacles and challenges in the implementation of strategic planning at the local level is still partial and sectoral. A qualitative strategy was used to explain this phenomenon with participatory observation in 69 regency/municipalities as the main data collection method, in addition to document analysis and in-depth interviews. The key findings from this article are that many strategic planning documents are a mere formality, are not strategic, and are not referred to in executing development activities. The challenges in strategic planning implementation were identified as being poor information and data quality and quantity, weak bargaining position that regencies/municipalities have against higher tiered administration, limited capacity of mid-level managers, limited capacity of planners, formal engagement of stakeholders, and unconducive political environment. Improvement of the evaluation model based on the achievement of outcomes, reducing the ministry's sectoral ego, improving the capacity of evaluators and the need for the involvement of other parties such as credible universities will create a multiplier effect for all stakeholders.

Keywords:

central-local government relationship; government accountability; institution capacity; strategic planning challenge; performance management

Introduction

By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail (The Star Tribune, 1970) a very popular phrase in the world of planning attributed to Benjamin Franklin.

This expression conveys a message about the importance

of planning when organizations or individuals intend to do something. In terms of the public sector, strategic planning has been known and applied for quite a considerable amount of time (Bryson, 2011; Johnsen, 2016; Poister, 2010). Strategic

planning refers to a process/effort carried out to determine what organizations should do, how they should do it, and why they choose to do it for the purpose of executing their organization's vision and mission. Such knowledge will help decision makers in managing their organization. In a tiered administration system, strategic management has the capacity to communicate local (lower level) needs and greater government pressure (Wæraas, 2015).

Disclosing the obstacles and challenges that the public sector has to face in applying strategic planning is most crucial, keeping in mind that strategic planning was adopted from the private sector (Johnsen, 2016; Walker et al., n.d.). The various factors affecting subnational governments in implementing strategic planning to realize their vision, mission, and institutional objectives as well as their correlations with performance management are highly interesting topics of study in order to examine the complexities of implementing a strategic planning system at the local level (Bryson, 2010; George, 2017). Additionally, this study is of great significance bearing in mind that strategic planning serves as a benchmark with considerable influence in evaluating the accountability of government institution performance (Ismanudin, 2012).

Strategic planning, as a process, has been implemented in various public organizations with satisfying results (Johnsen, 2016; Walker et al., n.d.), particularly in relatively smaller regions (Poister & Streib, 2005). Such satisfying implementation results come from a continuous process of knowledge management utilization applied in an organization (Khilji et al., 2017). Externally speaking, the success of strategic planning implementation is also supported by the involvement of various stakeholders (Chowdhury, 2018), which allows organizations to accommodate diversities found in the community (Harris & Thomas, 2004). In the public sector, the success (or failure) of strategic management

implementation is also determined by political factors, which are significantly salient in the public sector (Sager & Sørensen, 2011).

On the other hand, there are quite a lot of challenges encountered in the implementation of strategic planning. A number of research findings have confirmed those challenges as follows: (1) lack of implementers' administrative capacity; (2) unavailability of an existing entity that can be used as a benchmark; (3) extremely complex implementation environment; (4) lack of subnational government independence; (5) emergence of illusions due to the numerous number of stakeholders that must be considered; (6) high pressure exerted by the central government; (7) poor intergovernmental coordination and collaboration. These prior studies have revealed how truly vital strategic planning in public organization management is to arrange various tasks and functions (Bryson, 2010; George, 2017) along with the relevant challenges that need to be addressed in their implementation (Eakin et al., 2011; Hall, 2017; Johnsen, 2015; Liu et al., 2011; Sperling et al., 2011), particularly in relation to the complexities of implementation environment and central government pressure. The complexity of the obstacles and challenges faced by local governments in strategic planning is an interrelated issue. However, these studies are still partial in nature and they are not enough to uncover the interrelations between challenges in the complexities of a performance management system faced by the local public sector, a system that subnational governments must carry out as a consequence of the system mandated by their higher administration unit.

Strategic planning in Indonesia has, formally, been implemented since the issuance of Law No. 25/2004 on the National Development Planning System (Law of the Republic Indonesia Number 25 of 2004 on National Development Planning System, 2004). In line with the development of regional autonomy, strategic planning not only

became an obligation for the central government, but for the regional governments as well. The UU SPPN application, which has been running for 15 years, is not without its challenges and obstacles. There are several indications suggesting that the implementation of UU SPPN, followed by its subordinate legislation, namely the Rule of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 86/2017 (Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 86 of 2017 on Procedures for Planning, Controlling and Evaluation of Regional Development, Procedures for Evaluation of Draft Regional Regulations Concerning Regional Long-Term, 2017) in lieu of the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 54/2010, remains overwhelming for the regional governments to execute. Permendagri 86/2017 is an interpretation of the mandate contained in Law No. 23/2014 (Law of the Republic Indonesia Number 23 of 2014 on Local Government, 2014) article 260 stipulating that strategic planning of regional government is an integral part of the national development planning system, which means that it is inseparable from the provisions outlined in UU SPPN that regulates government planning. The previous study of strategic planning globally was dominated by the United States, Britain, and China, as countries included in the case study. However, they have different government systems than Indonesia. Indonesia with its decentralized government system is divided into provinces and regencies/municipalities and has the characteristics of regional potentials and various problems. The unitary state system means that Indonesia needs to pay attention to the integrity of the country while also being able to accommodate strategic planning with the country's existing diversity. As provisioned by the legislation above, all regions throughout Indonesia already have mandatory planning documents. However, those documents are far from adequate in meeting the requirements (Magister Administrasi Publik, 2018). Consequently, the development process continues to run as usual

(Bidana, 2013). The regions' inability to conduct for proper planning is caused by several factors (Sangadji, 2014): (1) informal institutions in charge of making the plans lack the capacity to do so; (2) unconducive institutional environment; (3) governance structure in aspects of incremental implementation and planning preparation procedure that is considered complicated; (4) governance structure in aspects of control and evaluation of strategic planning policies that is merely a formality; and (5) minimalized cost of economic transaction.

