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**MANAGEMENT OF THE EXCELLENT CLASS PROGRAM AT
SMPIT ABU BAKAR YOGYAKARTA
IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2024–2025**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the strategy of managing superior classes at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta in order to improve the quality of education and student learning achievement. Superior classes are classes that are specifically designed for students who have high academic potential and require an intensive, innovative learning approach, and are supported by adequate facilities. The research method used is a qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the study indicate that the strategy of managing superior classes at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta is carried out through careful planning, organizing learning structures, implementing active teaching, and systematic evaluation. Supporting factors in the implementation of superior classes include teacher quality, parental involvement, and learning facilities. The obstacles faced include social disparities between classes, limited certain facilities, and variations in student character. The solutions implemented include teacher training, improving communication between classes, and optimizing the use of learning technology.

Keywords: *Excellent Class, Class Management, Learning Achievement, Learning Strategies*



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Introduction

Education plays a strategic role in shaping an excellent generation, particularly in facing the dynamics of globalization characterized by challenges and competition. Education is not merely an instrument for knowledge transfer, but also a process of character formation and the holistic development of human potential. From this perspective, the primary function of education is to equip the younger generation with intellectual capacity, skills, and values required to adapt and contribute in the future.

In line with this, various educational institutions have innovated to improve the quality of the learning process, one of which is through the development of *excellent class programs*. The excellent class is a form of special educational service for students with above-average academic potential and intelligence. According to (Ngadirun 2009), excellent classes are composed of students who pass through a strict selection process, such as having a high IQ and outstanding academic performance (Suhartono 2009). This concept is also supported by (Hadi 2015), who describes the excellent class as a space for fostering students' talents and creativity in meeting their learning needs.

From a regulatory perspective, although the Indonesian National Education System Law does not explicitly mention the term *excellent class*, Article 5 paragraph (4) provides a legal basis by stating that students with potential intelligence and/or special talents have the right to receive special education. This phrase serves as a normative legitimacy for the establishment of excellent classes in particular schools (Memahami Makna Hakikat Pendidikan Nasional t.t.)

The urgency of managing excellent classes is highly significant, as it presents unique challenges in terms of classroom management, learning methods, and strategies for student potential development. Classroom management refers to a series of teacher actions to create a conducive environment for both academic and socio-emotional learning. Therefore, teachers in excellent classes are required to possess strong pedagogical, professional, and managerial competencies (Evertson & Weinstein 2006).

From a phenomenological perspective, there is a real need in the field for educational services that can accommodate high-potential students to help them grow optimally. This need underlies the establishment of the excellent class program at SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta, an integrated Islamic school located in Umbulharjo District, Yogyakarta City. In the 2024/2025 academic year, the school officially launched its excellent class program, based on strict academic selection and oriented toward holistic student development, covering cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Based on primary data obtained from direct observations and interviews with the school, it was found that the management of the excellent class at SMP IT Abu Bakar is supported

by several strategic programs, such as the provision of external tutors, complete learning facilities (LCD, air conditioning, student monitoring books), and afternoon tutoring sessions. These programs demonstrate the schools strong commitment to providing quality educational services oriented toward achieving excellent student outcomes.

Support for the implementation of the excellent class program is also evident in the readiness of school facilities and infrastructure, such as the provision of technology-based learning tools and systematic classroom administrative monitoring. These facts strengthen the argument that the management of excellent classes requires an integrated managerial approach, starting from curriculum planning, student service strategies, and teacher management, to the development of the overall learning environment.

Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth understanding of the management of the excellent class program at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta. The research was conducted directly through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with the principal, excellent class teachers, and students, as well as documentation of teaching materials and evaluation instruments.

The selection of participants was carried out using purposive sampling, with the criterion that respondents must be directly involved in the implementation of the excellent class program. Data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by (Miles, Huberman, dan Saldana 2013), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, triangulation of both sources and techniques was employed.

Results and Discussion

A. Excellent Class Planning

The learning design of the excellent class program at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta for the Academic Year 2024–2025 is systematically and strategically structured, based on the needs of the students. The process begins with mapping students initial abilities through academic tests, interviews, and character observations, which serve as the foundation for formulating learning strategies that align with students potential and intellectual profiles. This planning not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also emphasizes strengthening Islamic character, leadership, and social ethics.

According to (Ahyar 2022), the curriculum used in the excellent class is the national curriculum, modified with the addition of enrichment programs. These programs include project-based learning, mini scientific research, English public speaking, and cross-subject thematic learning designed to stimulate higher-order thinking skills (HOTS). Furthermore, Islamic mentoring activities, scientific study circles (*halaqah*), and daily worship practices are integrated into the learning plan from the beginning of the academic year. This

illustrates that excellent class planning is not only directed at academic achievement but also the holistic development of character in line with the vision of integrated Islamic education.

