Beyond Alienation: Reason Why Street-Level Bureaucrats Chose Discretion to Implement a Policy (A Case Study of Maybrat's Prospective Civil Servants' Training)

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Abstract

Discretion and street-level bureaucrats (SLB) are inseparable. SLB are seen to have better understanding and closer to what really happened in society, thus made SLB chose discretion so the implementation of a public policy can work successfully. Alienation, known as the condition where a policy is disconnected to its implementor, was said to be one of the main factors why SLB use discretion in implementing a policy outside what's been written. The previous researches had proven the connection between alienation and SLB's discretion decision, but what happened to the discretion that The Center for Training and Development and Government Management Research (Puslatbang KMP) chose to implement the blended learning policy for the prospective civil servants' training in Maybrat proved differently. Four out of five dimensions of alienation did not happen when Puslatbang KMP implemented the policy, yet discretion was still implemented for the prospective civil servants in Maybrat. The lack of training infrastructures, the low level of training participants' ability to access digital training platform, and the ever-changing security risks created what called needed deservingness for Maybrat's civil servants and made Puslatbang KMP chose discretion in implementing blended learning policy for them.

Keywords:

policy alienation; street-level bureaucrats; policy discretion

Introduction

The demand for excellent service from the bureaucracy makes the need for human resource (HR) management in the bureaucracy need to be carried out with comprehensive competency-based method. Training and development of public sector HR is actually a process that is constantly changing, which does not have to have a standard formula in its implementation, but needs to be carried out by being oriented to the needs and expectations of the public service itself (Manole, 2018). Especially with the need for technological adaptation and the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic which limits physical activities in public services, training with technology-based learning method presents as a solution that can be taken by the government to develop its employees' competency.

The two conditions above were responded to by the National Institute of Public Administration of Indonesia (NIPA) as the supervisory agency as well as the implementing agency

of training and development for Indonesian public servants by issuing the latest policy on Prospective Civil Servants' Training, namely NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 which regulates the implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training with blended learning method. With this learning method, trainees will undergo their training activities both online and offline. The online phase was done by utilizing the MOOC platform and also the LMS developed by NIPA itself, while the offline phase was done for six days for training subjects that require physical activities and also in the design and final actualization seminar. The regulation also includes a distance learning method in emergency conditions in the event of an outbreak of disease or pandemic, natural disasters, problems related to security at the training site, and other emergency conditions determined by the government. In this method, learning was done in two stages: the independent learning stage through MOOC which follows the provisions of blended learning, and the online learning stage both synchronous and asynchronous through the system developed by NIPA. In addition to the provisions regarding distance learning in emergency conditions, NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 also states that Prospective Civil Servants' Training with the classical method can be carried out if Government Agencies feel that they are not ready to hold or participate in Prospective Civil Servants' Training with the blended learning method and it needs to be approved by the Head of NIPA.

The Center of Training and Development and Government Management Research (Puslatbang KMP) of NIPA as one of the units under NIPA which has the function of implementing and quality assurance training activities for public servants with many stakeholders in the Eastern Region of Indonesia, carries out basic training for Prospective Civil Servants in Maybrat Regency, Southwest Papua, with a method different from what has been regulated in NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021. The Puslatbang KMP enforces discretion in the implementation of Maybrat's Prospective Civil Servants' Training where the training was done with a classical training curriculum, but the learning method was done by combining distance learning through video conferencing and classical learning. In participating in the training, as many as 511 Prospective Civil Servants from various agencies in the region (Sorong News, 2021) were divided into classes, some of which were not in accordance with the rules with 40 people per batch, and participants were also given the flexibility to take part in training in small groups without having to use their personal devices and gadgets. The Puslatbang KMP also applies slightly different standards in terms of passing grade, where in the training that was done without discretion, the graduation score threshold of 70.01 can be obtained if the trainees produce three outputs, namely reports, infographics and final project documentation videos, then Prospective Civil Servants in Maybrat are allowed if they do not meet the three outputs required to achieve the threshold value.

Table 1.

