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MERITOCRACY IN LIBRARIAN FUNGCTIONAL POSITIONS: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY OF PERMENPANRB No.55/2022 THROUGH THE LESSON OF JOSEPH KETT

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Abstract
This study analyses the conceptual alignment between the merit system for functional librarian positions established by PermenPANRB No.55/2022 and Joseph Kett's (2013) conception of merit. It examines how administrative merit, professional ethics, integrity, competency development, and social responsibility are connected within the institutional governance of librarians. The study employs a qualitative document-based analysis of PermenPANRB No. 55/2022 and relevant theoretical literature, with particular attention to provisions concerning performance assessment (Articles 19-27) and professional development (Articles 51-53). The findings indicate substantial alignment between the regulation and institutional principles of merit through formal qualifications, competencies, performance, achievement, career progression, and institutional oversight. Ethical and professional dimensions are also incorporated into the regulatory framework. However, the analysis identifies a reflective gap: the existing provisions do not explicitly establish a continuous mechanism for connecting assessment evidence with professional reflection, competency-gap identification, professional learning, social-professional impact, and subsequent improvement. To address this gap, the study proposes the Reflective Merit System Model, which connects administrative assessment with professional reflection, competency and professional development, social and professional impact, continuous improvement, and renewed merit assessment. The model retains quantitative evidence for recognition while extending its use toward professional learning and organizational development. The study contributes a developmental perspective to librarian merit governance by repositioning assessment from an administrative endpoint toward a mechanism for continuous professional learning, adaptive competency development, and improved public value in library services.
Keywords: merit system, functional position of librarian, Joseph Kett, PermenPANRB No. 55/202

INTRODUCTION

The merit system is a fundamental principle of civil service management in Indonesia, intended to ensure that recruitment, appointment, and performance evaluation are based on qualifications, competencies, performance, and demonstrated achievement rather than favouritism or personal preference. Previous research indicates that merit-based personnel management can improve organizational outcomes, including employee job satisfaction, leadership recognition, work quality, and institutional accountability (Brewer, Kellough, dan Rainey 2022; Oliveira et al. 2024)). Merit-based recruitment and employment conditions have also been associated with employee motivation and the recruitment and retention of competent personnel, although their effects vary across institutional contexts (Meyer-Sahling, Mikkelsen, and Schuster 2021; Mulaphong 2023). These findings suggest that merit is not only an administrative principle but also an important mechanism for strengthening organizational capacity and quality of public services.

The effectiveness of a merit system, however, depends on how merit is conceptualized and translated into mechanisms. Kett (2013)regulatory a conceptualizes merit as encompassing individual capability, demonstrated achievement, innovation, and institutional arrangements that promote fairness. Thus, merit should extend beyond formal qualifications and administrative compliance to include the recognition and development of professional capability. This perspective is particularly relevant to professional occupations in which competency, performance, career development, and service quality are closely interconnected.

Despite the growing literature on merit-based civil service management, its application to functional librarians in Indonesia remains underexamined. Existing studies have primarily addressed merit at the general civil service or organizational level, while limited attention has been given to how merit principles correspond with the regulatory provision and professional requirements of functional librarians. Research specifically concerning librarians and merit systems has also tended to be descriptive or normative, with limited analysis of whether regulatory mechanisms reflect broader theoretical principles of merit. This represents an important gap because functional librarians occupy professional positions in which competency development, performance assessment, professional achievement, and career progression are interdependent. The effectiveness of merit-based arrangements may also vary across institutional and professional contexts (Clarke, Hurst, and Tomlinson 2024).

The relevance of this issue is reflected in the distribution of functional librarians across career levels. Data compiled by the Centre for Librarian Development recorded 5,944 functional librarians in 2025, with 1,797 (30.23%) at the First Expert level and 1,984 (33,38%) at the Young Expert Level. By contrast, only 761 (12.80%) were classified as Senior Experts and 49 (0.82%) as Principal Experts. Although these cross-sectional figures cannot establish career stagnation or determine its causes, the concentration at the lower and middle functional levels and the very small proportion at the lower and middle functional levels and the very small proportion at the highest level indicate a potential career bottleneck. This pattern warrants closer examination of whether existing merit mechanisms adequately support sustained professional development and career progression.

