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Potential of a Public Information Commission Based on Public Information Disclosure Principles to Improve State Public Services

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Abstract

The free flow of information and ideas is essential for democracy and respect of human rights. Censorship has the potential to allow human rights violations to occur in secret, hinder investigations into corrupt and inefficient governments, and many other things. Based on this background, this research is a legal study that takes a statutory, conceptional, and case approach to examine the following issues: 1) the philosophical basis of public bodies as public institutions providing information in the era of public information openness; 2) the existence of an information commission as an administrator and law enforcer in public information disclosure; and 3) public entities' liability against disputes based on public information from the aspects of administrative, civil, and criminal law. We conclude that freedom of information is in the spirit of democratisation that ensures freedom, based on which the state can function effectively and efficiently without neglecting democratic principles. The enactment of the UU KIP in Indonesia on 30 April 2010 opened a new era of public information disclosure in the country. This law is part of the desire to implement a spirit of transparency to fulfil citizens' human right to access public information (right to know) guaranteed by Art. 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

Keywords: Openness of Public Information; Human Rights; Transparency.

Introduction

In democratic social, national, and state life, the principles of freedom of opinion and expression guarantee the right to obtain information as an essential human right needed to uphold justice and truth, promote public welfare, and educate the nation. Information has existed throughout time, beginning with oral records, moving to printed materials, and finally electronic forms. Information is one of the basic human needs of individuals as community members.

The fulfilment of this human right is regulated under Indonesian law, namely in Art. 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (hereinafter referred to as UUD NRI 1945). Further, 59 Resolution (1) of the United Nations General Assembly, of which Indonesia is a member, states that ‘freedom of information is a fundamental human right and a sign of all freedoms which will be the focus of the United Nations’. Based on the provision, it can be understood that information is a form human right that should be upheld and protected by the state. However, its ability to do so is arguably imperfect since many community members remain unaware of their right to obtain information and participate in social and state life.¹

Article 19 of the Declaration of Human Rights, also known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), further states that ‘everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers’. As of November 2009, 85 countries have passed laws that guarantee some degree of freedom of information.²

The number of regulations related to the right to obtain this information actually shows that this right is one of the rights that every human being requires to maintain his or her existence. This right cannot be reduced or hindered by any body/institution, and even the state cannot eliminate it. This is in accordance with the opinion expressed by John Locke, who asserted that the formation of the political world or state is preceded by the existence of individuals who have natural rights, which he refers to as a ‘state of nature’. It is important to note that this state is one of liberty rather than a state of licence.³

¹ Khairunnisa Kamaliah, ‘Implementasi Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2008 Tentang Keterbukaan Informasi Publik DI Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah Kota Samarinda’ (2005) III Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan.[1114].

² Dhoho A. Sastro, [et.,al.], *Mengenal Undang-Undang Keterbukaan Informasi Publik* (LBH Masyarakat dan Yayasan TIFA 2010).[13].

³ John Locke, ‘Kuasa Itu Milik Rakyat: Esai Mengenai Asal Mula Sesungguhnya, Ruang Lingkup, Dan Maksud Tujuan Pemerintahan Sipil’, *Translate from An Essay Concerning the True Original Extent and End of Civil Government. J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd* (Kanisius 2002).[1924].

The free flow of information and ideas is a key element of democratic thought and essential to truly respect human rights. If there is no respect for the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas, then it is impossible to implement the right to vote, which, in turn, has the potential to allow human rights violations to occur in secret, hinders the disclosure of corrupt and inefficient government, and has many other negative impacts. The most important principle to ensure the application of the doctrine of the free flow of information and ideas is that government bodies hold information not for themselves but on behalf of the public. These bodies hold vast amounts of information, which, if held in secret, could greatly diminish the right to freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution.

The recognition of the right to information which, in fact, is also a manifestation of human rights in Indonesia, was initially carried out haphazardly, spread across multiple laws and has yet to be recognised constitutionally. As a follow-up to Indonesia's recognition of the right to information as part of human rights, the regulations are expressed in the Constitution; in particular, as aforementioned, the provision can be found in Art. 28F of UUD NRI 1945. Thus, there is no basis that can be used to refute the theory that the right to information is not a human right. For this reason, the country is obliged to provide such guarantees to its citizens through the availability of a more specific legal umbrella governing this matter as well as other technical provisions. What cannot be forgotten is that the country is obliged to guarantee the availability of public information services to fulfil the public's need for public information. The provision in UUD NRI 1945 which, in fact, is *staats grund gesetz*, underlies the legal principle that all public information should be open and accessible to every public information user.