The Difference Between Implementation of Training Without Discretion

and with Discretion Carried Out by Puslatbang KMP

Training Elements	Without Discretion	With Discretion
Learning Method	Blended: self-learning through MOOC, e-learning through MOOC, implementation of actualization in the workplace, and classical	Blended: Distance learning through video conferencing, workplace actualization, and classical
Training duration	Self-learning: 16 days E-learning: 22 days Actualization: 30 days On-site learning: 6 days	Video conference: 21 days Actualization: 30 days Classical: 6 days
Training outputs	1. Magazine-designed report 2. Infographic 3. Actualization video	No need to fulfill three outputs

Puslatbang KMP, eventhough did not provide services directly to the community, have the task of providing services in the form of training and competency development to civil servants. This service was done by making direct contact with the recipients of the service, and this makes the Puslatbang KMP faced the same conditions faced by those who in the literature are included in the category of street-level bureaucrats. In bottom-up theory in policy implementation, the implementation of a policy is very likely to be unrelated to the original purpose of the policy (Pülzl & Treib, 2007). The proximity of local bureaucrats to the problems in the field is one of the reasons why SLB choose discretion in implementing policy and this is also considered one of the factors that support the objective of the policy itself (Pülzl & Treib, 2007). Alienation is one of the reasons why SLB chooses discretion in implementing a policy. Alienation itself is a condition in which policy implementers disconnect psychologically from the policy implemented (Tummers, 2017) which will affect the willingness and support for the implementation of the policy (Tummers, 2013a). This paper will dissect how Puslatbang Center as SLB made the decisions to implement discretion from the perspective of policy alienation which has two dimensions: meaninglessness and powerlessness. This paper will see whether these two dimensions really occur in the training policy implemented for Maybrat's Prospective Civil Servants so that discretion was done, or is there another reason why Puslatbang KMP implements discretionary policy.

Literature Review

Discretion in Public Policy Implementation

Discretion can be interpreted as a form of freedom in a hierarchical relationship, which at a certain level is given to an individual or an institution, to be carried out under certain conditions and based on certain standards that have been set (Evans & Hupe, 2020). A similar definition is stated by Tummers and Bekkers who defined discretion as the freedom gained by street-level

bureaucrats in determining matters related to the type, quantity, and quality of consequences – both in the form of sanctions and rewards – produced by the implementation of a policy. The bottom-up approach sees discretion as inevitable because it is able to increase the effectiveness of policy and become democratic support for the policy and programs implemented (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). Discretion occurs in a network between actors that has a direct relationship between people and roles and is mediated by documents or resources, and to understand it requires an understanding of the context in the network in the form of asymmetric and intersecting networks and describing different dimensions of power (Evans & Hupe, 2020).

Merilee Grindle (2017) gave her view on how policy are implemented in third world countries. In contrast to developed countries, policy implementation in third world countries is very related to political participation and competition. Developing countries' focus on economic and social growth makes policy-making mostly carried out only by those in national-level institutions. The policy-making process, which is mostly represented and cannot be accessed directly by the community, coupled with high political competition and limited resources, makes the factor of representation of interests of both individuals and groups and conflict resolution carried out in the final stage of the policy implementation process (Grindle, 2017). The limited participation of the community as policy recipients in the policy-making process ultimately makes this role replaced in the policy implementation phase. Participation in policy implementation was done by implementing policy flexibly and by making adjustments here and there, with the aim that the policy implemented can meet the needs of the community to the lowest level. Adjustments in the implementation of policy carried out by bureaucratic actors at the local level based on the physical, economic and political conditions that are directly faced are called discretion that is necessary to distribute resources so that the fulfillment of public demands in the political system can be carried out effectively (Grindle, 2017).

Discretion has also become inseparable from modern life. The rapid development of information and communication technology has created an increase in freedom of action (Evans & Hupe, 2020). The ever-changing needs coupled with increasingly dynamic environmental conditions require policy that can meet needs and adapt to environmental conditions. When existing policy are unable to meet needs and are not in line with environmental conditions, discretion emerges as a new perspective and a method of control over new systems that are not yet bound by rules (Evans & Hupe, 2020). In its implementation, discretion exercised by street-level bureaucrats can be classified into three forms (Taylor & Kelly, 2006 in Hoyle, 2014): 1) role discretion - which is limited by rules and legal, fiscal, or organizational constraints; 2) value discretion - which is based on an understanding of a sense of justice regarding something, which

can affect professional or organizational codes of ethics; 3) task discretion - related to the ability to perform tasks and complete work related to clients.

SLB and Their Role to Determine Policy's Successful Implementation

In the implementation of public policy, discretion cannot be separated from those known as street-level bureaucrats, a concept introduced by Michael Lipsky. Street-level bureaucrats, as defined by Lipsky, are individuals working in schools, police departments, social services, courts, or other lower-level institutions that provide services involving extensive discretion in granting benefits or sanctions to the public (Lipsky, 2010). These bureaucrats are also referred to by Hudson (1989 in Pülzl & Treib, 2007) as power holders who are beyond the control of the public and have autonomy from their workplaces. A bottom-up model highlights the significant role of each actor involved in the policy implementation process and how the actions taken by each actor in implementing policy can solve existing problems.