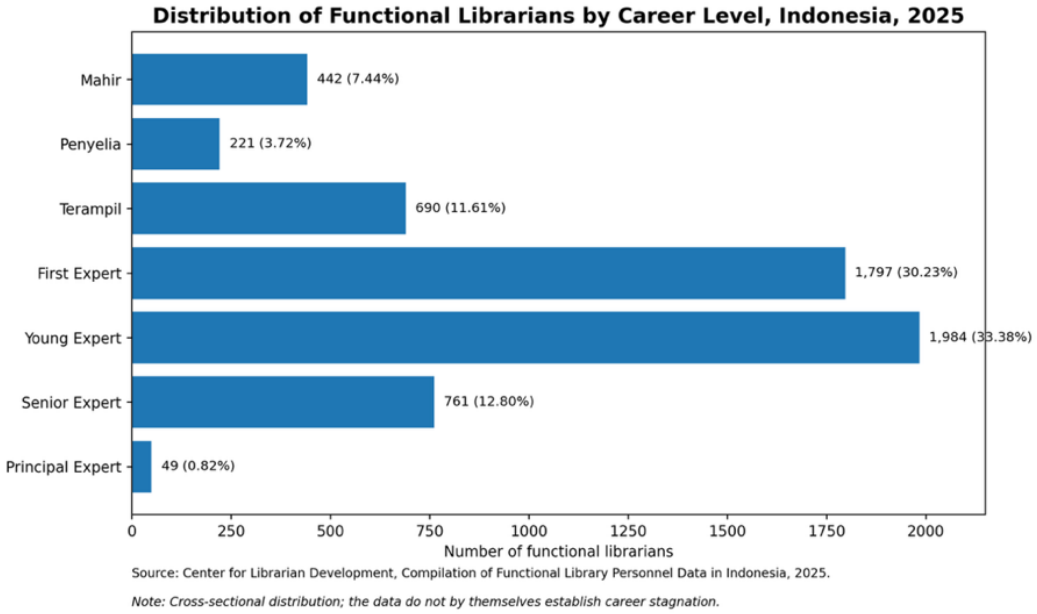


Figure 1. Distribution of Functional Librarians by Career Level in Indonesia, 2025.

PermenPANRB No. 55 of 2022 provides an important regulatory framework because it governs the appointment, assessment, promotion, and competency development of functional librarians. Its provisions therefore offer an appropriate basis for examining how merit principles are translated into the career management of librarians. This issue is particularly significant because librarianship requires nuesnuous professional development in response to technological change, evolving user needs, and changing service models. Previous studies have emphasized the role of continuous professional development, training, mentoring, and innovation in strengthening librarians professional capacity and enabling them to respond to these changes (Freedman 2021; Ikolo and Nongo 2022; Shahzad et al. 2023; Moonasar 2024).

Nevertheless, the existence of formal merit criteria does not necessarily indicate that merit operates as a developmental process. Regulations may establish qualifications, competency requirements, performance assessment, and promotion procedures without sufficiently clarifying how assessment results are translated into professional reflection, competency development, ethical judgment, and continuous improvement. This constitutes a reflective gap in the existing merit framework: the mechanisms for measuring and recognizing achievement are formally established, but the process through which assessment informs professional learning and subsequent improvement remains insufficiently articulated. Addressing this gap is particularly important in librarianship, where professional performance is not limited to measurable outputs but also involves ethical responsibility and responsiveness to users and communities.

Accordingly, this study examines PermenPANRB No. 55 of 2022 through Joseph Kett's merit framework to assess the extent to which the regulatory arrangements for functional librarians reflect the broader principles of merit. Based on the identified reflective gap, the study further develops a Reflective Merit System Model that connects formal merit assessment with professional reflection, competency development, ethical responsibility, and continous improvement. Rather than treating merit as a one-directional process of assessment and career assessment results become inputs for professional learning and subsequent improvement.

