

# Brief Note Roles and Activities of the Center for Child Development, Department of Special Education at the Indonesia University of Education

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## Brief Note

### **Roles and Activities of the Center for Child Development, Department of Special Education at the Indonesia University of Education**

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#### **Abstract**

This article aims to report on the roles and activities of the Center for Child Development in the Department of Special Education, the Indonesia University of Education. The purpose of the center is to develop special education, to provide educational support services for children with special needs, and to train teachers, parents, and students to intervene with children with special needs. The main activity of this Center is educational service, because children needing such services are increasing. However, the skills of the staff members and quality, quantity, and variety of the available educational aids are very limited. Consequently, it is important to establish interdisciplinary cooperation with other professions and institutions to improve skills of the staff members and supply the equipment and aids which are needed for educational services.

**Key words :** Center for Child Development, Children with special needs, Educational services, Special educational needs, Inclusive education, Indonesia

#### **Introduction**

Recently, the concept of special education has been changed to a new paradigm in which the term special educational needs is used instead of handicapped or disability (Johnsen and Skjorten, 2000<sup>2)</sup>; Wood, 1989<sup>3)</sup>; Corbett and Slee, 2000<sup>1)</sup>). The Special Educational Needs (SEN) concept is associated with placing everyone along a continuum, based on the assumption that there is no clear and categoric distinction

between the handicapped and the non-handicapped (Norwich, 1996<sup>3)</sup>). In addition, inclusive education has been used increasingly in the field of special education (UNESCO, 1995<sup>4)</sup>).

Inclusive education has started with radical school reform, changing the existing system and rethinking the entire curriculum of the school in order to meet the needs of all children. It also means to take education to an ordinary class or neighborhood school for a child who would normally require individual support as needed with extra attention to address specific needs, such as the teaching of self care or communication skills not easily taught in the ordinary

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classroom. Inclusive education however, is not incompatible with the presence of an additional support person in the classroom.

In relation to the issues mentioned above, a group of Indonesian parents provides educational services through establishing some therapeutic institutions to support their children who are able to go to regular schools. These efforts, however, are still not sufficient to implement inclusive education perfectly (Sunardi, 2000<sup>4)</sup>). Putting inclusive education in place, presupposes close cooperation among government, parents, NGO, and schools because each institution has its own responsibility to implement inclusive education successfully.

The Department of Special Education at the Indonesia University of Education has many roles, especially in responding to the new paradigm of special education as well as supporting the efforts of parents. In 1999, faculty members established a Center for Child Development in order to facilitate inclusive education in Indonesia. Thus far, the Center has not established cooperative ties with any other institutions either nationally or internationally.

### **Objectives of the Center**

The vision of the Center for Child Development is to be a model of educational services for children with special needs and to be a facilitator in implementing inclusive education in Indonesia. The objectives of the Center are :

- a. to develop the concept of special education based on research,
- b. to develop educational services for children with special needs,
- c. to give children with special needs access to regular schools as well as other educational settings,
- d. to prepare data and information needed by teachers, parents, and society about educa-

- tion for children with special needs,
- e. to train teachers and parents about child development, and
- f. to give students of special education department an opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills.

### **Activities of the Center**

The main activities of the Center are research, training of parents and teachers, and educational services for children with special needs.

#### **a. Research**

Research activities aim to enrich techniques and methods that are useful for child intervention.

#### **b. Training**

The training is carried out to help parents supervise the daily activities of their child. This training also aims to improve teachers' skills in teaching and guidance.

#### **c. Educational Services**

At present, activities related to educational services are as follows :

##### **1) Educational services include :**

- (1) Identification and testing; aims to identify problems, ability, and other needs of a child
- (2) Counseling and treatment
- 2) Discussions with school teachers and trainers of children with special educational needs outside the Center.

