

The Role of the Central Government in Supervising Regional Governments in the Era of Autonomy

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Abstrak

This study aims to analyze the role of the Central Government in supervising Regional Governments in the context of regional autonomy implementation in Indonesia. Regional autonomy grants broader authority to local governments to manage their internal affairs; however, it remains within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), which necessitates oversight by the Central Government. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, employing a literature review approach and documentation of statutory regulations. The results show that the role of the central government in supervising regional governments is crucial to ensure that the implementation of regional autonomy aligns with the principles of a unitary state and does not deviate from national objectives. The central government has strategic functions in providing guidance, supervision, monitoring, evaluation, and revocation of regional policies that contradict public interests and legal regulations. However, the implementation of this supervision faces several complex challenges, such as a lack of coordination between central and regional governments, limited human resource capacity, weak transparency and accountability in regional financial management, and inadequate law enforcement and sanctions for violations. These challenges impact the effectiveness of supervision and open up opportunities for deviations and corrupt practices at the regional level.

Keywords : Central Government, Regional Government, Regional Autonomy, Supervision, Guidance, Monitoring, Evaluation.

Introuction

The granting of broad autonomy to regions within a unitary state system is still based on the principle that sovereignty lies entirely with the central government. Although regions have the authority to manage and govern their own governmental affairs, the ultimate responsibility for the administration of government remains in the hands of the central government (Fauzi, 2019). In this context, the function of regional governments does not stand alone but is part of the overall national governance system. This confirms that in a unitary state, sovereignty is not divided between the central and regional governments as in a federal system. Instead, there is a division of tasks and authorities based on the principles of deconcentration and decentralization (Sufianto, 2020).

In line with this, policies made by regional governments must align with and become an integral part of national policies. The main difference between central and regional

governments lies in the implementation approach of these policies, which is adjusted to local conditions and characteristics. Regional governments are encouraged to explore and utilize local wisdom, resource potential, innovation, competitiveness, and community creativity in supporting the achievement of national development goals (Said, 2015). Thus, the active role of regions in exercising autonomy not only strengthens local governance but also becomes an essential pillar in the overall success of national development (Hariyanto, 2020).

Since the enactment of Law No. 22 of 1999, which was later refined by Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, Indonesia has entered a full era of regional autonomy (Wiranta, 2015). Regional autonomy is a manifestation of decentralization of power from the central government to regional governments to allow greater independence in managing governmental affairs and public services. With this authority, regions are expected to improve bureaucratic efficiency, accelerate development, and enhance public welfare in accordance with their local potential (Kurniawan, 2017).

However, the delegation of authority to the regions within the autonomy framework does not eliminate the strategic role of the central government in governance. The central government still plays an important role in providing guidance and supervision of regional governance (Lobubun et al., 2022). This is done to ensure that the policies and programs implemented by regional governments remain within the corridor of national interest and comply with applicable laws and regulations. Therefore, regional autonomy is not absolute independence but rather a system that balances local independence and central control to achieve national development goals (Wijayanti, 2016).

Supervision by the central government includes several critical aspects, including administrative, financial, and performance evaluation of regional governments. Administrative supervision functions to ensure that regional government processes comply with established procedures and regulations (Robi, 2023). Meanwhile, financial supervision aims to ensure transparency and accountability in regional budget management. Performance evaluation is

conducted to assess the extent to which regional programs provide tangible benefits to the community and contribute to overall development (Laksana & Putra, 2019).

Although supervision is formally regulated, in practice, its implementation often faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of competent human resources, both at the central and regional levels, to effectively carry out supervisory functions (Karim et al., 2020). In addition, coordination between central supervisory agencies and regional governments is often suboptimal, resulting in slow responses to identified issues on the ground. Overlapping or poorly synchronized regulations also frequently hinder the consistent and effective implementation of supervision (Dewi et al., 2022).