This study contributes theoretically by extending the application of merit theory to the specific professional context of functional librarianship and by introducing reflection as a developmental layer within merit-based career management. Practically, the proposed model provides a framework for librarians, library leaders, human-resource managers, professional associations, and policymakers to strengthen career and performance management so that merit mechanisms become not only fair and accountable but also more developmental and responsive to the professional context of librarianship in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using qualitative document analysis as the main analytical strategy. The primary source is PermenPANRB No 55 of 2022 concerning functional positions for librarians, which was examined to identify and interpret merit system values embedded in the regulation. Qualitative document analysis is appropriate for examining the contextual and substantive meaning of policy and regulatory documents (Bowen 2009). The analysis adopted a conceptual-analytical approach by comparing the substance of PermenPANRB No 55/2022 with Joseph Kett's merit framework. Kett's framework served as the initial analytical lens for examining professional capacity, achievement, fairness, competency development, innovation, and institutional responsibility. The analysis distinguished between administrative merit, reflected in formal and measurable mechanisms such as qualifications, performance indicators, credit points, and promotion requirements, and professional/ethical merit, reflected in professional judgment, integrity responsibility, social contribution, and the quality and consequences of professional achievement.

A directed content analysis approach was used to systematically categorize and interpret the regulatory text based on theoretically derived dimensions (Homayuni, Hosseini, and Abedini 2021; Staniland et all. 2023). The analysis proceeded through four stages (1) identification of relevant regulatory segments, (2) deductive coding and categorization, (3) conceptual interpretation, and (4) synthesis of findings. The units of analysis were individual articles or closely related groups of articles concerning librarian qualifications, appointment, duties, performance assessment, credit points, promotion, competency, professional development, supervision, and professional obligations. The full regulatory text was examined systematically, and relevant textual units were coded deductively according to merit dimensions derived from Kett's framework, including capacity and competence, proven accomplishment, fairness, measurable performance, career progression, professional development and innovation, and institutional safeguards (Kayesa dan Shung-King 2021).

The conceptual interpretation examined how merit principles were operationalized within the regulatory system, rather than merely identifying their presence. Particular attention was given to the relationship between administrative and professional/ethical merit, including the extent to which formal mechanisms such as performance assessment, credit points, and promotion requirements were connected with professional reflection, competency development, ethical judgment, innovation, contextual conditions, user impact, and continuous learning (Im et all. 2023; Kayesa and Shung-King 2021). The finding were then synthesized into throrectical and practical implications concerning the relationship among assessment, professional reflection, competency development, professional and social impact, and continuous improvement. This synthesis informed the development of the reflective merit system model, which conceptualizes merit as a continuous process of assessment, reflection,

professional development, and improvement rather than solely as an administrative mechanism for measuring achievement (Homayuni et all. 2021; Weiler et all. 2022).

To enhance trustworthiness, source triangulation was applied by comparing the regulation with recent academic literature and previous research on meritocracy in public administration. The analysis was conducted iteratively and reflectively to support a comprehensive interpretation of the alignment between the regulation of functional librarian positions and merit system principles (Glenn Morgan 2021; Ogamba and Ohadomere 2020; Sale dan Carlin 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Regulatory Alignment of Merit Principles

Merit system provide institutional mechanisms for organizing recruitment, appointment, performance assessment, promotion, and professional development on the basis of qualifications, competence, fairness and demonstrated achievement (Brewer dkk. 2022; Oliveira dkk. 2024). Merit, however, also concerns the institutional conditions through which professional contributions are recognized ad related to fairness, responsibility, and public purpose. Kett's framework is useful for examining this relationship because it distinguishes between essential merit, referring to qualities attributed to individuals, and institutional merit, through which achievement is recognized according to institutional categories, standards, and procedures. Institutional merit is particularly relevant to this study because professional capacity and achievement become institutionally recognizable through formal requirements for appointment, assessment, and career advancement. Kett's also relates institutionalized merit to questions of fairness, character, and achievement (Kett 2013:9).

