

Examining Strategies for Strengthening Competency Advancement in Functional Public Administration Roles

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Abstract

This study analyzes the improvement of functional officials' competencies. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation involving agency leaders and functional staff. The findings indicate that competency development encompasses six dimensions: knowledge, understanding, skills, values, attitudes, and interests. Most functional officials demonstrated adequate knowledge, positive attitudes, and strong interest in carrying out their tasks, supported by work experience and adherence to institutional values. However, challenges persist, including limited facilities and infrastructure, suboptimal performance in completing reports, and insufficient technical training opportunities. These factors hinder the optimization of functional officials' performance. The study highlights the importance of continuous competence development through formal education, professional training, and organizational support to ensure timely, high-quality task completion and improved public service performance within the agency.

Keywords: Competence, Performance, Public Service.

Introduction

Normatively, the Head of the Region serves as the Regional Property Management Officer, holding ultimate authority and responsibility for overseeing both the guidance and implementation of regional property management (Ipa *et al.*, 2023). In carrying out these duties, the Head of the Region is supported by several key actors within the administrative structure (Pangbourne *et al.*, 2020). The Regional Secretary functions as the primary manager, while the Lampung Provincial Regional Financial Management Agency acts as the assistant manager. Furthermore, the Head of the Regional Work Unit serves as the designated user, the Head of the Regional Technical Implementation Unit assumes the role of authorized user, and additional responsibilities are delegated to the regional property custodian and manager. This

structured division of roles ensures clarity, accountability, and efficiency in the management of regional assets (Pebrianti & Aziza, 2019).

Based on empirical findings, the competence of the functional apparatus at the Lampung Province Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency in carrying out their main duties and functions has not been fully aligned with their respective areas of assignment. This misalignment occurs because leaders frequently delegate tasks that do not correspond to the staff's fields of expertise, which in turn hampers the optimization of task performance. The impact of this condition can be observed in the delays in completing activity reports. For instance, in August 2023, two reports were submitted late, followed by three reports in September 2023 and another three reports in October 2023. These recurring delays clearly demonstrate that the mismatch between assignments and competencies negatively affects both the quality and quantity of work outputs, thereby undermining the overall performance of the functional apparatus (Muchiri, 2022).

Table 1. Data on the Completion of Activity Reports for Personnel 3 months

Months	Activities	Target completed	Timely report	Late report
August	4	4	2	2
September	5	5	2	3
October	5	5	2	3

Source: Lampung Province Regional Financial and Asset Management Office, 2023

Based on Table 1, it is evident that the training activities conducted over the past three months continue to encounter several challenges, particularly in the aspect of activity reporting. This issue is highly significant, given that the Lampung Province Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency routinely implements various programs each month, such as research, staff development, and training, all of which require regular reporting. The persistent difficulties indicate that the performance in fulfilling reporting obligations has not yet reached an optimal level. One key factor contributing to this condition is the limited number of functional officials, which creates an imbalance in workload distribution. Consequently, strong leadership intervention is required to increase the number of personnel, especially functional

officials, to ensure more effective task execution. Considering the critical nature of this matter, a more comprehensive analysis is necessary to identify appropriate and sustainable solutions.

Literature Review

a. Competence

Competence can be understood as a set of knowledge, skills, and abilities inherent in an individual, enabling the optimal performance of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behaviors (Hamid *et al.*, 2020). According to Salman *et al.*, (2020) competence refers to the mastery of tasks, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to achieve success. This definition highlights that competence is not limited to knowledge and technical skills but also encompasses the attitudes and values that learners must develop in order to successfully perform learning tasks aligned with the demands of the professional world (Astuti *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, there is a strong connection between the learning experiences provided in schools and the competencies required in the workplace (Al Sayegh *et al.*, 2023). This relationship underscores the importance of synergy between educational institutions and industry, particularly in identifying and formulating the competencies that should be instilled in students. In line with this, Abdoh *et al.*, (2020) emphasizes that competence involves the ability to perform a job or task through the mastery of knowledge and skills, supported by work attitudes that correspond to job requirements. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that competence represents an integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes characterized by professionalism in a specific field, making it a critical factor that contributes positively to both individual achievement and organizational performance (Gupta *et al.*, 2017).

