

The comparison of local government leadership during the covid-19 pandemic

Case study: New Zealand, Italy and China

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the several public leadership, policies and strategies reaction performed by the local government during the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper gives the summarize a conclusion of many responses given by the government of New Zealand (as representation of country with best response in handling the COVID-19 pandemic), Italy (as representation country which still have to struggle in reducing the COVID-19 cases) and China (as the first country which facing this pandemic).

Key Words:

Comparison, local government, public leadership.

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Introduction

The world is facing a common disaster nowadays. The coronavirus infected all of the country around the world. There are several countries that claimed to be succeeded in handling the spread of this virus in their country domestically. But many of countries are still pull effort and struggling in overcoming this condition.

Many approaches have been used and presented in front of other country to be discussed. The standard of operational procedure in overcoming this pandemic also has been announced by World Health Organization (WHO) regularly, according to the latest information about this disease and virus. This procedure also including the information about the symptoms and the life cycle of the virus. This strategy very useful to keep all of the country around the world in performing the policies and plan in the right path.

This pandemic not only leads us to the health crisis but also social, education, even economic ones. The normal education process can not be held because of the pandemic situation, and many of business has to be closed during the lockdown. The worse effect of this pandemic in economy is that a lot of small business even has to be closed permanently. And this cause the economic level all of the country around the world decrease dramatically . So we need more research based approach beside following and performing the WHO's strategies announced.

In this paper, we discussed and compare the various strategies and approaches performing by 3 countries . They are New Zealand (as representation of country with best response in handling the COVID-19 pandemic), Italy (as representation country which still have to struggle in reducing the COVID-19 cases) and China (as the first country which facing this pandemic).

Materials and Methods

In this section we will explain several materials related to this research, i.e. public leadership and the framework of crisis. This section also contains the results of comparison of local government leadership during Covid-19 pandemic between New Zealand, Italy and China.

2.1. Public Leadership

Hattke (2019) in Placek (2020) generally mentioned that leadership is actions performed such that there is no difference between the words and its actions. Hartley (2018) also defines that public leadership is any activity which is mobilizing individually and organizations to gain a certain purpose or values which aim for creating the valued outcomes for the public sphere.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, there are several factors that influences the public leadership responses. They are:

i. The fiscal decentralization

Decentralization of fiscal sector creates a sufficient opportunity to maintain the condition under pandemic disaster. This factor gives a big benefit for local government to overcome the

pandemic condition individually and accordingly to their province/region characteristics.

ii. The municipal/provincial/regional budget
The provinces with their own income have the authority to manage the fund according to the needs during the pandemic. This kind of budget policy leads the local government to react faster in dealing with this crisis.

iii. The legal order and administrative law
Public authority has to be organized hierarchically. The decentralization of law administrative and policy gives an open opportunity to the local government to built the appropriate local law in overcoming any crisis occurred in their region . So that the response during this pandemic crisis can be performed faster regionally.

2.2. The Framework of Crisis

Crisis is a claim of urgent action or reaction, usually by the leaders or government to characterize the condition that give both serious and immediate threat. This urgency claims typically performed by leaders, not only the head of state but also the expert of medical, social, economist and activist (Spector, 2020). In the other hand, Bundy (2017) said that crisis is any condition/event/ situation that is expected to be affecting unstably and dangerously, for individual, groups, or community of the whole society. In Seeger (1998), it is shown that crisis has several characteristics, they are specific, unexpected event, non-routine events that have high level of uncertainty and give serious threat to an organization high priority goal.

This kind of situations need an immediate necessary decision to stop the further destruction caused by that unexpected condition. The requirements of being “unexpected” is depending on our ability to recognize these conditions before they become the dangerous one. This ability is due to many psychological responses that related to our emotions. This inability also causes the late and slow reaction to overcome or prevent the side effect of this dangerous condition.

2.3. Result and Discussion

New Zealand’s Approaches (Wilson, 2020)

The New Zealand’s strategies to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic has moved through a series of phases, by adopting WHO’s plan and procedures and approaches advised by several experts not only in health and epidemiology, but also psychologist and business practitioner. Flight

from China immediately banned on February 3, as soon as after the WHO confirmed the first death outside of China.

On March 21, the prime minister also announced the new 4 level of “Alert System” she initiated that will be applied depending on the pandemic situation in New Zealand. On March 25, Ardern placed New Zealand at level 4 of alert. Then, 5 weeks later the easing back to level 3 on April 28 and is subject to further review by 11th of May. New Zealand has some advantages of their country characteristics. It is easier to perform isolation geographically than any other continental country. New Zealand also has a low population density and a later case of COVID-19 so that they can learn from another country with the earlier case of COVID-19.

There are several pandemic leaderships performed by the prime minister and her governments in overcoming the pandemic. They are:

Spreading the shared purpose

The government persuade the citizens with spreading the common purpose or mission to achieve the noble idea of saving lives (minimize the harm to the lives) and a faster economic recovery (minimize the harm to the livelihood). This purpose has been persuaded using the core branding of “unite against COVID-19”.

New Zealand government’s approaches is guided by the expert

The government’s policies related to overcome the pandemic crisis is guided by the scientific advice, facts and data, evidence and willingness to listen to the expert to help in decision making process. As the Prime Minister, Ardern even interviewed some experts and practitioners from varying fields. They are the health and epidemiology experts (to give advises in plan and policy decision making), the psychologist (to explore the stresses level of the community during the lockdown), experienced business mentor (to explore how to support small business through the government’s policy) and the business owner (to explore what they did to survive during the pandemic crisis).