The present study is focused on strategic planning implementation executed by subnational governments in Indonesia. In Indonesia's applicable planning system, the quality of planning can be observed from the Performance Accountability System of Government Institutions (*Sistem Akuntabilitas Kinerja Institusi Pemerintah – SAKIP*) issued by the assessing agency. According to the Rule of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (PAN-RB) No. 12/2015 (Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform of the Republic of Indonesia Number 12 of 2015 on Guidelines for Evaluation of the Implementation of Government Agency Performance Accountability System, Ministry of Administrative and B, 2015), the strategic planning component has a weight of 30% out of the total assessment score. As of 2020, the number of regencies/municipalities that had a SAKIP score, as an indicator of performance accountability, was at 63.98%, which is lower than the percentage of SAKIP availability shown by provinces at 97.39%, and line ministries/agencies at 95.24%. The SAKIP assessment data above suggest the lack of planning in place, keeping in mind that 80% of SAKIP's substantial content is evaluated based on the planning efforts carried out by the government organizations.

Strategic planning is a process implemented by an organization. Given the assumption that strategic planning is implemented formally

and mechanically, it will thus encourage public organizations to perform properly so that its implementation will positively contribute to the expected results (George, 2017). This article is aimed at describing the implementation of strategic planning along with its various obstacles and challenges in 50 regencies/municipalities throughout Indonesia. By implementing strategic planning in a disciplined manner, the organization's vision and missions are expected to be achieved. According to the SAKIP assessments, there are many regencies/municipalities in Indonesia that still have poor quality of planning. The relevant questions to discuss are, subsequently, **what are the obstacles and challenges faced by local/municipal governments in implementing the strategic planning?**

This article is arranged into several sections as follows. The introduction outlines the significance of the study in analyzing the strategic planning of a sub-national government. Subsequently, the article provides elaborations relating to the qualitative research design used for data collection and analysis. The empirical part of this article is explained in the research results and discussion section. The final section discusses the findings and conclusion of the present research.

Local Government Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a continuous process, it begins by mapping out existing conditions (where you are), determining goals and objectives (where you want to be), and defining the means (how to get there) of achieving those aspirations (Bryson, 2011). This concept has been developed from an approach implemented in private organizations and adopted by the public sector in organizational management (Allison & Kaye, 2015). In the public sector, strategic planning is not a separate concept, it consists of a set of concepts, procedures, tools, and practices assembled into various ways of creating various approaches that make it strategic (Bryson et al., 2018). Mapping out current

conditions refer to identifying the organizational mandate and the surrounding actual conditions, and the various problems encountered to execute said mandate. Assessment of the present state of the organization and its various achievements is a measure carried out to identify the extent that the organization has satisfied its given mandate (Allison & Kaye, 2015; Katsioloudes, 2006; Steiss, 2019).

Based on the conditions at hand, the organization defines the vision, mission, as well as goals and objectives it strives to achieve. The vision, mission, goals, and objectives are statements about what the organization intends to achieve in the future. The vision is a statement about the long-term aspiration the organization intends to attain in the future, or where the organization is intended to be taken to. The mission refers to statement(s) about what needs to be done in order to achieve the specified vision (Steiss, 2019). In Indonesia's governance, the vision and mission of governmental units are determined through political means (specified in Law No. 25/2004 article 5 point 2). The political way of determining vision and mission comes together with the technocratic process of determining goals and objectives. Goals are results produced by the organization in order to achieve the specified vision and mission. Objectives are specific and measured targets of each planning goal. As a specific target, an objective has the following SMART attributes, i.e.: Specific and Stretching; Measurable and Motivating; Achievable and Agreed; Realistic and Robust; Time-scaled and Timely (Courtney, 2002).

Strategy is a comprehensive planning formula on how an organization achieves its goals and objectives effectively and efficiently. Strategy as a method is on a macro level, so operationalization of the strategy is necessary. In planning terminology, the operationalization of strategy is called a program. As a strategy operationalization, a program, along with its

indicators, must also have strong correlation with the intended objective(s) (Bryson, 2011; Courtney, 2002; Steiss, 2019).

Based on the elaborations above, it is understood that when a planning process is done appropriately, it would produce a complete and comprehensive planning document for the organization. The strategic planning document must be coherent and consistent from one chapter to the next. The planning document should also be consistent with the implementation and assessment documents. Furthermore, a good planning document should also satisfy the criteria of each aspect, particularly the business process criteria in determining performance (Poister et al., 2015).

A benefit that is contiguous to the implementation of strategic planning is performance management. Performance management is one of the concepts of institutional reflexivity that is guided by a set of rules concerning incentives for organization members and it allows improvements in institutional routines, in specified procedures, and it provides opportunities for new ideas to develop in order to address any barriers to progress and innovations (Kuhlmann & Bogumil, 2018).

Strategic planning is also beneficial when an organization experiences extraordinary conditions or a state of emergency. Under a state of emergency, which may compel the government to revise their budget, strategic planning plays a key role in decision making and maintaining public trust by way of performance accountability (Jimenez, 2014; Kenk & Haldma, 2016). Accountability before the public is a crucial standard to validate the government's productivity, effectiveness, and responsiveness to public issues (Chen, 2013). In England, for instance, planning relating to Green Infrastructure (GI) was revoked as it no longer created the intended positive impacts. The government subsequently sought new means to address the

matter by creating changes in their approach (Mell, 2020).

