

ARTICLE

Strategic Implementation of Prior Learning Recognition for Regional Civil Servants through Edwards III's Model

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ABSTRACT

Prior Learning Recognition (RPL) has emerged as a strategic instrument in Indonesia's bureaucratic reform agenda, yet its implementation within regional government remains fragmented. This study applies Edwards III's policy implementation model, comprising communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure, to critically analyze institutional readiness and governance constraints in the adoption of RPL. A qualitative content analysis of 42 regulatory, strategic, and academic documents reveals persistent challenges: inconsistent policy communication, limited assessor capacity, inadequate digital infrastructure, uneven leadership commitment, and the absence of standardized operational procedures. These constraints highlight that RPL barriers are structural and organizational rather than merely technical. The study contributes theoretically by extending Edwards III's framework to competency recognition in public administration, empirically by mapping institutional dynamics of RPL in regional bureaucracies, and practically by offering strategic recommendations for talent management and merit system reform. By bridging classical implementation theory with contemporary human resource innovation, this research advances understanding of RPL as a policy instrument for accelerating bureaucratic transformation in Indonesia's decentralized governance system.

A. INTRODUCTION

The development of competencies among Indonesia's regional civil servants has become a cornerstone of bureaucratic reform and the merit-based civil service agenda. Conventional training models, however, remain costly, time-consuming, and insufficient in recognizing experiential learning acquired through professional practice. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), as regulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) Regulation No. 41/2021 and The National Institute of Public Administration (LAN) Regulation No. 5/2025, provides a strategic mechanism to acknowledge prior work experience and non-formal learning as part of competency fulfillment.

While RPL has gained policy legitimacy, its implementation at the regional government level remains uneven and institutionally fragmented. Many local governments lack certified assessors, integrated portfolio systems, corporate university structures, and clear operational guidelines. This gap reflects a broader issue of policy design–implementation misalignment within Indonesia's decentralized governance framework.

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Table 1. Previous Research on RPL Implementation

No	Researchers	Research Focus	Method/Approach	Key Findings
1	Australian Qualifications Framework (2015)	National guideline for the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning	Policy guideline and conceptual framework	RPL is outcome-based and requires evidence of competency, registered assessors, and standardized assessment procedures to grant credit transfer or full qualifications.
2	Van der Waldt, et al. (2025)	Implementation of RPL in the South African public service sector	Case study in professional civil servant training institutions	RPL can effectively map competencies of experienced civil servants, but requires standardized assessment systems and qualified assessors
3	Ma'ruf et al. (2024)	Intergovernmental collaboration in implementing RPL programs at the village level in Indonesia	Policy evaluation and qualitative analysis	Successful implementation depends on collaboration among local governments, villages, and universities; major constraints include funding limitations and facilitators' capacity.
4	Raciti et al. (2024)	Global trends in RPL implementation in higher education	Systematic literature review	RPL improves access to higher education and recognizes experiential learning, but institutional resistance and inconsistent assessment practices remain key barriers
5	Salzmann et al. (2025)	Facilitating and inhibiting factors of RPL in vocational and professional tertiary education	Empirical studies on institutional stakeholders	Successful RPL implementation requires a clear competency assessment instrument, trained assessors, and strong institutional collaboration. Barriers include funding constraints and perceptions of limited credibility.

Source : [Australian Qualifications Framework \(2015\)](#); [van der Waldt et al. \(2025\)](#); [Ma'ruf et al. \(2024\)](#); [Raciti et al. \(2024\)](#); [Salzmann et al. \(2025\)](#)

As shown in Table 1, RPL implementation is described at the higher education level and in the professional world of civil servants. [Australian Qualifications Framework \(2015\)](#), [van der Waldt et al. \(2025\)](#); [Ma'ru et al. \(2024\)](#). This section explains the elements of a successful RPL program, namely proof of competency, registered assessors, and assessment standards. [Raciti et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Salzmann et al. \(2025\)](#) explain the supporting and inhibiting factors and challenges of implementing the RPL program. However, no one has yet studied the implementation of RPL policies in local government using public policy implementation models. Policy implementation is a crucial aspect of the policy process. Without the policy implementation stage, the policy program will remain a document on the policymaker's desk, merely an archive ([Ayu Andini et al., 2025](#)).

Existing studies predominantly examine RPL within higher education or vocational contexts. Research by [Raciti et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Salzmann et al. \(2025\)](#) identifies institutional and perceptual barriers to RPL, while [Ma'ruf et al. \(2024\)](#) analyze intergovernmental collaboration in village-level RPL programs. However, these studies largely adopt descriptive or evaluative approaches and do not analyze RPL implementation through a structured public policy implementation framework. Consequently, limited attention has been given to understanding how institutional variables shape RPL implementation within regional bureaucracies.

This study argues that RPL implementation challenges cannot be understood solely as technical or administrative issues; rather, they must be analyzed in terms of policy implementation dynamics. Therefore, this research applies the policy implementation model developed by George C. Edwards III, which emphasizes four key determinants of implementation success: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure ([George C. Edwards III, 1980](#)).