Thus, it can be concluded that the work ability of government apparatus encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and abilities that must be demonstrated in the execution of their duties (Alhosani & Ahmad, 2024). To ensure effectiveness and efficiency, each apparatus is required to meet a certain level of competence that aligns with the demands of their role. These competency requirements continue to evolve in response to changes within the organizational and work environment (Lari *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, competence emerges as a critical factor that determines the capacity of individuals within an organization. In the

context of local government, officials and staff across regional agencies are expected to possess adequate competence to perform their duties and responsibilities optimally. To examine the extent to which competence influences apparatus performance, this study employs various perspectives and theoretical frameworks related to competence indicators, thereby providing a clearer basis for measuring individual competency levels (Dewi *et al.*, 2024).

Based on the description above, the indicators used to measure competence in this study include knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experience (Prayogi & Yani, 2021). According to Salman *et al.*, (2020) competence encompasses several interrelated aspects, namely: **knowledge**, defined as awareness within the cognitive domain, such as a teacher's ability to identify students' learning needs and design appropriate learning processes; **understanding**, which refers to the depth of cognitive and affective capacity, for instance, a teacher's comprehension of students' characteristics and conditions to ensure effective and efficient learning; **skills**, or the capacity of individuals to carry out assigned tasks, such as a teacher's ability to select and create simple teaching aids that facilitate learning; **values**, which are behavioural standards internalized by individuals, such as honesty and openness demonstrated by teachers in the learning process; **attitudes**, which represent affective responses to external stimuli, for example, reactions to economic crises or wage-related policies; and **interests**, which reflect an individual's tendency or inclination to learn or engage in specific activities.

Drawing from this framework, the competence of Civil Servants can be defined as a set of abilities and characteristics encompassing knowledge, skills, and behavioural attitudes that are essential for fulfilling job responsibilities (Antera, 2021). Competence is generally classified into two categories: (1) **general competence**, which includes fundamental abilities and characteristics, such as knowledge and behaviour required to perform duties effectively, and (2) **specific competence**, which refers to specialized expertise needed for the execution of particular job functions. Among the essential general competencies for officials or managers is the capacity to foster innovation, creativity, and motivation among personnel, thereby enhancing organizational performance.