The existence of the principle that public information is open and accessible to the public is actually the rationale behind UU KIP, which also has implications for the regulation of obligations. Thus, public bodies have an obligation to ensure public access to information they control as long as it is not categorised as information to be excluded or considered confidential under the Law on Public Information Disclosure.

If there is a dispute regarding the public information submission between the public body and public information applicant and/or public information user related to the right to obtain and/or use public information based on the Regulation of Information Commission Number 1 of 2013 concerning procedures for public information dispute settlement. The applicant is regulated under Art. 1, Point 7 of Regulation of Information Commission Number 1 of 2013. The respondent is a public body represented by the head of the public body, a ppid superior, or an appointed official who is authorised to make decisions on information dispute settlement at the Information Commission (*Vide*: Art. 1, Point 8 of Regulation of Information Commission Number 1 of 2013).

Based on the above description of the background of the problem, this study presents the main issues related to the information disclosure principles of public bodies.

Philosophical Basis of Public Bodies as Public Information Providers in the Era of Public Information Disclosure

The applicable laws and regulations should always contain the legal norms that the public aspires to maintain regarding the direction and purpose of social, national, and state life. Laws and regulations covering information disclosure are crafted to uphold noble ideals that create a philosophical foundation, which in turn is adopted by the Indonesian nation. The philosophical basis here is a consideration or reason that can reflect that laws and regulations must pay attention to the view of life, awareness, and legal ideals, including the spiritual atmosphere and philosophy of Indonesia sourced from Pancasila and the preamble of UUD NRI 1945.

The preamble, which is the fundamental norm of the state (*staatsfundamentalnorm*)⁴ of Indonesia, states the following:

⁴ According to Hans Nawiasky, there are four groups of legal norms in a country, namely: 1) Group I: staatsfundamentalnorm (State Fundamental Norms). 2) Group II: staatsgrundgesetz (basic rules/principles of the state) 3) Group III: formell Gesetz (formal law) 4) Group IV: verordnung and autonome satzung (implementing rules and autonomous rules). Hans Nawiasky, *Allgemeine Als Recht System Lichen Grundbegriffe* (Einsiedeln, Zurich/koln 1948).[31].

Pursuant to which, in order to form a government of the State of Indonesia that shall protect the whole people of Indonesia and for the entire homeland of Indonesia, and to advance general prosperity, to develop the nation's intellectual life, and to contribute to the implementation of world order based on freedom, lasting peace and social justice, therefore.

Thus, from this preamble, which is the highest legal source of laws and regulations in Indonesia, it can be seen that one of its goals is to create a government that ensures certain protections for the public. From this spirit, it can be understood that one of the concretisations of creating a government that provides protections for the public is to ensure transparency. The connectivities between government transparency and creating a system that reflect such protections are as follows:

1. with transparency in government actions, the public can take preventative actions to diminish the potential for abuse of authority;
2. when an abuse of authority occurs, the public can find out about it and take repressive actions, e.g. through lawsuits;
3. from the government's perspective, when 'forced' to be transparent, it will be difficult to abuse authority, thereby reducing the potential for abuse of authority.

The enactment of Law No. 14 of 2008 concerning information disclosure, which in fact is the first law that specifically regulates the disclosure of public information, initially came about due to reforms to the state government system. These reforms also generated some changes in the government system in Indonesia, one of which was the demand for good governance.

Public information disclosure as a manifestation of good governance is actually closely related to the administrative law approach through the human rights perspective. As described earlier, the human rights approach, which is related to the function of administrative law, focuses on the provision of legal protections for the public, wherein the existence of public information itself is a legal protection for the public—especially preventive legal protection since it is only through the disclosure of existing information that we can know our rights. This knowledge is key to preventing any violation of existing human rights.