Based on this framework, the core research questions are: what institutional factors influence the implementation of RPL policy for regional civil servants?. How can Edwards III's model explain the structural and organizational constraints in RPL implementation? What strategic formulation can strengthen the institutionalization of RPL within Indonesia's civil servants' talent management system?

This study makes three important contributions to the literature on public administration and policy implementation. First, theoretically, the study extends the application of the Edwards III policy implementation model to the domain of competency recognition and bureaucratic human resource development. While the model has been widely applied in various policy sectors, its use in analyzing learning recognition policies within public administration institutions remains limited.

Second, empirically, the research provides evidence on how RPL policies operate within regional government institutions, highlighting the institutional constraints and organizational dynamics that influence implementation outcomes. By examining RPL beyond regulatory discourse, the study offers insights into the practical challenges regional bureaucracies face in operationalizing competency recognition mechanisms.

Third, from a policy perspective, this study contributes to the broader agenda of bureaucratic reform and the strengthening of Indonesia's merit system. It demonstrates how RPL can serve as a strategic tool to accelerate competency development, improve talent management systems, and support administrative transformation within decentralized governance structures.

Through these contributions, the study advances the understanding of RPL not merely as an educational recognition mechanism but as a policy instrument embedded within broader institutional and governance dynamics. This study proposes a collaborative implementation perspective that complements Edwards III's policy implementation model in explaining the governance dynamics of RPL policy within Indonesia's decentralized bureaucratic system.

This paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the theoretical framework and relevant literature on RPL and policy implementation. The third section explains the research methodology. The fourth section presents the findings and discussion, followed by conclusions and policy implications in the final section.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

RPL in international practice

Using comparative policy analysis across OECD countries, RPL is recognized as a tool for social inclusion and labor mobility, while in Switzerland, it facilitates lifelong learning through formal assessment of outcomes and is shaped by national policies, professional bodies, and labor market dynamics (Baumeler et al. 2023; [The Recognition of Prior Learning, 2025](#)).

[The International Labor Organization \(2025\)](#) describes financing models for RPL implementation across various countries, in which assessment costs are a major limiting factor. A good scheme was found to be mixed financing (government, involving industry and institutions) ([Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\), 2025](#)).

The case of RPL in Portugal, using an ethno-phenomenological approach (narrative analysis and interviews), found that RPL has become a political tool rather than merely an academic one, thereby giving rise to tensions among the government, institutions, and society. The program's implementation has been successful at the individual level, but macro policies have been unstable (Barros, 2014). One of the main objectives of RPL practice in Portugal is to combat illiteracy in general and, therefore, to improve educational attainment among the Portuguese population (Bilon, 2016).

The success of RPL depends on clear and easily understood regulations. Institutions require assessor training and a standardized checklist. This was found in the study by Day (2016). A total of 36 people were mobilized, and thanks to a rigorous candidate screening process, 100% of participants achieved full validation of their prior knowledge, meaning obtaining a complete diploma is the target for cross-border RPL in France (Rius et al., 2021).

RPL has evolved into a global policy instrument that supports lifelong learning, labor mobility, and social inclusion. International experiences demonstrate that RPL effectiveness is not merely a technical assessment issue but strongly dependent on governance structures, institutional alignment, and regulatory clarity.

Comparative findings from OECD countries indicate that RPL functions optimally when supported by standardized competency frameworks, certified assessors, and sustainable financing mechanisms. However, recurring challenges include high assessment costs, limited public awareness, and insufficient assessor capacity. Similarly, the International Labor Organization highlights that mixed financing models-combining government support, institutional contributions, and industry participation-enhance sustainability while reducing financial barriers.

European cases provide further insight into governance dynamics. Switzerland and France demonstrate that institutional stability, rigorous validation procedures, and standardized checklists strengthen legitimacy and credibility. Conversely, Portugal illustrates that when RPL becomes politically instrumentalized without stable macro-policy alignment, tensions emerge between government, institutions, and stakeholders, weakening long-term sustainability.

Across these cases, three enabling governance conditions consistently emerge: clear and stable regulatory frameworks; institutionalized assessor training and quality assurance; and mechanisms for integrated coordination among education providers, professional bodies, and government agencies. Conversely, implementation barriers tend to cluster around administrative complexity, funding constraints, and fragmented institutional responsibilities.

In Indonesia's regional bureaucratic context, these international patterns suggest that RPL success depends less on the mere existence of regulations and more on institutional readiness and governance coherence. The absence of standardized operational procedures, certified assessors, and integrated competency management systems in regional governments reflects challenges similar to those identified internationally. Therefore, international experience reinforces the need to analyze RPL implementation through a structured public policy implementation framework, rather than treating it solely as an educational innovation.