Research Framework

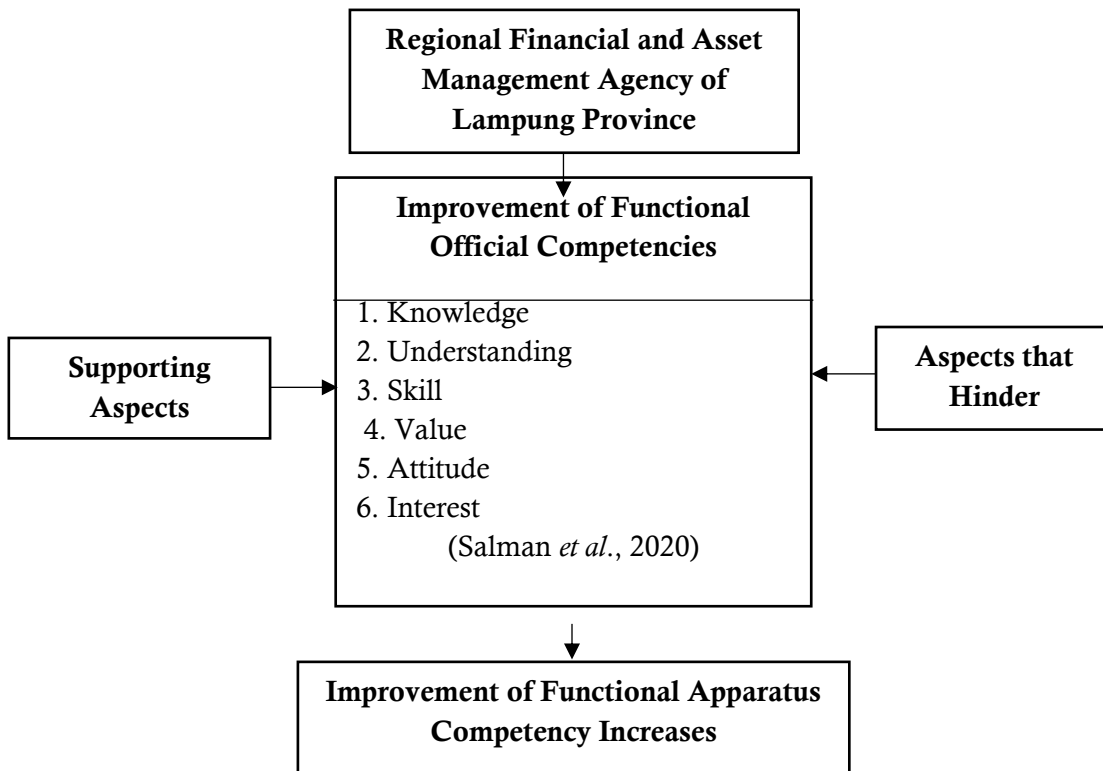


Figure 1. Framework

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach and was conducted at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province. The primary objective of the research is to analyze the enhancement of functional officials' competence within the agency. Consistent with the characteristics of qualitative research, the researcher served as the main instrument, engaging directly with the research context through observation, participation, and interaction with informants (Muzari *et al.*, 2022).

The research subjects consisted of officials from the Regional Research and Development Agency of Lampung Province, including the Secretary of the Agency, the Head of the Asset Division, and three functional officials. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the selected informants to gain insights into competence development, while secondary data were gathered from relevant documents related to the empowerment of functional officials at Regional Financial and Asset

Management Agency Lampung Province. The key data collection techniques employed were observation, interviews, and documentation.

As the principal instrument, the researcher assumed the role of an outsider while simultaneously immersing themselves in the social context under study, thereby reducing potential cultural biases. According to (Lochmiller, 2021) to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, data verification was carried out using four criteria: (1) credibility, established through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, the use of references, and member checking; (2) transferability, which parallels the concept of external validity in quantitative research; and (3) dependability, which emphasizes the consistency and reliability of the research process.

Result And Discussion

Analysis of Competency Improvement for Functional Officials at the Lampung Province Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency

The essential competencies required of an official or manager include the ability to foster innovation, creativity, and motivation among the apparatus to optimise organisational performance. In assessing the improvement of functional officials' competencies within the Lampung Province Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency, this study adopts (Salman *et al.*, 2020), which identifies six key indicators: (1) knowledge, (2) understanding, (3) skills, (4) values, (5) attitudes, and (6) interests. Accordingly, the primary objective of enhancing the competencies of functional officials in the agency is to improve overall apparatus performance. This objective can be effectively realised through the implementation of a well-structured management system that aligns with the capabilities of the apparatus.

Knowledge

Knowledge is formed through human sensory processes, representing an individual's ability to perceive and understand objects using the senses, such as sight, hearing, smell, and others (Barusman, 2024). This process, however, does not occur automatically; rather, it is shaped by the degree of attention and the individual's perception of the object being observed. Among the various senses, hearing and sight serve as the most dominant channels, contributing significantly to the acquisition of

knowledge. These two senses play a crucial role in constructing a person's understanding, shaping experiences, and enhancing reasoning about their surrounding environment.

Based on the interview findings, it was revealed that functional officials at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province possess a good level of knowledge in carrying out tasks according to their respective main functions. This condition is largely attributed to their relatively long work experience, which enables them to complete tasks effectively and efficiently. Fundamentally, knowledge is the result of recalling and understanding various aspects, both acquired through direct and indirect experiences, that occur following an individual's interaction or observation of a particular object. In this context, behavior driven by knowledge tends to be more sustainable compared to behavior that emerges solely from coercion or compliance with regulations.