Environmental Factors in Strategic Planning

Consistent and comprehensive planning is not prepared in a vacuum, it is developed in a constantly changing environment with continuously changing stakeholders, which lead to various complexities (Hall, 2017). A thorough assessment of the organization and its surrounding environment to develop an extensive strategy for addressing major issues faced by the government is a crucial aspect that must be conducted in strategic planning (Hendrick, 2010).

The challenges faced by local governments are different from institutions at the national level. At the national level, strategic planning is prepared sectoral based on matters carried out while the regional government must carry out various affairs whose authority is submitted by the central government. Strategic Planning Regional Government is holistic concerning all interests that are the responsibility of the regional government. Within the strategic planning process of the government sector, particularly local governments, aside from the government's own institutional issues, public interests, social conditions, and political resources are several factors that both formally and informally have an influence on the choices made and prepared in the planning (Alonso, 2014). Strategic planning at the local government level must also be in line with the issues faced by that particular region or community by considering the endogenous resources available in the community and integration among existing planning (Szostak et al., 2020). The freedom that the government level closest to the community has in playing its role also promotes strategic planning in its responsive public service provision (Shah & Sheahan, 2015). Regarding strategic planning in a tiered government system, integrated planning involving local economic development and socio-economic

planning as well as integration between local government planning and that of its higher-level of government are the types most often required (Szostak et al., 2020).

Another challenge faced by the public sector in implementing the concept of strategic planning is the issue of leadership and the commitment of all parties within the government organization structure to maximize the use of strategic planning in accommodating the needs of the community up to even the smallest group (Dimitrijevska-Markoski et al., 2021). Participatory practice through a deliberative process in strategic planning, which helps promote transparency and achieve people's aspiration, is also a challenge for the government (Savini & Grant, 2020).

Previous researchers often consider political factors to be a substantial element in preparing and implementing strategic planning (Bidana, 2013; Chowdhury, 2018; Johnsen, 2016; Sager & Sørensen, 2011). Political regime and political stability as well as existing political communication process are some of the focuses included in the political aspects. In the context of governance in Indonesia, the political factor is extremely vital since planning in Indonesia's government system follows four approaches, namely political, technocratic, top-down, and bottom-up (Law of the Republic Indonesia Number 25 of 2004 on National Development Planning System, 2004).

Stakeholder's engagement is one of the defining factors of planning quality (Bidana, 2013; Eakin et al., 2011; Harris & Thomas, 2004; Johnsen, 2016). In a complex environment, a government unit at the local level is associated with various stakeholders, beginning with the community they provide service to, the higher level of government unit, as well as the business sector that they need to facilitate. Quality planning, particularly implementation of planning, highly requires the involvement or participation of various stakeholders. Bornby as cited in Theresia,

(2015) argued that participation may be defined as actions carried out to take part in activities with the purpose of gaining benefits (Theresia et al., 2015). Within the planning process, participation subsequently emerges in a process carried out by stakeholders to influence and share insights on development decisions and initiatives as well as resources that impact them. The sustainable role of stakeholders reinforces the advocacy function to implement data collection, syntheses, and implementation design that will strengthen the quality of strategic planning (Mell, 2020). In the planning preparation process, the involvement of local government and community representatives through active communication in developing strategy and implementation serves as one of the keys in detailed planning the people require (Guzal-Dec et al., 2020).

The capacity of planners is also a main concern in preparing strategic planning (Bidana, 2013; Chowdhury, 2018; Eakin et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2011; Manojlović, 2017). The main function of the planner in the planning process is to prepare alternatives for decision makers. As such, planners should not only have an extensive understanding of the macro aspects, but they should also have the capacity to explain the planning aspect in detail. Furthermore, planners should also be skilled in taking actions and carrying out all the functions required in the planning process as well as the ability to interact with others. In other words, planners should also be able to perform the role of an analyst, organizer, intermediary, assistant, facilitator, educator, and disseminator of information. Such abilities are not only obtained from formal education, but from learning processes that take place when planners engage in the planning process. These lessons learned will only emerge when planners are indeed committed to their tasks and responsibilities (Werner & DeSimone, 2012).

Mid-level managers in local government public planning hold a strategic role because

they are tasked with the functions of directing and communicating (Khilji et al., 2017; Poister & Streib, 2005; Walker et al., n.d.). These mid-level managers hold the key to smooth communication among stakeholders, particularly internal planning stakeholders. When planning involves a higher level of government body or other government unit, they should also be the ones serving as communication channels so that the long line of communication can run effectively. That is why a mid-level manager in planning is required to have conceptual competence, communication skills, decision making ability, time management skills, and technical competency (Johnsen, 2015).

One of the definitions of organizational capacity that aligns with the concept of planning asserts that organizations have the capacity to determine their goals in accordance with the conditions of internal and external environments at hand (Irawan, 2016). Nonetheless, the environment that surrounds the organization continues to adapt. Accordingly, the organization should have the flexibility to respond to any changes in the environment (Bryson, 2011). In a tiered government system, subnational governments often must deal with policies issued by a higher administrative body, which are sometimes less applicable to local conditions. As such, organizations should ideally have sufficient authority over what they have planned. Given sufficient authority, local governments would have bargaining power (communication or collaboration) to negotiate central policies and align them with the local context (Johnsen, 2016; Liu et al., 2011; Sperling et al., 2011).

