

ARTICLE

Mainstreaming Functional Positions within Indonesian Bureaucracy: Half-Hearted Commitment to Professionalization?

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian government has declared bureaucratic simplification as one of its strategic targets. Based on the understanding that a functional (professional) position is the key to increasing the professionalism of civil servants, a massive "bureaucratic functionalization" was carried out by removing two layers of structural (managerial) positions and transforming them into functional (professional) positions. However, this policy of mainstreaming functional positions presents several problems. This study analyses the issues faced while implementing mainstreaming functional positions from the vantage point of professionalism. The significance of this research is to provide a systematization of the problems encountered in the policy of mainstreaming functional positions by outlining key thematic points and formulating ways to overcome these problems. It uses a qualitative method by combining literature study and observation approach. It reveals that the government genuinely displays a half-hearted commitment to professionalizing the bureaucracy. This can be seen from several pieces of evidence: a regulatory framework which discourages superior performance, the neglect of merit aspect during transformation, the discrepancy between the formal tasks and the actual tasks of functional officers, the lack of incentives and facilities, the discrimination against career functional officers, and the persistence of hierarchy through the new guise. As for the solutions for the identified problems, several measures can be taken: revising the regulatory framework, assessing the abilities and interests of employees before the induction as functional officers, utilizing functional officers more optimally, flattening the organizational structure resolutely, and providing competency development continually.

A. INTRODUCTION

In his first speech after being sworn in as Indonesia's president for the second term in October 2019, Joko Widodo declared bureaucratic simplification as one of his priority policies. According to him, the existing bureaucracy is too gigantic with lengthy procedures. With the principle of "flat structure, rich functions", it is necessary to cut the bureaucracy by simplifying organizational layers from four to two levels. Administration (managerial) positions consisting of Administrators (Echelon III/Managerial Level) and Supervisors (Echelon IV/Supervisor Level) will be transformed into functional positions that give more emphasis to the value of

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expertise and competence (*TimDetikcom*, 2019). Along with other priority policies (human resource development, infrastructure development, regulatory simplification, and economic transformation), this step is believed to bring Indonesia out of the middle-income country trap and become the fourth or fifth economic power in the world by 2045.

This policy will significantly change the composition of civil servants. In 2019, Indonesian civil servants consisted of 11 % of structural or managerial officers, 52 % of functional (professional) officers, and 37% of administrative (staff) officers (*HumasSETKAB*, 2019). With bureaucratic simplification, there will be fewer structural officers so that the bureaucratic chain will be shortened. Thus, it is hoped that the implementation of the policy can be carried out quickly and effectively. The percentage of functional positions which currently constitute the majority will continue to increase.

According to the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (*KemenPanRB*) Regulation Number 13 of 2019, functional (professional) positions are those whose functions and duties are related to functional services based on certain expertise and skills. Its career advancement is based on obtaining credit scores related to implementing the duties and functions of the functional positions. Each functional position has a standard of professional competence. In doing their jobs, functional officers must take a competency test, have competency certification, comply with the professional code of ethics, and join professional associations. In this case, functional positions are an illustrative embodiment of what is called "enforced forms of professionalism" (*Noordegraaf, van der Steen, & van Twist*, 2014). Currently, 243 functional positions in Indonesian bureaucracy are divided into 25 clusters (*Kusnadi*, 2021).

The discourse of mainstreaming functional positions through bureaucratic simplification has been echoed since 2012. In that year, the abolition of administration positions was attempted to change structural officers' orientation and reduce unnecessary costs, such as facilities for managers. However, this discourse failed to be realized because it encountered much resistance (*Tumanggor & Wibowo*, 2021). It was only in 2019 when Joko Widodo started his second term as president that this discourse was finally realized. In contrast to the trend in Western countries where professionals working for the government are increasingly losing their reputation (*Carter*, 2007), in Indonesia these professionals' reputation rises because they are believed to inject a high degree of competence in public administration.