Furthermore, knowledge is influenced by several factors, including education, occupation, age, interest, experience, culture, and access to information (Barusman *et al.*, 2024). It also serves as a fundamental domain in shaping an individual's attitudes and actions. As a product of human sensory processes through sight, hearing, smell, and others knowledge develops according to the intensity of perception toward observed objects. In this regard, most human knowledge is obtained through vision and hearing, which play a dominant role in shaping understanding, reasoning, and patterns of behavior that ultimately influence the work performance of functional officials (Abualoush *et al.*, 2018).

Understanding

Understanding represents a higher-order cognitive ability compared to mere knowledge, encompassing the capacity to explain, interpret, and relate concepts or information to relevant contexts (Serhan *et al.*, 2018). An individual who possesses understanding is not only able to recall acquired information but also capable of elaborating, restating, and interpreting its meaning in relation to the surrounding circumstances. This cognitive process enables individuals to connect their knowledge with actual phenomena, both in the present and in anticipation of future developments. Thus, understanding can be regarded as an active process of internalizing knowledge to achieve a deeper level of meaning (Celis, 2018).

More specifically, understanding can be defined as an individual's ability to grasp the meaning, essence, and significance of learned material. This is reflected in the ability to identify the main ideas of a text, reorganize key concepts, or transform data presented in one form into another in a logical and systematic manner. In other words, understanding serves as a measure of the extent to which a person is able to comprehend and give meaning to the activities undertaken. Consequently, it constitutes a fundamental basis for shaping attitudes, supporting decision-making, and carrying out tasks effectively.

Based on the interview results, it was found that the leadership of the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province initially lacked sufficient knowledge in the field of finance. However, over time, their understanding improved through work experience and the support of officials who carried out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with their respective roles. In contrast, most of the agency's officials had relatively long years of service, which enabled them to develop a comprehensive understanding of the processes and implementation of activities aligned with their primary functions and responsibilities.

In the specific area of regional asset management, officials play a crucial role as the central data repository, consolidating all information related to assets owned by the Provincial Government of Lampung. This task has become increasingly complex due to the shift toward online-based systems, requiring staff to input, update, and verify data continuously. Through extensive experience and direct involvement in these processes, functional officials have developed a strong understanding of asset management, including the ability to adapt to frequent system changes and program updates. These findings demonstrate that the officials' level of understanding regarding their main duties and responsibilities has been well established, thereby supporting the agency's performance in managing regional finance and assets more effectively and adaptively.

Based on the interview findings, understanding can be defined as an individual's ability to comprehend and interpret information. A person is considered to have understanding when they are able to explain the acquired information in detail using their own words, in accordance with the concepts learned. Understanding becomes more meaningful when individuals are able to relate the

knowledge they have gained to real-world problems within their environment. In this context, the understanding of officials can be interpreted as the ability to grasp a concept after it has been known and recalled, enabling them not only to recognize an object but also to view it from multiple perspectives (Chan & Lai, 2017). An official is regarded as having a good level of understanding when they can provide explanations or in-depth elaborations of a subject using their own language and reasoning.

Skill

Skills can generally be classified into two main categories: physical abilities and intellectual abilities. Physical abilities refer to an individual's capacity to perform tasks that require stamina, agility, strength, and other motor-related competencies (Dimaunahan & Panoy, 2022). These abilities are particularly crucial in jobs where success depends heavily on endurance, dexterity, and physical strength. In contrast, intellectual abilities are closely related to cognitive competencies, which are more essential in complex tasks that demand information processing, analytical thinking, and decision-making. Therefore, while intellectual abilities play a dominant role in handling complex work, physical abilities remain equally significant in executing relatively simple tasks that require speed, accuracy, and physical strength. Consequently, organizations must recognize and align employees' physical and intellectual capabilities with the specific demands of their roles to ensure optimal performance and effectiveness (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2017).