All teachers involved in the excellent class program actively participate in the preparation of the Lesson Plans (RPP), which are designed to be flexible, adaptive, and based on continuous reflection. These lesson plans are structured to encourage active interaction, independent exploration, and emotional engagement in learning. Teachers develop diverse and challenging learning strategies using digital media, interactive platforms, and differentiated approaches that take into account students' varied learning styles. The learning plan also incorporates remedial and enrichment schemes tailored to students' weekly competency achievements.

This planning aligns with the findings of (Suresmi 2020), who, in her study on quality learning management in excellent classes at *madrasah*, emphasized the importance of preparing an integrative and contextual curriculum accompanied by clear evaluation standards and implementation strategies. She argued that the quality of planning is the fundamental factor distinguishing excellent classes from regular ones, as it integrates academic, spiritual, and character dimensions in a holistic manner. A similar study conducted by (Iqbal et al. 2024) at SMA Negeri 3 Mataram also revealed that excellent class program planning must consider student input, teacher qualifications, specialized curriculum, and a conducive learning climate that fosters active student engagement from the outset of the educational process.

Teachers of the excellent class at SMPIT Abu Bakar are also provided with training and mentoring to design learning strategies that are responsive to contemporary developments. They do not only design content but also project alternative assessment methods such as portfolios, project-based evaluations, and student reflections as part of more comprehensive evaluation instruments. The learning plan is structured to facilitate student growth not only as learners but also as future leaders with noble character who are able to compete globally.

Thus, the learning plan for the excellent class at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta reflects an educational philosophy that is holistic and future-oriented. This planning serves as the foundation for ensuring that the entire learning process is directed, measurable, and transformative. The success of the excellent class is highly determined by the quality of planning, which integrates Islamic educational values, 21st-century competencies, and the individual needs of students into a unified learning system.

B. Implementation of the Excellent Class Program

The implementation of the excellent class program at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta represents a key phase of the overall management strategy designed to improve the quality of learning and students academic achievement. In this stage, various essential elements are

applied in a structured and integrated manner, including learning approaches, the role of teachers, the use of media, classroom management, and the cultivation of Islamic character. The process begins once students are selected based on specific criteria such as academic potential test results, report card grades, cognitive and psychological assessments, as well as motivation interviews. This selection is crucial to ensure that students admitted into the program demonstrate high learning readiness and strong cognitive abilities. Following the selection, the school develops a tailored learning program adapted to students' needs and potential.

In practice, the excellent class program adopts student-centered learning, positioning students as active participants, while teachers act as facilitators and mentors. Students are encouraged to engage in discussions, problem-solving, project development, and independent exploration of subject matter. Learning strategies such as problem-based learning (PBL), project-based learning, and mini-laboratory activities are characteristic of the program's implementation. This approach has proven effective in enhancing students' critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity.

Learning activities are conducted in classrooms equipped with modern facilities, including LCD projectors, classroom computers, air conditioning, and interactive whiteboards. Additionally, both teachers and students utilize digital platforms such as interactive quiz applications (Quizizz, Kahoot) to increase engagement and variety in learning. According to (Riswanto et al. 2024), the implementation of physics learning in excellent classes using diverse media and methods positively impacts student engagement and understanding of abstract concepts.

Classroom management during the implementation phase emphasizes discipline, administrative order, and a comfortable learning atmosphere. Each student is assigned rotational duties, maintains a progress logbook, and sets individual academic targets that are regularly monitored. The classroom environment is maintained to be conducive, clean, and orderly, with a code of conduct serving as behavioral guidelines. In the social and emotional dimension, the excellent class program also places strong emphasis on character and moral development. As SMPIT Abu Bakar is an integrated Islamic school, Islamic values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and respect for teachers are consistently instilled. Programs such as morning *muroja'ah* (Qur'an recitation), congregational *Dhuha* prayer, weekly mentoring, and other *tarbiyah* activities form an integral part of the daily routine.

Teachers regularly conduct reflections and evaluations of the learning process. Evaluation does not only focus on academic outcomes but also examines the effectiveness of the applied methods and student participation. Assessments include daily quizzes, project portfolios, and rubric-based performance evaluations. Learning outcomes are then

communicated to parents through regular forums such as Parent Meetings (Syamsiar et al. 2023).