The role of street-level bureaucrats is important in the implementation of a public policy considering that these street-level bureaucrats are directly intersecting with the conditions in the field where the public policy is implemented. All forms of activities and tools used to overcome conditions of uncertainty and pressure in the daily work carried out by street level bureaucrats are a reflection of the policy they implement (Lipsky, 2010). Lipsky (2010) also emphasized that although public policy was made by those at the top level of policy-making, what cannot be forgotten is the level at which the policy is implemented, such as the services provided by street level bureaucrats to the community.

When street level bureaucrats are given the flexibility to implement a policiy, this will have a positive effect on client meaningfulness and willingness to implement the policy (Tummers & Bekkers, 2012). Client meaningfulness is defined as the perception of policy implementers or in this case, the street level bureaucrats, that the policy being implemented has more value for clients or policy recipients (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). Discretion allows implementers to adjust how to implement policy to suit the conditions and needs faced by policy recipients. Adjustment to these conditions increases the meaning of the policy for its implementers, although this meaning may be different from what is felt by the policy recipients themselves (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). The second positive effect is an increase willingness to implement the policy. This willingness is a positive intention of the policy implementer to implement the policy (Ajzen, 1991; Metselaar, 1997 dalam (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014). This will is manifested in all forms of efforts carried out by the implementers so that the policy can run well.

Alienation in Public Policy Implementation

In short, alienation can be interpreted as a sense of isolation that arises in street-level bureaucrats when they are required to implement a policy. This sense of isolation arises because there is no opportunity for implementers to influence policy starting from the drafting stage, to the implementation to discretion. This sense of isolation also arises when the implementer feels that the policy cannot provide any benefits to the policy recipient and does not have a good impact on the community in its implementation. Alienation will make policy implementers have no desire to implement the policy and will affect the success of the policy themselves. Policy alienation is defined by Tummers (2017) as a cognitive condition in the form of a disconnection in the psychological relationship between the implementer and the implemented policy. In simple terms, alienation can be interpreted as a sense of alienation that arises when a policy is implemented because of inadequate freedom over the factors that are accounted for in the implementation of the policy (Tummers, 2013b). This sense of alienation can arise, for example, when policy implementers are faced with policy that only focus on economic efficiency while policy implementers have their own values and norms related to their work (Tummers, 2013b).

Policy alienation will affect the acceptance and willingness of implementers to implement existing policy (Tummers, 2011). Alienation of a policy arises due to powerlessness and meaninglessness of the policy (Tummers, 2017). Powerlessness arises when the policy implementer does not have strategic, tactical or operational influence over a policy. From a strategic perspective, powerlessness is related to the absence of opportunities for implementers to exert influence in the policy-making process. Tactical powerlessness has to do with how the implementer has no influence on the implementation of policy in his organization. Meanwhile, operational powerlessness is related to the level of discretion that can be exercised over the implemented policy. The higher the powerlessness of the implemented policy, the lower the willingness of the implementer to change and the less support given for the change (Tummers, 2013a).

Meaninglessness in policy implementation refers to the benefits provided by the policy to the target policy recipients and to the wider community. Tummers (2013a) explained that when a policy is considered meaningless to the community or is considered unable to meet the expectations of the community, support for policy implementation will also decrease. The same thing will also happen when a policy is considered unable to meet needs or considered ineffective for policy recipients (clients), the lower the willingness and support for the policy (Tummers, 2013a). Furthermore, policy alienation can have a negative influence on the effectiveness of policy,

affect the quality of the relationship between policy implementers and recipients, and even potentially reduce the legitimacy of the government itself (Tummers et al., 2012).

Research Metodology

This research was conducted in January 2023 at the Center for Training and Development and Government Management Studies (Puslatbang KMP) of NIPA in Makassar. This research was carried out using qualitative approach with case study as technique. With a qualitative approach, it is hoped that this research will be able to provide a contextual (social, institutional and environmental) picture of the phenomenon studied (Yin, 2011). Case studies will help explain and interpret contextual conditions, explain networks and causal interactions and interact empathetically with people involved as informants in the research (Tracy, 2020). The data source used in this study is primary data obtained from the results of in-depth interviews with informants. Informants are selected by purposive sampling method by directly selecting informants who are considered to have capacity in the implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training in Maybrat Regency. The criteria for the selected informants are to have direct role in the Prospective Civil Servants' Training, including managerial roles, technical roles and teaching roles. The informants are including: Head of the Puslatbang, Puslatbang KMP's Coordinator for Training and Development, Puslatbang KMP's Sub-Coordinator of Training and Development, person in charge (PIC) of the training and other parties who are considered to have the capacity in this research. The list of informants in this study is:

Tabel 1.