RPL in The Context of Policy

RPL in Indonesia is institutionally anchored in two primary regulatory frameworks: Kemendikbudristek Regulation No. 41/2021 (Kemendikbudristek, 2021), which governs academic RPL, and Regulation LANRI No. 5/2025 (LANRI, 2025b), which regulates RPL for civil servants' competency fulfillment. Normatively, these regulations provide a clear legal basis for recognizing prior experiential learning and integrating it into formal qualification and competency standards.

However, within Indonesia's decentralized governance structure, regulatory clarity at the central level does not automatically translate into coherent implementation at the regional level. The dual regulatory framework potentially creates overlapping institutional domains between higher education institutions, LAN, functional supervisory agencies, and regional human resource management bodies (BKPSDM/BKD). In practice, authority fragmentation may emerge in at least three dimensions.

First, there is vertical fragmentation between central policy design and regional administrative capacity. While LAN Regulation No. 5/2025 assigns recognition authority to central institutions, implementation depends heavily on regional readiness, including corporate

university systems, portfolio documentation mechanisms, and assessor availability. This creates an implementation asymmetry between regulatory ambition and local institutional capability.

Second, horizontal fragmentation arises from overlapping roles among universities, functional supervisory agencies, and regional personnel agencies in competency validation and certification. Without standardized coordination mechanisms, this multi-actor arrangement risks inconsistent interpretation of competency standards and procedural duplication.

Third, fiscal decentralization adds complexity. Although RPL is framed as a cost-efficient alternative to conventional training, regional governments retain budgetary discretion. In the absence of mandatory allocation guidelines, RPL implementation may be deprioritized relative to routine operational expenditures.

Furthermore, the inclusion of RPL within the LAN Strategic Plan 2025–2029 signals a central commitment to competency transformation and talent management reform. However, strategic policy articulation does not necessarily resolve governance tensions inherent in decentralized systems. The effectiveness of RPL thus depends on how central regulations are internalized, adapted, and institutionalized within heterogeneous regional bureaucratic environments (LANRI, 2025a).

This regulatory landscape demonstrates that RPL implementation challenges are not solely technical or procedural but embedded within Indonesia's multi-level governance architecture. Therefore, analyzing RPL through a policy implementation framework is essential for understanding how institutional interaction, authority distribution, and bureaucratic structure shape outcomes beyond formal regulatory design.

Policy Implementation Theory

The implementation variables proposed by Edwards George C (1980) (communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure) have been widely elaborated in the policy implementation literature. Edwards (1980) originally conceptualized these four determinants as interrelated factors shaping policy outcomes, and subsequent scholars have refined and contextualized them across different sectors. For instance, Van Meter & Van Horn (1975) emphasized the importance of communication and resources in bridging policy design and execution, while Sabatier & Mazmanian (1980) highlighted the role of bureaucratic structure and actor disposition in determining implementation success.

More recent studies, such as Hill & Hupe (2022), have extended Edwards III's framework to multi-level governance contexts, underscoring its relevance in decentralized systems. In this study, these conceptual sources provide the theoretical foundation for operationalizing Edwards III's variables to analyze RPL implementation within Indonesia's regional bureaucracies.

Civil Servant Competency Development and the Role of RPL as Civil Servant Talent Management

According to the Civil Servant Law, civil servant competencies fall into three categories: Technical Competence, Managerial Competence, and Sociocultural Competence. Civil servant competency development is achieved through formal education, training, and work experience. However, practice shows that competencies gained through experience are not always recorded or recognized. The Civil Servants' Position Recognition (RPL) addresses this gap by providing an evidence-based competency recognition mechanism.

The development of modern civil servants towards talent management emphasizes the importance of competency mapping, qualification recognition, career development, and merit systems. RPL supports all of these aspects by enabling the rapid equalization of the competencies of proven civil servants. Assinger (2023) found that organizations implementing

RPL experienced faster access to learning and upskilling; greater training efficiency (no need for repeated training); and more targeted career development. RPL supports civil servants' talent management in several ways:

1. **Competency Development:** RPL allows civil servants to obtain higher formal educational qualifications (e.g., progressing from a Diploma 3 to a Bachelor's degree) without having to start over, by recognizing their previous work experience. This efficiently accelerates the development of civil servant competencies.
2. **Career Acceleration:** With enhanced qualifications through the RPL pathway, applicants assessed as having high competency can be prioritized for career acceleration and assigned to target or strategic positions in the succession plan (*talent pool*).
3. **Optimizing Potential:** This program helps identify and optimize the hidden potential (underlying capabilities) of civil servants that may not be visible solely from their initial formal educational background, so that every civil servant has an equal opportunity to develop to their full potential.
4. **Time and Cost Efficiency:** RPL offers a faster path to a degree or certification (e.g., graduating with a bachelor's degree in about 2 years) than the traditional path, making it more time- and cost-efficient for civil servants and government agencies.
5. **Legal Basis:** The implementation of RPL in the context of civil servants is regulated in laws and regulations, including the Regulation of LAN, which equates RPL results with a certificate of completion of structural training for certain managerial positions, confirming its validity and recognition in the national civil service system.
6. **Human Resource Transformation Innovation:** The Minister of PANRB views RPL as an innovation in transforming civil servants' capacity development towards a smart, responsive, and competitive bureaucracy in accordance with the merit system.