Data is objective information about a fact, in quantitative, qualitative, or visual formats that are acquired through direct observation or those that have been collected in the form of printed materials or other means of storage (Law of the Republic Indonesia Number 25 of 2004 on National Development Planning System, 2004). Valid data and information function as

sources of analysis for issues an organization intends to resolve by using the plan that was made. The data and information required may be obtained from official publications made by data providing agencies, research activities, or monitoring and evaluation activities. Aside from data's function as materials for problem analyses, it can also be used as base materials to determine an organization's performance objective. These objectives will, at the end of the planning process, be the targets of monitoring and evaluation in order to assess organizational performance. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, it is not only performance achievement level that is required, but analyses on the various factors that support and obstruct the organization's achievements are required as well. This entire all of these processes generate rich data that can be utilized as base materials for strategic planning (Eakin et al., 2011; Hall, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The concept of strategic planning in every government unit will be similar, but the implementation must be aligned with the surrounding local conditions (Bryson et al., 2018). Politics, stakeholder engagement, planner capacity, mid-level manager ability, organizational capacity, and availability of data on planning, all these factors have an influence on the quality of planning and they are not separate elements. These various aspects can be interrelated and mutually influence one another. So much so that at times they become a vicious cycle that is difficult to break. Diagram 1 presents the challenges faced by the public sector in implementing its strategic planning.

Data is one of the basic materials for planning. When you have poor data, it can be ensured that the quality of planning is poor as well. Poor data quality which is associated with weak organizational capacity will exacerbate existing conditions, and poor data can also be produced by a weak

organization. One of the determining factors of organizational capacity is the people working in the organization, managers and staff alike. Due to the weakness of organizational capacity, the organization has no capacity to involve stakeholders in the planning process. Such inability becomes even more pronounced when there are political interventions that are not aligned with the existing data. The process may or may not go as planned, which consequently affects the quality of planning. In a tiered government system, strategic planning can essentially function as a bridge for distributing a common job/task/assignment at every level in order to achieve national development goals. City level governments in the United States apply an information system that integrates all interests from various parties, which makes for a comprehensive strategic planning. However, the effectiveness of using an information system is very much dependent on how local government implement them to achieve their goals (Manoharan et al., 2015).

Method

The current study employed a qualitative approach by conducting in-depth analyses

of various challenges in the implementation of strategic planning in the public sector. Secondary data obtained from reports based on assessment of government institution performance accountability made by the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (Kemenpan RB) were used to map out the quality of planning carried out by the local governments. The qualitative design in this study was intended to explore in-depth information about the challenges and obstacles faced by local governments in implementing strategic planning. The data was collected in 2021. Various challenges encountered in implementing the concept of strategic planning in the public sector were deeply explored by gathering data from randomly selected regional/municipal governments (approximately 13% of the 514 existing regencies/municipalities in Indonesia, i.e., 69 regencies/municipalities). This qualitative design was able to explore in-depth cases in the sample districts/cities but cannot be used as generalizations from all cases in Indonesia. Listed below are the 69 regencies/municipalities that were used as samples in the research.

Figure 1.
Various Challenges in the Implementation of Strategic Planning in the Public Sector



Source: Author's figure based on Bryson's Theory (2011)

Table 1.
Sample Regencies/Municipalities

No	Regency/ Municipality	No	Regency/ Municipality	No	Regency/ Municipality	No	Regency/ Municipality	No	Regency/ Municipality
1	Kebumen Regency	15	Bima Municipality	29	Padang Municipality	42	North Konawe Regency	57	Biak Numfor Regency
2	Kendal Regency	16	Batang Regency	30	Balikpapan Municipality	44	Morowali Regency	58	Tangerang Municipality
3	Lamongan Regency	17	Magelang Regency	31	East Barito Regency	45	Blora Regency	59	Palangkaraya Municipality
4	Bandung Regency	18	Pekalongan Regency	32	Lamandau Regency	46	Bantul Regency	60	Tapin Regency
5	Kampar Regency	19	Tangerang Municipality	33	Pulang Pisau Regency	47	Cianjur Regency	61	Ngekeo Regency
6	Banyuasin Regency	20	South Hulu Sungai Regency	34	Gorontalo Municipality	48	Aceh Tamiang Regency	62	South Halmahera Regency
7	North Penajam Paser Regency	21	Merauke Regency	35	Boalemo Regency	49	Bungo Regency	63	Wondama Bay Regency
8	Polewali Mandar Regency	22	Mojokerto Municipality	36	Bone Bolango Regency	50	Kerinci Regency	64	Banjarnegara Regency
9	Banggai Islands Regency	23	Sleman Regency	37	North Gorontalo Regency	51	West Bangka Regency	65	Purworejo Regency
10	North Gorontalo Regency	24	Kulon Progo Regency	38	Pohuwato Regency	52	Bontang Municipality	66	Yogyakarta Municipality
11	Cirebon Regency	25	Paser Regency	39	Kendari Municipality	53	Pekanbaru Municipality	67	Payakumbuh Municipality
12	Indramayu Regency	26	South Tangerang Municipality	40	Mataram Municipality	54	Tanjungpinang Municipality	68	Bengkayang Regency
13	Dumai Municipality	27	South Lampung Regency	41	Bandung Municipality	55	Palembang Municipality	69	Bulungan Regency
14	Kutai Kartanegara Regency	28	Nunukan Regency	42	Meranti Islands Regency	56	Bandar Lampung Municipality		

Source: Author's Table Based on Selected Regencies/Municipalities for Research

Primary data were collected by using the participatory observation method, wherein the researcher was directly involved in the process of preparing strategic documents, namely the Mid-Term Regional Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah – RPJMD*) and/or the Regional Office/Agency Strategic Plan (*Rencana Strategis Perangkat Daerah – Renstra PD*). In-depth interviews conducted in parallel with participatory observations involved about 25-30 persons in each regency or municipality in an unstructured face-to-face design. The informants represent planners, regional apparatus organizations, and regional officials related to strategic planning (such as the Regent/Mayor, Regional Secretary, and others). During the observations, the various problems

local governments encountered when preparing the planning documents were identified in detail. Additionally, analyses of the planning documents and evaluation documents belonging to the respective regencies/municipalities were also a significant part of the data. Analyses of both planning and evaluation documents led to key information pertaining to the quality of planning made by the subnational governments. A triangulation process was conducted in data collection by carrying out in-depth interviews with both bureaucratic officials and planners who prepared the planning documents. Data analysis was done by mapping out the regions' strategic planning based on quality, which was indicated by the SAKIP assessment score. The data were categorized and classified according to the type of

challenges and obstacles. Moreover, data analysis was also done by correlating one data with another based on the issues faced by each region, which subsequently generated comprehensive findings on each of the selected concepts. Ultimately, correlations between each concept and the challenges subnational governments encountered became apparent.