Informants' Lists

Nu.	Informant	Role of Informant
1	AT	Head of Puslatbang KMP
2	AV	Trainer appointed as Puslatbang KMP's Coordinator for Training and Development
3	ZC	Trainer appointed as Puslatbang KMP's Sub-Coordinator for Training and Development
4	JT	Trainer appointed as facilitator and coach for the Prospective Civil Servants Training
5	WI	Trainer appointed as facilitator and coach for the Prospective Civil Servants Training
6	WA	Trainer appointed as facilitator and coach for the Prospective Civil Servants Training
7	IR	Public relation officer appointed as facilitator and coach for the Prospective Civil Servants Training
8	FN	Policy analyst appointed as *person in charge* for the Prospective Civil Servants' Training
9	UN	Policy analyst appointed as *person in charge* for the Prospective Civil Servants' Training
10	FJ	Policy analyst appointed as *person in charge* for the Prospective Civil Servants' Training

Findings and Discussion

The Implementation of Blended Learning Policy in The Prospective Civil Servants' Training by Puslatbang KMP

Prospective Civil Servants Training is one of the trainings carried out by the Puslatbang KMP. In organizing the Prospective Civil Servants' Training, there are two budgeting patterns carried out by the Puslatbang KMP. The two patterns are the Non-Tax State Revenue (PNBP) and the self-management pattern. Prospective Civil Servants' Training with PNBP pattern is fully managed by the Puslatbang KMP, and training process becomes full responsibility of Puslatbang KMP through the Training and Development Section. Government agencies that choose this pattern in carrying out their Prospective Civil Servants' Training pay the training fee to the Puslatbang KMP according to the laws and regulations and being managed directly by the Puslatbang KMP according to the needs of the training.

The second pattern is self-management pattern was done in two methods: quality assurance and facilitation. In general, government agencies that chose to self-manage organize Prospective Civil Servants' Training manage their own budget to carry the training. Puslatbang KMP itself had two roles in this pattern. The first role is that Puslatbang KMP was appointed as a quality assurance in the implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training. The organizing team from Puslatbang KMP will present to monitor the implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training in the organizing agency, especially in the academic evaluation and final evaluation stages. The second role was as facilitator, where the training budget was fully managed by the agency where the Prospective Civil Servants originates, and Puslatbang KMP gets the task of organizing and providing facilitators in the training. This facilitative pattern was chosen by the Maybrat Regency Government in carrying out their Prospective Civil Servants' Training, so the training was done in self-managing budgetary, but the facilitators and organizers are from Puslatbang KMP.

Regarding learning methods, after the issuance of NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021, Puslatbang KMP conducted three forms of learning methods for Prospective Civil Servants' Training that were carried out. The three learning methods are classical learning, blended learning, and distance learning. Classical learning was done by Puslatbang KMP for Prospective Civil Servants' Training in Soppeng Regency, South Sulawesi which was done with self-management pattern; Majene Regency, West Sulawesi with the pattern of self-management but Puslatbang KMP was appointed as quality assurance; and Barru Regency with PNBP pattern. The classical method was chosen at the request of the local government based on their own conditions and capabilities, especially related to technical and infrastructure capabilities.

Other than the classical method, Puslatbang KMP also carried out Prospective Civil Servants' Training with blended learning method for prospective civil servants from Bulukumba Regency and the Election Supervisory Agency (Bawaslu). The Prospective Civil Servants' Training conducted for these two agencies was conducted with the PNBP pattern. In contrast to Barru Regency which chose the classical method for the implementation of its Prospective Civil Servants' Training, the Bulukumba Government chose blended learning as training method considering that although the training budget was initially planned at the cost of classical training, in the second half of 2021 budget revisions was allowed so the Prospective Civil Servants' Training can be changed to blended learning in accordance with NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021. The blended learning method itself was the method suggested by Puslatbang KMP to agencies that will cooperate in organizing Prospective Civil Servants' Training, this was done by Puslatbang KMP to spread and implement the newest Prospective Civil Servants' Training regulation.

The third training method carried out by Puslatbang KMP was the distance learning method. This method was done for two regions, Maybrat Regency and South Sorong Regency. Distance learning carried out in the Prospective Civil Servants' Training in these two regions was actually carried out differently from what was in NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021. In the regulation, distance learning for Prospective Civil Servants' Training was done through two stages, the MOOC stage and the online learning stage whose schedule was the same as blended learning but face-to-face learning was replaced by learning through online media. In contrast to these provisions, Maybrat's and South Sorong's Prospective Civil Servants' Training, learning was done through two stages, first one was the the online learning stage for the second and third learning agendas, and classical learning for first training agenda, academic evaluations, actualization seminars. In addition, adjustments were also made to the passing-grade standards of participants in Maybrat, where Prospective Civil Servants from Maybrat are not required to produce three outputs in the form of infographics, magazines and videos for the implementation of actualization, as well as the ease of obtaining the score of 70.01 to be able to pass the training. Participants' commitment and enthusiasm during the training become priority in conducting assessments for participants from Maybrat. The learning method, which was not directly regulated in NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021, was a form of discretion over the implementation of the policy carried out by Puslatbang KMP.

