

BRIDGING POLICY AND PRACTICE: READINESS TO INTEGRATE ASSESSMENT CENTER OUTPUTS INTO TALENT MANAGEMENT IN THE NTT PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the organizational readiness of the NTT Provincial Government to integrate Assessment Center (AC) outputs into its Talent Management (TM) system. Although regulations mandate the use of competency assessment in talent decisions, AC results remain weakly embedded in practice. Using a mixed-method approach—document analysis, a structured questionnaire ($n = 48$), and a Focus Group Discussion ($n = 20$)—the study assesses readiness across institutional, technical, human resource, and cultural dimensions. The findings indicate moderate overall organizational readiness (mean = 3.22). Technical readiness (3.94) and human resource capability (3.95) are relatively strong, reflecting adequate infrastructure and personnel professionalism. However, institutional readiness (3.15) and cultural readiness (2.58) remain weak, characterized by the absence of operational SOPs, limited system integration, uneven managerial interpretive capacity, and persistent non-merit staffing practices. The study identifies a condition of asymmetric organizational readiness, in which strong technical and individual capacities coexist with weak institutional and cultural foundations. This imbalance produces a readiness paradox, resulting in symbolic rather than substantive AC-TM integration. The findings extend organizational readiness theory and offer policy-relevant insights for strengthening evidence-based talent management in decentralized public administrations.

Keywords: Assessment Center, Talent Management, Organizational readiness, AC-TM Integration, NTT Provincial Government

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis kesiapan Pemerintah Provinsi NTT dalam mengintegrasikan hasil Assessment Center (AC) ke dalam sistem Manajemen Talenta (TM). Meskipun regulasi telah mewajibkan pemanfaatan penilaian kompetensi sebagai dasar identifikasi, pengembangan, dan penempatan talenta, hasil AC di lingkungan Pemprov NTT masih belum terintegrasi secara efektif dalam pengambilan keputusan manajerial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode campuran melalui analisis dokumen, kuesioner terstruktur ($n = 48$), dan Focus Group Discussion (FGD; $n = 20$) untuk menilai kesiapan organisasi dalam empat aspek, yaitu kesiapan institusional, teknis, sumber daya manusia, dan budaya organisasi, serta mempertimbangkan hambatan sebagai faktor penghambat implementasi. Hasil kuantitatif menunjukkan bahwa tingkat kesiapan organisasi secara keseluruhan

berada pada kategori sedang ($mean = 3,22$). Kesiapan teknis (3,94) dan kapabilitas sumber daya manusia (3,95) tergolong tinggi, mencerminkan ketersediaan infrastruktur digital dan profesionalisme pegawai. Akan tetapi, kesiapan institusional (3,15) dan kesiapan budaya organisasi (2,58) relatif lemah. Temuan kualitatif mengungkap ketiadaan Standar Operasional Prosedur (SOP), keterbatasan integrasi sistem, kapasitas interpretatif manajerial yang tidak merata, serta masih kuatnya praktik penempatan pegawai berbasis pertimbangan non-merit. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi kondisi kesiapan organisasi yang asimetris, di mana kekuatan pada aspek teknis dan individual tidak diimbangi oleh kesiapan kelembagaan dan budaya organisasi. Ketimpangan ini melahirkan paradoks kesiapan, sehingga integrasi AC-TM cenderung simbolik, bukan substantif. Temuan ini memperluas perspektif teori kesiapan organisasi dan memberikan implikasi kebijakan yang relevan bagi penguatan manajemen talenta berbasis bukti di lingkungan pemerintahan daerah.

Kata kunci: Assessment Center, Manajemen Talenta, Kesiapan organisasi, Integrasi AC-TM, Pemerintah Provinsi NTT

INTRODUCTION

Talent Management (TM) has become a strategic priority in public-sector reform as governments seek to strengthen leadership pipelines, enhance organizational capability, and institutionalize merit-based HR practices. In Indonesian Government, TM implementation is guided by the Ministerial Regulation of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number 3 of 2020 concerning TM for the State Civil Apparatus, which outlines an integrated cycle of talent acquisition, development, placement, retention, and evaluation. At the provincial level, the NTT Provincial Government has operationalized this framework through the Regulation of the Governor of East Nusa Tenggara Number 67 of 2021 and supporting systems such as an accredited Assessment Center (AC), a competency information system (*Si-Penkom*), and a performance management system (*Si-Kinerja*). These instruments provide a strong policy foundation and place NTT among the regions with relatively advanced TM infrastructure.