As a result of this weak supervisory system, various irregularities in regional governance often occur. Numerous cases of abuse of authority, budget manipulation, and corrupt practices have been found, which harm both the public and the state. Inefficiencies in budget management also present serious problems that hinder regional development progress (Rerung et al., 2017). Therefore, strengthening the central government's supervision and guidance system is crucial, including improving regulations, enhancing the capacity of supervisory personnel, and promoting transparency and public participation in the regional government oversight process (Savitri et al., 2019).

Therefore, an in-depth study is needed on how the central government exercises its supervisory role over regional governments in this era of autonomy. This research attempts to examine the effectiveness of such supervision, the challenges faced, and the strategies that can be employed to improve the quality of supervision within a unitary state framework. This study is also important in both theoretical and practical terms. Theoretically, it can enrich the academic discourse in public administration and constitutional law. Practically, the research findings are expected to provide policy recommendations for both central and regional governments in improving the supervisory system and enhancing the quality of governance.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding in depth the implementation of the delegation of authority to regions and the role of the Central Government in fostering and supervising regional government. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe the social and bureaucratic phenomena that occur in the field as a whole based on data and facts obtained directly. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and participatory observations (Sugiyono, 2011). Interviews were conducted to obtain information directly from key informants regarding the implementation of regional autonomy and central government supervision. Documentation studies were conducted on regulations, supervision reports, news, and related policy documents. Observations were used to directly see the conditions of policy implementation in the field. The data obtained were analyzed using interactive data analysis techniques according to Miles and Huberman, which include: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely by comparing the results of interviews, documentation, and observations in order to obtain accurate and credible findings (Thalib, 2022).

Results and Discussion

Role of the Central Government in Supervising Regional Governments in the Era of Autonomy

The central government plays a crucial role in supervising regional governments to ensure that local governance is carried out in accordance with national regulations and policies, while also supporting the independence of regional autonomy. This supervision is carried out through various mechanisms such as guidance, monitoring, evaluation, supervision, and the annulment of regional regulations that contradict public interest or laws.

1. Guidance and Supervision

Guidance and supervision are two essential functions within a decentralization governance system, as implemented in a unitary state like Indonesia. In the context of regional autonomy, the central government remains responsible for ensuring that regional governments exercise their granted authority effectively and in line with national objectives. One form of this responsibility is through the role of governors as representatives of the central government in their respective regions. Governors are tasked with providing guidance and supervision to district and city governments within their jurisdiction, especially regarding the implementation of governmental affairs delegated through decentralization mechanisms.

Guidance from the central government aims to strengthen the capacity of local governments to manage public administration. This includes providing technical guidelines, training, mentoring, supervision, and facilitation in areas such as financial management, development planning, public services, and enhancing human resource quality. The goal of guidance is not only for local governments to perform administrative functions but also to foster innovation and create local policies that focus on improving the welfare of the community. Therefore, guidance is constructive and proactive in building effective, efficient, and accountable local governance.

On the other hand, supervision serves as a control mechanism to ensure that the exercise of authority by regional governments aligns with the principles of good governance and legal regulations. Supervision is carried out through performance evaluations, administrative inspections, financial audits, as well as periodic reporting and monitoring. The main goal of supervision is to prevent deviations, misuse of authority, corruption, and inefficiency. A strong supervision function helps maintain harmony between national policies and local implementation while also improving accountability in local governance.

2. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are integral parts of the supervision function in a decentralized governance system. Monitoring is a continuous and systematic observation of

regional autonomy implementation to ensure that local government activities are carried out according to plans, legal regulations, and national policies. In this regard, the central government plays a strategic role in observing the dynamics of policy implementation at the local level to ensure alignment with national development goals. Monitoring is not only administrative but also substantive in assessing the alignment between program implementation and established objectives.

