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Evaluation of the Excellent Class Program in Improving the Quality of Education in Junior High Schools Muhammadiyah - Bandung

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Abstract

This study applies the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) program evaluation model with a descriptive qualitative approach. Data collection refers to the CIPP evaluation instrument table which is compiled based on predetermined criteria, through observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Data analysis involves data collection, data reduction, data presentation, drawing conclusions, and data verification. The results show 1. Evaluation of the program context in the number of students who have talents and creativity that are facilitated more optimally. The excellent class program to create superior students and shows that Muhammadiyah schools have quality students. 2. The Input Evaluation applied includes student screening, testing, willingness to join the excellent class. 3. Evaluation of the program performance process is not optimal. The relationship between the implementer and students is going well, with full trust from the parents of students regarding student development. 4. Evaluation of the program's product results showed good achievements, although not yet fully maximized. 80% of Muhammadiyah graduates successfully continued their education to favorite state schools. The superior class program to be continued with the condition of reformulating the initial objectives of the program.

Keywords: Program Evaluation, Superior Class, Education Quality

1. Introduction

Education plays an important role in the formation of human character. Therefore, the government is very serious in handling various aspects that support the improvement of the education system. With a good education system, it is hoped that a quality generation of the nation's successors will be born, able to adapt, and become examples in community, national, and state life. Education is considered the main fortress in forming a superior generation. Various innovations have been made to improve the quality of education in Indonesia, one of which is through the superior class program.

The objectives of organizing superior classes include developing and enhancing the quality of education, producing high-quality human resources, improving the skills and knowledge of educators, maximizing school potential, and increasing the ability to compete in the education sector by creating a competitive edge. The superior class program is an implementation of the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, specifically Article 4, which states that citizens with exceptional intelligence and talents are entitled to special education.

This superior class program was introduced around 1992 by the Ministry of Education and Culture, now known as the Department of National Education. The initial concept emphasized education with a focus on excellence, aimed at developing human resources equipped with the

insight needed to navigate free-market competition and enhance national competitiveness. The framework of excellence encompasses faith and devotion to God Almighty, self-reliance in facing the challenges of globalization, the ability to produce high-quality work, professional expertise, and fostering family bonds to strengthen national unity. This framework is intended to achieve international recognition for excellence (Depdikbud, 1996). One of the ways this framework is implemented is through the superior class program, as outlined in the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 0487/U/1992, Article 15, which includes provisions for accelerated programs, special programs, special classes, and special education, all of which embody the principles of excellent education (Bafadal, 2006: 26-28).

One example of the successful implementation of the excellent class program can be seen in SMP Muhammadiyah - Bandung, which continues to make improvements to achieve the quality of education that satisfies the community. The excellent class program at SMP Muhammadiyah has been running well and showing positive results. Therefore, this study uses the CIPP evaluation model as an evaluation tool. The focus of the CIPP evaluation includes four aspects. Context Evaluation, Providing data on various needs according to priority, to formulate the objectives of the excellent class program. Input evaluation, producing data on selected inputs, program strengths and weaknesses, strategies carried out, and designs to achieve program objectives.

Process Evaluation, Provides information for evaluators to monitor procedures that may be newly implemented, and identify strong elements to maintain and weak elements to improve. Product evaluation provides information to ensure the achievement of objectives and formulate whether strategies related to procedures and methods applied need to be stopped, modified, or continued, by continuing to make improvements until they reach their optimal form.

2. Literature Review

Program evaluation, as defined by Briekerhoff et al. (1983:2), is a process used to assess how well the goals and objectives of a program or project have been realized. This evaluation offers critical information for decision-making, allowing for the comparison of performance against established standards or benchmarks to identify any gaps. Additionally, it involves assessing both the cost and quality of the program. Tyler describes program evaluation as a process aimed at determining whether the program's objectives have been successfully achieved.

According to Arikunto (2005:291), program evaluation is an activity to measure the extent to which the level of success of planned activities. In this case, program evaluation is considered a form of research, namely evaluative research. Program evaluation involves the process of thinking and determining steps as in research. The main differences between research and program evaluation are as follows:

- a. In research, researchers try to understand the general picture of something and describe the results. In contrast, in program evaluation, implementers focus on assessing the quality or condition of the results of program implementation by comparing the collected data against certain criteria or standards.
- b. In research, the researcher is guided by the problem formulation to seek answers to specific research questions. In contrast, program evaluation focuses on assessing the extent to which program objectives have been achieved. If the objectives fall short, the evaluation process identifies the gaps and underlying causes.
- c. According to Mulyasa (2013:175), the Total Quality Management (TQM) program must meet four main criteria to achieve success in its implementation:
- d. The program must be based on a deep awareness of quality and be oriented towards quality in all its activities, covering every process and product or service produced.