Despite this structural readiness, the practical use of AC outputs in TM processes remains limited. Competency assessments have been conducted regularly—covering 5,142 civil servants since 2019 (Regional Civil Service Agency, 2024a)—but their results seldom inform talent identification, development planning, or promotion decisions. Evaluation reports show persistent gaps in follow-up actions, weak feedback mechanisms, limited technical capacity among HR users, and budget constraints (Regional Civil Service Agency, 2023, 2025). These issues point to a *policy-practice gap*, where reforms are adopted symbolically but weakly institutionalized in day-to-day implementation (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). This gap is further amplified in Indonesia's decentralized governance context. Regional governments often differ in institutional capacity, data system integration, leadership commitment, and HR professionalism (Daniel L.T, 2023; Iskandar, 2025; Atmojo, 2019). Pendid (2016) notes that although many regional ACs are accredited, they frequently operate in isolation from TM processes due to technical fragmentation and limited interpretive capability.

Effective integration of AC outputs into TM requires more than regulatory compliance. It depends on organizational readiness (Armenakis et al., 1993; Weiner, 2009)—particularly institutional clarity and technical infrastructures (Webster & Gardner, 2019), human resource capability (Alqudah et al., 2022), and a supportive culture (Gabutti et al., 2023; Holmström, 2022). Without these conditions, ACs risk becoming administrative rituals that produce data but fail to drive developmental change.

Within this context, the NTT Provincial Government offers a relevant case to examine how organizational readiness shapes AC-TM integration. Although the government has strong structural foundations, integration has not progressed convincingly. This study therefore adopts an organizational readiness perspective to analyze the institutional, technical, human, and cultural conditions influencing AC-TM integration and to explain the persistent gap between policy and practice.

Talent Management in the Public Sector

TM in the public sector differs fundamentally from private-sector approaches due to its emphasis on merit principles, equity, political neutrality, and accountability (Kravariti & Johnston, 2019; Boselie & Thunnissen, 2017). While national TM frameworks often articulate comprehensive cycles, their implementation is frequently constrained by limited HR capability, rigid structures, and fragmented systems (Linawati et al., 2024; Matindas et al., 2025). These tensions produce a persistent *policy-practice gap*, in which formal reforms fail to translate into operational behavior (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2010). Indonesia Ministerial Regulation of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number 3 of 2020 positions ACs as critical mechanisms for evidence-based talent identification and leadership pipeline development. However, empirical studies show uneven implementation across regions (Matindas et al., 2025) and limited integration into decision-making processes (Pendit, 2016). This suggests that TM systems achieve strategic impact only when competency assessments are embedded in broader HR processes—something many subnational governments have not yet achieved (Povah & Thornton III, 2016; Herd et al., 2015).

Assessment Centers as Strategic Instruments of Talent Management

ACs are recognized internationally for their predictive validity and developmental relevance (Thornton III & Gibbons, 2009; Rupp et al., 2015; Kleinmann & Ingold, 2019). When integrated with performance data and competency frameworks, AC outputs can inform leadership pipelines, individualized development plans, and succession management (Thornton & Rupp, 2006; Chatterjee & Bhatia, 2022). However, ACs only contribute strategically when vertically aligned with organizational strategy and horizontally linked to performance management, learning and development, and career systems (Herd et al., 2015). Without this integration, ACs risk becoming “technical islands”—methodologically rigorous but disconnected from decision-making (Birri & Melcher, 2016). Managerial interpretive capability and follow-up mechanisms such as coaching and IDPs are therefore essential for translating AC reports into actionable TM practices (Fletcher, 2016).

Policy-Practice Gaps in Public-Sector HRM

A substantial body of public administration research highlights the gap between policy adoption and practical implementation, particularly in HR reforms (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Nishimura et al., 2021) Williamson et al., 2020). Many government institutions like in UAE (Al Jawali et al., 2022), Botswana (E. N. Barkhuizen & Masale, 2021), South Africa (N. E. Barkhuizen & Gumede, 2021), and Brazil (de Araújo et al., 2022) adopt modern instruments—competency models, ACs, TM frameworks—symbolically to signal compliance, but fail to institutionalize and integrate them in everyday managerial decisions (Thornton III & Birri, 2016; Poljašević et al., 2025). Indonesia, decentralization amplifies these challenges, as regional governments vary widely in institutional capacity, HR professionalism, and system integration (Maulida & Musdalifah, 2022; Turner et al., 2022). Studies made by Pendit (2016) and Matindas et al (2025) show that many regional ACs in Indonesia meet accreditation standards but operate independently from TM processes due to weak digital interoperability, limited follow-up mechanisms, and low managerial engagement. This suggests that the existence of AC infrastructure does not guarantee its use—an issue at the heart of AC-TM integration challenges in Indonesia subnational governments.