PermenPANRB No. 55/2022 constitutes the principal regulatory framework examined in this study. The regulation establishes the functional librarian position within government institutions and specifies provisions concerning functional levels, duties, appointment, performance assessment, credit points, promotion, competency requirements, career governance, institutional supervision, professional organizations, and transitional arrangements. The coding analysis indicates that institutional merit is the dominant organizing dimension of the regulation. At the same time, the regulation incorporates professional capacity, character, fairness, professional ethics, competency development, and contextual recognition. Merit is therefore not treated solely as measurable performance but is institutionalized through several dimensions by which professional achievement is recognized and governed.

Tabel 2. Mapping of PermenPANRB No.55/2022 within Joseph Kett's Merit Framework

Regulatory Provisions	**Merit Dimension Informed by Kett (2013)**	**Analytical Interpretation**
Articles 5-11: Functional librarian categories, levels, duties, activities, and work outputs	Institutional merit: professional capacity and demonstrated accomplishment	Formal categories, career levels, duties, and documented outputs make professional capacity and achievement institutionally recognizable.
Articles 12-18: Appointment, inauguration, qualifications, integrity, and morality	Essential and institutional merit: capacity, character, and fairness	Career entry combines formal qualifications and eligibility with integrity and morality requirements, linking individual qualities to institutional appointment procedures.

Articles 19-26: Performance assessment, SKP, and work behaviour	Institutional merit: assessed performance and demonstrated accomplishment	Performance, SKP, and work behaviour are translated into formally assessable evidence through institutional performance-management mechanisms.
Articles 27-33: Credit-point determination	Institutional merit: measurable accomplishment	Professional activities and achievements are converted into quantified evidence for career and promotion decisions, while raising questions about whether quality, relevance, ethical complexity, and impact can be fully represented numerically.
Articles 34-41: Promotion and functional levels	Institutional merit: achievement based advancement	Career advancement is connected with accumulated achievement and fulfilment of formal institutional requirements rather than seniority alone.
Articles 42-45: Workforce requirements, competency standards, and competency development	Institutional merit: professional capacity and future capability	Merit extends beyond retrospective achievement toward the development of capabilities required for future professional performance.
Articles 46-50: Dismissal, reinstatement, transfer, and career mobility	Institutional merit: fairness and regulated career governance	Employment and career decisions operate through formal institutional procedures that provide predictability, accountability, consistency, and procedural fairness.
Articles 51: Duties of the supervisory/technical institution	Institutional merit: institutional production and maintenance of professional merit	Merit is not only assessed at the individual level but is institutionally defined, monitored, developed, and maintained through standards, quality assurance, competency development, and career governance.
Articles 52-53: Professional organization and its relationship with the supervisory/technical institution	Essential and institutional merit: professional character and collective	Professional ethics, codes of conduct, advocacy, ethical oversight, and professional development institutionalize professional character through professional governance.
Article 54: Additional credit for service in remote, vulnerable, and/or dangerous areas	Institutional merit: contextual fairness and equitable recognition	Differentiated credit recognizes contextual differences in professional service and indicates that fairness may require recognition of working conditions.
Articles 55-56: Transitional provisions	Institutional merit: continuity and procedural fairness	Previously completed work and existing career positions receive institutional recognition during regulatory transition.
Articles 57-59: Closing provisions	No distinct substantive merit dimension identified	These provisions concern regulatory continuity, repeal, and implementation and do not introduce an additional substantive mechanism for evaluating or developing librarian merit.

Source: Author's analysis based on PermenPANRB No.55/2022 and Kett's merit framework (2013).

Table 2 demonstrates that merit within the functional librarian position is multidimensional, encompassing professional qualifications, performance assessment, credit points, career advancement, competency development, institutional supervision, professional ethics, and contextual recognition. These dimensions are distributed across different regulatory functions rather than organized as a single assessment mechanism. Merit is therefore shaped not only by individual performance but also by the institutional arrangements through which professional performance is recognized, governed, and developed.

