

Evaluation of Legal Products and Legal Advocacy in the Pekalongan City Regional Election: Strengthening Participatory and Transparent Local Democracy

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Abstract

This article is the result of community service in the Evaluation Working Meeting for the Preparation of Legal Products and Legal Advocacy for the 2024 Pekalongan City Pilkada held by the Pekalongan City General Election Commission (KPU). The author was a resource person in the activity. A working meeting was held with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of regulations and legal advocacy strategies in strengthening the integrity and transparency of local election implementation. The KPU has prepared various legal products, including KPU Regulations, Decisions, Circulars, and Technical Guidelines, and disseminated them through the Legal Documentation and Information Network (JDIH). Legal advocacy is carried out by the Legal and Supervision Division of the Pekalongan City KPU in a preventive and responsive manner, by providing assistance and handling public complaints. The use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) plays an important role in realizing the openness of information and increasing public participation through social media, websites, and digital applications. This evaluation involves multiple parties and produces strategic recommendations for improving the implementation of the next Pilkada. The synergy between adaptive legal products and inclusive ICT strategies is an important foundation for building accountable, participatory, and transparent local democracy.

Keywords: *Pilkada, Products, Law, Advocacy, Democracy.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini merupakan hasil pengabdian masyarakat dalam Rapat Kerja Evaluasi Penyusunan Produk Hukum dan Advokasi Hukum pada Pilkada Kota Pekalongan Tahun 2024 yang diselenggarakan oleh Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) Kota Pekalongan. Penulis sebagai narasumber dalam kegiatan tersebut. Rapat kerja diadakan dengan tujuan mengevaluasi efektivitas regulasi dan strategi advokasi hukum guna memperkuat integritas dan transparansi penyelenggaraan pemilu di tingkat lokal. KPU telah menyusun berbagai produk hukum seperti Peraturan KPU, Keputusan, Surat Edaran, dan Pedoman Teknis, serta menyosialisasikannya melalui Jaringan Dokumentasi dan Informasi Hukum (JDIH). Advokasi hukum dilaksanakan oleh Divisi Hukum dan Pengawasan KPU Kota Pekalongan secara preventif dan responsif, dengan memberikan pendampingan dan menangani aduan masyarakat. Pemanfaatan Teknologi Informasi dan Komunikasi (TIK) berperan penting dalam mewujudkan keterbukaan informasi dan meningkatkan partisipasi publik melalui media sosial, website, dan aplikasi digital. Evaluasi ini melibatkan

multipihak dan menghasilkan rekomendasi strategis untuk perbaikan penyelenggaraan Pilkada berikutnya. Sinergi antara produk hukum yang adaptif dan strategi TIK yang inklusif menjadi fondasi penting dalam membangun demokrasi lokal yang akuntabel, partisipatif, dan transparan.

Kata kunci: *Pilkada, Produk, Hukum, Advokasi, Demokrasi.*

Introduction

This community service activity is part of the agenda of the Evaluation Working Meeting for the Preparation of Legal Products and Legal Advocacy after the implementation of the 2024 Pekalongan Mayor and Deputy Mayor Election. This event was organized by the Pekalongan City General Election Commission (KPU) on March 15, 2025, at the Santika Hotel. The author and two other speakers provided presentations to participants consisting of representatives of youth organizations, KPU ranks, the Pekalongan City Election Supervisory Body (Bawaslu), and other local stakeholders. This forum aims to reflect on the quality of law and advocacy during the implementation of the Regional Head Election (Pilkada) and to formulate improvements for the future.

Pilkada is an important pillar of local democracy in Indonesia which gives the people direct rights to elect regional heads. The quality of democracy in the Pilkada is not only measured by the level of voter participation, but also by the extent to which the process is transparent, fair, and accountable (Surbakti & Nugroho, 2015). The existence of clear and applicable legal products is vital to maintaining legal certainty and preventing conflict during the election stages.

Legal products in the Pilkada include various legal instruments such as technical regulations, decisions, circulars, and implementation guidelines prepared by the KPU. The quality of legal products greatly affects the integrity of the General Election (Pemilu) process. The KPU must ensure that all regulations are not only in line with higher laws and regulations but can also be understood and accessed by the wider community (Simanjuntak, 2016).

The success of the Pilkada is also determined by a strong legal advocacy system. Legal advocacy is not only important to respond to potential violations but also plays a preventive role through legal education and socialization of regulations to participants and voters (Putri, 2017). The function of advocacy in this context is as a companion instrument that bridges legal understanding, prevents administrative errors, and reduces the possibility of disputes.

