

Regional Government Design During the Pandemic: The Challenges Toward Agile Governance in East Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has demanded many adaptations in all life aspects, including the governance performed by governmental organizations. In consort with Indonesia's social restrictions policy which is carried out widely in continual periods, impacts on the performance shown by the local governments are quite blatant, which appears to hinder the success of duties they are responsible for. Basically, the current study seeks to describe the provincial governance resilience in East Java in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. Through agile governance perspective, the research is aimed to discover information related to what extent East Java Province governments have been demonstrating agile governance with due regards to the six key principles implemented during the pandemic. Moreover, a qualitative research method, by means of descriptive explanation design, was applied. Research data, in addition, were collected through document searching and in-depth interview with some related agencies. Concerned on four governance dimensions, i.e., the government, bureaucracy, civil society, and economic community, the research had shown that despite their efforts to perform the agility, the East Java Province governments could not fully and properly meet the whole principles of agile governance yet. It means that with all the improvements or accelerations made for the sake of work under the state of agile governance, a number of aspects were left weakened, and needed enhancements still.

Keywords

COVID-19 pandemic, governance, regional government, agile governance, and East Java government.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia, since March 2020, has caused instable situations throughout the state so as to change the whole structure of life aspects, so rapidly. Consequently, such a situation has swiftly turned into crises: not only health, but also multidimensional crises, i.e., science, economy, socio-culture, and psychology. The crises, moreover, appear to disrupt the principles of essential sectors in the human's life. Like it or lump it, the crises also demand fast and adaptive responses from the humans, exclusively related to governance system.

Theoretically and practically speaking, a bureaucracy has no tendencies to innovate. Pierson (2000) argues that in a bureaucracy, public and formal institutional policies are designed not adhering to innovations; instead, their practices are often based on specific decisions made in the past. Stated by Jansen & Vort (2016), one of typical characteristics of a bureaucracy is the limit of reactions and adaptiveness to reform. The reason why a bureaucracy is typified that way is due to its basis pertinent to traditional governance, with stability and accountability as cores of work orientation based on regulations made in response to long-termed necessities. Furthermore, the characteristic of a bureaucracy reflecting the governance is, therefore, faced to dynamic situations of life; one of which is the current pandemic one. In this situation, feelings of uncertainty, anxiety due to social threats, and enormous loss potentials undergone by the State or regions are rising. At this moment, indeed will the governments have no other choices to take, except agile resilience to respond to any possibilities caused by the current crisis.

Agile governance is basically centered to the contribution of the governments or institutions to giving fast responses to any unexpected changes in order to fulfil public needs and demands that also reform due to the changes (Ngai. et.al, 2011). Specifically, agile government is defined as a specific ability possessed by organizations to perform financial duties efficiently, along with it, to accelerate and maintain accuracy in the exploitation of probabilities to be converted

into innovative and competitive actions (Hung et.al, 2014; Liang et, al 2017 Queiroz et.al, 2018 cited in Vernanda, 2019). East Java Province has been named one of several provinces with the highest rate of COVID-19 dissemination in Indonesia. The latest record has even reported a significant case explosion. As of 5 January 2021, East Java Province had suffered the highest death rate per day according to the date when the first case was recorded, by the number of 54 patients. Accumulatively, the province is still reported to record the highest death rate due to COVID-19. With reference to the occurring situation, East Java Province is still at high risk so as to absolutely need policies with due regard to agile governance.

These days, East Java Province governments have been actually striving for the realization of responsive governance amidst the pandemic situation. Some endeavors have been pronounced by the releases of some policies and regulations by the Governor, which manifests positive reactions by the governments in administering public services in the time of the pandemic crisis. However, some aspects are still left devitalized, and need improvements, e.g., in terms of inter-institutional coordination. The aforesaid is parallel with research findings that highlight the characteristics of governmental policies during the pandemic. Widaningrum & Mas'udi (2020:55) assert that the policies in the time of pandemic are fairly ambiguous, irresponsive, and uncertain in response to whichever potentials caused by occurring/reactive (in an emergency mode) or fragmented crises (Apriliyanti & Pramusinto, 2020: 89). In accordance with such a phenomenon, this research is of urgency to reveal crucial information about to what extent East Java Province governments have been performing agile governance principles to administer public services in the time of COVID-19.