This pattern corresponds with Kett's conceptualization of institutional merit, in which earned achievements is distinguished from privilege and translated into formal institutional categories and procedures (Kett 2013:7). PermenPANRB No. 55/2022 can consequently be characterized primarily as an institutional merit system. At the same time, the presence of integrity, morality, professional ethics, competency development, and contextual recognition indicates that merit extends beyond quantitative performance. The mapping therefore does not indicate an absence of ethical or professional merit: rather, these dimensions are incorporated into the institutional framework, while their relationship with assessment and subsequent professional development requires further consideration.

From Administrative Merit to the Reflective Gap

The regulatory mapping reveals an important distinction between administrative merit and the broader professional interpretation of merit. Administrative merit refers to formal procedures through which qualifications, performance, achievement, promotion, credit points, and career progression are assessed and recognized, supporting objectivity, comparability, transparency, accountability, and procedural fairness. Ethical and professional responsibility, by contrast, concerns how competence and achievement are exercised through integrity, professional judgment, ethical reasoning, responsibility, and attention to the public interest. These dimensions should not be understood as separate or sequential forms of merit, but also complementary dimensions through which professional achievement can be assessed and interpreted.

The regulation already provides evidence for this complementary relationship. Integrity and morality are incorporated into appointment requirements; competency standards and development are embedded in the professional career framework; professional ethics, codes of conduct, and professional oversight are recognized through professional organizations; and differentiated recognition is provided for librarians working in remote, vulnerable, and/or dangerous areas. This framework is further supported by Perpustakaan Nasional Regulation No 24/2017 on Competency Standards for the Librarian Functional Position and Perpustakaan Nasional Regulation No. 14/2024 on Competency Assessment for Library Functional Positions, covering technical, managerial, and sociocultural competencies. Research on librarian recruitment likewise indicates that professional skills, knowledge, and attitudes are considered in librarian selection (Matsumoto 2022). The analytical concern therefore shifts from whether these dimensions exist to how they are connected within the regulatory system.

This distinction is particularly relevant to Kett's discussion of the bureaucratization of merit. Quantitative indicators are necessary for consistent and accountable career decisions, but they do not necessarily capture professional reasoning, ethical considerations, contextual constraints, or consequences. Credit points, performance indicators, and other quantitative measures can establish that an activity has been completed, or an output produced, but not necessarily its professional significance. Kett's argues that increasingly technocratic approaches to merit can weaken its substantive meaning when formal measurement becomes detached from the purposes it is intended to serve (Kett 2013:243). For librarians, professional achievement therefore needs to remain connected with professional responsibility, ethical judgement, public value, and the broader purpose of library services (Kett, 2013:11).

The analysis consequently identifies a reflective gap rather than a deficit of ethical or professional merit. The regulatory framework contains the principal elements that could support a development approach, including assessment, competency development, institutional

oversight, professional ethics, contextual recognition, and career governance. These elements, however, are primarily articulated through separate regulatory functions. The regulation does not explicitly establish a mechanism through which assessment evidence is systematically examined, translated into competency-gap identification and professional learning, related to professional and social impact, and subsequently used to guide improvement. The issue therefore lies not in the absence of relevant merit dimension, but in the relationship among existing dimensions.

This gap has practical significance because existing assessment evidence can potentially serve both recognition and professional learning. Practical information-management capabilities and the capacity to learn and adapt to changing requirements may not be fully represented through conventional quantitative assessment approaches (Rod 2023). Similarly, innovation, research, training, community literacy, and service development can generate professional contributions whose significance depends partly on quality, professional judgment, context, and consequences rather than ouput volume alone. Research has associated transformational leadership with innovative librarian behaviour and identified mentoring as a mechanisms supporting professional and leadership development (Srirahayu, Sridadi, and Ekowati 2024; Freedman 2021). These finding reinforce the importance of connecting assessment evidence with professional learning rather than treating assessment as the endpoint of career recognition. A developmental interpretation can be supported through several interconnected mechanisms.