The implementation of the excellent class extends beyond intraclass activities and is reinforced through academic extracurricular programs, such as science olympiads, scientific writing competitions, and English debates. Students who demonstrate outstanding performance are rewarded with certificates, coaching scholarships, or fee waivers for specific academic activities. This reward system is designed to motivate students to continuously improve and serve as role models for their peers.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the excellent class also faces challenges, such as the potential for excessive exclusivity, high academic workload, and differing perceptions between teachers and parents regarding learning targets. To address these issues, the school emphasizes the importance of humanistic and collaborative approaches, ensuring that the excellent class remains inclusive, psychologically healthy, and free from social disparities with regular classes. With its comprehensive, well-planned, and spiritually grounded approach, the excellent class at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta stands as a concrete example of how an educational institution can facilitate students best potential while maintaining balance between achievement and life values.

C. Learning Evaluation

The evaluation of the excellent class program is conducted periodically and systematically. The assessment does not only focus on students' cognitive aspects but also covers affective and psychomotor domains. Students who demonstrate improved performance receive recognition in the form of certificates or further coaching. Conversely, those who have not yet met the standard are provided with additional guidance through remedial programs and mentoring by teachers or peer tutors. This evaluation pattern aligns with findings published in the *Realita* journal, which highlights that learning in excellent classes is characterized by continuous monitoring of the teaching and learning process (Wulansari et al. 2017).

Nevertheless, the implementation of the excellent class program is not without challenges. One of the most significant challenges is the social and psychological gap between students in excellent classes and those in regular classes. Some regular class students feel marginalized or less appreciated due to limited access to the special programs available to excellent class students. This situation has the potential to create internal polarization that may disrupt school harmony. This issue is also emphasized by (Iqbal et al. 2024), who underscore the importance of fostering interaction between excellent and regular classes to cultivate a sense of togetherness and prevent jealousy.

Another challenge arises from internal teacher-related factors. Some teachers struggle to maintain consistency in applying innovative learning strategies due to administrative

demands and limited time. Teachers require continuous training and support from school management to remain updated with developments in pedagogy and educational technology. SMPIT Abu Bakar responds to this challenge by organizing periodic teacher training and establishing an internal teacher learning community aimed at sharing best practices.

In the context of long-term development, the school has begun integrating the use of a Learning Management System (LMS) as a medium to support blended learning. This initiative is regarded as a strategic step to strengthen the effectiveness of the excellent class, particularly in addressing the dynamics of post-pandemic education. Parental involvement also plays a crucial role in sustaining the excellent class program (Astari et al. 2024). SMPIT Abu Bakar regularly holds parent-school meetings to present reports on student progress and to gather feedback from parents as educational partners.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the management of the excellent class at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta has been carried out through a holistic and systemic approach. The success of the program's implementation is strongly determined by the synergy among principals, teachers, students, and parents. The strategies developed reflect the principles of modern educational management, namely thorough planning, innovative implementation, and continuous evaluation. By consistently adapting to challenges and contemporary demands, the excellent class program is expected to serve as a driving force for quality improvement in this integrated Islamic-based school.

D. Quality Improvement Strategies

The entire planning process of the Excellent Class program at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta is carried out comprehensively, systematically, and consistently. No decision is made suddenly or incidentally; rather, everything is designed based on students needs, the vision of modern Islamic education, and the ever-changing challenges of the times. From this standpoint emerges the conviction that excellence does not arise by chance, but from well-structured, reflective, and value-based planning. The quality improvement strategies of the Excellent Class at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta constitute a systematic and continuous approach aimed at enhancing the quality of educational services-covering academic performance, character development, spirituality, and school management. These strategies are focused on four key dimensions: strengthening inputs (students and teachers), developing the learning process, optimizing facilities and infrastructure, and improving educational outcomes and impacts.

First, quality improvement begins with the selection of high-quality student inputs, conducted through a rigorous academic and psychological selection process. Students admitted into the Excellent Class are those with strong intellectual potential, analytical reasoning skills, and high learning motivation. The selection process is not solely based on

test scores but also involves academic potential assessments and personal interviews to measure students psychosocial readiness for intensive learning programs.

Second, with regard to teachers, quality improvement is pursued through professional development. SMPIT Abu Bakar routinely organizes pedagogical workshops, training on the integration of Islamic values into learning, and mastery of educational technology. Teachers in the Excellent Class are equipped with innovative teaching skills such as technology-based learning, constructivist approaches, and active learning strategies including problem-based learning and cooperative learning. This supports the argument made by (Riswanto et al. 2024), who emphasize that teacher quality significantly determines the effectiveness of learning in excellent classes.