Moreover, Mainstreaming functional positions that value, that value expertise can tackle the classical problem of the low level of competence. The assessment results on 1024 echelon II and echelon III officers showed that more than a third (34.47 %) of them were recommended to improve their competence. Of the 294 echelon II officers assessed, almost half (48.64 %) is recommended for development (*Syafiq, Putra, & Nugroho*, 2017). The low competence can also be seen in the bureaucracy's many administrative positions (staff), which do not require high skills because they only do administrative tasks. Therefore, a discourse arose to lay off 1.6 million administrative staff because their work could be replaced by the digital system (*Qurniawan*, 2021).

KemenPANRB immediately conducted bureaucracy simplification according to the presidents' direction. The bureaucratic simplification was targeted to be completed by December 2020. It was later postponed to December 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for a pilot project to be made first. Until August 7, 2020, there has been a simplification of the bureaucracy structure in 41 ministries and institutions, with a total of 24,644 echelon positions or 59 % transferred to functional positions (*HumasMENPANRB*, 2020). Meanwhile, as of December 2021, 94,156 administration positions have been transferred to functional positions in 327 local governments or 66 % of the total target (*Prihatin*, 2021). Not all echelon III and IV positions were trimmed. Exceptions are given to some positions with certain criteria (*Dewi*, 2019).

Several studies on transforming structural positions to functional positions within bureaucracy have been carried out before bureaucratic simplification became a government priority program (Muhlis, 2013; Rohida., Nuryanto., & Sarif, 2018). After it became a national priority policy, other studies which assessed it from various aspects emerged. Daniarsyah (2020) found that bureaucratic simplification can lead to counterproductive work behaviour. Meanwhile, Fitrianingrum., Lusyana., & Lellyana (2020) and Marthalina (2021) studied the implementation of bureaucratic simplification to the career development of former administration officers who were transferred to functional officers at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences and KemenPanRB respectively. In their study at the Ministry of *KemenPanRB*, Insani., Warsono., & Astuti (2021) found that because the transition from administration positions to functional positions was carried out hastily and without being preceded by an in-depth study, the performance of transformed functional officers decreased, and this in turn had an impact on reducing organizational performance.

Moreover, Tumanggor & Wibowo (2021) examined the motivation and performance of transformed functional officers in the central and local governments. Sumanti., Yunita., & Sinurat (2021) analyzed professional position development's legal, technical, and welfare aspects in the context of adjustment from administration to functional positions. In other studies, Ramadani & Sofyaningrum (2020) examined the communication strategy implemented at the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources related to transforming administration positions into functional positions. Rakhman (2020) focused on compensation or income from employees affected by the bureaucratic simplification at the Center for Civil Service Human Resources Development, Ministry of EMR. Lastly, Rusliandy (2022) analyzed the policy of bureaucratic simplification by focusing on three types of transformation: organization, position, and performance management.

From various previous research findings, it is known that there are many problems in the policy of transforming administration positions to functional positions that have been going on for more than two years. These various problems will be explored and analyzed more deeply to get a more comprehensive picture of the contours of the problem. This article is the first study that attempts to map and link these problems more systematically into thematic points. Apart from that, this article also attempts to formulate ways to solve these problems. Studying this issue can also provide lessons to be learned for governments around the world trying to mainstream functional positions within a bureaucracy. This article attempts to answer the following two questions: 1) What problems are faced during the implementation of mainstreaming functional positions; and 2) how to overcome those problems? Based on the profession and professionalism theory perspective, this article provides a rapid and broad answer to those questions.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Profession and professionalism are two closely related ideas. A person who works full-time in a particular profession is called a professional. The profession has characteristics including an abstract and specialized set of knowledge, autonomy over work processes, self-regulation, legal rights that limit who can practice a profession, control over the supply and license of practitioners, altruism, and high status in society (Carter, 2007). Professionals in modern society are based on the value of trust. Lay people should trust professionals as parties with knowledge and expertise in a specific field.