First, professional reflection can be applied selectively to activities where numerical indicators do not adequately capture professional decisions and circumstances. A digitization target, for example, may document the number of collections processed, while also involve decisions concerning collection selection, metadata accuracy, preservation, accessibility, copyright, and user needs. Structured reflection can make these decisions, challenges, ethical considerations, lessons learned, and possible improvements visible. The same principle applies to collection management and information services; where quantitative evidence remains useful while selected complex cases can be examined in relation to professional judgement, information evaluation, ethical considerations, accessibility, and user needs. Reflection therefore complements rather than replaces quantitative assessment. Second, peer review and professional contribution can complement quantitative evidence where achievement depends on contextual judgment. Scientific writing, research, training, community literacy, digitization, and service innovation may demonstrate professional contribution, but output volume does not necessarily indicate its substantive quality. Selected outputs can therefore be reviewed for professional quality, relevance, innovation, ethical considerations, evidence of learning, and potential value for users or communities. Innovation is thus assessed not simply by activity volume but by the problem addressed, rationale, adaptation, learning, and evidence of benefit, consistent with Kett's recognition of innovation as a potential form of civic contribution (Kett 2013:182).

Third, assessment and reflective evidence can be used for systematic competency-gap analysis. Reflection becomes developmentally useful when its findings are considered collectively rather than treated solely as individual documentation. Repeated difficulties in metadata creation, for example, may indicate a need for further development in metadata standards, while recurring challenges in digital preservation or complex information services may indicate needs in preservation, reference interviewing, information evaluation, or ethical decision-making. Analysis of 363 librarian job vacancies by Silaen (2024) also indicates diverse

competency requirements across librarian positions, suggesting that professional development needs to remain responsive to changing workplace expectations. Assessment evidence can consequently serve not only existing capability but also areas requiring further learning, adaption, or institutional support.

Identified competency gaps can inform targeted professional learning, including training, mentoring, peer learning, guided practice, professional communities, or self-directed learning. The establishes a closer relationship between professional experience and development because learning priorities emerge from evidence of actual practise. The subsequent application of newly developed competencies can provide evidence of progress and inform further development. Assessment thus becomes connected to learning rather than functioning solely as documentation of completed achievement.

A further consideration is context and social-professional impact. Professional activities are performed under different organizational, technological, and community conditions. An activity producing relatively modest numerical output may nevertheless require substantial professional judgment or generate considerable value for a particular user group, while high-volume activity does not necessarily produce equivalent professional or social value. Contextual evidence can document working conditions, professional decisions, adaptations, and consequence without displacing objective performance evidence. For example, a community literacy program may involve a relatively few participants while addressing a significant information need among a particular population. Contextual interpretation therefore does not relax performance standards; rather, it enables performance evidence to be understood in relation to the conditions, decisions, and consequences surrounding professional achievement.

Finally, the developmental function of reflection also requires institutional follow-up. Supervisors, assessment teams, and professional organizations can examine aggregated findings from performance assessment, reflection, and peer review to identify recurring competency needs, professional challenges, and areas requiring organizational support. Supervisors can address individual developmental needs and monitor the application of newly acquired competencies; assessment teams can identify recurring patterns across professional evidence; and professional organizations can provide mentoring, peer learning, ethical guidance, and communities of practice. This arrangement is consistent with Kett's characterization of institutional actors as guardians of fairness and institutional conscience (Kett 2013:198, 211). Institutional conscience does not imply replacing formal procedures with subjective moral judgment. Rather, it concerns maintaining the connection between merit decisions, professional responsibility, contextual circumstances, and the broader purpose of library services.

These mechanisms do not require a parallel merit system. Existing assessment, credit points, qualifications, competency requirements, professional ethics, and institutional oversight can remain the formal basis for career recognition, while their developmental value can be strengthened through reflection, peer review, competency-gap analysis, and institutional follow-up. Quantitative evidence can support recognition, while reflective evidence supports professional learning and improvement. The reflective gap is therefore not a justification for adding indicators, but for strengthening the relationship between existing assessment evidence and reflection, learning, professional application, and improvement. This interpretation provides the basis for the reflective merit system model.