Result and Discussion

Average achievement score profiles from the secondary data in the form of SAKIP evaluation results of all regencies/municipalities throughout Indonesia in 2020 were classified based on general criteria and by provinces as presented in the table below.

Based on the average SAKIP rating scale achievement of the regencies/municipalities in each province, the acquired data is as follows.

The secondary data acquired suggest that no regency/municipality has received a highly satisfactory rating scale, many regencies/municipalities were rated at the good and

sufficient levels. In terms of area, regions located in the island of Java and Kalimantan by and large had a relatively high SAKIP score. Generally speaking, the SAKIP scores of regions in the eastern part of Indonesia were relatively falling behind. It is also important to note that only one subnational government (municipality) attained a satisfactory rating in 2020, which was the city of Yogyakarta.

Finding 1: Strategic Planning as Business as Usual

At the regency/municipality level in Indonesia, there are at least six kinds of strategic planning documents, i.e., a Long-term Regional Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Panjang Daerah – RPJPD*), a Mid Term Regional Development Plan (*Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Daerah – RPJMD*), a Regional Government Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Daerah – RKPD*) based on the provisions outlined in the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 86/2017. The RKPD is subsequently referred to as

Table 2.
SAKIP Score Profiles in 50 Regencies/Municipalities

Range of SAKIP Scores	Rating Scale	Interpretation	Number of Regencies/Municipalities
>90 -100	AA	Highly satisfactory	0
>80 – 90	A	Satisfactory , leading change, high performance, and highly accountable	11 (2.14%)
>70 – 80	BB	Very good , accountable, good performance, having reliable performance management system	56 (10.86%)
>60 – 70	B	Good , good performance accountability, having a system that can be used for performance management, and requiring little improvement	258 (50.19%)
>50 – 60	CC	Sufficient (Adequate) , passable performance accountability, complying with policies, having a system that can be used to produce performance information for accountability, requiring many non-essential improvements	118 (22.95%)
>30 - 50	C	Poor , system is unreliable, having a system for performance management but requires numerous minor and essential improvements	58 (11.28%)
0 - 30	D	Very poor , system is unreliable for implementing performance management; requiring numerous improvements, some requiring very essential changes	0
	Not evaluated		7
	Number of Regencies/Municipalities		514

Source: *Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, 2020*

Table 3.
Average SAKIP Score by Province, 2020

Provinces	Number of Regencies/ Municipalities	Average SAKIP Rating Scale of Regencies/ Municipalities
Nangroe Aceh Darussalam	23	CC
North Sumatra	33	CC
West Sumatra	19	B
Riau	12	B
Riau Islands	7	B
Jambi	11	B
Bengkulu	10	CC
South Sumatra	17	B
Bangka Belitung Islands	7	B
Lampung	15	CC
West Java	27	B
Central Java	35	B
East Java	38	BB
Yogyakarta SR	5	A
Jakarta SCR	6	No assessment
Banten	8	B
Bali	9	B
West Nusa Tenggara	10	B
East Nusa Tenggara	22	CC
North Kalimantan	5	B
West Kalimantan	14	B
Kalimantan Timur	10	B
Central Kalimantan	14	B
South Kalimantan	13	B
West Sulawesi	6	CC
North Sulawesi	15	B
Central Sulawesi	13	CC
Southeast Sulawesi	17	B
South Sulawesi	24	B
Gorontalo	6	B
Maluku	11	CC
North Maluku	10	C
Papua	29	C
West Papua	13	CC
Total	514	

Source: Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, 2020

materials for the General Budget Policy (*Kebijakan Umum Anggaran – KUA*) and the Provisional Budget Ceiling and Priorities (*Prioritas dan Plafon Anggaran Sementara – PPAS*) prior to being discussed in the Regional Budget Plan (*Rencana Anggaran Pendapatan dan Belanja Daerah – RAPBD*) cycle based on the Minister

of Home Affairs Regulation No. 77/2020 on Technical Guidelines on Regional Financial Management. Meanwhile, in parallel, Regional Government Organizations (*Organisasi Perangkat Daerah – OPD*) also prepare each of their Regional Apparatus Strategic Plans (*Rencana Strategis Perangkat Daerah – Renstra PD*) according to the number of OPD available, along with the drafting of the RPJMD. Annually, OPDs prepare a Regional Apparatus Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Perangkat Daerah – Renja PD*), which serves the material used to prepare the Regional Apparatus Budget and Work Plan (*Rencana Kerja Anggaran Perangkat Daerah – RKA-PD*) along with the drafting of RAPBD. The series of planning and budgeting for the year is carried out at least two, namely drafting for year n+1 and amendments for the current year (year n).

The cycle and procedure for regional development planning in Indonesia, as stipulated in Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 86/2017, were designed to be based on the issues subnational governments encounter. This is in line with prior studies stating that strategic planning at the local level should be in line with the issues governments are facing in their particular region or community by considering the endogenous resources available in the community and integrating them across existing various existing plans (Szostak et al., 2020). However, we observed that in some of the regencies/municipalities there are activity and program designs that were merely repeating implementations from the previous years. This is similarly observed in the state of Mississippi, in the United States, where the municipal government's understanding of strategic planning remained low, while in fact, the strategic planning process was used as a guideline to carry out programs and activities that focused on mission, priorities, and benefits in making the right decision (Dimitrijevska-Markoski et al., 2021). Accordingly, strategic planning of each regency/municipality should guide the

implementation of responsive and dynamic activities and programs that are in accordance with the region's priorities and the issues to be addressed.