As for public rights, there are juridical consequences for the government as

the party burdened with the obligation to provide such information. The information disclosure mentioned includes; for example, information disclosure related to the hearing or meetings (*openbaarheid van vergadering*), procedures (*openbaarheid van procedures*), and document access (*openbaarheid van register*).⁵

In the Netherlands, public information disclosure is formalised in a law, namely *Wet Openbaarheid van Bestuur* 1991. In this law, the government is obliged to provide both active and passive information (*passive-en actieve informatieplicht*). The passive information obligation refers to the government's obligation to provide information when there is a request from citizens (*informatie op verzoek*) while the active information obligation highlights the government's obligation to provide information to citizens on their own initiative (*informatie uit eigen beweging*).⁶ The existence of perspective related to information disclosure as a manifestation of good governance, which, in fact, is an approach from the human rights perspective, should not be used arbitrarily; therefore, there are also regulations related to the use of public information.⁷

The Existence of Information Commission as an Organiser and Law Enforcer in the Public Information Disclosure

Information disclosure is considered crucial since it can provide benefits to both the state and the public. In addition to being related to the fulfilment of basic human rights, information disclosure is considered to encourage the existence of an open and accountable government. The implementation of information disclosure is contained in *United Nations Convention against Corruption* (UNCAC) and is believed to be the first step in supporting the eradication of corruption.

The central position of the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia is law enforcement in Indonesia, as one of the sub-systems in an

⁵ P. de Haan, [et.,al.], *Bestuursrechtin DeSociale Rechtsstaat, Dee!* (Deventer 1986).[121-122].

⁶ Ridwan, 'Arti Penting Asas Keterbukaan Dalam Penyelenggaraan Pemerintahan Yang Bebas Dari Korupsi, Koneksi, Dan Nepotisme (KKN)' (2000) XI Jurnal Hukum.[58-59].

⁷ It should be noted that there are different arrangements between the provisions on public information disclosure and the use of public information.

orderly, integrated, mutually influencing, and complementary unit with other sub-systems in the Criminal Justice System to successfully achieve the goals of law; the relationship between law and law enforcement cannot be ignored if proper law enforcement is to be achieved.⁸ In order to carry out its duties and appropriately exercise its authority, the Attorney General's Office must be transparent and accountable. This means it is integral for the office to secure the right to information for the public, as regulated in Art. 7, Paragraph (3) of UU KIP.

The implications for the Indonesian Attorney General's Office, in carrying out its duties and authorities based on law, include that the office should always side with the law to uphold justice and truth, both repressively, in relation to the *Integrated Criminal Justice System*, and preventively, in the form of counselling and administration in relation to the actions of the office in its efforts to regulate. These law enforcement measures are bound by legal rules, certain procedures, and controlled by law.⁹

In an effort to realise legal certainty and order, justice, and truth based on the law and heed existing norms, the Indonesian Attorney General's Office issued the Decree of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia No. Kep-115/J.A/10/1999 concerning the organisational structure and work procedure of the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia. The regulation states that counselling or legal information and public relations (PR) should be carried out at the Indonesian Attorney General's Office.

The Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia is one of the public bodies that has established technical regulations concerning the implementation of information disclosure. To date, it has issued the Decree of Attorney General (PERJA) No. PER-032/A/JA/08/2010 concerning public information services at the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia, the Instruction of the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia No. INS-001/A/JA/06/2011

⁸ Satjipto Rahardjo, *Hukum Dan Perubahan Sosial* (Alumni Bandung 1983).[31].

⁹ Marwan Effendy, *Kejaksaan RI, Posisi Dan Fungsinya Dari Perspektif Hukum* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama 2005).[6].

concerning standard operating procedures for public information services, the Decree of the Deputy Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia No. KEP-133/B/WJA/09/2011 concerning the list of public information of the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia, PERJA No. PER-064/A/JA/7/2007 concerning recruitment of candidates for civil servants and prosecutors of the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia, and PERJA No. PER-069/A/JA/7/2007 concerning provisions for implementation of supervision of the Attorney General's Office of the Republic of Indonesia.