Reflective Merit System Model and Its Implications

Drawing on the regulatory mapping and the reflective gap identified above, this study proposes the Reflective Merit System Model as a developmental extension of the existing institutional architecture of merit. The model retains the administrative mechanisms established by PermanPANRB No.55/2022 while explicitly connection existing merit dimensions through a continuous cycle: administrative merit → Professional Reflection → Comptency and Professional Development → Social and Professional Impact → Continuous Improvement → Renewed Merit Assessment. Thus, assessment serves both administrative recognition and professional learning without replacing the existing merit architecture.

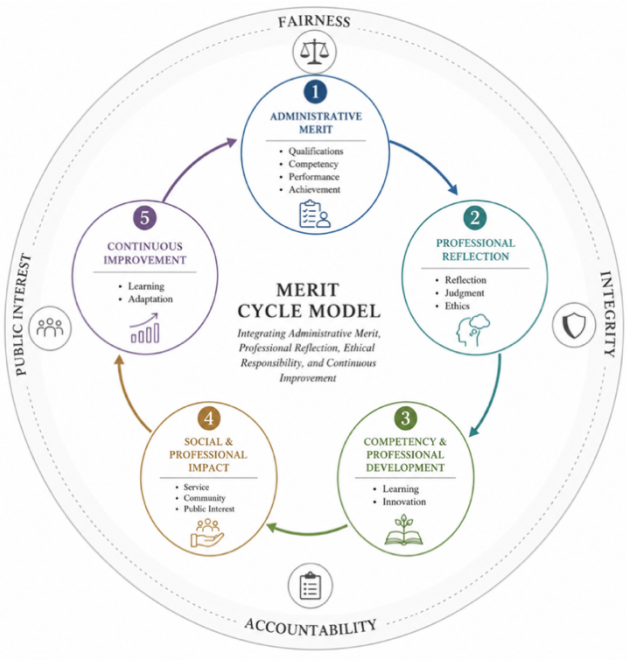


Figure 2. Reflective Merit System Model.

The cycle begins with administrative merit, which provides the formal institutional foundation through qualifications, competency requirements, performance assessment, work outputs, credit points, promotion, and career procedures. It supports institutional recognition, objectivity, comparability, accountability, and procedural fairness. Professional reflection functions as the central connecting mechanism by interpreting assessment evidence in relation to professional judgment, contextual conditions, ethical considerations, competency needs, and opportunities for improvement. Reflection is therefore not an additional merit category but a mechanism for connecting formal assessment with its professional and developmental significance.

Reflection informs competency and professional development by identifying competency needs and learning priorities from actual professional performance. Social and professional impact extends the interpretation of achievement beyond activity completion or measurable outputs by considering contributions to information access, service quality, preservation and accessibility of knowledge resources, information and digital literacy, community engagement, and institutional development. Impact complements rather than replaces measurable achievement. Continuous improvement then translates learning from

professional experience, reflection, and impact evidence into changes in professional practice, service design, competency development, and organizational support. The cycle then returns to renewed merit assessment, allowing subsequent performance to be documented and recognized. Assessment thus functions simultaneously as an accountability mechanism and as evidence for reflection, development, and improvement.

Across the cycle, fairness, integrity, accountability, and public interest operate as transversal principles rather than separate merit categories. Fairness requires achievement to be interpreted in relation to relevant professional context and working conditions while maintaining transparent standards. Integrity connects professional evidence and judgment with ethical responsibilities and professional standards; accountability ensures traceability and transparency in assessment and developmental decisions; and public interest connects professional development and innovation with the purposes of library services and users' and communities' needs. These principles are consistent with the finding that ethical and professional dimensions are already distributed across the regulatory framework through qualifications, integrity and morality, competency development, professional ethics, institutional oversight, and contextual recognition.