1.1 Objectives

In respect of the abovementioned exploration, the current research is highly expected to be able to analyze the dynamics of policy implementation concerning provincial governance to deal with the pandemic situation, exclusively as regards the probability of success and the potential challenges. Further, the research is supposed to contribute to representing the practices of agile governance, especially for crises. At least, the research is aimed to depict the dynamics of agile governance implementation, including the probability of success and most possible challenges.

2. Literature Review

Basically, 'agility' is referred to as the urgency of being fast or agile. By description, a group of people or organizations can more quickly respond to certain issues only if they are able to make use of errors or mistakes as the basis for organizational improvements. Responsiveness, along with sustainable function of evaluation for work performance improvements, is considered good at stimulating the organizational performance to be better. In other words, there is a process of 'learning by failing' manifested in the state of being agile. Adding to that, the state of agility is highlighting 'fail-fast' and 'learn-faster' philosophies (Apriliyanti and Parmusinto, 2020: 19). To describe agile governance, Luna et.al (2015) propose six key principles as follows: *Good enough governance* – highlighting the organizational context; *Business-driven* – highlighting business as the core of decision-making and action-taking; *Human focused* – highlighting people to be respected and given opportunities for decision-making and action-taking; *Based on quick wins* – highlighting celebrations for quick victories as motivation to acquire more inputs and better outcomes; *Systematic and adaptive approach* – highlighting the ability to elevate intrinsic skills in response to dynamic and systematic changes; *Simple design and continuous refinement* – highlighting the ability to result in quick and increasing outcomes. All this time, research concerning the governance in East Java Province, especially in the time of pandemic, has been initiating by some scholars; some of whom are concerned on the probability of adaptive government through dominant modification that leads to use of technological aids. In addition, the elaboration is more focused on sectoral dimensions, such as bureaucracy (Nihayaty, A.I, 2021) and economy, especially on micro small and medium enterprises (UMKM) (Soetjipto, N. 2020; Aminy, A. & Fithriasari; Nafiah, B. A. et al, 2021). In real-life practice, it is so evident that East Java Province governance has lacked attention. Yet, a review on such a topic was ever conducted by Rifqi (2021) who tried exploring the capability of East Java Province Government by means of dynamic governance.

Referring to 'agile governance', some researches have been carried out in so varied contexts; some of which are only limited to regional or municipal governments, just like that of Apriyanti et al (2021), exploring the forms of agile governance implemented by the Municipal Government of Surabaya in surviving COVID-19. The research portrayed that the socio-cultural factor caused the limit of agile governance implementation. Further, research carried out by Halim, et al (2021) attempted to investigate the implementation of agile governance in East Java Province. Despite

the scope similarity to that of applied in the current research, provincial level, the previous was only centralized to the practices of ‘agile’ principles in an innovated application developed by the governments, called as PIKOBAR. In accordance with the reviews on the similar area, it is obvious that the current research is aimed to fulfil the research gaps, especially in two main perspectives. Firstly, as sectoral research is quite dominant in the context of provincial governance in East Java, the present research gives more detailed attention through different institutional dimensions. Secondly, in respect of ‘agile’ governance used for enrichment in related disciplines, the research also contributes to analyzing the state of ‘agile’ governance based on the applicable principles.

3. Method

The current research used a qualitative approach by means of descriptive analysis design. The research focus was on identifying the governance implemented in East Java Province, to be specific on institutional policies issued in response to the pandemic situation. It was conducted by reviewing multidimensional aspects related to governance based on the Indonesia Governance Index (IGI), including the government, bureaucracy, civil people, and economic people. Further, two sorts of data were used: primary and secondary. The former included the results of in-depth interview with some related informants, whilst the latter encompassed governmental documents and news from any media relevant to the research scope. Moreover, informants for the interview were selected purposively based on the representativeness of each dimension, i.e., Development Planning Agency at Sub-National Level, East Java Social Office, Cooperative Services, and East Java Micro Small and Medium Enterprises. At last, the data were analyzed descriptively based upon the referral theories adopted (Table 1).

Table 1. informant representation

Category	Subjects
Government	Regional Development Planning Agency
Bureaucracy	Regional Development Planning Agency
Civil people	The East Java Social Service
Economic people	The Cooperative Service, and East Java Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Agency

4. Data Collection

Like common regional governments in surviving uncertain conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, East Java Province has released some resilient policies in response to effects caused by the COVID-19, as articulated in the implementation of ‘New Normal’ scheme. The policies, furthermore, consist of several aspects related to governance, and are applied based on the derived policies made in advance by the Central Governments. In addition, the regulations and policies are referred to some aspects of life, comprising economy, social, education, health, and politics, which has automatically become a referral guideline for East Java Province.