Evaluation is the process of assessing the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact of regional autonomy implementation. This evaluation aims to identify not only the achievements of development targets but also the obstacles, structural constraints, and local factors affecting the performance of local governments. The central government uses the results of this evaluation to make decisions on guidance policies, regulatory revisions, or adjustments in resource allocation to support optimal autonomy implementation. Evaluation also enables continuous improvement in the governance of regional administrations.

Academically, monitoring and evaluation of regional autonomy serve as a mechanism for checks and balances between the central and regional governments. This process is vital in ensuring that the principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability, participation, and effectiveness, are maintained in the implementation of autonomy. With a systematic monitoring and evaluation process, the central government can promote equitable regional development, prevent potential deviations, and ensure the continuation of policies that benefit the community. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation are not only administrative tools but also strategic instruments in overseeing the success of decentralization in Indonesia.

3. Supervision

Supervision is an active form of guidance performed by the central government to ensure that local governments' operations comply with regulations and national policies. In the context of decentralization, supervision is essential because not all authority is fully delegated to the regions. Some tasks are still carried out by the central government but delegated to the

regions for implementation, with the central government retaining ultimate responsibility. Therefore, through supervision, the central government can provide direction, technical assistance, and support to local governments to ensure that these tasks are executed correctly and according to procedures.

Supervision does not focus solely on administrative aspects but also includes guidance on planning, execution, and evaluation of programs. This activity creates a dialogue space between the central and regional governments to ensure a shared understanding of national development goals and strategies for their implementation at the local level. Through supervision, local governments can find solutions to technical issues faced when running cross-sectoral programs or programs that meet certain standards set by the central government, such as in education, healthcare, or infrastructure. Supervision also encourages the strengthening of local human resource capacity and institutional capabilities.

Supervision acts as a coordinating bridge between the central and regional governments to achieve policy synchronization. This function reduces the potential gap in policy implementation due to differences in capacity or interpretation of regulations between the central and regional governments. With optimal supervision, the central government can ensure that the principles of good governance are upheld while respecting the spirit of regional autonomy. Therefore, supervision should not be repressive, but rather constructive and collaborative, aimed at improving the performance of local governments as strategic partners in the administration of national governance.

4. Cancellation of Regional Regulations

The cancellation of Regional Regulations is a form of normative control carried out by the central government over local legal products. This is done when a regional regulation contradicts public interest, the principles of good governance, or higher-level laws in the national legal hierarchy. This authority is regulated by legislation, including Law Number 23 of 2014 on Regional Government. The central government, through the Ministry of Home

Affairs, has the authority to assess and cancel regional regulations or local head regulations that are deemed inappropriate, with the aim of maintaining the consistency and alignment of the national legal system.

The process of canceling a regulation begins with an evaluation conducted on the draft regulation by the governor (for district/city regulations) or by the Ministry of Home Affairs (for provincial regulations). If, after being ratified, there are problematic aspects of the regulation, the central government can cancel it through an administrative mechanism. Examples of content that could lead to cancellation include discriminatory provisions, those that burden society disproportionately, or those that hinder investment and national economic interests. Therefore, the cancellation of a regulation is not intended to weaken regional autonomy but rather as an effort to ensure that the regulation stays within the correct legal framework.

The cancellation of regulations reflects the principle of checks and balances between the central and regional governments in the unitary state system. Although regions have limited legislative authority in the context of autonomy, such authority must still comply with national legal norms. Thus, the mechanism of regulation cancellation is not only a form of vertical supervision but also a means to ensure that the implementation of autonomy does not cause legal disintegration or disparities in legal treatment across regions. In practice, this requires the central government to act objectively, fairly, and transparently when canceling to avoid unproductive conflicts between the central and regional governments.

5. Implementation of Delegated Tasks

Delegated Tasks are the transfer of governmental affairs from the central government to the regions or villages, and from provincial governments to districts/cities, with specific objectives and accompanied by funding, facilities, and other resources. In its implementation, although the operational responsibility lies with the local government, the final responsibility remains with the central government. Therefore, the central government plays a strategic role

in coordinating, fostering, and supervising the implementation of these tasks, particularly to ensure that the objectives of the programs are achieved effectively and efficiently.