From the results of data processing carried from the Maybrat's Prospective Civil Servants Training report, there are only six from 511 participants whose scores are considered "Unsatisfactory" and not being able to pass the training. This number showed that Prospective Civil Servants' Training in the Maybrat were carried out well. It was also supported by the good

and supportive testimonials given by both training participants and the local government where the participants work.

Alienation in the Implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training Policy

The issuance of a new policy has the potential to create a sense of alienation for those who have the role of implementing it. This sense of alienation is referred to as one of the success determinants of the policy implementation itself (Tummers, Bekkers, van Thiel, et al., 2015). Alienation arises due to powerlessness and meaninglessness felt by implementers towards the implemented policy (Tummers, 2017). This powerlessness arises from the initial stage of the policy where the implementer is not being involved in the preparation stage of policy implementation or so-called strategic powerlessness. Powerlessness will also arise when policy implementers have no influence in implementing policy, which are divided into two, tactical powerlessness which refers to the absence of opportunities to influence policy implementation decisions and operational powerlessness related to the absence of the opportunity to exercise discretion over the implemented policy. In addition to powerlessness, alienation will also arise if policy implementers feel that the implemented policy do not provide benefits to policy recipients who are their clients (client meaninglessness) and also do not have a positive impact to wider community (societal meaninglessness). Alienation will be stronger if powerlessness and meaninglessness occurred and the chance of policy implementation failure will be greater as well.

A different thing happened when Puslatbang KMP chose to implement discretion in the implementation of the Prospective Civil Servants' Training policy with the blended learning method. At the policy formulation stage, strategic powerlessness was experienced by Puslatbang KMP. Although Puslatbang was one of the NIPA units that is directly involved in the implementation of basic training for Prospective Civil Servants, in fact Puslatbang KMP was not involved in the process of drafting NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 which substantively changes the learning method (Informants AT, AV, and WA, 2023). The preparation of the policy by NIPA was completely handed over to the Center of Development of Program and Policy on Competency Development of the State Civil Apparatus (P3K Bangkom ASN). The absence of involvement in the policy drafting process still arises even though P3K Bangkom itself has carried out Public Trial before NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 policy was passed. The activity was carried out by inviting various Training Institutions all over Indonesia. Unfortunately, in these activities, only a few training institutions were given the opportunity to provide input. Throughout the input session, it was more a QnA session about the implementation of the new policy.

Although strategic powerlessness happened, other powerlessness did not occur during policy implementation stage. This can be seen from the content of NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021

which still provides options in learning methods that can be used in the implementation of training, such as blended learning, classical and distance learning with special conditions. These two other learning methods can be chosen by the training organizer if they have obtained written approval from NIPA (NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021, 2021). The existence of this clause makes tactical powerlessness, which refers to the absence of the opportunity to choose how a policy will be implemented within the organization, becomes invalid.

The learning method options listed in NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 made Puslatbang KMP then inform the local agencies that will collaborate in Prospective Civil Servants' Training. Agencies and local governments that will carry out Prospective Civil Servants' Training were given the opportunity to choose which method that was suitable with their budget and their respective local condition (Informant AT and UN, 2023). Although there are several options, Puslatbang KMP as a unit of NIPA will first advise the local agencies to choose the blended learning method. This was done due to the fact that the cost of blended learning was much cheaper compared to the other two methods. This was also a form of support from Puslatbang KMP for NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 which in principle prioritizes blended learning as the Prospective Civil Servants' Training learning method. However, the decision to choose remains in the hands of the agency whose Prospective Civil Servants' Training will be carried out with the help of Puslatbang KMP (Informant WI and FJ, 2023). This indicates that tactical powerlessness does not occur in the implementation of the Prospective Civil Servants' Training policy.

The same thing happened in operational powerlessness as it related to how much discretion can be exercised when a policy is being implemented. Puslatbang KMP was still given the opportunity to implement discretion in implementing the Prospective Civil Servants' Training learning method outside the methods in NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 for the Prospective Civil Servants' Training in Maybrat Regency which was done with facilitation and self-managed scheme. Discretion was done by changing classical learning to distance learning with the help of the Zoom Meeting for theoretical training subjects, and continue to carry out face-to-face classical training for civil ceremony protocol and drill subjects in the National Defense Preparedness Agenda. This method can be carried out after obtaining written approval from NIPA through the Deputy for Competency Development Training in the form of principal permit. The principal permit itself was issued after there was an application from Puslatbang KMP including the conditions that made the implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training in Maybrat could not be carried out in accordance with existing rules (Informant FJ dan ZC, 2023).