### **Professional Staff**

The staff of the Center for Child Development consists of ten individuals who are also lecturers in the Special Education Department. All of them have special education background with various specialties : teachers for children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, developmental disabilities, physical impairments, and behavior disorders, and some psy-

**Table 1** Professional staff at the Center for Child Development

Gender	Age	Field of Study	Responsibility
M	43	Education for persons with Developmental disability	Assessor of child development
M	45	Education for persons with developmental disability	Trainer in behavior modification
F	50	Education for physically impaired persons	Sensory motor trainer
F	42	Education for persons with behavior disorder (s)	Behavior modification trainer
F	48	Education for hearing impaired persons	Speech disorder trainer
F	38	Education for hearing impaired persons	Speech disorder trainer
M	38	Education for persons with developmental disability	Trainer for reading and writing problems
M	47	Education for visually impaired persons	Instructor for orientation and mobility
M	42	Education for visually impaired persons	Researcher
F	58	Psychology	Psychological consultant

**Table 2** Profile of children with special needs served by the Center (1999-2002)

Special Needs	1999		2000		2001		2002		Numbers
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Language Disorder	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	3
Sensory Motor Dysfunction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Speech Disorder	-	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	5
Learning Disability	-	-	-	1	-	2	2	2	7
Hyperactivity	-	-	-	1	4	-	3	1	9
Communication Disorder	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Attention Deficit Disorder	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Emotional Disturbance	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	3
Down's Syndrome	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	6
Cerebral Palsy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total	1	0	3	5	8	3	9	8	37

chologists. Table 1 shows the, gender, age, he field of study, and the area of expertise of each staff member.

### Clients

Table 2 shows profiles of the children with special needs served by the Center. The number of the children receiving educational services has

been gradually increasing from 1999 up to 2002. In addition, the learning barriers of the children visiting this Center include language disorders, sensory motor dysfunction, speech disorders, learning disabilities, hyperactivity, communication disorders, emotional disturbances, attention deficit disorders, Down's syndrome, and cerebral palsy. The age of clients from 1999 to 2002

**Table 3** Equipment and educational aids available at the Center

Equipment & aids	Year Developed	Quantity
Hearing Aid	1984	1 unit
WISC-R	1980	6 unit
VICTA	1980	1 unit
Arithmetic Teaching Aid	1984	1 set
Language Teaching Aid	1984	1 unit
Sensory Motor Training Aid	1986	1 unit
CCTV	1990	2 unit
Braille Computer	2000	1 unit
MVPT	1980	1 set
QNST	1980	1 set
Montessori Therapy Equipment	1986	1 set
Visual Function Test	1980	1 unit

ranged between 3.5 to 10 years.

The clients who visited the center mostly come from Bandung and around the Indonesia University of Education where the center is located. The distance from clients' home to the Center varies from 3 to 60 km.

#### **Educational Aids**

Table 3 indicates the educational aids available at this Center. All of them can be categorized into: test batteries, teaching aids, and sensory motor training aids. Some of them are very limited and out-of-date. Some of the available aids at the Center are not suitable for the problems of the clients. For example, special aids are needed to develop the concentration of hyperactive clients. In addition, the Center does not have aids for developing balance and sensory motor such as, ABS-Sensoball, Physio-Roll, Motorik-Koffer Nr1.

#### **Current System of Educational Services at the Center**

The provision of educational services to children with special needs by the Center follows the procedures indicated below:

1. Identification and assessment

The key in this phase is to obtain detailed

information on the child's overall condition. A consulting team is in charge. The results of this assessment serve as the foundation for educational service activity provided in each case.

2. Program arrangement

Teachers (personnel) responsible together with a consulting team are in charge of arranging the relevant educational service program. The program design is discussed and approved by the parents who are asked to actively participate in the implementation.

3. Program application

A child with disability is provided with individual educational services at the Center.

In every contact, the staff members will keep records available to both parents and the staff members. Child progress reports will be made continually and periodically. The results of the evaluation will be used for reference at case conferences.

Based on a case conference, a follow-up intervention is recommended to the parents. Some alternatives recommended to parents include:

1. Continuation of the program.

2. Continuation of the program to a regular school with or without special teacher guidance.

Figure 1 shows mechanism of educational services at the center.