- e. This program must prioritize strong humanitarian principles, by treating employees well, involving them actively, and providing inspiration.
- f. TQM must be implemented with a decentralized approach, giving authority at all levels of the organization, especially at the front line. This ensures enthusiastic involvement and achievement of common goals, not just jargon.
- g. The implementation of TQM must be comprehensive, ensuring that all principles, policies, and habits are applied in every part and corner of the organization.

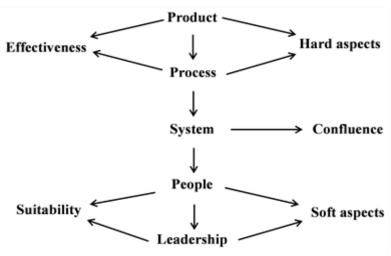


Figure 1. Five Pillars of TQM (Source: Wikipedia.com)

3. Research Method

This study uses the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation model with a qualitative approach. The data collected in this study are in the form of words and images, not numbers. This approach adopts phenomenology and symbolic interaction, with the assumption that human experience is obtained through interaction. Researchers try to understand the meaning of various events in a particular context from the researcher's own perspective.

3.1. Research Instrument

In qualitative research, researchers cannot determine data precisely in the research design before implementation, because qualitative research focuses more on the meaning contained in the research problem in a particular context than the relationship between variables. According to Lofland as quoted by Moleong (2011), the main data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, while documents and other additional data are also used.

3.2. Data Collection Technique

The data collection procedures applied in this study include:

- a. Interview: The interview objects in this study include the Principal, Vice Principal for Curriculum, Vice Principal for Student Affairs, and Teachers.
- b. Observation: The observation conducted is participatory observation, which is in-depth observation by being directly involved in the situation being studied.
- c. Documentation: Data collection through documentation involves taking data from related documents.

3.3. Data Analysis

In this study, data analysis was carried out through two processes, namely pre-field data analysis and field data analysis. Pre-field data analysis was carried out on data from preliminary studies or secondary data to determine the focus of the study. The focus of this study used the CIPP Evaluation Model, which is one of the most well-known and applied evaluation models by evaluators. This model consists of evaluation of context, input, process, and product (Context, Input, Process, Product or CIPP), and focuses on decision making.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Evaluation of the Context of the Implementation of the Excellent Class Program in Improving the Quality of Education at SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

The evaluation of the context surrounding the implementation of the excellent class program at SMP Muhammadiyah Bandung reveals that the program's primary goal is to enhance the quality of education and cultivate exceptional students by providing opportunities for talented and creative individuals. This program was created in response to the need to nurture and develop students' talents and creativity within the school.

The excellent class program has been in place for a considerable time, beginning under the leadership of the principal at SMP Muhammadiyah. The school recognized significant potential in its students that needed proper facilitation for growth. As a result, a selection test was administered, involving a psychology team to assess and measure the students' abilities. This test led to the formation of the first superior class, consisting of 20 students with high intellectual capabilities. Over time, the number of superior classes expanded to six, accommodating the current VII grade.

Based on interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the program was established to optimize the development of students with high intelligence. These students are expected to excel in memorization, language skills, tilawah (Qur'anic recitation), and IT compared to their peers in regular classes. However, the program faces challenges, such as disparities between Class A and other classes, where Class A is populated by students with high IQ and EQ, while other classes are not at the same level.

Overall, the context evaluation shows that this program has great potential in improving the quality of education in SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung, although there are challenges that need to be overcome, especially related to class gaps and students' financial conditions.

4.2. Evaluation of Input for the Implementation of the Superior Class Program in Improving the Quality of Education in SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

In the evaluation of the input of the implementation of the Excellent Class program at SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung, the approach used initially was through strict selection of prospective students. This selection process involves an intellectual ability test conducted by a psychology team from the University of Bandung Area. After the test results are out, the School will offer parents whether they are willing to put their children into the excellent class if the test results show very good performance.

Over time, the selection process for the excellent class program has evolved. Currently, all interested students can apply, although there is still a quota limit. After registration, students are grouped based on their learning styles—auditory, visual, or kinesthetic—instead of being sorted by IQ levels as before. This change aims to reduce the disparity between classes, allowing all

students to learn in a way that suits their style and making it easier for teachers to deliver the material effectively.

The input evaluation indicates that while the program initially employed a highly selective approach, the shift to grouping by learning styles offers greater flexibility and better accommodates students' needs. However, challenges remain, particularly concerning the financial capacity of students' parents, which can impact the program's smooth execution. To meet the program's objectives, the school has appointed professional educators, developed an enhanced curriculum, set higher targets for Qur'an memorization, and implemented an IT-based learning system distinct from that of regular classes.