Furthermore, quality strategies are implemented by developing a differentiated curriculum tailored to the needs and potential of gifted students. The Excellent Class curriculum is not only aligned with national standards but is also enriched with additional components such as mini research projects, advanced literacy studies, STEM integration, and acceleration programs. Its implementation is supported by holistic and formative assessment systems so that students are evaluated not only on cognitive aspects but also affective and psychomotor domains. Another dimension of quality enhancement is the strengthening of school culture, which is built through a religious, conducive, disciplined, and collaborative learning environment. Islamic spiritual values are instilled through practices such as Qur'an memorization (*tahfiz*), daily recitation (*tilawah*), religious mentoring, and Islamic character building. These practices not only strengthen students' morality but also shape their character as the foundation for both academic and social achievements. This aligns with (Suresmi 2020) spiritual learning model, which highlights spirituality as a crucial element of quality learning in excellent classes.

Facilities and infrastructure are also an integral part of quality strategies. SMPIT Abu Bakar continues to optimize learning facilities, such as LCD projectors, science and computer laboratories, air-conditioned classrooms, stable internet connectivity, and digital libraries. All facilities are directed toward creating a modern and efficient learning environment. Research by (Iqbal et al. 2024) confirms that adequate facilities are essential for building an ideal excellent class and minimizing learning barriers.

In terms of teaching processes, quality improvement is carried out through innovative and research-based learning approaches. As noted by (Nurhayati et al. 2024), teachers are encouraged to design learning activities that foster critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (the 4Cs). Activities such as mini research projects, field explorations, and scientific projects are integral to the learning process. At the end of each semester, Excellent Class students also undergo a "Kompetensi Unggulan" assessment as a more challenging and applied form of formative and summative evaluation compared to regular examinations.

To reinforce the managerial dimension, quality strategies are also applied through regular monitoring and evaluation of the Excellent Class program by the school's internal quality management team. Evaluations are conducted using indicators of academic achievement, spirituality, discipline, as well as student and parent satisfaction. Feedback from these evaluations is used as the basis for policy refinement and program development. This approach is consistent with (Akdon 2007) strategic management evaluation model, which stresses that every strategy must be periodically monitored and corrected to remain aligned with the institution's long-term goals.

One special strategy to maintain quality sustainability is building strong partnerships between parents and the school through regular communication forums, learning progress reports, and parental involvement in school activities. Parental involvement serves as both external control and a motivating factor for students. Parents are also engaged in character and spiritual development at home, creating synergy between home and school education.

Finally, quality improvement is strengthened by implementing an educative reward and punishment system. Students who achieve academic excellence and demonstrate exemplary behavior are given recognition in the form of certificates, scholarships, and acknowledgment in school forums (Hasibuan 2022). Meanwhile, students who do not yet meet the targets are provided with remedial programs, personal guidance, and intensive coaching to ensure they are not left behind and remain motivated. This system is applied proportionally to create a healthy and competitive learning culture.

Overall, the quality improvement strategies in SMPIT Abu Bakar's Excellent Class represent an integrated approach that encompasses all aspects of education. By prioritizing spiritual values, innovative learning, teacher quality, and the support of school management and parents, these strategies have successfully created a sustainable educational ecosystem oriented toward multidimensional excellence.

E. Implications

Overall, the quality improvement strategies implemented in the excellent class program at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta have proven to be an integral approach encompassing all aspects of education. By emphasizing spiritual values, instructional innovation, teacher quality, and the support of school management and parents, these strategies have created a sustainable educational ecosystem oriented toward multidimensional excellence.

The implications of managing the excellent class at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta extend across various educational dimensions, including academic, social, managerial, and spiritual aspects. The program not only contributes to improved student learning outcomes but also exerts a broader influence on the school system, peer relationships, learning culture, and the quality of educators (Astuti 2023). Through a systemic and structured approach,

this strategy has generated tangible transformation in the dynamics of integrated Islamic education.

One major implication is the creation of an integrative and more meaningful learning system. In the excellent class, teachers are required to develop active, collaborative, and engaging teaching methods. This has triggered a transformation from conventional approaches toward learning based on exploration, investigation, and the strengthening of students' critical reasoning. (Suresmi 2020) highlights that excellent classes foster integrative and spiritually grounded learning systems that establish new standards of teaching quality in Islamic schools.