Like some regional governments in general, East Java Province has contributed to handling COVID-19 and participating at the realization of ‘New Normal’ period as a sustainable action based on the official mandates issued by the Central Governments (Table 2).

Table 2. central government mandate

No	Government Regulations
1	Regulation of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 20 of 2020 on the Handling Acceleration for COVID-19 in Regional Governments;
2.	Joint Regulation of Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance No. 119/2813/SJ on Acceleration of 2020’s Regional Budgeting Reallocation in Handling COVID-19 and Resilience for People’s Purchasing Power and National Economy;
3	Circular Letter No. 440/2622/SJ on Formation of Task Force for Accelerating Regional COVID-19 Handling;
4.	Instruction of the Minister of Home Affairs No. 1 of 2020;
5	General Guideline for Surviving the COVID-19 Pandemic for Regional Governments.

To date, East Java Province Government has made some adaptive policies to handle the COVID-19. In accelerating the handling of the COVID-19, the provincial government allocated budgeting for COVID-19 with the amount of IDR 2.384 trillion in the beginning of April 2020, which was collected from the Regional Budget (APBD). The amount was 6.8% out of the total of East Java Province Regional Budget, constituting IDR 35.1 trillion. The amount was, in fact, a portion for program budgeting generated from 'refocusing' process, specially used for handling emergency due to pandemic. The budget allocated for COVID-19 handling by the East Java Province Government is divided into some handling categories, including social safety net by the amount of IDR 995.04 billion, curative IDR 825.31 billion, promotive and preventive IDR 110.17 billion, and recovery from economic loss experienced by East Java people in the time of COVID-19 IDR 454.26 billion.

Technically speaking, the major principles of a 'New Normal' practice, as recommended by WHO, have been massively implemented by the East Java Province Government in response to the pandemic situation. The strong concern is emphasized on individual conducts, both on the community and sectoral clusters, including ones regarding governmental programs. In terms of governance, in addition, strategical innovations and policies developed by the East Java Province Government also deserve public exposure; one of which is an innovative program for adaptive performance remarked by the release of '*Si Bang Kodir*' application. The application is basically used for individual competency development, especially to provide local civil servants with ease to monitor the procedure of Professionalism Index Measurement. The exercise of adaptive governmental performance in the time of pandemic, exclusively in East Java Province, cannot be separated from regulations issued by the Central Governments, e.g., Circular Letter of the Minister of State Apparatus Empowerment and Bureaucratic Reform No. 58 of 2020 on Work System for State Apparatus in New Normal Era. Further, it is governed in the regulation that New Normal setting requires the state apparatus to work at flexible time and in adaptive conditions, with professionalism still as the top of priority. There are three main coverages of the Letter, such as: 1) adaptive work system; 2) supportive human resource; and 3) supportive infrastructure.

Despite the occurring situations, in terms of governance for public services, the East Java Province governments are being faced with issues in common. It, more and less, can affect the quality of governance, primarily in the pandemic context. Some of common issues that occur are related to population administration and civil registration records. The unoptimized exercise of electronic identity card (E-KTP) issuing in East Java Province and the public complaints to population administration and civil registration records services have become the most frequent issues. Further, strategical issues also occur, specifically regarding general governments, regional apparatus, and regional financial administration closely linked to interregional coordination. The potential issues include: asynchronized data aggregation, especially between the one collected by the Local Government Implementation Report (LPPD) and the other by the East Java Province Government, complete with the exercise of compulsory and elective duties; lack of institutional capacities from the Regional Governments; and limited human resources that meet the standards of IT qualifications. (RPJMD, 2014). Some of the aforesaid issues have become a general portrayal and overall depiction of the degree of preparedness shown by the East Java Province Government, especially in the exercise of governance amidst the pandemic situation. It is quite clear that those issues can be serious challenges that need fast and intensive enhancement. It is because the governance in the time of pandemic highly demands strong and mature preparedness in such institutional aspects as the infrastructure, work system, and human resources so as to warrant for prime public services.

