

Autism Service Center (ASC) Management: Role of Government Service for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Children

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Abstract

Based on the data from (klinikautis.com), the number of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Indonesia increases by up to 134.000. Therefore, the government established a special program to take care of ASD children, namely Autism Service Center (ASC). ASC is a place for children who have psychological and physical disorders to get special education. The results of observation shows that many ASD children of Early Childhood Education in Blitar City were not handled well. The research aims to describe and analyze more deeply about the ASC program management as well as the inhibiting and supporting factors in the implementation of the ASC program in Blitar City. This research applied a qualitative research approach with a case study design. The data collection techniques used were observation, interview, and document study. The subjects of this research were the head of the ASC, educators/therapists, program implementing assistants, and students and their parents. Source and method triangulation were applied to check the validity. The data analysis was done through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that the management which consisted of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling had been carried out systematically and efficiently. The inhibiting factors in the implementation of the program were parents who were less disciplined in selecting dietary for their children, home program was not run properly, and the time span of therapy was very short. Whereas the supporting factors were the supports from other agencies for the ASC program, the educators/therapists were capable in their field of expertise, and parents' active-participation in parenting to increase their knowledge in taking care of ASD children.

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, there were only five ASC organized by the government until 2013. These ASC are located in Malang, Riau, Jakarta, Bali, and South Kalimantan. So far, ASD children in Blitar City are still handled by private institutions managed by the community. Besides the limited number of institutions that handle ASD children, the costs for it are also expensive enough so that it becomes a problem for parents who are economically classified as underprivileged. At the end of 2013, the ministry of education and culture will establish 24 ASC in a number of cities in several provinces across the country (www.beritasatu.com). One city that is given the mandate to establish the ASC program in Blitar City, which was officially established in May 2015. The ASC is one of the solutions provided by the government to overcome these conditions. It is expected that the ASC program will be a new solution as support in providing services for ASD children.

The establishment of the ASC in Blitar City was motivated by various issues related to the condition of children with special needs. Since the ASC was founded, there have been 338 children registered as students. The data are a comprehensive calculation of various ages and other special needs. The ASC is an effort that can be done by the government to help children to be able to live independently by providing continuous maintenance in the form of therapeutic activities (Kardilah *et al.*, 2017). For parents and professionals, they need to use a special approach to take care of ASD children. Parents' lack of knowledge in dealing with ASD children will have an impact on the inconsistency of the services provided. On the other hand, to reduce the symptoms of ASD children, they must be given appropriate therapy/treatment continuously.

Children with ASD disorders are less well accepted by society (Karal & Riccomini, 2016). Therefore, the government needs to improve this service by providing more specialists to take care of ASD children, promoting inclusive schools and providing more information to the wider

society about early treatment on children with special needs (Alotaibi & Almalki, 2016). Therefore, in order to make ASD children to be well accepted by the society, it is necessary to have wider socialization about ASD children in particular, and children with special needs in general. One of the strategies that can be done is to add professional staff in taking care of the ASD children. In addition, the ASC provides the opportunity for the society to get to know children with special needs by conducting seminars/workshops.

Children with ASD disorders are found in Early Childhood schools in Blitar City. It is because this disorder often appeared in the first two years of their lives (Wiyani, 2014). If there are children of early childhood who are suspected of having ASD disorders or those with special needs, it is recommended for them to attend the ASC in Blitar City. This is done with the purpose that education can be implemented comprehensively without intimidation for children with special needs.

In Blitar City, there has not been a special institution to take care of disabled children. So, the ASC is the only government institution that provides services for them. Not only ASD children who registered, but also those with other special needs such as down syndrome, cerebral palsy, ADD, ADHD, hearing impaired, speak delay, mental retardation, GDD, behavioral disorders, rubella, and mentally disabled people. This phenomenon is not in accordance with the vision, mission, and objectives of the ASC Blitar City. The program that should focus only on ASD children turns out to serves children with other special needs as well in the implementation so that they can only use the available facilities. The purpose of this study is to analyze and describe the management, and the inhibiting and supporting factors of the ASC program in Blitar City.

According to George & Terry (2016), management is a process or framework that involves the guidance or influence of a group of people towards organizational goals. It can be concluded that management is an effort to manage and organize an institution in running

the programs and utilizing human resources to achieve a goal. Latifah & Widiastuti (2018) stated four management processes called POAC, namely Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling.

Planning is a process of determining what goals will be pursued in a certain period of time so that these goals can be achieved (Talibo, 2018). It can be said that planning is a process of activities in setting goals, or steps to be done in order to achieve goals effectively and efficiently.

Organizing is a process of arranging an organizational structure in accordance with the goals of the organization, its resources, and the environment (Mungal, 2015). It can be concluded that organizing is a process of arranging resources neatly by assigning and coordinating tasks to a group.

Implementation is an effort to make a plan come true through various directions and motivations so that every teaching and educational staff can perform the activities optimally (Supiani *et al.*, 2016). It can be stated that implementation is the process of directing and influencing the activities related to the work of all group members.