The evaluation activities carried out by the Pekalongan City KPU reflect serious efforts in measuring the effectiveness of regulations and advocacy systems that have been implemented during the Pilkada. This process is carried out collaboratively by involving various stakeholders such as Bawaslu, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the media. This approach is in line with the principles of deliberative democracy which emphasize multi-sector participation in public decision-making (Rahmadipadma & Widodo, 2024).

A comprehensive evaluation of legal products also includes an analysis of potential weaknesses in the regulations. For example, overlapping technical rules or unclear nomination guidelines can be a loophole for disputes to arise. Supervision of the voter data updating process, logistics distribution, and determination of results also need to be closely monitored by responsive and anticipatory legal instruments (Riskiyono, 2015).

Information transparency is an equally important aspect. Law Number 14 of 2008 concerning Public Information Transparency mandates that information regarding all stages of the election must be open to the public. Information transparency prevents manipulation, strengthens public oversight, and increases the legitimacy of the election results (Sholihah, 2016). The use of technology such as the KPU website, social media, and election applications has proven to be an effective means of conveying information to the public quickly and widely.

This community service activity also encourages increased capacity of election actors through the use of ICT. The use of ICT is considered crucial in creating an inclusive and participatory information ecosystem. A healthy information ecosystem connects providers, channels, and recipients of information efficiently and in two directions (Subandari, 2024). Through ICT, the community is not only a recipient of information but also actively participates in monitoring and reporting.

Evaluation of legal products and legal advocacy in the implementation of the Pilkada is a strategic step in strengthening the foundation of local democracy. This evaluation not only ensures the validity of the law governing the Pilkada but also strengthens accountability and community participation. Collaboration between institutions, technology support, and public involvement is key to realizing a Pilkada with integrity and trust by the wider community.

Method of Service

1. Preparation and Opening

The method of implementing this community service activity is carried out systematically in the form of evaluation and education on the preparation of legal products and legal advocacy in the 2024 Pekalongan City Pilkada. The stages start from technical preparation by the Pekalongan City KPU together with its staff, including coordination with resource persons and activity participants. There are four resource persons invited to deliver material, consisting of academics from the University of Pekalongan and the K.H. State Islamic University. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan. The author also acted as a resource person from Pekalongan University. Participants in the activity included representatives from youth organizations, media, Pekalongan City Bawaslu, and internal ranks of the Pekalongan City KPU. This activity was held on March 15, 2024, at the Santika Pekalongan Hotel. The event was officially opened by the Chairperson of the Pekalongan City KPU, Fajar Randi Yogananda, who delivered a speech and expressed the hope that this activity could strengthen the legal basis and public participation in the implementation of the Pilkada.



Figure 1: Activity Participants

2. Material Delivery

The next stage is the delivery of core material by four speakers who have competence in the field of law and elections. The material presented focuses on the evaluation of the preparation of legal products and the urgency of legal advocacy in supporting the integrity of the Pilkada. Each speaker uses visual presentation media (slides) to explain the hierarchical structure of laws and regulations, types of KPU legal products (such as PKPU, Decisions, Circulars, and Technical Guidelines), and the strategic role of legal advocacy in anticipating election disputes and violations. The delivery of this material aims to provide a comprehensive understanding to participants, who come from various backgrounds, including the ranks of the KPU, Bawaslu, youth organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the media. It is hoped that the material presented can strengthen the capacity of participants to understand and implement regulations appropriately in the context of organizing the Pilkada.



Figure 2. Resource person delivering material

3. Interactive Discussion

After the presentation of the material, the activity continued with an interactive discussion session involving all participants. This discussion aims to explore views, experiences, and obstacles faced in the implementation of legal products and legal advocacy during the implementation of the Pilkada. The discussion is two-way and guided by a moderator/facilitator so that the discussion remains structured, relevant, and productive. Participants are given space to express empirical experiences, clarify aspects of the law that are not yet fully

understood, and convey legal needs that are not yet covered in existing regulations. This forum is a means of critical and constructive dialogue between organizers, supervisors, and elements of civil society, resulting in a shared understanding and direction for future improvements.

4. Preparation of Recommendations

The final stage of this activity is the preparation of recommendations formulated based on the results of the discussion and the identification of problems that emerged during the implementation of the activity. The preparation of recommendations was carried out by the Pekalongan City KPU by considering input from participants as a whole. The recommendations produced include a number of important points, including proposals for improving the substance and format of legal products, adjusting legal advocacy strategies at the local level, increasing public accessibility to KPU regulations, and strengthening inter-institutional coordination in the Pilkada stages. This recommendation document will be submitted by the Pekalongan City KPU to the Central Java Provincial KPU, and then compiled together with the evaluation results from the district/city KPUs throughout Indonesia to be reported to the Republic of Indonesia KPU. These recommendations are expected to be strategic considerations in formulating policies, improving regulations, and developing a legal advocacy system in the implementation of the next Pilkada, in order to realize honest, fair, and transparent elections.