Conversely, professionals must prove they are worthy of receiving that trust by prioritizing clients' interests, keeping confidential information, and evading fraudulent acts (Evetts, 2013). Through expertise-based services provided to the public, professionals act as an intermediary between the state and the citizen. In this position, they simultaneously serve

the interests of the state and citizens in a balanced way (Kuhlmann., Agartan., & von Knorring, 2016).

The functional structuralist approach sees the profession instrumentally. With technocratic skills, professionals improve society's condition through their services. Their interest is not primarily the pecuniary but rather the high social status and reputation. However, since the 1960s, this approach has been heavily criticized using the lens of power relations. It is increasingly understood that each professional group competes with the other. Not all professions enjoy the same status and reputation (Carter, 2007).

Similarly, Larson (2018) sees the profession as an interest group that seeks to improve members' economic and social standing through collective efforts. According to her, professional groups are trying to enforce monopoly control over areas related to the profession's expertise. Because of the mutual interest, it is not surprising that experienced members usually form a professional association. Besides protecting the knowledge and market possessed by the profession, an association also serves as a formal representative to bargain with the state, a means of controlling its members, and a body to form a code of ethics (Macdonald, 2007).

Mike Reed distinguishes three types of professions: liberal, entrepreneurial, and organizational (Carter, 2007). The liberal profession is characterized by being independent, working for wages, and enjoying autonomy over work organization. Examples are doctors and lawyers. The entrepreneurial profession was born from the opportunities offered by the market, such as computer experts and management consultants. The organizational profession is a profession whose status and professional nature are obtained from the organization where they work. Generally, they are professionals who work in the government, which in Indonesia are functional officers. In many Western countries, this group has experienced a decline in social status and adopted market logic approach such as New Public Management in the bureaucracy. This approach was introduced to give more power and voice to the public who had been positioned as passive objects of diagnosis, treatment, and expertise-based services provided by professionals (Tonkens, 2016). However, adopting this approach has reduced the autonomy of professionals working in the public sector, triggering protests and collective action (Bezes et al., 2012; Tidmarsh, 2021). This is exacerbated in the United States, where the high costs of attending university combined with low economic rewards make the option of working as a professional in the public sector unattractive (Carter, 2007). However, the changing landscape faced by professionals also gives opportunities for a better change, for example by introducing more innovative service techniques (Noordegraaf, 2013).

C. METHOD

This article employs a qualitative method by combining a literature study and observation approach. A literature study is carried out by utilizing and analyzing books, regulations, journals, articles, and news related to the issue of the mainstreaming of functional positions in the Indonesian public sector through bureaucratic simplification policy. The literature review used in this study is a semi-systematic review, typically used to depict a research field, synthesize the knowledge findings, and generate a plan for further investigation. Furthermore, the technique used to run the literature review is thematic analysis, an approach suitable to locate, analyze, and show a pattern in the form of crucial themes (Snyder, 2019).

The observation was made at the Center for the Supervision of Functional Positions for Competence Development of Civil Service, National Institute of Public Administration. Observations were made from March 2021 to July 2022.

From the daily work experience, the author has abundant opportunities to drive continuous observations about how to working as a functional position in the government is implemented, for example by listening to the narration told by functional officers about their problems related to functional positions' tasks and responsibilities. Observations were made on