Moreover, a general portrayal is presented to demonstrate the governance preparedness in its transition into the state of being 'agile'. Some of the facts have indicated that the performance of public services is relatively less maximum. Some improvements on public services are aimed to elevate the quality of services in each of governmental institutions based on the people's needs and expectations. More detailed information related to public services in East Java Province can be seen in the following Figure 1:

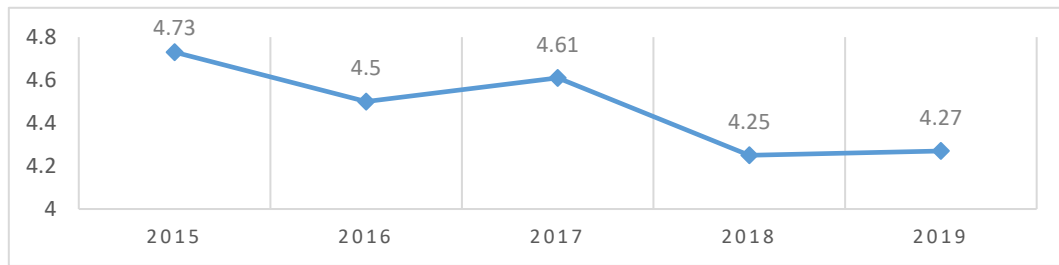


Figure 1. Public Services Quality in East Java Province

Both, increases and decreases, are shown to occur from 2015 to 2019. In 2015 to 2016, decrease occurred by the significance of 0.23, whilst increase did in 2016 to 2017 by the significance of 0.11. Furthermore, in 2017 to 2018, significant decrease was found by the point of 0.36, from 4.61 to 4.25, which means that improvement programs were needed to elevate the quality of the public services, such as by implementing standards of services, prime service cultures, complaint management, evaluation for public satisfaction, and technology utility for the realization of better service performance. Similarly, in terms of work performance, there is shown a trend of decrease within four recent years, in the span of between 2016 to 2019 (Figure 2).

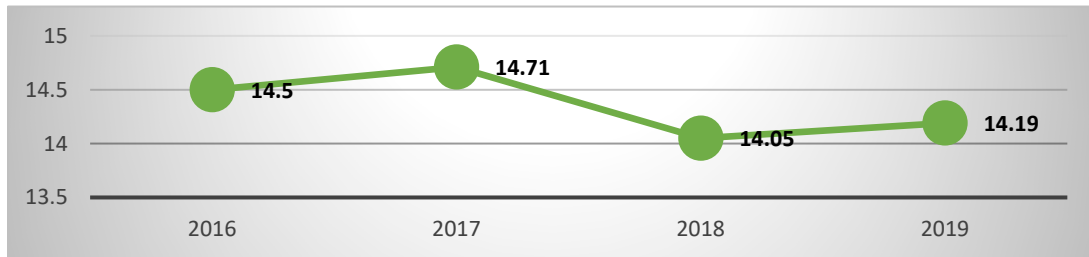


Figure 2. Work Performances in East Java Province

The work performance shown in 2016 constituted 14.6, and it elevated in 2017 to be 14.71. In the following year, 2018, decrease occurred in the point of 14.05. At last, the point rose again up to 14.19 in 2019. Some programs could be taken to elevate or keep the work performance rate on track. By achieving the work target, better work performance would be certain thing to achieve in the following years. Such a condition implies that to build 'agile' government, the East Java Province Government requires enhancement in so many sectors.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Agile Leadership

As one of vital instruments for governance, leadership has become the primary reference to the governmental success in running good governance, primarily in the time of crises. This chapter is aimed to discuss how leadership played its role in East Java Province governance in the time of pandemic. It was referred to a conceptual dimension set in advance, with the focus targeted on regulations made by the Governor and Vice Governor of East Java Province as well as ones by legislative boards of the Regional People's Representative Assembly in the realization of good governance by creating good and responsive public services in New Normal era.

Referring to a concept adopted in this research, 'agile' governance, leadership dimension performed by the East Java Province Government is analyzed based on New Normal perspective and several key principles embodied in 'agile' governance. It cannot be denied that in case of an agile organization, leadership plays important role since all decisions are on the leaders, before disseminated to their professional members within the organization (Wasisitiono & Rohmadi, 2020: 217). According to a principle of 'agile' leadership as proposed by Dening (2016), it is referred to as strong leadership. In this case, agile leaders are referred to those equipped with visions targeting new trends and strategic goals set in an organization. Leaders, in this case, are considered as those who are of flexibility in

articulating visions and missions to real-life policies concerning the current situations and natural resources utility and availability.