Overall, RPL is a strategic tool in the civil servants' talent management system to ensure the availability of competent and professional successors, and to create world-class civil servants in the future.

Challenges and Factors Supporting and Inhibiting the Success of RPL Implementation

Assinger (2023) found that challenges in implementing RPL include subjective competency assessments, a lack of documentation of experience, resistance from superiors or HR units, unclear competency standards, and time or cost constraints in managing assessments. RPL will be effective if the organization has a strong learning culture, an appreciation for practical experience, and an HR structure that supports competency mapping. Without a supportive culture, RPL will simply become an administrative procedure.

The success of RPL depends on the synergy of individual, organizational, and policy-level factors. At the individual level, credibility is demonstrated through work experience, portfolios, performance records, and project outcomes. Organizational mechanisms, including competency standards, assessment systems, and qualified evaluators, provide structure and fairness. At the same time, at the policy level, professional regulations, standardized procedures, and strong linkages with educational institutions or certification bodies create an enabling environment. Together, these dimensions establish RPL as a reliable and equitable instrument for competency recognition in public administration.

Implementation of RPL is often suboptimal due to variations in understanding, institutional capacity, and participant readiness. The success of RPL, however, is strongly influenced by several interrelated factors. Institutional commitment, reflected in clear internal policies, administrative support, and consistent assessment standards, provides the foundation for effective implementation. Collaboration with industry further strengthens the process by

ensuring that evidence of work experience is validated, competency standards are appropriately adjusted, and worker performance is recognized.

Equally important are assessors' competencies and readiness, as their ability to objectively evaluate experience, understand competency frameworks, and minimize bias determines the credibility of the assessment. Finally, participant support—through clear guidance on evidence preparation, mentoring in portfolio development, and transparent information about the RPL process—ensures that individuals are adequately prepared to engage in the recognition mechanism. Together, these elements form the institutional, professional, and individual pillars necessary for successful RPL implementation.

The success of RPL depends on institutional commitment, industry collaboration, assessor competence, and participant readiness, each of which plays a critical role in shaping implementation outcomes. [Salzmann et al. \(2025\)](#), so that the four elements above are needed as determinants of the success of RPL implementation, namely institutional readiness, assessor competence, Institutional support, and participant capabilities.

At the University of Namibia, [Shaketange \(2018\)](#) identified opportunities for RPL, including political will for institutional implementation, expertise, technological and infrastructural capabilities, RPL policies, quality assurance, and institutional assessment policies. Challenges identified include a lack of ontological knowledge about what RPL is, how it is assessed, and its validity and integrity. The study recommends raising awareness of RPL's importance as an assessment strategy for career advancement and enhancing educational qualifications.

C. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative policy analysis design based on a systematic literature review and document analysis. The research does not aim to generate field-based empirical data, but to critically examine the institutional and governance dimensions of RPL implementation for the Regional Civil servants through a structured theoretical lens.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The study analyses 42 documents, consisting of National regulations related to RPL, civil servants management, and bureaucratic reform (12 documents); Strategic policy documents (LAN Strategic Plan, national talent management guidelines, ministerial decrees) (8 documents); Academic journal articles on RPL implementation and public policy implementation models (15 articles); International reports (OECD, ILO, European Commission) on RPL governance (7 reports).

The selection criteria included, firstly, direct relevance to RPL governance or civil servants' competency development; secondly, publication between 2005 and 2025 to ensure contemporary relevance; thirdly, institutional credibility (peer-reviewed journals or official government/international reports); and, fourthly, explicit discussion of implementation challenges, governance arrangements, or institutional coordination. In addition, documents that were purely descriptive without governance analysis were excluded.