Finding 2: Obstacles and Challenges in the Implementation of Strategic Planning

In accordance with the guideline, all of the strategic planning documents are developed with extensive amounts of activities Around the already busy schedules of the regencies/municipalities, and they are carried out repeatedly. On the other hand, there are various factors that influence the planning process, as a result the strategic planning process becomes a normal activity or a routine activity that must occur. Such conditions are brought about by various interrelated issues that eventually lead to poor overall atmosphere surrounding strategic planning tasks. Among these issues include poor quantity and quality of data and information, regency/municipality's weak bargaining power over higher administrative bodies, limited capacity of mid-level managers, limited capacity of planners, formal stakeholder engagement, and uncondusive political environment.

1. Lack of Availability and Low Quality of Data and Information

Data and information are basic materials for preparing strategic planning. Data and information serve as a guide to determine to what extent the organizational mandate has been carried out, what challenges and obstacles are encountered, what strengths and opportunities are available, and what ambient conditions are like, all of these can be found through an analysis of the data. All the regions that were included as samples in the current study experienced issues with data availability. Some of the main problems that local governments consistently face include data unavailability, incomplete data, and invalid data. Furthermore, there was

also an issue with distribution of data among regional government organizations, wherein those responsible for managing data do not have a shared understanding of how significant data is. The existing system, which remains unreliable for satisfying data accuracy and speediness requirements, exacerbates the presentation of data, which functions as materials for analyzing development issues confronted by regencies/municipalities.

Such challenges are also faced by other countries including Ghana, where poor data collection management, lack of skilled monitoring and evaluation experts at the local level, and lack of sanction for noncompliance have led to delays in reporting (Kaye-Essien, 2020). This reinforces the significance of data in the reporting and evaluation process.

Tracing back even further, the source of data unavailability lies in the evaluation model applied, because it is through evaluation that data actually emerge. The assessment model carried out on development performance is still partial, a formality, and based on budget. The Accountability Report (*Laporan Keterangan Peretanggungjawaban* – LKPj) of the regional head, Regional Government Implementation Report (*Laporan Penyelenggaraan Pemerintah Daerah* – LPPD), Information on Regional Government Implementation Report (*Informasi Laporan Penyelenggaraan Pemerintahan Daerah* – ILPPD), and Government Agency Performance Report (*Laporan Kinerja Instansi Pemerintah* – LKjIP) as development evaluation documents merely present development targets and realization of its objectives. No effort has been made to link the objectives to the programs that were designed as a means to achieve said objectives. As a consequence, how effective the implemented programs are in achieving the objectives has never been identified. This occurred because the measure of effectiveness has been incorrectly defined or understood. The effectiveness of a

program can only be assessed based on the size of the planned budget absorption. An integrated system is needed which facilitates the evaluation process for regions to submit the various forms of reporting in a comprehensive manner, including a comparison of performance measurement and strategic planning structure, which is important because sometimes there is quite a dynamic cooperative relationship between the regional government and its superior administrative body (Rivera & Heady, 2006).

Such evaluation documents are recurrent since the evaluators, which in this case are people from higher administrative institutions, only examine the table title lines and whether the contents are available in the table instead of comprehensively assessing the government's performance. The perception of evaluators which may not be aligned also adds more confusion for the subnational governments in fulfilling follow-up plans identified as evaluation notes in the previous year. The recurring disfunction of the evaluation process is one of the primary causes of poor availability and quality of data, which is used as one of the basic materials for planning. When you have poor data, it can be assured that you will have poor planning quality.

2. Weak Bargaining Power of Regency/Municipality over Higher Administrative Body

Regional governments are indeed autonomous, yet currently, the level of regency/municipality autonomy remains relatively low when facing the central government. The nature of regional autonomy in Indonesia tends to apply as power/authority that is being "lent" instead of being "given" absolutely (Pudjianto, 2019).

In terms of planning and evaluation, an example can be provided here about regional development evaluation. Annually, regional/municipal governments create a strategic plan called *RKPD*. Based on this *RKPD*, annually

regencies/municipalities are required to conduct at least four evaluations, i.e., evaluations of *RKPD*, *LKjIP*, *LKPj*, *LPPD*, and *ILPPD*. Evaluation of *RKPD* is mandated by Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 86/2017, which is submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs via the provincial government and used as the basic materials for preparing the planning documents of the following year. As stipulated in the latest regulation, in accordance with Governmental Regulation (*PP*) No. 13/2019 and Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 18/2020, *LKPj* is submitted to the Regional House of Representatives (*DPRD*), *LPPD* is submitted to the Ministry of Home Affairs as materials for the Regional Government Implementation Evaluation (*Evaluasi Penyelenggaraan Pemerintah Daerah – EPPD*), and *ILPPD* is conveyed to the public. In line with the Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform No. 53/2014, *LKjIP* is submitted to the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform and reviewed by the same Minister or with the assistance of the Provincial Inspectorate or the Finance and Development Supervisory Agency (*BPKP*).

The documents evaluate the same thing, which is *RKPD*, but each ministry requests a different assessment, the difference is only in the title and table of contents, as well as the table format. Nonetheless, regencies/municipalities are required to prepare these numerous amounts of documents. If they do not prepare them according to the technical guidance provided, they will be penalized, with the lowest sanction being a light warning and the most severe being that they are not given a good assessment mark by the central government. Due to such copious amounts of assessments being carried out, evaluations are merely completed by filling in tables with contents that are not understandable at times, particularly with comprehensive evaluation of occurring development activities. The regions do not have sufficient energy to produce a comprehensive

evaluation document that meets the evaluation principles.