Organizational Readiness for Change

This study conceptualizes organizational readiness as a multi-dimensional organizational capacity (Gabutti et al., 2023) enabling the AC-TM integration. Anchored in Weiner's (2009) theory, readiness is understood as a shared condition reflecting collective commitment to change and belief in implementation capability. Modern perspectives expand this concept beyond psychology to include institutional (Webster & Gardner, 2019), technical (Gabutti et al., 2023; Webster & Gardner, 2019; Eryanto et al., 2025) human (Alqudah et al., 2022), and cultural capacities that enable organizations to support, absorb, and sustain change (Gabutti et al., 2023; Webster & Gardner, 2019). Institutional readiness (Webster & Gardner, 2019) refers to the extent to which regulations, structures, and formal procedures legitimize and routinize the use of AC outputs in TM, signaling organizational commitment and reducing ambiguity in public-sector reforms. Technical readiness captures the availability and interoperability of digital systems, standardized competency frameworks, and data architectures that enable integration across HR functions; in system-dependent environments, technology readiness directly shapes collective confidence and commitment (Eryanto et al., 2025; Webster & Gardner, 2019). Human readiness (Gabutti et al., 2023; Alqudah et al., 2022) denotes the capability of assessors, HR professionals, and managers to interpret AC results and translate them into development and staffing decisions, reflecting change-specific efficacy (Holt et al., 2007) and practice enactment (Webster & Gardner, 2019). Meanwhile, cultural readiness encompasses shared norms, leadership behaviors, and attitudes supporting merit-based, feedback-driven, and evidence-based HRM, reinforcing collective motivation and sensemaking (Weiner, 2009; Gabutti et al., 2023; Webster & Gardner, 2019).

In AC settings, these dimensions are visible in leadership sponsorship, assessor professionalism, and effective feedback processes, which enhance human and cultural readiness for developmental change (Thornton III & Birri, 2016; Fletcher, 2016; Boyle, 2016). Organizational cultures that treat assessment as a continuous learning process, rather than a compliance mechanism, further support change readiness by sustaining developmental momentum and embedding evidence-based decision-making (Bergvall, 2016; Nosworthy & Ee-Ling, 2016). These perspectives indicate that organizational readiness for AC-TM integration requires at least four foundational aspects: institutional, technical, human, and cultural readiness.

Conceptual Framework

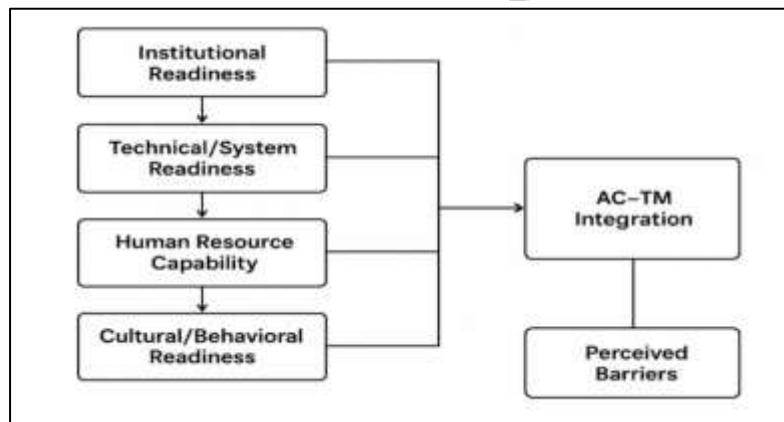


Figure 1. Organizational Readiness Framework for AC-TM Integration

Source: Developed by the authors based on Weiner (2009), Webster & Gardner (2019), Gabutti et al (2023), Alqudah (2022), and Eryanto (2025).

This study employs the aforementioned organizational readiness concepts (Weiner, 2009; Holt et al., 2007; Gabutti et al., 2023; Webster & Gardner, 2019; Alqudah et al., 2022; Eryanto et al., 2025) to explain why AC-TM integration within the NTT Provincial Government has not progressed beyond regulatory compliance. Organizational readiness is conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing four interrelated capacities: Institutional, Technical, Human and, Cultural readiness. These four capacities form the core enabling conditions for AC-TM integration. The framework also recognizes the presence of moderating barriers—such as hierarchical norms, political discretion, fragmented data systems, and budgetary constraints—that may weaken even strengthen readiness conditions, resulting in partial or stalled integration. Within this conceptual model, organizational readiness functions as the mediating mechanism linking regulatory intent to operational practice. The model proposes that policy and structural provisions (e.g., regulations, AC infrastructure) create the formal foundation for TM, readiness determines whether these provisions can be operationalized, moderating barriers influence how readiness translates into use of AC outputs, while integration outcomes reflect the extent to which AC evidence is embedded in talent identification, development, and placement.