The positive impacts of the excellent class are also evident in students' increased motivation and academic achievement. Students in this program demonstrate a high enthusiasm for learning as they feel their potential and needs are being adequately addressed. Continuous evaluation through formative assessments, project-based learning, and advanced competency tests provides intrinsic motivation for ongoing development. In this context, teachers also experience professional growth, as they are required to continually improve their competencies. This aligns with findings by (Riswanto et al. 2024), which indicate that excellent classes motivate teachers to implement innovative teaching practices and enhance overall instructional quality.

Nevertheless, the management of excellent classes also brings complex social implications, particularly concerning the potential for segregation or disparities between excellent class students and those in regular classes. Some regular students, and even their parents, may perceive unequal treatment or privileges. If not carefully managed, this could result in social jealousy, excessive exclusivity, and disharmony among student groups. Therefore, effective communication strategies, integrative cross-class programs, and inclusive character development are crucial to mitigating these negative effects. Findings by (Iqbal et al. 2024) demonstrate that social gaps arising from class separation can be addressed through joint activities and the cultivation of egalitarian values within the school environment.

From a managerial perspective, the excellent class program has significant implications for school organizational structures and systems. School leaders and management teams must allocate time, resources, and specific policies to support the program-ranging from additional learning schedules, recruitment of high-quality human resources, to the provision of facilities and quality assurance systems. This requires a more professional and measurable system of monitoring and evaluation. As (Wati and Trihantoyo 2020) point out, the management of excellent classes demands commitment and coordination among all school stakeholders to ensure that the program serves as more than a symbol of prestige but truly enhances educational quality.

Another implication is the strengthening of the school's image and competitiveness. The presence of excellent classes has shaped public perception of SMPIT Abu Bakar as a progressive, selective, and quality-oriented educational institution. This has increased enrollment interest and community trust while fostering healthy competition among students. Moreover, the school has gained stronger bargaining power within local and regional educational forums. In the context of Islamic schools, (Suresmi 2020) asserts that excellent classes can reinforce institutional competitiveness and affirm their position as centers of educational excellence.

In terms of internal policy, the excellent class initiative has encouraged the school to adopt data-driven and student-centered policies. Regular evaluation of the program's effectiveness generates data that inform teacher training, curriculum revisions, and assessment policies. This fosters a culture of quality within the school. Policies such as rewarding high-achieving students, providing remedial support for underperforming students, and actively involving parents have become integral to this data-driven approach.

In sum, the implications of managing excellent classes at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta point toward the development of an adaptive, transformative, and responsive educational system in the face of contemporary challenges. The school not only produces academically accomplished students but also nurtures individuals who are spiritually, emotionally, and socially mature. The excellent class program reflects the ideal synergy between modern educational innovation and deeply rooted Islamic values. By carefully addressing social, managerial, and cultural dimensions, this strategy contributes significantly to improving the quality of education both at the micro level within the school and at the macro level in national educational policy (Jipi 2023).

Ultimately, the management of excellent classes demonstrates that students in these programs tend to achieve more stable academic performance, higher learning motivation, and sharper critical thinking skills compared to those in regular classes. This aligns with studies that affirm the effectiveness of excellent class programs in enhancing both academic achievement and students' character development.

Conclusion

The management of the excellent class program at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta in the Academic Year 2024–2025 was implemented through a comprehensive, structured, and integrated Islamic values-based approach. The management strategy was carried out systematically, ranging from well-prepared planning, innovative instructional practices, to continuous evaluation. During the planning stage, the excellent class was designed based on student potential mapping and formulated into an enrichment curriculum that fosters critical thinking, independence, as well as spiritual and moral integrity.

The learning process was conducted actively, collaboratively, and student-centered, employing approaches such as project-based learning, problem-based learning, and the integration of relevant educational technologies. Islamic values served as the core foundation of every learning activity, shaping students to excel not only in academic achievement but also in noble character.

Evaluation was conducted comprehensively, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. Reward and remedial strategies were proportionally applied to sustain student motivation while ensuring equal opportunities for development. Despite challenges such as disparities between regular and excellent classes, limited facilities, and teacher resource constraints, the school effectively responded through professional training, technology integration, and effective communication among stakeholders.

Quality improvement strategies were focused on four key dimensions: the quality of student and teacher input, innovative learning practices, optimization of facilities and infrastructure, and the strengthening of a quality culture. The synergy among school management, teachers, parents, and students served as the key to the program's success.

Overall, the management of the excellent class at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta has had a significant positive impact on educational quality, student achievement, as well as the school's reputation and competitiveness. The excellent class has proven to be an effective educational service model in addressing the needs of high-potential students and represents a strategic initiative in strengthening the integrated Islamic education system that is adaptive to contemporary developments.

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