On the other hand, evaluators also seem to just put checkmarks on the tables without paying attention to the substance of the evaluation. Given of the current evaluation procedure, the regions are unable to refuse, even when planners in the regions know and understand what should be done during evaluations, they still continue to carry out evaluation formalities demanded by the evaluators (abide and comply). While it is, actually, not impossible that planners in the regions have a better understanding of planning and evaluation than the evaluators. This is why evaluators hide behind formal evaluations that simply require one to put checkmarks on the table. A nearly similar phenomenon experienced by most of the regions throughout Indonesia is also observed in the government of Ghana. Lack of political autonomy coupled by lack of adequate economic resources in most regional governments have created a master-servant relationship in Ghana's regional government, wherein city leaders, particularly those appointed by the government, are forced to comply with the central government in all political, economic, and social matters (Kaye-Essien, 2020).

Another example concerning the weak level of bargaining power regional governments have over the central government can be observed in the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 90/2019 on the Classification, Codification, and Nomenclature of Regional Finance and Development Planning, which regulates the programs up to the sub-activities that regional governments should use in their strategic planning. The programs, both activities and sub-activities, are essentially carried out by government organizations to address issues and achieve planned objectives. The diversity of the regions surely generates a wide range of problems and objectives, although the end result is to achieve prosperity and quality human resources.

The efforts that the regions work on should also be varied and diverse as well. Nevertheless, given the Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 90/2019, the programs and activities have been uniformized according to whatever the issues and objectives may be. The function of regulation as guidance will turn into a process or mechanism that refers to a single actor standard where they are able to ensure the expected value or utility of their actions in a broader context (Kaufmann, 1991). The regions have no bargaining power over all these things on account of the evaluation system, which is based on this Minister of Home Affairs Regulation. Ideally speaking, regulatory products pertaining to the preparation of planning documents should be a guideline that facilitates the regions in implementing the policy in accordance with the issues they face and the potentials options they possess.

3. Limited Capacity of Mid-Level Managers

A mid-level manager should have managerial capacity and technical competence because mid-level managers are intermediaries for top management and front-line staff. Accordingly, mid-level managers should have the capacity to prepare policy recommendations or suggestions to advise top management based on existing data and translate the vision and mission of the organization into a more operational format.

In agencies/municipalities, mid-level managers are the regional secretaries and the heads of the regional government organizations. In many sample regions, the mid-level managers were found to be less functional. There are even some regions that for several years have no regional secretary official assigned and the position is held by a daily technical officer who has no authority to decide strategic policies. In terms of planning, the one in charge is the Regional Development Planning Agency (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah – Bappeda*), but it needs to coordinate with all *OPD*. When the head of Bappeda attempts to engage in

coordination about anything with *OPD*, it is not an easy feat to achieve in reality. Having the same level or structural position makes *OPD* feel *Bappedda* has no rights to control *OPD*. So, the regional secretary is a more appropriate position with the capacity for such a task. Additionally, the regional secretary also functions as a guide to translate the vision and mission of the regional head into more operational formats. If the regional secretary does not have this capability, it can be ascertained that the region has poor quality planning documents. In some regions with reliable mid-level managers, the process of preparing strategic planning documents was found to be more efficient with relatively good results.

At the head of *OPD* level, it turns out that not all heads of *OPD* have a common understanding of strategic planning. The following sentence was articulated by a head of *OPD*, and it is a strong indication of the existing misunderstanding and carelessness. “*Planning? It should be enough being done by those making the programs*”. When heads of *OPD* do not understand the significance of planning, what is bound to happen is that planning merely becomes the job of staff or employees assigned to prepare or create programs who at times don’t even have any knowledge of the business process let alone techniques in planning. If this happens, the planning document will only be business as usual. Last year’s programs are repeated and the budget amount for last year is simply raised by 10% for this year.

These findings are in line with the research results in South Africa indicating that mid-level managers usually associate their strategic role merely as strategists and communicators who create links between their subordinates and higher level of management (Van Rensburg et al., 2014). Ideally speaking, in strategic planning, mid-level managers should also play a role in ‘advocacy’ and ‘enhancing operational performance’ into elements of conventional strategy implementation, and a role in ‘managing performance’ as well as ‘promoting compliance’

into their downward influence role (Van Rensburg et al., 2014). Given these driving roles of the mid-level managers, strategic planning should no longer be presented as planning as usual.

4. Limited Capacity of Planners

Planners are, ultimately, the keyrole in the strategic planning process. In regencies/municipalities examined in the current research, the number of planners and their quality highly varies from one region to the next. There are even regencies that have no planners (meaning human resource/personnel with acknowledged planner skills) at all. In the case where *Bappedda* or *OPD* has no planner(s), the task of planning is carried out by those who lack a decent understanding of planning. There are regions that have enough planners in *Bappedda*, but none are available at the *OPD* level, which is also a highly challenging condition as good planning requires a common understanding of planning in itself.

When no common understanding is observed among planners across various organizations, planners in *Bappedda* begin to encounter difficulty since the data collection stage, and data analyses subsequently become even more difficult when the evaluation documents are found to be mere formalities. Almost the same condition occurred in development planning in South Africa when planners at the city level tended to use development performance indicators that were not entirely oriented toward the region’s developmental objectives, thus resulting in inefficient development performance achievements (Mautjana & Mtapuri, 2014)

On the other hand, mid-level managers also disregard the importance of strategic planning. At the end of the day, what we are seeing is an apathetic attitude since they feel that they are not getting proper support from the heads of *OPD* and other planners. Those who truly understand the importance of planning try to request assistance from other parties, such as universities. Yet, the

universities they turn to sometimes also have zero understanding of the complex process of strategic planning. Despite having gone through the planning process, the quality of the planning documents created remains subpar. This is due to the fact that the planners are already “overwhelmed” and they “handover” the task to others, who are actually incapable as well, this consequently becomes a vicious cycle of planning with poor quality.