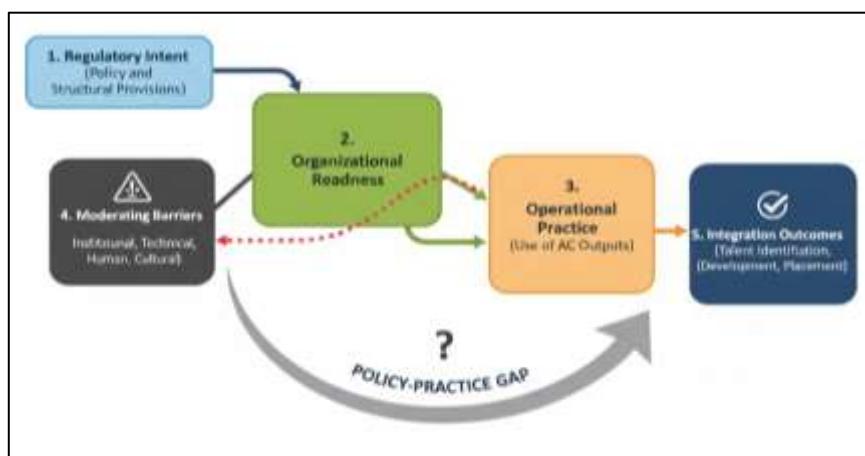


Figure 2. TM Regulation to Operational Practice Framework

Source: Developed by the authors

By applying this framework, the study examines why strong regulatory and infrastructural readiness has not resulted in substantive AC-TM integration, and how variations across institutional, technical, human, and cultural dimensions shape the persistent policy-practice gap.

METHODS

Document Analyses

Document analysis was conducted to establish the formal and structural context of TM and AC implementation in the NTT Provincial Government. This process involved reviewing key regulatory and administrative documents, including Governor Regulation No. 67 of 2021 on TM, AC operational report 2024, Monitoring and Evaluation reports 2023 and 2025, as well as technical documentation for the *Si-Penkom* (2024b) and *Si-Kinerja* (2023b) systems. Through these documents, the study examined the existing policy framework, governance arrangements, and operational mechanisms related to competency assessment and TM.



The Structured Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire (Saris & Gallhofer, 2014) was administered to 48 purposively selected respondents who possessed substantial knowledge of AC and TM processes. These respondents included HR assessors, middle managers, supervisors, personnel analysts, and computer analysts, who work in *Badan Kepegawaian Daerah (BKD)* / Regional Civil Service Agency, as well as HR managers of other Provincial Government Agencies (PGAs) and several officials outside BKD who had previously been involved in AC or TM operations. The purposive sampling ensured that responses reflected informed judgment and practical experience rather than general opinions. The instrument comprised 25 items measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), each dimension consists of 5 items. Prior to analysis, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicate good reliability, with an alpha coefficient of 0.766, exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70. Accordingly, all questionnaire items were deemed reliable and suitable for subsequent analysis. The research instrument consisted of a structured questionnaire designed to measure organizational readiness for integrating AC results into the TM system.

Quantitative analysis of the questionnaire proceeded in three stages. First, a mean score was computed for each readiness dimension by averaging the values of the corresponding items. Because the barrier items were phrased negatively, they were reverse-scored using the formula "*6 - original score*". Second, an overall organizational readiness score was calculated by taking the arithmetic mean of all readiness dimensions, such that each dimension contributed equally to the composite score. This approach reflects the assumption that institutional readiness (IR), technical readiness (TR), human resource readiness (HRR), and cultural readiness (CR)—along with the presence of barriers (B)—are equally necessary conditions for successful integration of AC outputs into TM processes. Although barriers conceptually function as moderating conditions, they are included in the composite index as an inverse readiness indicator to capture the organization's capacity to overcome constraints. Accordingly, overall readiness was calculated using the following formula: [Total Readiness = Mean (IR, TR, HRR, CR, B)]

This equal-weighting strategy conceptualizes organizational readiness as a systemic and non-compensatory condition. Rather than assuming hierarchical importance among dimensions, the model recognizes that deficiencies in any single readiness domain can constrain AC-TM integration, regardless of strengths in others. This approach is consistent with multidimensional readiness frameworks that emphasize interdependence among structural, technical, human, and cultural capacities (Weiner, 2009; Gabutti et al., 2023; Webster & Gardner, 2019). The total score was then interpreted using a standardized scale (Allen & Seaman, 2007) in which scores from 1.00 to 2.49 indicate *Low Readiness*, 2.50 to 3.49 indicate *Moderate Readiness*, and 3.50 to 5.00 indicate *High Readiness*.

Focus Group Discussion

To obtain richer qualitative insight into the organizational dynamics surrounding AC-TM integration, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) (Nyumba et al., 2018) was conducted. The FGD brought together 20 participants representing the key actors across the TM and AC ecosystem, including 8 HR assessors, 2 BKD middle managers, 2 middle managers and 2 supervisors from other PGAs, 3 computer analysts, and 3 personnel analysts. The selection of participants ensured a broad representation of operational, administrative, and technical perspectives, providing a holistic understanding of how different units perceive and experience the integration process.

The FGD explored themes that emerged from the document analysis and questionnaire results. Its results were analysed thematically, which then were aligned with the four readiness dimensions—Institutional, Technical, Human, Cultural. Subsequently, they were compared with the questionnaire and document findings to validate patterns, clarify inconsistencies, and strengthen the overall interpretation through triangulation. Through this multi-method design, the study combined quantitative measurement with qualitative depth to generate a comprehensive assessment of the organizational readiness factors influencing the integration of AC outputs into the TM system of the NTT Provincial Government.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal an uneven readiness landscape within the NTT Provincial Government. While quantitative results indicate generally high organizational readiness, qualitative evidence from document review and the FGD shows persistent institutional and cultural barriers that limit the practical integration of AC results into TM processes. The following subsections present the refined findings across the four readiness dimensions and barriers.