functional officials with various positions (policy analyst, trainer, researcher) with whom the author regularly interacts, both at work and non-work setting. Observations were made mainly by listening to stories and narrations conveyed by informants on various occasions (formal and informal meeting, workshop, and private chat) related to the implementation of their duties as functional officers. The type of observation carried out was unstructured observation because it was conducted spontaneously and casually without prior planning with the research purpose in mind. As for the role played by the author, the observation can be classified as participant observation. Because the author provides service to functional officers while working as a functional officer himself, the problems faced by functional officers with whom the authors routinely interact also find points of intersection with the experiences faced by the author in his daily work.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Ministry of *KemenPanRB* is the spearhead agency of bureaucratic simplification policy. In addition to designing a roadmap for bureaucratic simplification consisting of short, medium, and long-term implementation, this ministry also made various regulations to guide the policy implementation, including multiple circulars since 2019 concerning Strategic and Concrete Steps for Bureaucratic simplification. Then the Minister of *KemenPanRB* Regulation Number 28 of 2019 concerning Equalization of Administration Positions into Functional Positions was also enacted, which was later amended by Minister of *KemenPanRB* Regulation Number 17 of 2021. Government Regulation Number 7 of 2020 was also issued to accommodate the mandate to simplify the bureaucracy. Similarly, the Ministry of Home Affairs, tasked with overseeing the implementation of bureaucratic simplification in local governments, has also issued several regulations. To ensure that administration officers transferred to functional officers are not harmed, the government guarantees that these officers will not receive a decreased income. However, several studies have found the other way around (Fitrianingrum., Lusyana., & Lellyana, 2020; Rakhman, 2020; Rakhmawanto, 2021; Sumanti., Yunita., & Sinurat, 2021). With this pay differential, the assumption of functional-structuralist theorists about the high reputation and prestige of the professional class (Carter, 2007) would be hard to be met.

Mainstreaming of functional positions through bureaucratic simplification has been running for two years. Various problems have been found that hinder the achievement of the ideal of forming a more professional and competent bureaucracy. The general pattern shows that the government seems to show a half-hearted commitment to genuinely professionalize the bureaucracy. Firstly, this can be seen from a regulatory perspective by analyzing policy governing functional positions to discern how the regulation can trigger the emergence of professional behaviour and work results. In 2019, the Minister of *KemenPanRB* Regulation Number 13 of 2019 on the Proposal, Determination, and Development of Functional Positions for Civil Servants was issued. This umbrella regulation provides general arrangements regarding all functional positions in the government.

The problem with this regulation is that it contains an article that creates demotivation among functional officers because it limits the performance of functional officers. This can be seen in Article 46, paragraph (2), which states that the attainment of the credit scores per year is set at 150 % of the minimum credit scores target. This means that functional officers who can collect more than 150 % credit scores in a year cannot claim the excess credit scores. On various occasions, many functional officers complained about this maximum limit of credit scores. They feel as though they are barred from being high performers. One article from a policy analyst also confirms this (Khadafi, 2022). Regarding the trainers, the author found that many trainers routinely exceed the maximum credit scores almost every year. Only a tiny part

of their annual performance can be recognized as credit scores. Through new regulation, promotion one level higher can only happen for three years at the earliest. This is a setback from the previous arrangement where functional officers could be promoted within two years because they were not limited to maximum credit scores.

Limitations on the performance of functional officers can also be seen in the provision regarding the credit scores of professional development, which can be seen in Article 54. Only six credit scores from professional development are needed for functional officers in the skill category to advance from junior (*muda*) level to senior (*madya*) level. While for those who want to advance from senior level to prime (*utama*) level, only 12 credit scores from professional development are needed. For some functional positions such as trainer, the amount of needed credit scores for professional development in the Minister of *KemenPanRB* Regulation Number 13 of 2019 is lower and more undemanding than the old regulation. Previously, trainers were required to collect professional development credit points each time they wanted to be promoted. Due to the new regulations, some trainers who are productive in producing scientific publications complained because only few of their publications that can be counted as credit scores. In his work as an assessor of credit scores for trainers, the author finds many trainers whose credit scores from professional development far exceed the stipulated provisions. With this standard reduction, it is understandable that there is a doubt about the government's commitment to improve the professionalism and performance of functional officers.

No provision or article regulate sanction for functional officials who cannot meet the minimum credit score requirements yearly, as stated in the article 44 of the *MenPanRB* Regulation Number 13 of 2019. Without this sanction, functional officers who cannot produce credit scores throughout the year can continue their career as functional officers. This is a provision that is counterproductive to the cultivation of professionalism. Without sanction for those who fail to meet the minimum performance, there is no pressure to perform as expected.