Based on the interview findings, every functional officer at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province is required to possess adequate skills to effectively carry out and complete assigned tasks. To meet these demands, capacity building must be facilitated through various education and training programs organized both at the provincial and national levels. In general, functional officers within the agency demonstrate strong work capabilities, as most of them have considerable work experience and are accustomed to performing their duties in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities. Nevertheless, a small proportion of officers are still less attentive to their core functions, which occasionally leads to delays in task completion.

The interviews further emphasized that work ability is essentially the outcome achieved by an individual in fulfilling assigned tasks, which is grounded in competence, experience, commitment, and effective time management. In line with (Workineh, 2022), ability can be understood as a stable characteristic related to the maximum physical and mental capacity of an individual. Thus, work ability can be defined as the sufficient aptitude or proficiency to master a particular skill, which is then applied to accomplish various tasks optimally.

Value

The concept of values in the context of enhancing the competence of functional officials at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province can be understood as a belief regarding actions that are considered appropriate and proper. In everyday life, values serve as guiding principles for behavior and can be acquired through personal experiences, learning from others, or from norms that have developed within society. These values form the foundation of one's beliefs in making life choices and directing actions. As emphasized by Steeman, values provide meaning in life, acting as a reference point, a foundation, and a goal for human conduct. Values are regarded as something to be highly esteemed because they shape and inspire individual behavior. Beyond being mere beliefs, values are closely linked to patterns of thought and action, thereby establishing a strong connection between values and ethics (Painter *et al.*, 2019).

Based on the interview findings, it was revealed that each functional officer at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province demonstrates a good level of work competence in accordance with their rank. Within the nine existing rank levels, each level carries distinct values that reflect the degree of seniority among officers. Promotion to a higher rank requires the accumulation of credit points, the number of which varies depending on the level of the position. The evaluation process conducted by superiors is regulated through a standardized format that outlines the scoring of every activity performed. Furthermore, to advance to the next rank, functional officers must fulfill the required credit points. The higher the rank attained, the greater the number of credit points that must be collected.

Based on the interview results, it was revealed that each functional employee who intends to advance to a higher rank is required to meet different criteria, with

the requirements increasing in complexity as the rank level rises. In the broader social context, values are abstract in nature but are recognized and understood by the community that upholds them. Values are considered essential in guiding individuals toward fulfilling their human essence and carry moral weight when integrated into specific moral behaviors. Thus, values cannot be separated from one's character, as they serve as a foundation that shapes attitudes, decisions, and actions (Sugiarti et al., 2021).

Attitude

Attitude can be understood as a reaction manifested through an individual's perception or feelings toward a specific object. Although the object may be the same, individuals do not always demonstrate identical attitudes, as these are shaped by personal conditions, experiences, information, and varying needs. Consequently, an individual's attitude toward an object plays a significant role in shaping their behavioral patterns in responding to that object (Widianto *et al.*, 2021).

Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that in assigning tasks to functional officials at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province, leaders observed that each official demonstrated different attitudes in responding to instructions or directives. Some accepted them willingly, while others did so reluctantly. Nevertheless, leaders were able to understand the characteristics of each staff member. Each functional official exhibited distinct traits in receiving and carrying out assigned tasks, which also affected the way tasks were completed, both in terms of quantity and quality. Despite these differences, functional staff generally maintained a positive attitude toward instructions and directives from their superiors, as fulfilling such responsibilities is considered a fundamental duty in line with their respective roles. Furthermore, staff members strived to accomplish the tasks assigned to them appropriately, recognizing that refusing or opposing directives would not align with organizational policies, as leaders hold a crucial role in guiding and controlling the organization.

Based on the results of the interviews, it was revealed that human attitudes are not innate, but rather formed through social processes that occur throughout life, where individuals acquire information and experience. This process takes place within various environments, including the family, school, and wider society.

Through these social interactions, reciprocal relationships are established between individuals and their surroundings. In this context, officials at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province consistently demonstrate positive attitudes in carrying out their principal duties and functions.