Institutional Readiness

Table 1. Questionnaire Results on Institutional Readiness

Item Code	Indicator	Mean (n = 48)	SD
IR1	Clarity and operational relevance of Governor Regulation on TM	3.96	0.52
IR2	Availability of SOPs or guidelines for using AC results	2.50	0.71
IR3	Clarity of roles and responsibilities among AC and TM Agencies	3.56	0.48
IR4	Accountability mechanisms ensuring AC use	3.27	0.56
IR5	Adequacy of budget and resources to support AC result utilization	2.46	0.69
IR		3.15	0.48

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

The questionnaire results indicate a moderate level of IR for AC-TM integration, with an overall mean score of 3.15. Respondents generally acknowledge the existence of formal regulatory frameworks governing TM and AC, particularly the clarity and operational relevance of the Governor Regulation on TM (IR1; M = 3.96) and the delineation of roles and responsibilities among assessors, BKD, PGAs, and the provincial leaders (IR3; M = 3.56). These findings suggest that IR is relatively stronger at the regulatory and structural level. However, lower mean scores on the availability of SOPs or technical guidelines for using AC results (IR2; M = 2.50) and the adequacy of budget and resources to support AC result utilization (IR5; M = 2.46) reveal significant implementation gaps. Document analysis corroborates these results, showing that while Governor Regulation No. 67/2021 provides a comprehensive formal framework for TM, it is not accompanied by operational SOPs or detailed technical guidelines to translate AC results into concrete HR decisions, despite earlier plans to develop such instruments.

Findings from the FGD further reinforce this gap between formal regulation and practice. Participants emphasized that the core challenge is not technical capacity but rather weak directive leadership and limited follow-through. Senior leaders were described as having insufficient understanding of TM workflows, while staff trained in relevant competencies are frequently reassigned to unrelated functions. As a result, institutional readiness remains largely symbolic and procedural, with formal regulations lacking the practical authority and organizational support needed to guide day-to-day HR practices effectively.

Technical Readiness

Table 2. Questionnaire Results on Technical Readiness

Item Code	Indicator	Mean (n = 48)	SD
TR1	Accessibility of AC Data Systems	4.19	0.64
TR2	System Interoperability	4.04	0.68
TR3	Standardization of Competency Data	4.15	0.62
TR4	Adequacy of IT Infrastructure	4.25	0.48
TR5	Data Integration Design	3.06	0.78
TR		3.94	0.48

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

The questionnaire results indicate a high level of TR, with an overall mean score of 3.94, suggesting general confidence in existing digital systems and IT capacity to support Talent Management (TM). High mean values for accessibility of AC data systems (TR1), system interoperability (TR2), standardization of competency data (TR3), and adequacy of IT infrastructure (TR4) indicate that core technical components are largely available and perceived consistently across respondents, as reflected in relatively low standard deviations. In contrast, data integration capability (TR5) records a lower mean score (mean = 3.06) and the highest standard deviation (SD = 0.78), indicating both limited perceived readiness and substantial variation in respondents' experiences. Qualitatively, this dispersion reflects uneven understanding and communication regarding the existence of a technical plan to integrate AC data with other HR information systems.

Findings from the FGD and document analysis confirm this interpretation. At the time of the study, no formal integration design, system architecture, or technical roadmap explicitly linking AC and TM systems was in place. Discussions regarding integration remain largely informal and have not been institutionalized through policy directives. Although the BKD has initiated plans to develop an online Human Resource Information System (SIMPEG Online), these plans do not yet explicitly incorporate AC-TM integration. Consequently, awareness of such initiatives varies among stakeholders, explaining the observed variability in responses to TR5.

The results suggest that TR is strong in terms of infrastructure and IT capacity, but remains weak at the level of system integration and formal technical planning. The absence of an explicit integration framework constrains the functional use of AC data for TM purposes, resulting in continued reliance on manual processes and static outputs rather than on integrated, data-driven digital platforms.

Human Resource Capability Readiness

Table 3. Questionnaire Results on HR Capability Readiness

Item Code	Indicator	Mean (n = 48)	SD
HRR1	Ability of managers to interpret and use AC results	4.04	0.50
HRR2	Ability of assessors to provide actionable feedback	4.63	0.53
HRR3	Availability of training on AC data interpretation	3.23	0.69
HRR4	Sufficiency of qualified AC personnel	4.67	0.48
HRR5	Ability to translate AC results into IDPs	3.17	0.75
HRR		3.95	0.38

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

HR readiness received the highest score (mean = 3.95), representing the strongest readiness dimension assessed. High mean scores for assessors' ability to provide clear and actionable feedback (HRR2; $M = 4.63$) and for the adequacy of AC human resources in terms of number and qualifications (HRR4; $M = 4.67$) indicate strong professional capacity within the AC. Low standard deviations for these indicators suggest consistent perceptions of assessor competence and staffing sufficiency. However, capabilities related to the diffusion and utilization of AC results are less robust. While leaders and officials within BKD responsible for TM are generally perceived as capable of interpreting AC outputs (HRR1; $M = 4.04$), lower mean scores for the availability of training to enhance AC data literacy among users (HRR3; $M = 3.23$) and for the ability of personnel managers in PGAs to develop Individual Development Plans (IDPs) based on AC recommendations (HRR5; $M = 3.17$) indicate uneven capability distribution beyond the AC function.