This model has four principal implications for librarian career governance. First, assessment can retain its administrative functions in career and promotion decisions while also informing professional learning. Second, professional development can be linked directly to documented performance and recurring competency gaps. Third, reflective documentation, peer learning, and contextual evidence can complement quantitative indicators when professional judgement, innovation, ethical complexity, or social impact are particularly relevant. Fourth, supervisory institutions and professional organizations can use aggregated assessment and developmental evidence to identify recurring professional needs and strengthen mentoring, ethical guidance, and organizational learning.

Finally, the model provides a mechanism for responding to changing professional and societal conditions. Digital transformation, emerging information technologies, changing information behaviour, and increasingly complex user needs require professional capabilities that may not be fully anticipated by fixed performance indicators. a reflective-developmental mechanism allows evidence emerging from professional practice to inform new competency requirements and development priorities. Merit can therefore function not only as a mechanism for recognizing what professionals achievement but also as a continuing institutional process through which achievement generates reflection, learning, improvement, and renewed professional contribution.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that PermenPANRB No.55/2022 provides a substantially institutionalized merit architecture for the librarian functional position, incorporating professional qualifications, competency requirements, performance assessment, achievement recognition, career advancement, competency development, professional governance, ethical responsibility, and contextual recognition. The findings do not indicate an absence of ethical, professional, or developmental dimensions. Rather, they identify a reflective gap: existing merit dimensions are primarily organized according to their respective administrative functions and are not explicitly connected through a continuous process that interprets assessment evidence,

identifies competency and professional learning needs, considers professional and social impact, and informs subsequent improvement.

To address this gap, the study propose the reflective merit system model as a developmental extension of the existing merit architecture: Administrative Merit → Professional Reflection → Competency and Professional Development → Social and Professional Impact → Continuous Improvement → Renewed Merit Assessment. Administrative merit remains the institutional foundation for recognition, objectivity, comparability, transparency, accountability, and procedural fairness, while professional reflection connects assessment evidence with professional judgment, contextual conditions, ethical considerations, competency needs, and opportunities for improvement. Fairness, integrity, accountability, and public interest operate as transversal principles throughout the cycle. The model therefore extends the use of existing assessment evidence without replacing administrative merit or creating an additional set of quantitative indicators.

The principal contribution of the study lies in specifying this reflective-developmental connection among existing merit dimensions. Existing assessment mechanisms can retain their administrative functions while being complemented by selective reflective assessmenr, competency-gap identification, peer learning, professional development, and consideration of professional and social impact, particularly for activities involving substantial professional judgment, innovation, ethical complexity, contextual constraints, or significant implications for users and communities. The model consequently repositions merit assessment from a predominantly retrospective mechanism of achievement recognition toward a cyclical process of recognition, learning, and improvement while maintaining its functions in fairness, accountability, comparability, and career governance.

This study is limited by its conceptual and regulatory approach and does not empirically test the proposed model. Future research should validate and refine the model through multi-institutional case studies and mixed-methods or longitudinal research involving librarians, assessors, supervisors, human-resource managers, library leaders, and professional organizations. Such research should examine whether reflective assessment contributes to competency development, innovation, service quality, professional and social impact, and organizational learning over time. Overall, strengthening the librarian merit system does not require replacing its administrative foundation, but establishing an explicit connection between what is assessed, what is learned, how professional capability is developed, and how subsequent improvement is demonstrated.

SUGGESTION

This article examines the implementation of the merit system in Indonesian librarian functional positions through a qualitative analysis of PermenPANRB No. 55 of 2022 using Joseph Kett's meritocracy framework. The merit system emphasizes recruitment, promotion, and performance evaluation based on competence and achievement rather than favouritism. Although the regulation adopts merit principles procedurally, its implementation remains technocratic and lacks the moral dimension that Kett defines as a "moral habit" linking individual excellence with public good. Analysis of key provisions reveals alignment with professional capacity, achievement, innovation, and fairness but still focuses narrowly on the credit point system. Ethical, empathetic, and social contributions of librarians are not yet fully recognized. The article recommends integrating quantitative and qualitative assessments, ethics-based peer review, and stronger roles for professional bodies to ensure fairness and

develop a professional ecosystem that balances competence and moral awareness in public service reform..

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