Results and Discussion

1. Evaluation of the Preparation of Legal Products and Legal Advocacy for the 2024 Pekalongan Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Elections

The implementation of the 2024 Pekalongan Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral Elections is a reflection of the stability of local democracy which continues to improve. The implementation which took place in an orderly, safe, and conducive manner showed the readiness of the Pekalongan City KPU to carry out all stages of the Pilkada by prioritizing the principles of professional, independent, and integrity-based election governance. Smooth implementation does not mean without evaluation. A comprehensive evaluation of the legal aspects is an important indicator for election-organizing institutions to assess the effectiveness of regulations and prepare strategies to improve quality in the future (Simanjuntak, 2016).

This evaluation focused on two main aspects, namely: the preparation of legal products as normative instruments, and legal advocacy as a mechanism for assistance and conflict resolution during the Pilkada. The centralized KPU legal products are under the authority of the Republic of Indonesia KPU (except for Decisions) including KPU Regulations, Circulars, KPU Decisions, and Technical Guidelines. The existence of these legal products is a manifestation of the principle of legality and the rule of law, which states that all actions of state administrators must be based on applicable laws (Riskiyono, 2015).

One effort to ensure public access to regulations is by utilizing the Pekalongan City KPU Legal Documentation and Information Network (JDIH). Through this page, the public can access relevant legal documents, including the determination of Pilkada stages, campaign procedures, online campaign rules, and vote recapitulation procedures. This openness shows the KPU's commitment to

building a democracy based on transparency and public participation (JDIH KPU, 2023).

Furthermore, the preparation of legal products is carried out by paying attention to compliance with higher legal norms, such as Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections, as well as decisions of the Constitutional Court which are important references. This step was taken to avoid inconsistencies in norms, overlapping authority, and potential legal disputes that could harm election participants and the public at large.

In addition to regulations, legal advocacy also plays a central role in maintaining the integrity of the Pilkada process. The Legal and Supervision Division of the Pekalongan City KPU has a mandate to provide legal assistance to sub-district and village-level organizers, as well as manage complaint reports from the public regarding alleged violations or non-compliance with procedures. This advocacy strategy is preventive and curative, namely educating early on while providing space for dispute resolution quickly and appropriately (Putri, 2017).

A real example of the effectiveness of the KPU's response system was when a flood disaster occurred which affected seven Polling Stations (TPS). The KPU responded to the emergency by quickly building an emergency TPS in the form of a stage. This indicates the existence of fairly adaptive technical regulations and responsive institutional coordination. This experience underscores the importance of flexibility in implementing regulations and logistical readiness based on risk mitigation.

The legal evaluation carried out by the Pekalongan City KPU is not closed but involves many stakeholders. This cross-sector involvement supports the creation of an objective, holistic, and field-experience-based evaluation map (Rahmadipadma & Widodo, 2024). In the evaluation forum, a number of challenges were also found that need to be noted. One of them is the need to update the substance of the regulations regarding digital campaigns and the involvement of new voters. This issue arose because of the gap in understanding between supervisors, participants, and the community regarding the provisions of online campaign content, which has the potential to cause unconscious violations. Updating the substance of the regulations is considered very relevant to addressing the socio-political developments of the local community.

The Chairperson of the Pekalongan City KPU, Fajar Randi Yogananda, emphasized that the results of this evaluation will be used as a learning document and institutional legacy for the next organizers. This effort is very important to ensure policy continuity, especially in anticipating the complexity of the regulations for the upcoming national and local simultaneous elections. Strengthening the capacity of lower-level election organizers is a priority through technical guidance, legal product training, and direct socialization. The KPU also took the initiative to form a regulatory consultation forum between academics, legal practitioners, and organizers, as a forum to formulate adaptive, clear, and public service-oriented legal policies.

The final assessment of the implementation of the 2024 Pilkada in Pekalongan City was a success without excess. With no lawsuits to the Constitutional Court filed by election participants, as an important achievement in the context of the validity of the results and public acceptance of the process. This

requires that the legal regulation and advocacy system implemented can maintain legal and political stability simultaneously (Surbakti & Nugroho, 2015).

2. Information and Communication Technology Strategy: Transparency and Openness of Information in the Implementation of Regional Elections

The implementation of regional elections in the digital era cannot be separated from the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Technology not only functions as administrative support, but has transformed into a strategic medium for realizing a more inclusive, transparent, and participatory democracy (Subandari, 2024). Pekalongan City, as one of the areas that actively integrates ICT in the 2024 Regional Election process, shows how a digital approach can bridge communication limitations and expand the reach of public information access.