Another problem that arises from the policy of bureaucratic simplification is the neglect of the merit aspect. Because the transfer from administration positions to functional positions due to bureaucracy simplification is not as strict as the appointment of functional officers from the regular track, the requirements of minimum competency standards and education level are often compromised. Many transformations are not based on competency mapping and job analysis (Rakhmawanto, 2021; Rusliandy, 2022). This nebulous and hasty process made some ex-administration officers perceive that they were transformed into functional officers unilaterally without regard to their aspirations and expertise. Besides testified privately by some functional officers to the author, this point is also confirmed or implied in some studies (Daniarsyah, 2020; Fitrianingrum., Lus yana., & Lellyana, 2020; Insani., Warsono., & Astuti, 2021; Sumanti., Yunita., & Sinurat., 2021). As a result, some transformed functional officers do not understand their duties and find it challenging to work with their new duties, as shown by the study of transformed policy analysts in East Kalimantan conducted by Kusumaningrum et al. (2022).

Another problem that hinders functional officers' high professionalism is the discrepancy between the formal tasks of functional positions and the daily tasks in which the functional officers are placed. This disparity can occur because the organizational structure has not been designed to accommodate the performance of functional officers (Rakhmawanto, 2021; Rusliandy, 2022; Wahyuni., Hidayah., & Sari, 2022) or because changes in the organizational structure that are no longer fit with the functional positions within it (Fitrianingrum., Lus yana., & Lellyana, 2020). A policy analyst is a good case in point. It is the most desirable functional position from the point of view of former administration officers and the organization because it has a fairly large allowance and can be placed almost anywhere. Referring to *PUSAKA-LAN's* data as quoted in Prawitasari et al. (2022), in February 2020, the number of policy analysts

who were transformed from administration positions is 2567 or almost 70 % of the total number of policy analysts of 3713.

In reality, some of them are placed in units that have nothing to do with the tasks of policy analysts. For example, a policy analyst in South Sulawesi told the author that she works as a cashier who receives motor vehicle tax. Other policy analysts based in Aceh works as a secretary to high-ranking official and handler of the office's property and assets. As a policy analyst, the author mainly works as an assessor of trainers' credit scores. This discrepancy stems from the rationale that the task of policy analysts is to provide evidence-based policy recommendations. Since every unit in the organization can provide policy recommendations, policy analysts can be placed almost anywhere. When policy analysts are busy with daily administrative, technical, or public service activities, their duties as policy analyst cannot be carried out optimally because they can only be done during free time. Not all policy analysts have the capacity to undertake the tough task of analyzing policy in their spare time, especially if they are not used to conducting policy research or have other burdens outside of office work. Many policy analysts confess that they have difficulty in collecting credit scores. A formal position as a policy analyst becomes almost meaningless if the job as a policy analyst cannot be actualized in daily assignments in the workplace. This contrasts with some functional positions that can relatively focus on carrying out their functions in daily work, such as researchers, lecturers, or trainers. This problem will doubly exacerbate if there is low utilization of policy analysts in the organization. Functional officers are supposed to be agile and flexible to be mobilized across units and even organizations. If an organization via its top ranking managers knows the cross-cutting nature of functional positions, the misplacement problem can be partially resolved because they are no longer confined to their unit.

Another problem that is not conducive to the professional development of functional officers is the lack of incentives and facilities despite the enormous demands. This is especially true with regard to functional positions with high targets such as researchers. Senior and prime researchers must produce at least one international publication every year. If that requirement is not fulfilled, the performance allowance will be deducted next year. In the following year, the researcher also has to produce two international publications to make up for the previous year's failure. However, producing international publications in reputable academic journals is difficult and can take more than a year. Worse, there is no additional incentive for those who can publish in international journals. The facilities for conducting research are also insufficient (Akmaliah, 2021). Some research groups at the National Research and Innovation Agency, the institution that houses researchers, even have no budget (BRINwatch, 2022).