Interest

Interest can be understood as a preference or aversion toward something. In other words, interest is reflected in an individual's level of liking or disliking toward a particular object, task, job, or activity. According to Tomasi (2020), interest represents a stimulated condition directed toward achieving beneficial goals. As previously mentioned, interest manifested as focused attention constitutes an organism's response, whether overt or imaginary, that arises from a sense of liking toward a specific object. This interest tends to influence individual behavior in particular activities. Therefore, interest within an individual plays a crucial role in determining success. An individual who possesses an interest in an object or activity has essentially set a meaningful goal for themselves, which naturally fosters a tendency to engage with and appreciate it. Consequently, their behavior becomes well-directed, leading to the achievement of desired objectives.

Based on the interview results, it was found that in the effort to improve the competence of functional officials at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province, the dimension of interest plays a crucial role. Each employee has demonstrated genuine interest in completing their tasks responsibly. Although some tasks have not always been carried out optimally, this is largely due to the limited number of personnel and the relatively low capabilities of certain staff members. Nevertheless, the tasks assigned by superiors are generally adjusted to the abilities of subordinates, ensuring that responsibilities are aligned with their knowledge and skills. In this context, employee interest functions as an internal driver of motivation to fulfill their duties. Furthermore, it is essential for employees to cultivate a positive attitude and genuine interest in their daily work. When employees enjoy and engage with their tasks, they are more likely to complete them effectively and on time. Thus, interest serves as a motivational force that supports the successful execution of responsibilities entrusted to each functional official within the agency.

Based on the interview results, interest can be understood as an activity of the organism that directs focused attention toward a particular object, especially one that is relevant or shares similar characteristics with the object of concern. The relationship between interest and motivation has been interpreted in various ways. Some argue that the connection is gradual, where motivation arises after attitude, and attitude emerges as a result of interest. Others suggest that interest represents the cognitive aspect of motivation, while some view interest and motivation as simultaneous phenomena. In fact, there are also perspectives that equate interest directly with motivation, indicating that when an individual shows interest in an activity, it reflects the presence of motivation toward that activity.

Aspects That Hinder

The inhibiting aspects in improving the competence of functional officials at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province can be identified as follows. First, the relatively low competence of functional officials is partly due to limited office facilities and infrastructure, which occasionally results in some officials lacking specific tasks within certain periods. Second, the ability of functional officials to carry out office duties remains suboptimal, often causing delays in the submission of monthly accountability reports. Third, the implementation of technical education and training programs related to financial and asset management is still relatively limited, thereby constraining officials from enhancing their motivation and improving task performance.

Conclusion

The improvement of functional officials' competence at the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency of Lampung Province has been carried out through several dimensions. First, in terms of knowledge, most officials already possess adequate understanding to complete their tasks effectively. Second, in terms of understanding, some officials still lack a comprehensive grasp of their main duties and functions. Third, in terms of skills, officials generally demonstrate good work abilities. Fourth, in terms of values, most officials are aware of the principles and values inherent in their roles when performing their responsibilities. Fifth, in terms of attitude, officials consistently show positive behavior in carrying out assigned

tasks. Sixth, in terms of interest, employees strive to approach their work with genuine interest, which serves as a motivational driver in task completion.

However, several inhibiting factors remain. First, the relatively low competence of some officials is influenced by limited office facilities and infrastructure, which sometimes leaves officials without specific assignments for certain periods. Second, the performance of functional officials in carrying out office duties is still suboptimal, often resulting in delays in the submission of monthly accountability reports. Third, the implementation of technical education and training programs related to financial and asset management is still relatively limited, thereby hindering officials from enhancing their motivation and improving their performance in fulfilling their responsibilities.

Implication

First, each functional official is expected to continuously enhance their competence in order to effectively perform and complete their assigned duties. By doing so, tasks can be accomplished on time and with high quality. Second, the Provincial Government of Lampung is encouraged to organize training programs related to the responsibilities of the Regional Financial and Asset Management Agency, while also providing broad opportunities for officials to pursue further formal education. These efforts are essential to ensure the development of the required competencies among functional officials.

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