Analytical Procedure

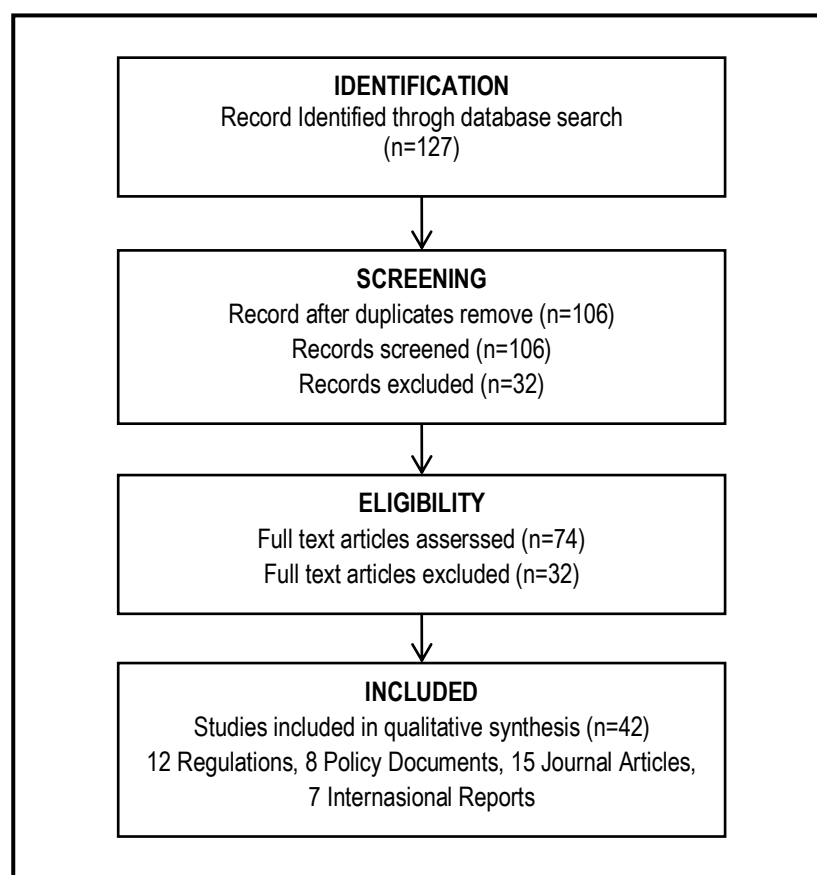
The study applies a directed qualitative content analysis approach. The analytical process was conducted in four stages: firstly, Document Mapping (Categorizing documents into regulatory, strategic, academic, and international comparative clusters). Secondly, Open Coding (Identifying recurring themes related to governance, institutional coordination, capacity constraints, and implementation barriers). Axial Coding Using Edwards III Variables (Reorganizing identified themes into four analytical categories: Communication; Resources;

Disposition; Bureaucratic Structure). Thirdly, Interpretive Analysis (Examining patterns of interaction among variables within Indonesia's decentralized governance system).

Operationalization of Edwards III Variables

To ensure systematic application, each variable was translated into an observable analytical indicator, such as, firstly, communication: regulatory clarity, transmission consistency, policy socialization, interpretative gaps between central and regional actors. Secondly, resources: assessor availability, fiscal allocation, institutional infrastructure, and digital systems. Thirdly, disposition: leadership commitment, reform orientation, and organizational acceptance; moreover, bureaucratic structure: authority distribution, coordination mechanisms, SOP availability, and fragmentation patterns.

Each document was coded using these indicators to determine how governance conditions enable or constrain RPL implementation.



Source: processed data, 2026

Figure 1. Systematic Literature Review

Methodological Limitations

This study does not include interviews or regional case studies. Consequently, findings reflect structural and institutional tendencies rather than region-specific empirical variation. However, by applying systematic coding and transparent analytical criteria, the study maintains methodological rigor while providing a theoretically grounded analysis of governance.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This discussion will focus on the implementation of the RPL Policy for Civil Servant Positions, as stipulated in LAN Regulation No. 5/2025. Although it differs in several respects

from the academic RPL (Permendikbudristek No. 41/2021), the implementation of the RPL policy for Civil Servant Positions shares a similar concept, providing a reference and case studies for academic RPL in local government environments. The following is a comparison between academic RPL and civil servant position RPL:

	Academic RPL	RPL for civil servants Positions
Legal basis	Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation 41/2021	LAN Regulation 5/2025
Objective	Improving the competence of the civil servants and the general public through academic degrees	Improving the special competencies of civil servants in structural/functional positions
Output	Academic degree	Structural/Functional Job Competency Training Certification
Organizer	Campus/College	LAN for structural positions, and the respective supervisory institutions/agencies for Functional Positions
Mechanism	Converting work experience portfolio and work period into course credits and study period	Recognition of learning in the civil servants (<i>corporate university</i>) learning environment as a conversion of all or part of managerial training, such as technical training

Source: Processed Data, 2026

Current Conditions of RPL Implementation for the Regional Government Civil Servants

Based on Ministerial Regulation of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 41 of 2021 concerning Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), the purpose is to provide the broadest possible opportunity for every individual to pursue formal, non-formal, and informal education through lifelong learning facilities and to provide opportunities for equivalency towards certain qualifications. Therefore, RPL is established to provide opportunities for the community to continue their formal education at a higher level, ultimately leading to the issuance of a diploma as proof of learning outcomes (Kemendikbudristek, 2021).

The current state of the Academic RPL implementation for civil servants is under development. It is being widely implemented, driven by central government policy aimed at improving the quality of civil servant human resources (Ayu Andini et al., 2025). Academic RPL for civil servants is a formal mechanism for recognizing work experience and non-formal learning as credits or as nationally recognized qualifications. The goal is to accelerate the formal education level of civil servants and improve qualifications in accordance with the Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia (KKNI) standards and Mendikbudristek Regulation No. 41 of 2021.