Controlling can be defined as a process to assure that the objectives of the organization and the management can be achieved (Allison & Kaye, 2005). This deals with the strategies to carried out the activities as planned. This definition shows that there is a very close relationship between planning and controlling. It can be said that controlling is the supervision of the planned program implementation process. Based on the research findings, it is found the inhibiting and supporting factors in the implementation of the ASC program in Blitar City.

METHODS

This research applied a qualitative research approach with a case study design. Qualitative research intends to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects in a descriptive form (Moleong, 2017). This research focuses on certain cases or problems such as testing in detail

on one setting or one subject. In other words, this is a research conducted to observe problems systematically and accurately about certain facts and objects.

The data collected in this study were those that describe (1) program management (which consists of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling), and (2) inhibiting and supporting factors of the program. The data collection techniques used were observation, interview, and document study. The research subjects were the head of the ASC, educators/therapists, a program implementing assistants, and students and their parents. Source and method triangulation were applied to check the validity. The data analysis was done through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Management of the ASC Program in Blitar City

Management is the ability or skill in managing activities dealing with other people to achieve a certain goal, namely through planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling (Fauzi & Widiastuti, 2018). The ASC program planning in Blitar City plays an important role in determining what will be done when implementing an institution's program. Planning was done in the meetings of educators and educational staff in the ASC program in Blitar City. The type of planning prepared included the arrangement of the vision, mission, and objectives of the program. The aim of the ASC program in Blitar City is to fully assure the rights of children to be able to live, grow, and participate optimally in accordance with the dignity of humanity, and to get protection from violence and discrimination for the realization of independent and noble Indonesian children. Whereas, the implementation of the program was inseparable from financial support. The ASC program in Blitar City received funds from educational operational support, regional expenditure budget, state expenditure budget and voluntarily donations form students' guardians.

The organization of the ASC program in Blitar City started from the division of the tasks. Each teaching and educational staff in the ASC has their own duties and functions. The tasks were adjusted to their expertise so that the program can reach its targets maximally. Facilities and infrastructure at the ASC program in Blitar City were good and complete. The classrooms used for therapy were very comfortable and teaching aids or tools to support the therapy were suitable with the class settings. Nevertheless, there were still therapeutic rooms that had not been used optimally because of the support details are still in development process.

The main implementations of the ASC program in Blitar City are assessment services, integrated intervention services, and transition education services. Figure 1 is the main service flow for ASD children.

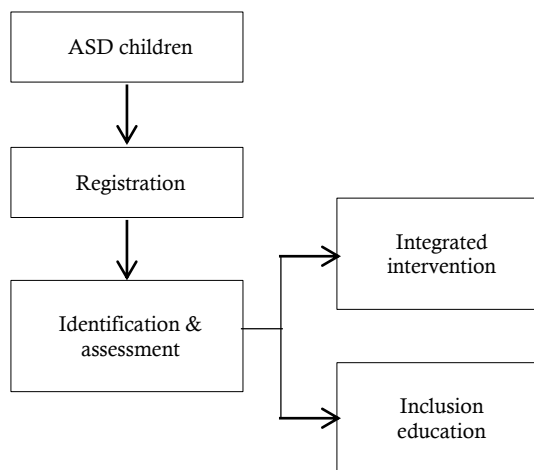


Figure 1. Flow of Main Services Mechanism

The first was the assessment service. It was one of the service units that was applied to conduct identification and assessment services for ASD children. The second was the integrated intervention service. It consisted of psychological intervention services and medical services. The third was transition education services. It consisted of pre-academic education services and placement services in formal and non-formal schools. The results of the main service are the determination of interventions given to children was in accordance with the results of observations carried out for 2 weeks. If there are children who

can be developed cognitively, then the child belongs to transitional education. Children can also attend both formal and non-formal education. During the education, the ASC provides assistance to monitor their development.

Besides the main services that have been explained before, the next are general services. The flow of general services mechanism is presented in figure 2.

The last was general services. It included consulting services, family, school, and community services, as well as study and development. These services are targetted at the wider community which includes parents, individuals, institutions and schools. The results show that public services were carried out in accordance with the objectives, namely providing a place for the society both institutions and individuals to obtain information or knowledge about taking care of ASD children through training/workshops organized by the ASC in Blitar City.

The results of the interview with the head of the ASC program in Blitar City were in the implementation of the ASC program there is always direction and guidance from the leadership. It was done every day. It is done in the morning ceremony before the program activities begin. Coordination was carried out to synchronize perception in giving programs to students. The divisions of behavioral therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech development, transition education were all interrelated and could not stand alone. Every student had different needs so that one student did not only get one program. They could get three therapeutic programs at the same time according to the children's needs. Thus, every division must coordinate with each other to synchronize the appropriate activities for students according to their needs. By doing that, the objectives could be achieved maximally. In addition, in order to be able to run as expected, supports from other agencies such as the health department, social services, education offices, and other agencies are needed in the implementation of the program. The advantage of this support was that it was easier for the ASC

program in Blitar City to give information to the society about ASC programs.