Coordination and fostering are carried out in the form of preparing technical guidelines, training, providing assistance, and strengthening the institutional capacity and human resources of the regions. This is important because the implementation of delegated tasks often requires specific standards, both technical and administrative, set by the central government. Through fostering, the central government helps the regions to implement delegated tasks with the quality expected at the national level. This fostering also serves as a means to align perceptions and strengthen synergy between the central and regional governments within the context of national development.

Supervision of delegated tasks is carried out periodically through mechanisms such as reporting, monitoring, and evaluating the output and outcome of the transferred programs. The purpose of supervision is to prevent deviations, assess performance, and ensure accountability in the implementation of tasks at the local level. In this context, the central government acts as the quality assurance guarantor of the implementation of delegated tasks. If violations or discrepancies in implementation are found, the central government can impose administrative sanctions or withdraw the delegated authority. Therefore, coordination and supervision are key to ensuring the success of the implementation of delegated tasks as part of a decentralized but controlled governance system.

Challenges in Central Government Oversight of Regional Governments

The challenges in central government oversight of regional governments include the lack of coordination between agencies, limited human resource capacity, and a lack of transparency and accountability in budget management. Additionally, weak law enforcement and infrastructure disparities also pose challenges in oversight.

1. Lack of Coordination

The lack of coordination between the central government, provincial governments, and district/city governments is a major challenge in regional governance oversight. This weak coordination often leads to overlapping policies and programs, resulting in disorganized and inefficient field implementation. As a result, central government supervision cannot run optimally because each level of government operates with different priorities and interpretations of the same regulations. This not only hinders the effectiveness of governance but also has the potential to create jurisdictional conflicts.

Moreover, the lack of coordination leads to inaccurate information dissemination, both from the center to the regions and vice versa. Delayed or inaccurate information can slow down decision-making processes, especially in situations that require quick and accurate responses, such as natural disasters, health crises, or social-political dynamics in regions. Misaligned information also hampers the preparation of reports, program monitoring, and regional performance evaluation, which ultimately weakens the oversight and accountability mechanisms. Therefore, improving coordination between levels of government is essential for effective, targeted, and integrated oversight.

2. Limited Human Resource Capacity

Limited human resource capacity is a serious challenge in the central government's oversight of regional administrations. Many regional government officials lack adequate knowledge and skills, especially in technical areas such as program planning, activity implementation, and financial oversight and reporting. This lack of readiness results in various programs launched by the central government through fiscal decentralization and assistance tasks not being optimally implemented on the ground. A low understanding of regulations, accounting systems, and evaluation mechanisms also contributes to weak accountability in managing regional budgets.

This issue is further exacerbated at the village level, where the lack of skilled and professional administrative personnel is felt the most. Many villages face shortages of trained

staff in both governance and financial management. Since the introduction of Village Fund allocations, the responsibility of villages in managing public budgets has become larger and more complex. However, due to the limited technical and managerial capabilities of village officials, development programs are often ineffective and prone to mismanagement.

In addition to the shortage of human resources, limited budget allocations for capacity development programs also hinder progress. Training and mentoring programs from both the central and regional governments often do not reach all areas, especially remote ones. As a result, the quality gap in human resources between advanced and underdeveloped regions continues to widen, directly impacting the effectiveness of oversight, budget transparency, and regional development goals. Therefore, improving human resource quality at all levels of government is a priority in strengthening regional oversight systems.

3. Lack of Transparency and Accountability

The lack of transparency and accountability in regional budget management is a significant obstacle to achieving good governance. Many regions still fall short in providing public access to information regarding the process of drafting and implementing the Regional Revenue and Expenditure Budget (APBD). Low community involvement and weak internal oversight make the budgeting process often closed and non-participatory. As a result, programs do not fully reflect the needs and priorities of the public and may be influenced by political or personal interests.