Regional governments as key actors. RPL at the regional level involves several actors: BKPSDM as the competency management organizer, regional civil servants as the human resource owner, universities as the assessment organizer, LAN as the supervising agency, and civil servants as the participants. The success of RPL depends on coordination between these actors. Structural challenges in the regions.

Regional governments often face obstacles: a lack of an RPL unit, a lack of assessors, a lack of a civil servants portfolio data system, limited education funding budgets, and the absence of regional regulations governing RPL. Most regional governments are not yet ready

to implement RPL independently, thereby requiring a more effective mechanism for collaboration.

Indonesia's bureaucratic structure imposes significant institutional constraints on the implementation of RPL at the regional level. Indonesia currently employs more than 4.7–5.5 million civil servants across more than 600 government institutions, with approximately 76–78% working in regional governments, making local administrations the primary actors responsible for competency development and public service delivery. However, the capacity of regional governments to implement innovative competency recognition mechanisms remains uneven ([Kemenpan-RB, 2025b](#)).

Many regional administrations still lack dedicated RPL units, certified competency assessors, and integrated digital systems for documenting civil servants' competency portfolios. Institutional readiness is further constrained by limited training capacity and fiscal resources for human resource development. Although national policy mandates continuous competency development for civil servants, training systems remain dominated by conventional classroom-based programs that cannot accommodate the learning needs of millions of public officials across geographically dispersed regions. At the same time, the government has promoted institutional learning models, such as the ASN Corporate University, to strengthen competency development; however, recent national mapping indicates that only around 350 government institutions have begun implementing corporate university-based learning systems, suggesting that institutional learning infrastructures remain unevenly developed across regional governments.

This gap between the scale of the Indonesian civil service and the limited institutional capacity for competency development highlights a structural challenge for the implementation of RPL policies. Consequently, many regional governments remain institutionally unprepared to implement RPL independently, making cross-institutional collaboration between central government agencies, regional administrations, universities, and professional certification bodies a critical prerequisite for effective policy implementation.

Implementing RPL in local governments often involves collaboration with universities. The process involves assessing the work experience of civil servants or village officials, which is then converted into Course Credits. This assessment serves as the basis for continuing formal education in relevant study programs. This program is supported by legal frameworks, such as the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education ([Kemenristekdikti](#)) Regulation No. 41 of 2021 on Recognition of Prior Learning. Thus, RPL serves as a strategy to improve the quality of civil servants and human resources in local governments ([Lukman Rais et al., 2024](#)).

One example is the Muslim University of Indonesia, which has reaffirmed its commitment to benefiting the community by strengthening Human Resource capacity in the regions. One concrete manifestation of this commitment is the RPL Program, which targets village-based human resource development. This RPL program embodies the synergy between academia and local government in encouraging improvements in village officials' competencies, so that their experience and performance can be recognized as part of formal academic achievements ([Universitas Muslim Indonesia, 2025](#)).

In some places, such as Sorong Raya, academic RPL has been used to improve human resources through a program that allows civil servants to complete a bachelor's degree in two years by recognizing prior work experience ([BKPSDM Pacitan, 2025](#)). The implementation of Academic RPL still faces many challenges, including incomplete files, a lack of understanding of RPL requirements, and complex administrative flows and layered procedures that slow down the file assessment process. Multi-interpretive standards and the absence of detailed guidelines also contribute to obstacles to implementing Academic RPL in the field ([Ayu Andini et al., 2025](#)).

The Sorong City Government, in collaboration with Muhammadiyah University of Sorong, provides RPL for the civil servants (Lukman Rais et al., 2024). Applicants with a high school education background in Sorong are allowed to take the Bachelor of Government Science program through the RPL pathway, with a duration of approximately 2 years. In Mahakam Ulu Regency, there is a collaboration between the local government and the Faculty of Administrative Sciences, University of Indonesia, for the RPL program and integrated learning as an effort to improve the quality of human resources in the region (Universitas Indonesia, 2025), and in Banggai Kepulauan Regency, the socialisation of RPL Type A (credit transfer/credits recognition) was held by the local government, as part of a strategy to improve access to education and the quality of human resources, including civil servants (Pemkab Banggai Kepulauan, 2025).

The implementation of RPL supports several strategic bureaucratic reform agendas: strengthening civil servant human resources, implementing a merit system, streamlining training budgets, accelerating the fulfillment of educational qualifications, and innovating human resource management. RPL is a crucial tool in accelerating the development of civil servant competencies without the need for conventional classroom learning. This allows civil servants in the regions to apply their knowledge and experience to improve bureaucratic performance.

RPL provides formal recognition of the competency and performance achieved by officials through prior work experience and non-formal learning, thus confirming that individuals fill positions with proven competence. The success of the RPL program marks a new milestone in building an organizational culture that is continuously learning (*lifelong learners*) and adaptable to the challenges of the times. This fosters sustainable innovation in public service.