Upon the current context of East Java Province, the Government and Vice Government, along with the legislative apparatus, are found already persistent with the 'agile' leadership state, but still in need of serious attention on some aspects. The most primary aspect to consider is 'the goals of structural conducts and values focused for sustainable adding values and innovations', or is referred to as 'orientation'. The East Java Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa, in this case, has demonstrated obvious orientation on the governance for New Normal era, which is depicted through the public policies made. In addition, the realization of the governance is also portrayed by awards granted to the East Java Governor Khofifah Indar Parawansa as 'A Leader of Reform' by the Ministry of State Apparatus Empowerment and Public Reform. The criteria for the awards grant are based on some standards; one of which is that the Governor is highly committed in the realization of governance reform, which typifies honesty, excellency, and transparency, besides creating a massive integrity zone. In addition, the determination of the provincial government to run agile governance can also be seen from the other aspects, such as the Financial Report of the Provincial Government accredited 'Corruption-Free Area' (WBK) and 'Clean and Serving Bureaucracy Area (WBBM). Those awards cannot be separated from innovative ideas that had been initiated from the beginning of her leadership, which demonstrates visions focused on new trends and strategical organizational goals – pronounced in a tagline of CETTAR, standing for *Cepat (quick) - Efektif (effective) - Efisien (efficient) - Tanggap (responsive) - Transparan (transparent) - Akuntabel (accountable) - Responsif (responsive)*.

The other aspect to portray the leadership performed in the governance is the handling of the first COVID-19 case. A quick response was given by the Government through the release of, at very least, six points for pandemic handling focused on some sectors, such as transportation, health, education, bureaucracy, economy, and information and communication. In transportation, the Government assigned regional governments to provide handwashing spots located in all entering point, airport, railway station, and bus station with no strict procedures for monitoring public mobility from and to their regions. In education, through almost all of schools were made off, the twelfth graders could still take the National Exam based upon the mandatory instruction from the Central Governments. In health, people at risk were monitored, and COVID-19 infected people were traced. In addition, facilities in hospitals were upgraded, especially those stipulated as referral hospitals. In bureaucratic government, the governmental focus was on the exercise of health protocols for the entire state apparatus (Hanafi, et al, 2020: 209). Those efforts, more and less, can be used to justify the responses of the Government in dealing with critical situations, through the visions and strategical endeavors in response to certain conditions.

Meanwhile, based on the other criteria of 'agile' leadership, the 'Manager' is supposed to see himself as a part of the team, and act out as motivator, instead of controller. The performance shown by the East Java Province Government, tactlessly, was not really satisfying. Comparative reports had demonstrated that among three other provinces, i.e., Jakarta Capital Special Region, West Java, and Central Java, East Java received serious highlight regarding coordinative relation made by its government. Besides, it was also depicted through the relation made with legislative boards, in which the governance for COVID-19 handling was massively criticized, especially in terms of budgeting. The Regional People's Representative Assembly suspected some critical issues, i.e., untransparent use of funds, synchronization of performances between the provincial and regional or municipal governments on unoptimized social assistances; and unclear design of economy for particular community (selalu.id, 2020).

According to the aforesaid depictions, it is clear that the relation made between executive and legislative boards in East Java has been quite balanced. The legislative boards, moreover, used their monitoring function for every policy made by the executive boards. However, it is also said that communication between related institutions in the provincial governments could not result in good program.

5.2 Bureaucratic Enforcement

According to the real practice of COVID-19 handling to coming to new normal era, the provincial government had performed governance that paid attention to and was adapted to the existing organizational flow. Through the illustration, for example, based on the framework of COVID-19 handling, the East Java Province Government as the commander for regional level would be coordinating with Regional Leaders Communication Forum, expressly in COVID-19 handling. It actually reflected agile governance, especially based upon principles of good enough governance on the nature of coordination according to applicable structure of organization.

Although the provincial government had indicated good policy practices in accordance with the organizational context through strategic coordination, both in related units under it and together with other elements, the performance shown in this case was still categorized unwell. It is related to the description of the problems raising on conflictual relations with several regions during the COVID-19 handling. It indicates that organizational relations made by the provincial government were hindered by ego-sectoral issues or poor coordination among the bureaucracies. In addition, related to the same issue, the provincial government often encountered a deadlock in solving problems, especially in the Greater Surabaya area so as to make the COVID-19 handling policy in the area counterproductive (Hanafi, et.al, 2020: 210).