In the pre-reform era, almost all types of information available and managed by the judiciary were closed to the public. The available information was also difficult to access, especially regarding decisions, track records of judges, court service fees, court budgets, etc. The court at that time did not realise that court transparency not only applied to trials open to the public but also to documents related to the judicial process. The narrowing of the meaning of court transparency only at the trial level reduced the court transparency principle. The court did not understand the 'open court principle' was applicable as a whole since the information regarding such matters was still confidential.¹⁰ Accordingly, it can be concluded that there are several factors that cause difficulties in accessing court information, which are as follows:

1. basically, the closed culture is still strong in the judiciary—in such a culture, even open-minded people tend to be afraid to disclose information that should be open to the public;
2. there is an intention by certain officials in court, including judges, to withhold information, either to avoid public scrutiny for their mistakes and bad practices, to extort information applicants, or for other motives;
3. there are weaknesses in the laws and regulations that allow for the interpretation that certain information should not be disclosed to the public.¹¹

¹⁰ Rifqi S. Assegaf and Josi Katarina, *Membuka Ketertutupan Pengadilan* (Lembaga Kajian dan Advokasi Untuk Independensi Peradilan 2005).[23].

¹¹ *ibid.*

The importance of transparency is recognised by some judges, especially by the Chairman of the Supreme Court (Bagir Manan), who has continuously emphasised the importance of court transparency and asked judges and court officials to uphold it as it builds overall judicial system transparency. In this case, transparency is meaningful not only as a form of public service but also as a control system that regulates the judicial system and related processes. One of the important forms of transparency is ensuring public access to every court verdict or decision from the point of view that it will encourage judges to be careful, impartial, and quality considering that every verdict or decision will become part of the public discourse, scientific observation, or public opinion.¹²

The rapid development of science, information, and communication technology and changes in the strategic environment require the bureaucracy and data management of public service institutions to be reformed to meet public needs. As an integrated public institution in the general justice system, the Supreme Court must be committed to implementing the information disclosure for the public. In response to this, the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia issued the Decree of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (SK KMA) No. 114/KMA/SK/VIII/2007 concerning information disclosure in court. This indicated that the Supreme Court had already considered the need to provide services to the public regarding information disclosure. This rule was made before UU KIP, which obliged every public body to provide information to the public.

After UU KIP came into effect, the Supreme Court responded by updating the regulations regarding public information disclosure by issuing the Decree of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (SK KMA) No. 1-144/KMA/SK/I/2011. The blueprint for 2010–2035 judicial amendments also explains that there are six supporting functions, which are human resource management (HR), financial resource management, facilities and infrastructure management, information and technology management (IT), judicial transparency, and supervision function.

¹² Bagir Manan, *Sistem Peradilan Berwibawa: Suatu Pencarian* (Mahkamah Agung RI 2004).[32].

Consequently, according to the law of supremacy and clean government, supported by the participation of public and/or social institutions that assume a control function over the implementation of government and its development is a supporting factor for the implementation and achievement of bureaucratic reform.¹³

Nowadays, judicial transparency in the Supreme Court is needed not only for the public but also for its member judges. Judicial transparency is expected to result in a gradual reinforcement of the judiciary's accountability, professionalism, and integrity. The Supreme Court, as the peak of judicial power and state judiciary occupies a strategic position in the field of judicial power since in addition to being in charge of four judicial environments it also manages administrative, personnel, financial, facility and infrastructure matters. The 'one roof' policy presents unique responsibilities and challenges since the Supreme Court is required to demonstrate its ability to serve as a professional, effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable institutional organisation.

Various regulations regarding public information disclosure in court in addition to UU KIP are also regulated in Law No. 25 of 2009 concerning public services, the Decree of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (SK KMA) No. 114/KMA/SK/VIII/2007 concerning information disclosure in court, the Decree of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (SK KMA) No. 1-144/KMA/SK/I/2011, and the Decree of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (SK KMA) No. 026/KMA/SK/II/2012 concerning judicial service standards.

The correctional position, as an integral part of the criminal justice system, will expand the roles and responsibilities of the Director General of Corrections since previously corrections were only defined as correctional institutions in the last phase of the law enforcement process as explained in Art. 1, Point 1 of Law No. 12 of 1995 concerning corrections.

Its role has shifted since it now manages new institutions such as the state detention house institution, the state confiscated house institution, and correctional

¹³ Ridwan Mansyur, 'Keterbukaan Informasi Di Peradilan Dalam Rangka Implementasi Integritas Dan Kepastian Hukum (Information Transparency in The Court in Order to Implement Integrity Implementation and Legal Certainty)' (2015) IV Jurnal Hukum dan Peradilan.[84].

centres that are employed during the pre-trial to post-trial stages. Clearly, these institutions have different goals, work power, and organisational structures from correctional institutions.