**Method of Educational Services**

Conditions, backgrounds, and age of children who obtain educational services in this Center show a great variation. Intervention for children with special needs who come from special schools or regular schools is undertaken with the following two methods :

1. The Center for Child Development sends someone or special teachers to the related school. All activities of special teachers fall completely under the Center’s control and responsibility. This service system is intended to assist children and teachers to

control the ongoing learning activity in the school.

2. Schools or parents send a child to the Center at given times, then the child returns to his/her school to pursue further learning activity.

These two methods can also be applied to pre-school exceptional children by providing educational services completely at home by sending special teachers, otherwise the parents take their child to the Center for Child Development instead.

**Discussion**

The Center for Child Development has various difficulties in implementing its main function to provide educational services for children with special educational needs in order to pave the way for inclusive education.

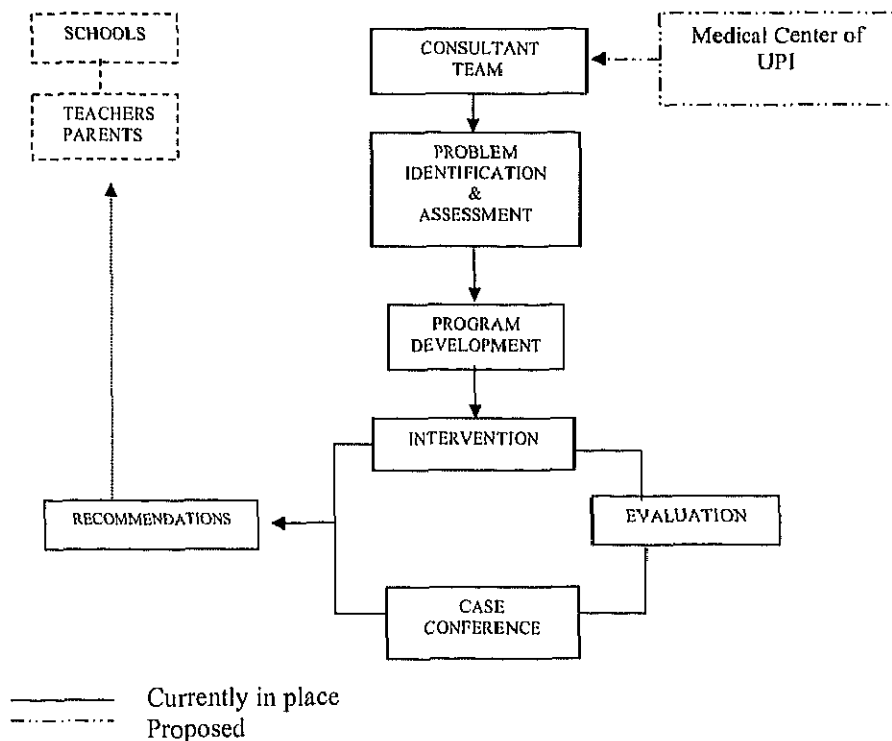


Figure 1 Current System of Educational Services at the Center

Parents or teachers have been very receptive to this service. This is evident from the increasing number of children with special needs who come to the Center annually. This in turn means a great demand for more skilled staff. Therefore, a closer cooperation with other professionals such as neurologists, ophthalmologists, physiotherapists, psychiatrists, and speech therapists is needed.

The main activity of this Center is educational service, because children needing such services are increasing. However, the skills of the staff members and quality, quantity, and variety of the available educational aids are very limited. Consequently, it is important to establish interdisciplinary cooperation with other professions and institutions to improve skills of the staff members and supply the equipment and aids which are needed for educational services. It is also necessary to cooperate with related institutions at home and abroad.

The present awareness and attitudes of society toward inclusive education are still negative and should be changed. Hopefully, our Center will be able to support the implementation of inclusive education by providing and disseminating the related information.

Implementing special education in Indonesia may be influenced by many factors. These factors include; that most of children with

disability live in isolated area, problems with transportation to go to school, most of special schools are located in the city and far away from their home. The center, hopefully, as a model of educational services for the children with disability, should be developed by other universities in diverse area.

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