Furthermore, related to the other aspect, which was business driven, the government was described responsible for policymaking, and it was shown that sustainable economy and business aspects had become the top priority. The governance performed by the provincial government, institutionally speaking, comprised some policies that could be identified to cover this aspect. For example, there were innovations institutionally initiated by the Bureau of Procurement of Goods and Services of East Java Province to respond to the economy that tended to decline due to pandemic, and to encourage people to continue carrying out economic activities; one of which was "*Jatim Bejo*", an acronym for "*Jatim Online Shopping*" (beritasatu.com, 2020). Although this kind of policy was more oriented to improving economic affairs, it was detectable that the bureaucracy possessed institutional sensitivity to developing regional growth during crisis.

Related to bureaucracy, East Java had been concerned a lot on community involvement, which was shown through provincial government's policies concerning quick wins aspect. It was illustrated through the case of COVID-19 handling a couple of time ago by means of a website release, 'Radar Covid East Java'. Such an innovation had provided updated and real-time data to public. By means of it, public could have easy access to information related to the dissemination of COVID-19 in East Java Province, by which cautiousness could be increased in response to it.

5.3 Digital Market Opportunities Expansion

The governance performed by the East Java Province Government in economic affairs in the midst of a pandemic situation has been relatively impressive. Basically, the governance in the area, exclusively in new normal, has reflected the state of agility in the economic community. Of the six principles of agile governance, four principles have been shown excellent to be run, i.e., good enough governance, human-focused, systematic and adaptive approach, and simple design and continuous improvement. There are vital notes to highlight upon two fundamental indicators, especially in consort with economic society; both of which include business-driven and quick-wins principles.

Regarding these two principles, the highlight on the business-driven principle is that there are still limited strategies in the marketing process for the products by most of business actors. As mentioned in the discussion, it was proved by the results of the latest public poll, which made product marketing during a pandemic situation and new normal order the main problem. In fact, innovations to increase business capacity in this aspect are quite numerous and varied. However, most of these things were limited to strengthening the knowledge level of business actors. In terms of marketing, although the government provided collaborations with digital marketplaces, such an effort was still inadequate. Therefore, it is of necessity pursuing a certain strategy that goes beyond further than providing a digital point of sale.

5.4 Civil Community

Two issues rose with different conditions based on the current dimension. With reference to agile governance, civil community nearly portrayed all of the six principles, but one. Overall, the governance applied in East Java Province was relatively impressive, especially in the time of new normal, as it was nearly of agility in terms of performing governance for civil community. It was indicated by the significances of varied policy programs representing six key principles of agile governance. Meanwhile, there were several principles that could be fulfilled by the existing policies regarding this dimension, including good enough governance, business-driven, human-focused, quick-wins-based, systematic and adaptive approach, and simple design and continuous improvement.

The success of East Java province to carry over this dimension was mainly contributed by a number of policy programs pioneered by the Community and Village Empowerment Service. Though those six main principles could all be fulfilled, there were basically some notes needing thoughtful considerations, especially on design simplicity and

continuity for improvement. It was due to the fact that innovations for infrastructure of programs and policies had existed, but the operation was still problematic. As one of examples, the program *Jatim Social Care*, to date, are still remaining problematic in the real-life practice.

6. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing analysis on agile governance approach applied in the observation, this research concludes that the governance of East Java Province, in the time of pandemic, has been basically implementing agile governance. It is evidenced by a number of innovations which can be referred to as a reflection for working under agile principles, covering: good enough governance, business-driven, human-focused, based on quick wins, and systematic and adaptive approach. Meanwhile, those six principles are embodied in various policies or priority decisions, exclusively in dealing with the new normal situations based on the varied dimensions.

This excellence must be acknowledged that it is closely linked to the willingness shown by related governmental agencies to make innovations based on primary aspects of technology. For example, in civil community, the East Java Province Government, through a PMD Service, has made use of varied technological aids to carry out several agendas for village communities. By such a pattern, the government can warrant that numerous priority programs intended for rural communities are still running despite face-to-face limits.

However, though some dimensions of agile governance principles generate successes, especially in the new normal, not all of these principles can be actualized, nonetheless. These limits obviously occur, therefore. For instance, data problems are becoming a serious challenge, to date, for the Social Services Office. The identification is based on the low-quality state of Systematic and Adaptive Approach, especially in case of data integration between the provincial and municipal/regional governments. It, therefore, results in cases of inaccurate distribution of social assistances for communities.

Furthermore, the governance applied in East Java, primarily during the new normal era, can be considered improved or either accelerated in terms of running agile government. Despite such a fact, there are still some dimensions remaining for further enhancements.

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Biographies

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