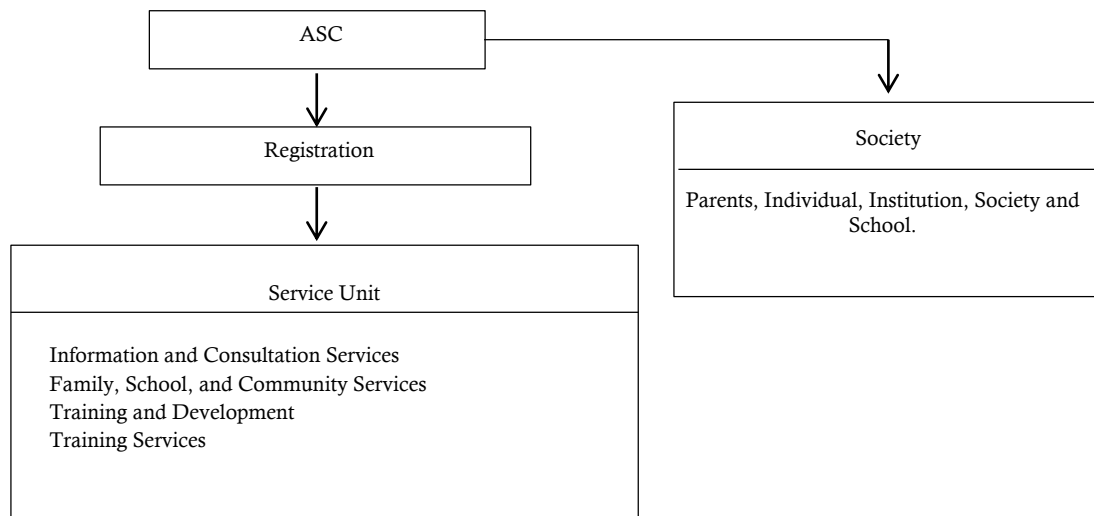


Figure 2. Flow Chart of General Services Mechanism

Controlling is done by the chairman by supervising activities on the performance of educators/therapists during intervention activities. This activity was carried out in order to control the implementation of the program so that it stayed on the right path as had been planned. In addition, the purpose of controlling was to find out the problems faced by educators/therapists during the implementation program process. Controlling was done not only during the program implementation process but also during self-development meeting activities. The purpose of these activities was to find out the obstacles experienced during the implementation process.

Inhibiting and Supporting Factors of the Implementation of ASC Program in Blitar City

The results of the implementation of ASC program management for ASD students in Blitar City show a significant increase. It is supported by Kusnadi's research (2015) which revealed that the role of educators/therapists is very helpful in the process of healing ASD children with various methods and models. However, there were also inhibiting and supporting factors in the program.

The problems experienced during intervention activities caused by various factors such as parents who were less discipline in giving

a good diet in accordance with the instructions or directions from the ASC, and parents who were less assertive and did not implement home programs consistently. This is in line with the results from Siwi & Anganti (2017), it is stated that providing therapy to children must be done continuously so that they can have a significant improvement. If the home program is not carried out continuously, it will hinder the ASC program.

Environmental factors become a major factor in children development progress, one of which is family (Anggraini, 2013). In addition, the therapeutic schedule that did not meet the target, which is only 45-60 minutes, lead the intervention implementation was less conducive. This is supported and has similarities with the research conducted by Artanti (2012), stating that the obstacles during the implementation of the program include conditions/ children behavior that is not conditioned, a therapeutic schedule that is short enough so that it does not meet targets, parents who are less cooperative, and inadequate facilities and infrastructures.

Other than the inhibiting factors, there were also supporting factors in the implementation of the program. There were three main supporting factors in the implementation of the ASC program in Blitar City there were good supports from agencies that can be used to

socialize the ASC program to the wider society, good cooperation from parents and educators/therapists, and the ASC program in Blitar City routinely held parenting 1-2 times a month.

The support from other agencies meant was the support from the education office, social service, and health service. The health service worked together with a local government hospital whose role was to provide health care and monitor the development of ASD children. While parenting is given to parents by providing materials about understanding of children with special needs and how to take care of them. With the purpose of adding insight for parents in taking care of ASD children. For educators/therapists, it suggested to always improve new knowledge about education and how to take care of children with special needs through comparative study activities/workshops either at the ASC or outside the Blitar City ASC.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the procedures were carried out in accordance with the principles and functions of the management. The planning that had been prepared was carried out in detail and systematically starting from the identification of the program, determining the vision, mission, and objectives to be achieved, making preparations for the program to be carried out in accordance with predefined procedures. Organizing was done very well. The tasks of the teaching and educational staff were in accordance with their own duties and functions. The program was carried out in accordance with predefined procedures. The evaluation was done by providing supervision, self-development, and routine meetings.

The results of the research found the inhibiting and the supporting factors in the implementation of the Blitar City ASC program. The Inhibiting factors include; the time given to students during therapy is very short, parents who were less discipline over the food supply given to children (should be a diet food), and the home program was not implemented continuously.

Whereas, the supporting factors of the ASC program were; enthusiastic support from other agencies such as the education office, health service, social service, and other agencies was very good, and the educators/therapists were capable in their field of expertise.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Overall, the procedures were carried out in accordance with the principles and functions of the management

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