Graduates of the RPL program are expected to become agents of change toward a professional bureaucracy that is both integrity-driven and has a real impact on society. RPL is a major component of the civil servants' transformation, which aims to create neutral, competent, professional, and high-performing civil servants, as one of the eight main areas of bureaucratic reform. Therefore, RPL is not only an educational tool but also a structural tool for building the capacity of regional bureaucracies.

While the RPL for civil servant positions has not been fully implemented at the local government level. The Ministry of State Apparatus Utilization and Bureaucratic Reform and LAN have implemented a pilot project, making the RPL program an innovation in the transformation of civil servants' capacity development, including the implementation of a Special RPL for the high leadership position at the primary level in 2025. RPL is a form of state contribution that provides official recognition of the knowledge, skills, and work experience that apprentices have obtained through formal education, training, and daily work practice (KemenpanRB, 2025).

Table 3. Current Conditions of RPL Implementation for the Regional Government Civil Servants

Variable (Edwards III)	Sorong City	Mahakam Ulu Regency	Banggai Kepulauan Regency	Cross-Case Pattern
Communication	Structured collaboration with Muhammadiyah University of Sorong; clearer technical guidance; relatively consistent policy transmission	Communication mediated through a partnership with the University of Indonesia; dependent on external institutional clarity	Socialization conducted (RPL Type A), but limited follow-up technical guidance; interpretative ambiguity persists.	Regulatory clarity is set centrally, but regional interpretations vary; effectiveness depends on the strength of institutional partnerships.
Transmission Consistency	Moderate–High; coordination meetings and formal MoU mechanisms	Moderate; coordination formal but not institutionalized	Low–Moderate; outreach activities not always followed by procedural consolidation	Vertical transmission is weak without continuous coordination mechanisms
Resources – Human	Limited internal assessors; reliance on university evaluators	No strong local assessor base; external university dependence	Minimal assessor capacity; mostly preparatory stage	Structural shortage of certified RPL assessors across regions
Resources – Financial	Education upgrading is supported but not structurally embedded in regional budget planning.	Budget-constrained; partnership-driven financing	Limited fiscal prioritization for RPL	RPL is often treated as a programmatic initiative, not an institutional budget priority
Resources – Infrastructure	Portfolio assessment facilitated through the university system	Dependent on partner institution systems	Weak documentation system; incomplete portfolio readiness	Digital and documentation infrastructure is uneven across regions
Disposition – Leadership Commitment	Reform-oriented framing of RPL as an HR upgrading strategy	Strategic collaboration indicates reform support	RPL is framed more as educational access rather than bureaucratic reform	Leadership framing significantly influences program momentum
Organizational Acceptance	Growing acceptance among civil servant participants	Conditional acceptance; dependent on career incentives	Limited internalization within the HR management system	RPL is not yet fully integrated into the talent management culture

Variable (Edwards III)	Sorong City	Mahakam Ulu Regency	Banggai Kepulauan Regency	Cross-Case Pattern
Bureaucratic Structure – Role Clarity	BKPSDM–University coordination is clearer, but not institutionalized via a permanent SOP	Authority distributed across actors; coordination ad hoc	Fragmented authority; no formal RPL unit	Fragmentation is common; absence of standardized SOP across cases
Coordination Mechanism	Formal collaboration agreements (MoU-based)	Inter-institutional agreement, but not embedded in a permanent governance structure	Socialization-based coordination without structural integration	Coordination remains project-based rather than system-based
Institutionalization Level	Semi-institutionalized (partnership model)	Pilot/collaborative model	Early-stage/socialization model	No region has yet achieved full institutionalization within the regional governance system.

Source : [Pemkab Banggai Kepulauan \(2025\)](#); [Lukman Rais et al. \(2024\)](#); [Universitas Indonesia \(2025\)](#)

RPL Implementation Strategy based on the Edward III Model

This section analyses RPL implementation using George C. Edwards III's framework, emphasizing communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure as interacting determinants within Indonesia's decentralized governance system.

Communication: Systemic Gaps in a Decentralized Bureaucracy

Communication challenges in RPL implementation are not merely issues of socialization but reflect structural coordination gaps within multi-level governance. While central regulations (including LAN Regulation No. 5/2025) provide normative clarity, vertical transmission to regional governments remains uneven.

Three systemic communication problems emerge. The first is Interpretative Divergence. This means that regions interpret RPL eligibility, assessment standards, and portfolio requirements differently because there are no detailed technical guidelines. Fragmented Information Channels, such as BKPSDM, universities, LAN, and functional supervisory agencies, disseminate overlapping but not fully synchronized information. Lastly, there is asymmetric Understanding in which many civil servants view RPL as a “fast-track diploma” rather than a competency-validation mechanism.

In decentralized systems, policy communication must move beyond transmission toward institutional alignment. The absence of harmonized technical manuals and standardized assessor guidelines creates multiple interpretations and inconsistent application across regions. Thus, communication failure here is not an informational deficiency but a coordination failure within multi-level administrative structures.