FGD findings corroborate these results. Assessors are able to explain assessment outcomes when presenting them, but many personnel managers and supervisors lack the skills required to independently translate competency profiles into IDPs, coaching interventions, or structured training programs. Limited capacity-building initiatives for non-assessor users reinforce reliance on centralized interpretation of AC results. In addition, centralized staffing authority at BKD—particularly for structural positions—constrains the practical application of AC-based recommendations at the agency level. Consequently, HR capability readiness is strong in technical and professional terms, but its contribution to TM outcomes remains limited by uneven skill diffusion and restricted managerial discretion.

Cultural Readiness

Table 4. Questionnaire Results on Cultural Readiness

Item Code	Indicator	Mean (n = 48)	SD
CR1	Cultural support for data-driven personnel decisions	2.08	0.68
CR2	Leadership Commitment to Merit Principles	2.06	0.67
CR3	Openness to Feedback and Learning	3.29	0.87
CR4	Positive perception of AC for development	3.40	1.09

Item Code	Indicator	Mean (n = 48)	SD
CR5	Institutionalization of Merit Practices	2.06	0.70
CR		2.58	0.56

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

CR is generally low ($M = 2.58$), indicating weak organizational support for merit-based and evidence-driven personnel management. Item-level analysis reveals consistently low mean scores for bureaucratic support for data-driven decisions (CR1; $M = 2.08$), leadership commitment to merit principles (CR2; $M = 2.06$), and the institutionalization of merit-based practices (CR5; $M = 2.06$). The relatively moderate and similar standard deviations across these indicators suggest that perceptions of limited merit orientation are broadly shared among respondents rather than being driven by isolated or extreme views. In contrast, indicators reflecting learning-oriented and development-focused attitudes at the individual or unit level show comparatively higher mean values. Openness to feedback and continuous learning following competency assessments (CR3) records a higher mean score ($M = 3.29$), accompanied by a larger standard deviation ($SD = 0.87$). Findings from the FGD clarify this variability: while the BKD has provided structured feedback and presentations of AC results to several PGAs, such practices have not been implemented consistently across all agencies, some PGAs have not yet received formal dissemination, resulting in divergent respondent experiences. This pattern indicates that openness to feedback exists in practice but remains inconsistent. Similarly, the perception of AC as a tool for personal development (CR4) is relatively favorable ($M = 3.40$), yet displays the highest dispersion among cultural indicators ($SD = 1.09$), suggesting uneven acceptance of assessment-based development across organizational units.

Overall, these findings reveal a cultural misalignment between relatively positive individual-level attitudes toward competency assessment and persistently weak leadership commitment and institutional norms supporting merit-based human resource management. This misalignment constrains the substantive integration of AC results into TM processes, regardless of existing technical or human readiness.

Barriers to Integration

Table 5. Questionnaire Results on Barriers to Integration

Item Code	Indicator	Mean (n = 48)	Mean (Reversed) (6 – Original Score)	SD
B1	Influence of personal relationships on decisions	4.08	1.92	0.77
B2	Absence of post-assessment development	3.65	2.35	0.79
B3	Limited AC Utilization	2.54	3.46	1.18
B4	Weak coordination among agencies	3.67	2.33	0.72
B5	Budgetary Constraints	3.69	2.31	0.78
B		3.53	2.48	0.52

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

Based on the original (non-reversed) scores, the barriers dimension records a relatively high mean value ($M = 3.53$), indicating that respondents generally agree that significant obstacles hinder the integration of AC results into TM processes. In particular, the influence of personal relationships on promotion and placement decisions (B1; $M = 4.08$) emerges as the most salient barrier, reflecting a strong perception that non-merit considerations continue to shape personnel decisions. Other items further reinforce this pattern. Respondents report limited post-assessment follow-up such as coaching, mentoring, or training (B2; $M = 3.65$), weak coordination between BKD and other PGAs in utilizing AC results (B4; $M = 3.67$), and constrained budget availability for post-assessment development activities (B5; $M = 3.69$). In addition, competency assessment reports are often perceived as not being systematically submitted to, or acted upon by, provincial leaders (B3; $M = 2.54$), suggesting that AC outputs frequently remain underutilized.