The public information available at www.ditjenpas.go.id includes the profiles of the Director General of Corrections, as well as information on the organization's structure, legislation, and performance reports. However, the website www.ditjenpas.go.id does not provide public information, as mandated in UU KIP, namely other public information that is required to be announced periodically. Among those elements not found on the website are a summary of financial statements, a summary of reports on access to public information, wealth reports for public officials, and a summary of the program or activity being carried out.¹⁴ The website www.ditjenpas.go.id does not fully refer to the provisions stipulated in UU KIP. In this section there is only information about brief procedures for information services, a list of wanted people, and annual performance reports.

Additionally, on the official website www.ditjenpas.go.id, the Director General of Corrections discloses some public information through a database provided on the website www.smslap.ditjenpas.go.id. In general, this website provides detailed information related to the management of correctional institutions and detention centres in Indonesia, including the number of occupants, number of special inmates, child prisoners, and treatment. It also provides links to information on the correctional centre (Bapas), state confiscated objects storage house (Rupbasan), human resources (SDM), community guidance of the correctional centre, budgets and their realization, the correctional data system (SDP), reports on land and building area, and reports on overstaying in correctional institutions. It should be noted that the data available on this website are detailed information on each regional office (Kanwil) and organisations at the regional level under the Director General of Corrections updated daily, monthly, and/or yearly.

¹⁴ Supriadi Anggara, [et.,al.], *Keterbukaan Informasi Pada Lembaga Peradilan: Review Lima Tahun Berlakunya Undang-Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2008 Tentang Keterbukaan Informasi Publik (Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (ICJR 2013).[8].*

Broadly speaking, the websites www.ditjenpas.go.id and www.smslap.ditjenpas.go.id do not provide sufficient information regarding the procedure and recapitulation to fulfil prisoners' rights guaranteed under Law No. 12 of 1995 concerning corrections, including remission, assimilation, parole, leave, and other rights.

Public Bodies' Responsibilities for Public Information Disputes

Currently, through the Decree of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia No. 085/KMA/SK/V/2011 a working group has been established for preparation of Supreme Court regulations concerning procedures for settlement of lawsuits on decisions of information commission at the state administrative court and/or district court. Subsequently, Supreme Court Regulation No. 2 of 2011 was issued since the decision of the Information Commission is actually not the end of everything, in the sense that it is not a truly final and binding decision. A lawsuit sent to the court can be regarded as a legal remedy mechanism provided by UU KIP to the disputing parties. Based on Art. 47 of UU KIP, a civil lawsuit submitted by an applicant can be carried out via two routes: a lawsuit in the General Court (PN) or a lawsuit in the State Administrative Court (PTUN). Which route is taken depends on the status of the defendant. If the defendant is a state public body, then the route provided is through the State Administrative Court (PTUN); on the other hand, if the defendant is a non-state public body, he or she will go through the General Court (PN).

In the event of a decision that has permanent legal force (*inkracht van gewijsde*), and the respondent for public information refuses to provide the information, he or she may be subjected to criminal sanctions as outlined under Art. 52 of KIP.

Conclusions

Freedom of information is integral to the spirit of democratisation, which offers both freedom and inherent responsibility. This freedom also gives birth to governability in which the state can function effectively and efficiently without

compromising democratic principles. The effective enforcement of UU KIP in Indonesia since 30 April 2010 has opened a new era of public information disclosure in the state. The birth of the law is part of the implementation of the spirit of transparency in an attempt to guarantee the rights of citizens to know and access public information guaranteed by Art. 28F of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. However, there are still many public bodies that are either closed or reluctant to disclose their information to the public in practice. In fact, the experience thus far shows that the process of realising public information disclosure tends to be influenced by the willingness and commitment of the various authorities and public information providers.

The establishment of the Information Commission is contained in Art. 1 point 4 (*jo*) in conjunction with Art. 23 of UU KIP as an independent institution whose primary function is to implement UU KIP and relevant regulations, stipulate standard technical guidelines for public information services, and resolve disputes over public information through mediation and/or adjudication. Information Commission receives, examines, and decides on applications for the settlement of public information disputes through non-litigation mediation and/or adjudication submitted by each public information applicant based on the reasons as referred to in the law. UU KIP mandates that the Information Commission be independent in carrying out its functions, which means being free from interference or intervention from other existing state institutions. The Information Commission as a state auxiliary body sincerely needs to maintain its independence in order to implement state ideals in the context of public service.

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