Another dimension of alienation that was not present in the implementation of the Prospective Civil Servants' Training policy with the blended learning method is meaninglessness.

This dimension refers to whether there are benefits obtained by policy recipients (client meaninglessness) and the wider community (societal meaninglessness) by implementing the policy. The issuance of NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021 which completely changes the learning method and curriculum of Prospective Civil Servants' Training with the emergence of blended learning as a preferred learning method, was considered to be able to provide benefits for Prospective Civil Servants as well as agencies or local governments from which participants came from. These benefits arose from increasing of competency in terms of the direct or indirect use of information technology through technology-based learning systems in MOOC, shorter training schedule, and cheaper training costs. Furthermore, the implementation of the policy was also felt to have a positive domino effect for stakeholders in wider scope (Informant JT, AT, dan FJ, 2023).

Why Discretion When There was No Alienation?

It was interesting to see what happened in Maybrat turned out to be the opposite from the existing theoretical studies. Theoretically, discretion is often associated with the emergence of alienation to a policy, but what happened in the implementation of the Prospective Civil Servants' Training policy in Maybrat was the opposite, where no policy alienation occurs, but discretion was still happened. This discretion was chosen by Puslatbang KMP based on several factors, and those were:

1. Limited Human Resources and Infrastructures

In the bottom-up model of policy implementation, discretion is mentioned as a way to solve problems that are close to the root of policy problems (Pülzl & Treib, 2007) faced in the field. These problems will arise as the result of resources unavailability, unpredictable and unrelated events to the policy (Grindle, 2017). The limited supporting infrastructures and the limited human resources in accessing and following learning methods are the main factors of why Puslatbang KMP chose discretion in implementing the Basic Training for Prospective Civil Servants of Maybrat Regency.

Accorrding to the regulations, blended learning actually provides more convenience for trainees to learn considering that most of the learning was done asynchronously. Asynchronous learning provides an opportunity for participants to be able to access learning systems and materials without being monitored by organizers or facilitators. Synchronous learning that requires participants to do face-to-face with a facilitator was limited to only 25 training hours, so participants had the flexibility to learn anytime and anywhere. This opportunity was inversely proportional to the discretion carried out by Puslatbang KMP for Prospective Civil Servants of Maybrat Regency. The learning method was by principle using the classical training curriculum, but it was done in a blended way by combining distance learning through video conference

application for subjects that can be taught by direct lecture, and classical learning for subjects that must be done directly in the field and also for academic evaluation.

During the distance learning session, participants are required to learn in front of their respective devices for 18 days of classical training. This will certainly take time, energy, and cost considering that in one day participants are required to take part in training via video conference for 12 training hours or about 9 hours every day. Even so, this method was still chosen as learning method considering that the system used was simpler and more accessible compared to blended learning where the learning process was mostly done through MOOC and LMS. Assistance to participants can also be carried out comprehensively considering that the facilitator will always be present in the video conference during the training. The ease of access to the learning system and direct monitoring was needed by the Prospective Civil Servants of Maybrat Regency considering that their human resource capabilities in terms of digital skills tend to be lower (Informant JT dan FN, 2023).

In addition to the condition of infrastructure and the ability of human resources to access the learning system, another reason that makes Puslatbang KMP use discretion in the implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training in Maybrat Regency was due to the large number of Prospective Civil Servants of Maybrat Regency who had not been participating in the Prospective Civil Servants' Training while their trial period had ended. A total of 511 Prospective Civil Servants of Maybrat Regency who are Prospective Civil Servants appointed in 2018 were given the opportunity to join the Prospective Civil Servants' Training only in 2021. Considering the large number participants, discretion in the learning method was chosen so all participants could complete the training within one year. This discretion was also agreed to be implemented by the Chairman of NIPA who wants all Prospective Civil Servants from Papua and West Papua to train no matter how limited their condition is (Informant AT, ZC dan IR, 2023).

2. COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred in early 2020 brought significant changes in the implementation of Prospective Civil Servants' Training. The designation of COVID-19 as a national disaster made the government restrict activities involving face-to-face interaction, thus made the method of conducting training to change immediately. The basic training of Prospective Civil Servants which used to be carried out with classical methods was instantly changed to distance learning by utilizing information technology. In distance learning method, learning was completely carried out through video conference, even for training subjects that require practice in the field. Not long after the discretion over the learning method in the Prospective Civil Servants' Training was implemented, NIPA finally made changes to the Prospective Civil Servants'

Training policy which was ratified in early 2021. The change of the learning method by using blended learning was one of the main points regulated. Blended learning emerged as a learning method that was expected to strengthen the competence of Prospective Civil Servants in facing challenges in their tasks through a modern training model that combines information and communication technology and integrated classical learning (Keputusan Kepala Lembaga Administrasi Negara Tentang Pedoman Penyelenggaraan Pelatihan Calon Pegawai Negeri Sipil, 2021). In the regulation, the pandemic and other emergency conditions were mentioned as the reasons for changes of the policy. This showed that the need for competency development in accordance with the development of current conditions and needs was the fundamental reason for change. The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the triggers that accelerates these changes (Informant FN, WA, dan AV, 2023).

In the context of discretion in the learning method for basic training of Prospective Civil Servants in Maybrat, the pandemic was also indirectly becoming the reason why discretion was carried out. In addition to the main reasons caused by the limited accessibility to the learning system and limited human resources, discretion in learning methods was chosen considering that in 2021 there were quite strict travel restrictions. Discretion was used as an effort to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 by reducing physical contact with trainees considering that training in Maybrat was in principle using classical curriculum and should be carried out face-to-face for 21 days.

In various literatures, discretionary decisions made by SLBs were related to COVID-19 pandemic which began to occur in early 2020 (Davidovitz et al., 2021; Gofen & Lotta, 2021; Hadna et al., 2022; Lotta et al., 2021). Discretion, which was initially present as a response to the uncertainty and pressure that arises in the daily work of bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010), has inevitably become something that must be taken along with the crisis conditions that arise due to the pandemic. The need for decision-making in a very fast time, the increasing needs with limited resources, increasing uncertainty, absence of policy and limited experience related to the conditions, as well as concerns about the health risks from the pandemic itself, have led to a more intense response from SLBs as a form of coping with the crisis (Lotta et al., 2021).

Eventhough Puslatbang KMP did not provide services directly to the community, has the task of providing services in the form of training and competency development to Indonesia civil servants. This service was done by making direct contact with the recipients of the service, and this makes Puslatbang KMP faced the same conditions faced by those who in the literature are included in the category of SLBs. This was what made Puslatbang KMP finally face the same

pressure when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred and use discretion as a way to deal with the crisis.

3. Maybrat's Security Condition

Another reason underlying the discretion in the Prospective Civil Servants' Training in Maybrat Regency was the poor security conditions at the time of the training being conducted. Before conducting the training, BPSDM Maybrat Regency as the local committee coordinated with the police and also the Indonesia National Army (TNI) related to classical training phase. From the information obtained, the police and the TNI stated that with the existing conditions, they were unable to guarantee the safety of all parties involved in the training, both participants and organizers, if the training were to be conducted in full classical method for 18 days. This was related to the conflict potential that occur if there are large gatherings initiated by the government.

These considerations are the reason as to why then the training in Maybrat was carried out with blended learning method that wasn't following the rules, where the classical phase was done only for three days. Concerns about security condition are proved by the occurrence of violence that caused casualties from TNI in September 2021 (COSTA, 2021). The incident occurred close to the time the training was being held (Informant AT, IR dan ZC, 2023).

Discretion as Puslatbang KMP's Coping Mechanism

Theoretically, alienation arises as a problem in policy implementation has a solution that arises from the policy implementer itself, and discretion appears as a coping mechanism against the alienation. But what happened in Maybrat was beyond that. Puslatbang KMP as a training organizer at the local level faced a condition where its client, the Maybrat Regency Government, has limitations that will greatly affect if its Prospective Civil Servants Training were carried out with blended learning method following NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021. The number of Maybrat's Prospective Civil Servants was very large, but it was not supported by qualified training facilities and human resources, coupled with the limited ability of participants to participate in MOOC and LMS, as well as security conditions that cannot be ascertained, making Puslatbang KMP choose to implement discretion for the training. Puslatbang KMP chooses discretion as a form of coping mechanism for the limited conditions experienced by its clients, without experiencing alienation from the regulated blended learning policy that should be implemented.

Discretion as a form of coping mechanism was done when SLBs faced challenges arise when performing public services (Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, et al., 2015). Discretion was a way to get close to clients by making adjustments to existing rules, so that clients can meet their needs and the public services can provide good meanings for clients who receive it. In the context of

public service, coping is defined by (Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, et al., 2015) as the efforts made by the policy implementors dealing with clients to master, tolerate, and reduce conflicts and demands both from the internal and external sides in their field of work. One of the coping methods done by policy implementers in implementing policies that are alienated from them was to approach the clients or policy recipients they serve by bending the rules of the existing policies. This rule bending was done by making adjustments to the rules to be able to meet the needs of the clients they served (Tummers, Bekkers, Vink, et al., 2015).