To ensure interpretive consistency with other dimensions, barrier items were reverse-scored at the item level prior to aggregation. After reverse scoring, the composite mean decreases to 2.48, indicating low readiness in overcoming barriers, or conversely, the persistence of substantial obstacles to AC-TM integration. This transformation allows higher scores across all dimensions to consistently reflect more favourable conditions. Findings from the FGD provide strong contextual support for these results. Participants emphasized that leaders do not question the technical accuracy of AC results; rather, they often choose not to use them, as personnel decisions continue to be dominated by personal relationships, seniority, or socio-political considerations. These governance-related barriers, combined with weak coordination and limited budgetary support, reinforce the institutional and cultural constraints identified earlier and help explain why AC results remain insufficiently integrated into TM practices.

Overall Organizational Readiness

Table 6. Summary of Organizational Readiness Scores

Readiness Dimension	SD	95% CI	Mean (n = 48)	Interpretation
IR	0.48	3.01–3.29	3.15	Moderate Readiness
TR	0.48	3.80–4.08	3.94	High Readiness
HRR	0.38	3.84–4.06	3.95	High Readiness
CR	0.56	2.42–2.74	2.58	Low-Moderate Readiness
B (reversed score)	0.52	2.33–2.63	2.48	Low Readiness (High Barriers)
Composite Readiness	0.49	3.08–3.36	3.22	Moderate Readiness

Source: Research Analysis, 2025

The composite organizational readiness score of 3.22 places the NTT Provincial Government in the category of moderate readiness. The relatively modest SD (0.49) and narrow 95% CI (3.08–3.36) indicate a stable overall assessment and limited dispersion in respondent perceptions at the aggregate level. However, this composite score conceals substantial variation across readiness dimensions. TR and HRR are both classified as high, with relatively low SD values, indicating consistent perceptions of strong assessment infrastructure, digital capacity, and individual competencies across respondents. Their corresponding confidence intervals are also relatively narrow, suggesting robust and reliable estimates. In contrast, IR remains at a moderate level, reflecting incomplete procedural formalization and limited routinization of AC results in personnel decision-making processes.



CR is comparatively lower, falling within the low–moderate readiness range and exhibiting higher variability, as reflected in a larger SD and wider confidence interval. This suggests uneven internalization of merit-based and evidence-driven norms across organizational units. Furthermore, the barriers dimension records a low mean score which—given its reverse coding—indicates the continued presence of substantial implementation constraints. The moderate SD and CI for this dimension suggest that these barriers are perceived consistently across respondents rather than being isolated concerns. The overall readiness profile can therefore be characterized as “technically and individually ready, but institutionally and culturally unprepared.” This asymmetry explains why AC outputs remain underutilized and why TM implementation has not progressed beyond formal compliance.

Discussion

This study offers a novel contribution by demonstrating that organizational readiness for AC–TM integration is inherently asymmetric rather than uniform. While prior studies tend to conceptualize readiness as a single or additive organizational condition, the findings from the NTT reveal a pronounced imbalance across readiness dimensions. Technical systems and individual human capacities are relatively well developed, yet institutional arrangements and organizational culture remain weak. This imbalance generates a readiness paradox, in which formally high readiness—reflected in regulatory compliance, assessment infrastructure, and assessor capability—masks substantial implementation constraints, resulting in symbolic rather than substantive integration of AC outputs into TM decisions. By shifting analytical attention from aggregate readiness levels to the configuration and balance of readiness dimensions, this study extends organizational readiness theory and provides a more nuanced explanation of persistent policy–practice gaps in public administrations.

The results further show that the readiness of the NTT Provincial Government for AC–TM integration is characterized by a significant disconnect between policy intent and operational practice. Although regulations such as Governor Regulation No. 67/2021 provide a strong formal basis for competency-based TM, implementation mechanisms remain underdeveloped. This condition mirrors the “policy–practice gap” described by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017), where reforms are adopted in form but not in function, and aligns with Poljašević et al. (2025), who argue that public-sector HR initiatives often remain symbolic when operational structures are weak. Similar to the findings of Pendid (2016) on AC adaptation in Indonesia, the regulatory framework in NTT has not been supported by standardized operating procedures or consistent managerial routines, thereby limiting the practical value of assessment data for staffing and development decisions.

TR appears relatively strong; however, the absence of interoperability between *Si-Penkom*, *Si-Kinerja* and other HR Systems prevents competency and performance data from being integrated into a coherent TM information system. This contradiction supports Webster and Gardner’s (2019) observation that technological capability alone does not guarantee innovation adoption in the absence of institutional alignment. It also echoes Wagoga et al. (2023), who note that Indonesian regional governments frequently possess digital tools but lack system-wide coordination, resulting in fragmented governance outcomes. Thus, while digital competence is increasingly recognized as a core capability of civil servants (Herwanto et al., 2024), the institutional and policy environment required to enable meaningful digital integration remains insufficient.