Mobilize collective efforts

The health minister announced the importance of washing hands regularly, explained the procedure of self-isolated and social distancing and how to get help for those who had the possible symptom. He also encourages the citizens to not to do the panic buying of groceries and provides the update

cases of COVID-19 and pandemic-related issues daily, such as the testing availability, the provision of PPE, the related latest research and also the contact tracing of the suspect. Other departments also provide the pandemic-related information depending on their field, which is updated regularly.

Enable coping policies

The level of alert system declares by the Prime Minister providing transparency about the government's decision and policy.

Developing creative responses

The government make various efforts to many effects that occur during the pandemic. They are (1) giving a wage of subsidy scheme that given to the employers and support the small business economically, (2) giving the home-schooling packages to those who needed, including laptop and modem.

There are also several problems occurred during the procedures of overcoming the pandemic in New Zealand. They are (1) the lack of provision of personal protection Equipment (PPE), (2) the slow pace of access of COVID-19 testing, (3) the debate about the border restrictions, (3) the regulation of government's supports to the business aspect and workers, and many more. But this problem can be solved by various efforts of solicit feedback to these criticisms. The open governance and well-communication of the officials to follow up all of the problems occurred also play an important role in reducing the effects of lockdown.

Italy's Approaches (Sanfelici (2020), Pisano (2020), Mohajan (2020))

Italy has become one of the countries with high density of population with 22,8% of their total population was the elders (over 65 years old). On 30th of January the first case of COVID-19 had been confirmed in Italy. They are two Chinese tourists in Rome. Then the Italian Council of Minister declared the state of emergency on 31st of January. The government also decided to allocate some necessary funds for the pandemic overcoming and plan procedures. But it is not known whether Italy had the accurate risk assessment or not because of the unpublic data and document of the ISS. It is possible that the spread of the virus had been started weeks before. So, when the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed, it was already late to maintain the spread of virus infection. The most immediate

evident was that their availability of resources was not adequate to face the health crisis like COVID-19 pandemic.

The government recommended to reduce the travelers and citizens activities by means to control the virus transmission. There is also 24/7 toll-free number for citizens to get more information about the infections. The government immediately increased the health checks in ports and use the thermal scanners in their airports. The direct flights from China were also banned.

The first Italy's government response focused mainly on the sanitary crisis. On 23rd of February, 11 municipalities of Lombardy and 1 in Veneto were announced as "red zone" by the first decree law. In the beginning of March, the virus had already spread widely in all of the Italy's regions. On March 19, Italy became the country with highest number of confirmed deaths cause by the COVID-19 in the world. On 11 March, all non-essential business was closed and the government declared the restrictions of people's movements.

On March 22, a new decree was announced by the government. They interrupted all of industrial and commercial production activities, except the essential one. The government also banned the movements and relocations of community, except for justified work needs or health reasons. Starting from early of March, many new hospitals were built and many of them had been converted into COVID-19 hospitals with thousands of volunteers.

On 29th of March, the National Civil Protection had supported the municipalities some funds to provide food vouchers and basic necessities for the citizens. Local governments were able to decide how they provide the needs freely. The Ministry of Economy also announced the emergency guaranteed minimum income for all the workers excluded from the ordinary measures. A toll-free number also performed for psychological support in the end of April 2020. The Minister of Education and The Minister of Universities and Research also announced a new decree about the procedures to guarantee the regular conclusion of the current school year, and announced that the teaching and learning process has to performed by the teaching staff through remote teaching and computer and IT-based learning.

As a conclusion of the Italy's government approaches in overcoming the pandemic, that the

crisis in Italy seemed to be nothing like crisis in the early of stages. The initial emergency announcement was met by the skepticism by both the citizens and several policy circles. Even though several scientists had warned of the potential infection weeks before. This systematic inability to listen to the experts become one of the causes that Italy faced a complex situation because of the disease.

China's Approaches (He, 2020)

China widely known as a country with large region and population. It also has a unitary state with high central relations. All of the strategies and decision are performed by the political principals at the top, but the local agents and local policy activists are also largely encouraged in generating the proper and effective solutions and innovations in overcoming this pandemic. Various waves of fiscal decentralization had been held since the 1980s and had given the local government a substantive political autonomy related to the local problems.

The first plague of COVID-19 occurred in Wuhan City of China in November 2019. And the unknown pneumonia disease was confirmed on 8th of December 2019. Then, on the 23rd of January 2020, the Chinese government made the decision to lockdown the Wuhan city. Apart from the lockdown decision, there are many measures were adopted by the local government to overcome the spread of this disease. An unprecedented procedure in scope and extent of social control had been performed. Then, on 31st of March 2020, the Chinese government announced that the large-scale transmission of COVID-19 had been stopped domestically.

Authoritarian states are usually stated as an advantageous position in resourcing mobilization during the crisis. The China has performed their capacity in mobilizing in crisis relief and post-crisis reconstruction. Its ability to mobilize human and material resources is supported by 2 conditions, they are (1) the nationwide allocation of resources (the strong central authority claimed to be enabling China government to control and distribute the resources from civilian and military subordinate), (2) the large state-owned enterprise sector (while another country's government struggling with material resources to face the pandemic, the Chinese government had a large state-owned enterprise (SOE) that provides a huge economical foundation).

Moreover, the community and resources mobilization during the pandemic has been supported by sweeping war narratives, they are contained campaign (zui zhan), total war (zongti zhan), battle of annihilation (jianmie zhan) and people's war (renmin zhanzheng). These narratives campaigned as a battle between human and the virus.

Conclusion

From the study above, we can conclude that various measures had been performed by the country's government. The New Zealand strategies are advantaged by their characteristics geographically and socially, the Chinese government has a huge foundation and resources to be distributed during the pandemic and the Italy's government has performed the various strategies even though they have to face the skepticism in their early emergency stage.

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