There is also the problem of covert discrimination against career functional officers or those who started their careers as functional officers. One of the requirements for occupying the highest level of functional position, namely the prime level for functional positions in the expertise category or supervisor level for functional positions in the skill category, is the availability of formation at the highest level in the institution where the functional officer serves. However, career functional officers' chances of advancing to the highest level are often negated because the available formation has been secured or slotted for ex-top-level managers who will switch position to become functional officers. They are ex-echelon I and II officers who want to extend their work period up until age 65, which can only be done by switching to functional officers at the highest level. They turn into functional officers not because they are committed to a career in a functional position. This problem is complained by trainers in various agencies who have spoken to the author on various occasions. This discriminatory practice is certainly very unfair to career functional officers. They have proven their professionalism by crawling from the bottom and slowly rise to the higher level. However, they

cannot rise to the highest level because they do not have high political power and influence like top-level managers.

Shortening the bureaucratic chain as one of the goals of bureaucratic simplification has also failed to be achieved. With the pretext of the adaptation period, ex-Echelon III and IV officers who are transformed into functional positions are given additional duty as Coordinator (for ex-Echelon III) and Sub-Coordinator (for ex-Echelon IV). However, this additional duty is nothing but new clothes for structural officers with the same taste as the old ones (Subarja., Asropi., & Rajab, 2022; Sumanti., Yunita., & Sinurat, 2021). Based on the confession by colleagues from other organizations and as observed by the author in his organization, the Coordinator and Sub-Coordinator still act like Echelon III and IV. They still have subordinates, give orders to subordinates, and assess the annual performance of subordinates.

In countries where New Public Management and managerialism grip the public sector, some professionals have responded intelligently to these conditions by developing hybrid professionalism to reconcile traditional professional values with management values (Carvalho, 2014; Noordegraaf, 2015). On the other hand, it is increasingly common for managers to experience professionalization with practices such as creating professional associations and developing good practice standards and codes of conduct (Noordegraaf, van der Steen., & van Twist, 2014). However, the intent of creating the nomenclature of Coordinators and Sub-coordinators is not to create such hybrid professionalism. Coordinators and Sub-Coordiators are not titles but temporary roles during a transitional period within organizational governance arrangements in the form of mutually supportive working groups based on networking related to competencies (Fitrianingrum., Lusyana., & Lellyana, 2020). However, this is hard to be implemented because The hierarchical and bureaucratic culture has been entrenched for too long. Many transformed functional officers fail to instill professional values à la functional position such as autonomy, quality, and care.

Moreover, this position should be gone when the initial holder is moved to another unit or promoted. However, inauguration as Coordinator and Sub-Coordinator is still routinely carried out in various agencies. This is detrimental to the Coordinators and Sub-Coordiators themselves. As functional officers, their rank can only be increased after obtaining sufficient credit scores. However, since they are busy with managerial work, they do not have enough time to achieve the stipulated target of the functional officer.

As the solutions to the various problems that accompany the mainstreaming of functional positions through bureaucratic simplification, several corrective steps can be taken as follows. First, revise Minister of *KemenPanRB* Regulation Number 13 of 2019 as the umbrella policy that regulates all functional positions by removing the provision for maximum credit scores and adding clear sanctions for functional officers who fail to produce minimal performance. With this regulation, high-performing functional officers will not be demotivated and low-performing functional officers can be motivated to improve their performance.

Second, carry out a careful assessment of echelon officers who will be transformed into functional officers. The functional positions should align with the employees' aspirations, interests, and abilities. The interests of the organization and the interests of employees should be harmonized. For transformed functional officers who feel that their current functional position is not aligned with their aspiration and expertise, the organization should make it easy for them to change functional position according to what they want, provided that the formation is available. That way, the employees are capable of pursuing a career in the aspired functional position. Functional officers who cannot develop their careers even though they have been given competency development should also be transferred to other functional positions. The easiness of changing functional positions should also be provided for old functional officers who wish to change functional positions due to changes in interests or career boredom.