HRR exhibits a similar pattern of unevenness. Assessors and IT personnel demonstrate high levels of technical expertise, yet interpretive capability among line managers and agency leaders remains limited. This constrains the translation of AC results into development planning or career decision-making. These findings are consistent with Fletcher's (2016) assertion that the effectiveness of AC depends not only on methodological rigor but also on managerial capacity to understand and apply assessment outcomes. They also reinforce the conclusions of Boyle (2016) and Betti and Monobe (2016) that assessment systems generate strategic value only when embedded within managerial decision-making processes—conditions that have not yet been fully established in NTT.

CR emerges as the most significant constraint on AC-TM integration. Despite growing employee interest in competency-based development, leadership behavior continues to prioritize political loyalty, seniority, and personal ties over merit-based considerations. This finding aligns with Nishimura et al. (2021), who emphasize that weak meritocratic norms can undermine HRM reforms even when technical instruments are available. It also supports Weiner's (2009) view that organizational readiness requires collective commitment, not merely capacity, and echoes the study of Boselie and Thunnissen (2017) that public-sector TM is frequently constrained by institutionalized non-merit norms. As observed in other Indonesian regions such as South and Central Sulawesi (Maulida & Musdalifah, 2022), cultural resistance in NTT limits the influence of AC results on high-stakes personnel decisions.

Overall, these findings reinforce and extend organizational readiness theory by demonstrating that readiness is both multidimensional and interdependent. High levels of TR and HRR cannot compensate for weak institutional frameworks and unsupportive organizational culture. The NTT case illustrates how asymmetric readiness can produce a readiness paradox; whereby strong formal preparedness coexists with minimal practical integration. In doing so, this study deepens existing insights on AC-TM integration (Povah & Thornton, 2016; (Herd et al., 2015) and advances understanding of how readiness imbalances—rather than readiness deficits alone—shape public-sector HRM reform outcomes.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study have several important implications for both policy formulation and practical implementation of TM in the NTT Provincial Government. First, the results indicate that regulatory alignment alone is insufficient to ensure integration of AC outputs into TM processes. Although Governor Regulation No. 67/2021 provides a solid policy foundation, the lack of operational instruments—such as SOPs, workflows, and technical guidelines—creates a significant implementation gap. Policymakers need to prioritize the development of these operational mechanisms to translate policy intent into actionable procedures.

Second, the study highlights the need for a comprehensive digital integration strategy. The current fragmentation of *Si-Penkom* and *Si-Kinerja* prevents competency and performance data from being used systematically for talent identification. For practical implementation, BKD must invest in an integrated TM Information System and formally assign responsibility for system integration and maintenance. Third, the findings underscore the central role of leadership commitment and organizational culture. Even when technical and human capacities exist, the integration will not occur unless decision-makers consistently use AC data in organization deliberations and staffing decisions. Support from top leadership as a key factor in organizational change (Faupel & Süß, 2019; Nurwahyulingsih et al., 2022), therefore is crucial for shifting entrenched norms and reducing political discretion in personnel management. Besides, reform efforts require not only technical solutions but also cultural interventions that promote meritocracy, transparency, and data-driven decision-making.

Finally, the study suggests that practical implementation should involve capacity building beyond assessors. Agency top managers, middle managers, supervisors and HR officers must be trained in interpreting AC results, preparing IDPs, and linking competency insight to career development. Without this interpretive capability across the system, AC results will remain underutilized.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the NTT Provincial Government exhibits a condition of asymmetric organizational readiness in integrating AC outputs into its TM system. While technical readiness and core human resource capability—particularly among assessors and IT personnel—are relatively high, institutional and cultural readiness remain weak. The absence of operational guidelines, limited system integration, and uneven interpretive capacity among agency leaders constrain institutional readiness. More critically, cultural readiness is undermined by persistent political discretion and non-merit considerations in staffing and placement decisions. As a result, AC outputs are produced with technical rigor but are not systematically utilized in talent identification, development planning, or career decision-making. The organization can therefore be characterized as ready in capacity but not in commitment, ready in skill but not in behaviour. This condition explains why TM implementation in NTT remains largely symbolic despite moderate aggregate readiness scores and substantial investments in assessment infrastructure.

The findings contribute to the literature on public-sector human resource reform by demonstrating that technological advancement and professional expertise alone are insufficient to drive evidence-based talent management. Effective AC–TM integration requires balanced readiness across institutional, technical, human, and cultural dimensions. Without aligned organizational routines and leadership-driven cultural change, readiness gaps will continue to transform reform initiatives into formal compliance rather than substantive practice. Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, although the questionnaire respondents were purposively selected based on expertise in AC and TM ($n = 48$), the findings may not fully capture perspectives from all agencies within the provincial government. Future studies could employ larger and more diverse samples to enhance generalizability. Second, the qualitative component relied on a single Focus Group Discussion; additional FGDs or in-depth interviews could provide richer insight into political and inter-agency dynamics shaping AC utilization. Finally, as this study focuses on a single provincial government, comparative research across multiple regions would be valuable to identify broader patterns of organizational readiness within Indonesia's decentralized governance system.

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