Resources: Fiscal Trade-offs and Institutional Readiness

Resource constraints are structural and multidimensional, encompassing human capital, fiscal allocation, technological infrastructure, and the distribution of authority.

1. Human Resources

Most regions lack certified RPL assessors and rely on external university partners. This dependence signals weak internal institutional capacity.

2. Fiscal Trade-offs

Although RPL is normatively framed as cost-efficient—because it reduces the need for full-length conventional training—the fiscal reality is more complex. Regional budgets prioritize: Routine operational expenditures, Conventional training programs, Mandatory personnel expenses. RPL requires: portfolio verification costs, assessment honoraria, digital system investment, and administrative staffing. Without earmarked allocations, RPL competes with existing budget lines. Thus, the efficiency claim holds only under conditions in which Corporate University (Corpu) systems are already established and Learning recognition replaces—not duplicates—training expenditures. In fiscal terms, RPL represents a reallocation model, not pure cost saving. Its efficiency depends on institutional maturity.

3. Institutional Infrastructure

Regions without integrated digital documentation systems face verification delays. Consequently, resource readiness directly shapes the sustainability of implementation.

Disposition: Political Commitment and Organizational Culture

Disposition emerges as the most decisive variable. However, commitment must be conceptualized beyond individual leadership support. Political commitment in this context operates at three levels:

1. Symbolic Commitment – Formal endorsement of RPL in speeches and policy documents.
2. Programmatic Commitment – Allocation of budget and administrative support.
3. Institutional Commitment – Integration of RPL into long-term talent management systems.

Regions demonstrating reform-oriented leadership treat RPL as part of bureaucratic transformation rather than educational upgrading. Conversely, where leadership commitment remains symbolic, RPL stagnates—organizational culture further shapes implementation. A rigid hierarchical culture and risk-averse mindset reduce acceptance of competency-based recognition systems. Skepticism toward non-traditional pathways indicates institutional inertia.

Thus, disposition reflects both political will and administrative culture. In implementation theory, this aligns with the broader governance literature, which emphasizes reform coalitions and bureaucratic entrepreneurship as drivers of innovation adoption.

Bureaucratic Structure: Institutional Capacity and Coordination Failure

Structural fragmentation is the most persistent implementation barrier. RPL governance involves: LAN (central supervisory authority), BKPSDM/BKD (regional HR management), Universities (assessment institutions), and Functional supervisory agencies. However, coordination remains project-based rather than institutionalized. From an institutional capacity perspective, three weaknesses appear:

1. Absence of Standardized SOPs (Most regions lack dedicated RPL procedural guidelines).
2. Authority Overlap (Assessment authority, validation authority, and administrative processing are dispersed across actors).
3. Limited Horizontal Integration (RPL is not fully embedded within Corporate University systems).

This fragmentation illustrates classical coordination failure: multiple actors share responsibility, but no single actor holds integrative authority. In decentralized governance systems, such structural dispersion increases transaction costs, prolongs decision cycles, and creates accountability ambiguity. Therefore, bureaucratic structure must evolve from fragmented coordination toward integrated governance mechanisms if RPL is to become institutionalized.

Across the four variables, two structural conclusions emerge: first, Implementation asymmetry: Central regulatory ambition is stronger than regional institutional readiness. Second, Governance dependency: RPL success depends more on structural coherence and leadership commitment than on regulatory existence. Among the four variables, disposition and bureaucratic structure appear most decisive in determining sustainability, while communication and resources function as enabling—but insufficient—conditions. Thus, RPL implementation should be understood not merely as an educational innovation, but as a governance reform requiring institutional capacity strengthening and the redesign of multi-level coordination.

E. CONCLUSION

Beyond the four classical variables of policy implementation, this study also highlights the importance of collaborative governance in strengthening RPL performance. The implementation of RPL for regional civil servants cannot rely solely on internal bureaucratic capacity; it requires coordinated collaboration among multiple institutional actors, including the National Institute of Public Administration, regional human resource development agencies, universities, professional certification bodies, and sectoral ministries. Such collaboration enables the sharing of assessment expertise, institutional learning infrastructures, and competency validation mechanisms that are often unavailable within regional governments. Therefore, the effectiveness of RPL implementation depends not only on communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure, but also on these actors' ability to form collaborative institutional arrangements.

To ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of RPL for regional civil servants, the government should prioritize integrated governance reforms that harmonize institutional roles among key actors, strengthen assessor capacity and corporate university-based systems, realign training budgets toward recognition-based learning schemes, institutionalize leadership commitment within talent management frameworks, and standardize national technical guidelines to eliminate policy fragmentation and inconsistent interpretation at the regional level.

While this study provides a structured governance analysis, its reliance on document-based data limits the availability of region-specific insights. Future research should incorporate empirical case studies, interviews, and comparative regional analyses to validate and enrich the theoretical findings. Such studies could explore how local political will, organizational culture, and fiscal priorities interact with RPL implementation, thereby advancing both theory and practice.

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