This lack of transparency also directly impacts accountability. In many cases, budget accountability is not adequately conducted or properly reported. Financial reporting documents are often unavailable to the public or poorly prepared, making it difficult for audits and oversight by the central government, the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK), or independent oversight bodies. The lack of feedback mechanisms from the public also means that budget mismanagement often goes unnoticed.

Moreover, this situation opens the door for corruption related to regional finances. Practices such as manipulating reports, inflating budgets, or diverting project funds often occur, and law enforcement on these cases remains suboptimal. Although law enforcement agencies have handled several corruption cases in the regions, many violations are not addressed firmly or are completely undetected. This reflects the still-weak oversight system and legal sanctions, which should serve as a deterrent for deviations. Therefore, increasing transparency, strengthening accountability systems, and reforming bureaucracy and consistent law enforcement are critical steps to reduce corruption and enhance regional budget oversight effectiveness.

4. Weak Law Enforcement

Weak law enforcement is a crucial challenge in the oversight of regional governments by the central government. Although regulations and laws have been established to regulate governance and financial accountability in regional administrations, their implementation is often inconsistent. The lack of firmness in enforcing the law results in various violations, such as monopolistic practices in procurement, collusion in project tenders, and the manipulation of projects that benefit certain groups while disadvantaging the public interest. This creates injustice and undermines public trust in government institutions.

Furthermore, weak law enforcement is also due to the lack of implementing regulations that clearly outline administrative and legal sanctions for regional governments found to be in violation. In many cases, violations committed by regional heads or government officials only result in reprimands, with no subsequent firm or impactful actions. This lack of firmness means the deterrent effect is not achieved, and it leaves room for similar violations in the future. Additionally, the weak capacity of internal oversight bodies at the regional level further exacerbates this situation.

Therefore, strengthening the legal system to be firm and consistent, as well as updating regulations to clarify sanction mechanisms for regional government violations, is essential. Fair

and transparent law enforcement is the foundation for improving oversight effectiveness and promoting accountable governance. Active involvement of law enforcement agencies, oversight bodies, and civil society is necessary to create a regional governance environment free from abuse of power.

Conclusion

Regional autonomy is a form of delegation of authority from the central government to regional governments to manage and govern their own domestic affairs. This aims to accelerate development, improve the welfare of the people, and optimally explore local potential and wisdom. However, in a unitary state system like Indonesia, the implementation of regional autonomy is not absolute. The central government still plays an important role in fostering and supervising the implementation of regional government affairs to ensure they remain within the framework of national policies and applicable laws and regulations. Regional policies should be an integral part of national policies, not functioning separately or contradicting them.

To ensure the effectiveness of regional autonomy implementation, the central government conducts various forms of supervision, such as monitoring and evaluation, technical supervision, and the cancellation of regional regulations that deviate. This supervision aims to ensure that regional governments remain accountable, efficient, and aligned with national development goals. However, the implementation of supervision is not without challenges, ranging from weak coordination between institutions, a lack of competent human resources at the regional level, to weak transparency and accountability in regional financial management. The disparity in capacities between regions also complicates the implementation of supervision in a uniform and comprehensive manner. Furthermore, low law enforcement and the lack of strict sanctions against violations by regional governments are key factors that weaken the effectiveness of supervision. Without consistent law enforcement, practices such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism at the regional level will be difficult to eliminate.

Therefore, there is a need to strengthen institutional systems, reform regulations, and enhance the capacity of human resources at both the central and regional levels to strengthen the supervisory function. Synergy between the central government, regional governments, supervisory institutions, and civil society is essential to build transparent, accountable, and public-interest-oriented regional governance. Only then can regional autonomy become an effective instrument in realizing good governance across all regions of Indonesia.

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