How then was this coping carried out by Puslatbang KMP? Coping was done through discretion in learning methods, discretion in the number of participants in one batch, and slight adjustments to the quality of participants' passing grade standards. Puslatbang KMP as a training organizer at the local level faced a condition where its client, the Maybrat Regency Government, has limitations in many ways that will greatly affect the success of the implementation of Basic Training if it was done with a blended learning method in accordance with NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021. The results of the training showed positive results in terms of the participants' passing rate, so it can be said that the discretion had positive impact on the goal of the policy. This was also a proof that discretion can increase the effectiveness of the policy itself (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014) because with the implementation of discretionary training, the obligation to hold Basic Training for Prospective Civil Servants of Maybrat can be fulfilled even under very limited conditions.

Why did Puslatbang KMP choose Maybrat Regency as "the one who needed help" and implement discretion? This cannot be separated from what is called deservingness or whether the client is eligible to receive help. In implementing a policy, SLBs have the power to determine who gets help and who does not. This determination is based on deservingness or worthiness which Jilke & Tummers (2018) divided into three: earned deservingness – obtained by the client for their hard work; needed deservingness – arose because the client really needs help; and resource deservingness –obtained for the ownership of resources that can be used as "investment" when there are limitations. These criteria of deservingness are related to the four attributes that the client has: effort, performance, gender and race, which makes a client getting priority to be helped (Jilke & Tummers, 2018).

In the case of Maybrat, needed deservingness was the dominant reaseon to make Puslatbang KMP chose to implement discretion. The condition in Maybrat where the area has limited internet and electricity networks, added with the human resources who were not really qualified in accessing e-learning systems, added with uncertain security conditions was a picture of underperformance. That's why Puslatbang KMP felt that Maybrat needs to get help so that in

these limited conditions the Prospective Civil Servants' Training can still be held. The help was done by doing discretion in the learning method: blended learning in only two stages and using classical curriculum. The implementation allowed participants to learn with easier access and understanding. The discretion done by Puslatbang KMP was also a form of positive discrimination (Goodsell, 1981 in Jilke & Tummers, 2018) given to Maybrat was considered under underperformance criteria.

What cannot be ruled out of needed deservingness is the racial factor so a client was considered to need help from SLBs. Those who is minority have structural disadvantages and it made SLBs feel the need to help the minority group. This was also the reason behind why discretion was chosen to do in Maybrat. The ability of participants from Maybrat in terms of receiving learning materials and accessing learning systems if it were done by fully blended learning method, was lower compared to another region. This racial factor was also the reason behind the enactment of different standards in terms of the quality of assignments, actualization, and final reports made by participants from Maybrat.

Conclusion

What was done by Puslatbang KMP can be concluded that the discretion SLBs was not always related to policy alienation. Puslatbang KMP as the implementer of the blended learning policy regulated in NIPA's Rule Number 1/2021, chose discretion to implement the policy in Maybrat even though Puslatbang KMP did not experience alienation to policy. Things that happened in the field such as the large number of Prospective Civil Servants, but not supported by qualified training facilities and human resources, added with the limited ability of participants to participate in independent learning, as well as security conditions that could not be ascertained, made Puslatbang KMP feel that their client got what-so-called needed deservingness and they decided to help their client by doing the rule bending. Discretion was the coping mechanism of Puslatbang KMP so that policy can continue to be implemented in the midst of limitations. Although discretion was done by changing learning methods and passing grade standards in training can result decreasing in training quality, in the end the obligation to carry out training for Prospective Civil Servants in Maybrat can be implemented and the policy output in the form of participant passing rate can be fulfilled.

Research Limitation and Recommendation

Based on the experience gained by the author during the data collection process, there are several limitations that can be used as a reference to improve future studies. These limitations include: 1) limitations of the point of view, where the research's POV was based on what was

experienced by the policy implementer only, and the training participants as the policy recipients was excluded from this research; 2) limitations of the research locus, where this research only see at how the policy was done in the Eastern Indonesia; and 3) this research was only conducted to see how policies are implemented, not in the level of policy evaluation.

Some of the recommendations that the author can provide for the next research are:

1. Further research is needed to provide a broader picture of policy implementation from the perspective of trainees and local governments or as policy recipients, as well as from the policymakers' side.;

2. Research with other regional contexts is needed considering the geographical conditions of Indonesia which is very wide and having diverse regional characteristics. It is very likely that different findings will emerge if the research is done in the context of the West Indonesia, the Disadvantaged, Frontier and Outermost (3T) regions, the New Autonomic Region (DOB), and other regional contexts.

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