5. Formal Stakeholder Engagement

One of the approaches used in preparing planning documents is the participatory approach, which means the *RPJMD* document is prepared with the participation of all stakeholders. A space or even obligation to participate is regulated in the participatory planning concept (Law No. 25/2004). The actual format of the participatory process in development planning in Indonesia can be observed from the process of public consultations and development planning assemblies (*musrenbang*) (Law no 25/2004; Minister of Home Affairs Regulation No. 86/2017). The process is carried out and takes place in the planning preparation process, as it is an obligation that needs to be fulfilled. However, the reality on the ground shows that the process is a mere formality. Public consultations and *musrenbang* are attended by all *OPD* and other stakeholders, including those from the provincial government who are safeguarding the provincial level planning, and also academicians as observers. In this process, the number of participants involved in public consultations and *musrenbang* can be quite substantial, reaching up to 100 individuals.

During the public consultations and *musrenbang*, the unit in charge of planning, which in this case is *Bappeda*, presents the draft that they have made. Subsequently, the provincial government unit presents aspects that they consider crucial in the planning, whereas academicians give a presentation

about the importance of planning. As a matter of fact, after these three presentations have been delivered, the participants of public consultations or *musrenbang* have exhausted their energy. Moreover, the participants are usually not given the presented draft once the three presentations have been delivered, the decision is made to take a break for lunch. As a result of the tedious process, criticisms and suggestions are almost never given by *musrenbang* participants. Nonetheless, the forum is operated formally. Ideally speaking, public consultations and *musrenbang* should function as a process for legitimizing regional development planning policies by capturing the various interests that stakeholders have. The policy process, essentially, should refer to a diverse institutional configuration with numerous stakeholders striving to solve public issues, managing their differences is one of the most crucial aspects in the policy process (Telch et al., 2020).

6. Unconducive Political Environment

The planning process accommodates the political process. In this process, i.e., strategic planning of the drafting of the Regional Mid-Term Development Plan (*RPJMD*), there is one political mechanism in place, which is when the *RPJMD* is to be ratified as a regional regulation. During the drafting process of the *RPJMD*, there is relatively low level of political intervention. During the Regional Work Plan (*RKPD*) drafting process, there is also relatively low intervention, but *RKPD* is a document that must run in accordance and in parallel with the Regional Budget (*APBD*). It is in the process of drafting *APBD* that there is a highly intense level of political intervention.

In many regions, members of the Regional House of Representative (*DPRD*) often intervene without conducting any analysis on existing facts and data. The lack of commitment shown by these political elites is also one of the obstacles for achieving a participatory planning process

(Panday & Chowdhury, 2020). As a matter of fact, DPRD have the opportunity and space to convey their main points of thoughts (*Pokok-pokok Pikiran DPRD/Pokir*), which stem from the suggestions given by their constituents using the aspiration capture mechanism applied in the *musrenbang* phase at various levels. However, the perspectives of DPRD members in making use of their constituent's interests sometimes differ from the reality observed on the field. Consequently, the Regional Budget (*APBD*) tends to be oriented toward programs that are in line with the aspirations of the DPRD members, which is in fact different from what has been specified in the Regional Government Work Plan (*RKPD*) based on the Regional Mid-Term Development Plan (*RPJMD*). Therefore, it is not surprising if the *RKPD* is found to be different from the *RPJMD*. Ultimately, the regions plan for things that they won't do and do things that they didn't plan for.

Conclusion

This study aims to reveal the description of the quality of strategic planning, challenges and obstacles faced by local governments. The main finding in this article is that many strategic planning documents are mere formalities and are not referred to in implementing development activities. The expression *planning for things that will not be done and doing things that were not planned for* is quite accurate in depicting the state of strategic planning in most of the regencies/municipalities examined. This kind of planning is the result of a routine and ordinary planning process, which is no longer strategic in nature. The lack of a strategic aspect in the planning process in this study was found to be caused by several factors of which among them include poor quantity and quality of data and information, weak bargaining power that regencies/municipalities have over higher administrative units, limited capacity of mid-level managers, limited capacity of planners, formal stakeholder engagement, and an

unconducive political environment. These various factors are not standalone, but are interrelated. Based on the research analysis, the source of these issues lies in data availability (or lack of it), which is the result of how development assessments are being conducted. Evaluation that is only a formality completed by various different central institutions has left regional governments with very little energy to engage in more substantive evaluation.

In the current tiered government model and political system, improvements in the evaluation model specified by the central government are one of the keys to improve strategic planning. This implies that the central government evaluations should be based on simple and substantive assessments by examining achieved outcomes and providing elaborations concerning what efforts are required in order to positively contribute to the outcome. To achieve this end, central government ministries/agencies must remove their respective sectoral egos and have only one standardized document of evaluation that is used across all the departments. Additionally, evaluators who truly understand the substance of the evaluation process are required. The engagement of other parties like universities with proper credibility will create a high multiplier effect for all parties involved.

When evaluation is conducted to be based on outcome by the central government, then the high bargaining power that central government maintains over regional governments can in fact become an opportunity to improve the existing climate and make it more conducive for implementing the strategic planning process in the region. The demand for better substance evaluation creates better data availability. In addition, it encourages regional governments, particularly mid-level managers, to put more emphasis on planning and evaluation. Accordingly, various measures to prepare the entire planning process will be taken, such as having reliable

planners as staff, building a shared work system, making mid-level managers into leaders, and so forth. With reliable staff on hand, stakeholder engagement can be carried out properly. Valid data and good planning drafts can also be extremely solid materials for the executive branch to raise their bargaining power over the legislative.

This research is limited to the description of the quality of regional strategic planning documents. Further research can be specifically explored based on regions or affairs, internal planning connectivity, planning and budgeting integration as well as related to central and regional governments, relations between institutions, performance management and accountability, risk management, capacity and readiness of human resources planning.

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