ICT in Pekalongan City is utilized multidimensionally: to disseminate information on election stages, open access to voter data, display candidate profiles, publish the use of campaign funds, and display the results of the vote recapitulation in real-time. This openness is in line with the principles of good electoral governance and is reinforced by Law Number 14 of 2008 concerning Openness of Public Information which guarantees the rights of citizens to access information from public bodies. Digital platforms such as the Pekalongan City KPU website, official social media accounts, and web-based supporting applications are the main channels for distributing information to the public. With a two-way communication model, the public is not only a consumer of information but also a reporter and supervisor of the election process. The role of ICT as a "democratic enabler" is significant—namely as a bridge of interaction between the organizing institution and the public (Surbakti & Nugroho, 2015).

The success of ICT integration in the Pilkada cannot be separated from the structural and cultural challenges that must be faced. Several main obstacles include the low level of digital literacy of the community, especially among the elderly and marginalized groups; the massive spread of hoaxes and disinformation on social media; and the limited user-friendly digital interface for the general public. ICT-based strategies are not enough to rely only on digital platforms but also require a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach.

The Pekalongan City KPU in the future needs to develop three main strategies to optimize the use of ICT:

- a. **Strengthening Digital Platforms and Communication Design.** The official website of the Pekalongan City KPU and its social media accounts were redesigned with a more communicative visual communication design approach. Information related to the stages of the Pilkada, campaign schedule, DPT, and voting procedures is presented in the form of infographics, educational videos, and interactive FAQs. This approach has been proven to increase the absorption of information, especially for young people and first-time voters who are more familiar with dynamic visual content (Sholihah, 2016);
- b. **Digital Literacy and Anti-Hoax Education.** In response to the rampant disinformation, the KPU collaborates with local communities, educational institutions, and the mass media in organizing digital literacy campaigns and anti-hoax training. This program is designed so that the public is able

to identify valid information and sort out trusted sources. This kind of education is very crucial, considering that a study by the Ministry of Communication and Information (2023) stated that more than 60% of political hoaxes were spread through social media during the campaign period; and

- c. **Public Involvement in Digital-Based Supervision.** Through applications such as “Gowaslu” and reporting platforms such as “Lapor!”, the public is encouraged to actively report campaign violations and irregularities in election procedures. Online discussion forums and live streaming of candidate debates are also provided, allowing the public to directly assess the vision and programs of regional head candidates. This innovation creates a more open and accountable discourse space.

The strategy is expected to be positive. The increasingly active use of the KPU's official website, accompanied by the involvement of local media in verifying information, helps to form a healthy information ecosystem. Local universities such as Pekalongan University and K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan State Islamic University are also involved in facilitating digital education spaces, and strengthening election literacy capacity among students and the general public. However, there are still a number of challenges. For example, the outskirts of Pekalongan City still face digital infrastructure constraints such as slow and unstable internet access.

The level of participation of young voters in digital-based supervision is still relatively low, indicating the need for a more innovative approach that is in accordance with the digital culture of the millennial and Gen Z generations, such as TikTok-based content, reels, and light political podcasts. The Pekalongan City KPU needs to explore further collaboration with local technology developers and community influencers to form political communication channels that are more relevant to people's digital behavior. A combination of digital strategies and conventional approaches such as direct counseling, brochure distribution, and community radio broadcasts are still needed as an inclusive bridge.

In general, the application of ICT in the Pekalongan Pilkada has opened a new paradigm in building a more transparent, adaptive, and active participation-based democracy. ICT is no longer an administrative complement, but a new social infrastructure that forms a more accountable digital election ecosystem. This strategic approach needs to be expanded and strengthened through national policies, including budget support for digital election infrastructure, training for election officials, and periodic research to measure the effectiveness of digital election platforms.

Conclusion

The 2024 Pekalongan City Pilkada shows the importance of synergy between legal force and the use of ICT in creating transparent, participatory, and integrity-based elections. The Pekalongan City KPU has prepared and socialized regulations by statutory provisions through JDIH and carried out preventive and responsive legal advocacy to prevent disputes. Meanwhile, the digital strategy implemented through websites, social media, and monitoring applications encourages openness of information and public participation. Although challenges such as disinformation and low digital literacy still exist, educational efforts and community involvement have strengthened information resilience. The

combination of adaptive regulations and strategic use of ICT makes the 2024 Pekalongan Pilkada an example of strong and accountable local democracy practices. Commitment to continuous evaluation, strengthening human resources, regulatory updates, and technological innovation needs to be continued to ensure elections that are responsive to the dynamics of the times and guarantee people's sovereignty sustainably.

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