Likewise, administrative officers who wish to become functional officers should be allowed in order to the mainstreaming of functional positions for a more professional bureaucracy.

Third, maximum utilization of functional officers is gravely needed. Organizations through their high-ranking officers need to know the duties and functions of functional officers in their units. Thus, the appropriate assignment of functional officers can be given. Besides accommodating the personal interest of functional officers in the form of credit scores, such utilization can also improve organizational performance. Likewise, the organization should place its functional officers into the right units not only in terms of specific duties of functional officers but also in terms of the specific skills of functional officers. Agencies that supervise certain functional position need to check whether the user agencies have placed functional officers in appropriate positions.

Fourth, discard the positions of Coordinator and Sub-Coordinator as soon as possible. The existence of these positions hinders the mainstreaming of functional positions because it creates the structural and managerial taste within the work pattern. The appointment of new Coordinator and Sub-Coordinator officers should also be stopped. By acting like structural officers, the ideals of a short decision-making chain and an agile bureaucracy will be difficult to achieve. A transition period of more than two years is more than sufficient. Furthermore, bureaucratic simplification should also be a sustainable political commitment. The future president must maintain the vision of agile and lean bureaucracy.

Fifth, provide competency development to functional officers on an ongoing basis. As functional officers are expected to uphold professionalism in their work, continuous competency development is necessary because the demands of society are increasing along with the progression of time and technology. Competencies and skills currently considered important may become obsolete in the future. Knowledge on functional officials also continues to grow along with the latest findings and studies. By continuously developing competence, functional officers' high level of professionalism can be maintained constantly.

A final point can be made regarding the role of a professional organization. Theoretically, professional are representatives of the profession to bargain with the state (Macdonald, 2007). If a policy harms or prevents the profession from doing its job professionally, the professional association can advocate to change the policy. However, because functional officers are professionals who work in the government so that they are part of the state itself, the professional associations that serve as the advocate for functional positions do not have high bargaining power vis-à-vis the state. When professionals work in organizations run by the principles of hierarchy and control such as a government bureaucracy, independence and discretion are difficult to maintain (Evetts, 2014). The existence of professional associations for each functional position is nothing more than the fulfilment of the obligation as stipulated in the Minister of *KemenPanRB* Regulation Number 13 of 2019. It is not established voluntarily based on the collective will of the professional members to fight for their interests. The professional association's function as identity provider for their members (Hughes & Hughes, 2013) is difficult to achieve. Furthermore, the obligation to have only one professional organization for each functional position (Article 70 paragraph (1) Minister of *KemenPanRB* Regulation Number 13 of 2019) also gives a strong smell of corporatism which makes the members of the profession prone to be co-opted.

E. CONCLUSION

The Government of Indonesia has launched a bureaucratic simplification policy to evade the middle-income country trap. This is translated by mainstreaming functional positions within the bureaucracy by replacing most administration positions with functional positions. With this step, the proportion of functional positions in the bureaucracy becomes increasingly

large. The expected impacts of this policy are a faster decision-making process and more professional public service works.

However, after more than two years of implementation, the bureaucratic simplification policy has failed to meet the intended outcomes. Several problems related to functional officials were found from the perspective of professional idealism and professionalism. First, the regulatory framework hinders career acceleration and signifies low demand for professional excellence. Second, arbitrary placement and assignment of functional officers. Third, low utilization of the functional officers coupled with unsatisfactory incentives and facilities. Fourth, discrimination towards career functional officers and the persistence of hierarchical structure despite the simplification.

As the solutions to various problems that hinder the creation of high professionalism among functional officers, it is necessary to take the following steps: removing the provisions on maximum credit scores and the absence of sanctions for low-performing functional officers in the regulation, more thorough assessment of echelon officers who will be transformed into functional officers, maximum utilization of functional officers, removing the positions of Coordinator and Sub-Coordinator as soon as possible, and developing competency for functional officers on an ongoing basis.

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