4.3. Evaluation of the Implementation Process of the Excellent Class Program in Improving the Quality of Education in Junior High Schools. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

Evaluation of the implementation process of the excellent class program in Muhammadiyah Schools cannot be separated from the close relationship between program implementers and students. Many parents feel satisfied, especially those who have higher financial capabilities and are busy outside the home. They tend to fully entrust their children's education to the School with the assumption that the costs incurred already cover the full responsibility of the School. However, there are also parents who compare the current excellent class program with the previous one, questioning some of the changes.

This excellent class program is a special attraction for parents because they feel that their children no longer need to take extra lessons outside of school. However, this creates the perception that the responsibility for the child's education is entirely in the hands of the teacher, so that communication that ideally involves three directions between parents, students, and teachers—often only occurs between teachers and students. The absence of effective communication can be a weakness in the implementation of the program, especially when students experience difficulties or failures, parents tend to blame the School. In addition, some students in the advanced classes need more attention from teachers, which causes teachers to have to work more than their formal working hours.

The Muhammadiyah principal acknowledged that with improving economic conditions, the cooperation between parents and teachers has diminished. Some parents believe that by paying higher fees, the responsibility for their children's education falls entirely on the school. While the parents' trust in the school is a positive sign, it can become a challenge if not matched by strong collaboration between teachers and parents. When issues arise in the learning process, the school is often held accountable.

Despite these challenges, the advanced class program generally demonstrates good performance, even though it hasn't fully achieved the desired outcomes. This is reflected in the growing interest and trust of parents in enrolling their children in these classes, as well as the increasing number of advanced classes each year. Additionally, Muhammadiyah Bandung School serves as a model for other schools in the area looking to implement similar programs.

In its implementation, the relationship between teachers and students is good. Teachers deliver material according to the syllabus, and advanced class students can receive the material well, as evidenced by good daily and semester test scores. The principal also routinely coordinates with teachers and staff to ensure optimal performance. However, of course there are aspects that need to be improved so that this program can run better. Changes in the system in the superior class have caused a shift in the expected results, so the initial goal of establishing this program needs to be revised to adjust to current conditions.



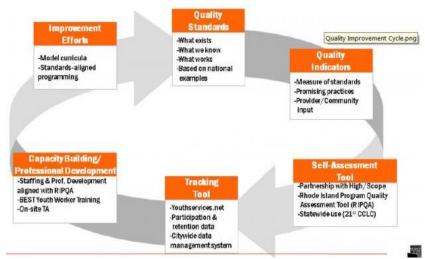


Figure 2. Evaluation of the Excellent Class Program (Source: PASA's Quality Improvement Cycle)

4.4. Evaluation of the Implementation Product of the Superior Class Program in Improving the Quality of Education in SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

Based on research conducted at Sekolah - Muhammadiyah, the results achieved from the implementation of this superior class program have not been fully in accordance with expectations. The results achieved are in the range of 50-60%, because each student has different abilities, so the results are not optimal. At the beginning of the implementation, this program was more effective because the class was filled with selected students, so that when the teacher increased the level of learning, students were able to follow it well. However, the change in concept that no longer groups students based on IQ causes variations in ability in one class.

Although students' learning styles are similar, it is undeniable that there are students with high intellectual abilities and some with low ones. This requires teachers to be more careful in managing classes so that learning remains effective and program objectives can be achieved. Nevertheless, the excellent class program at Sekolah - Muhammadiyah - Bandung is still running well and has a positive impact on improving the quality of the School, which can be seen from the increase in the number of students each year. The trust and interest of the community to enroll their children in this School continues to increase. However, to achieve better efficiency, schools need to strengthen their strategies and systems so that the objectives of this excellent class program can be achieved as expected, without just adjusting to existing conditions.

It can be concluded that the excellent class program has had a significant impact on enhancing the school's quality. The school aims for graduates of this program to be fluent in Arabic and English, as well as proficient in reading basic yellow books. However, these shortterm goals have not been fully realized, largely due to time constraints. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, the product evaluation indicates that although the program's results have not yet reached their full potential, the outcomes are quite positive. Approximately 80% of graduates continue their education in public schools or other institutions, and they also demonstrate strong Quran memorization skills and the ability to read basic yellow books.

This excellent class program still has advantages compared to regular classes and has a positive impact on improving the quality of schools, as evidenced by the increase in the number of students each year. Therefore, this program is worthy of being continued with adjustments to the objectives to be more in line with current conditions.

4.5. Evaluation of the Context of Implementation of the Excellent Class Program at SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

The evaluation of the context surrounding the implementation of the Excellent Class Program at Muhammadiyah Schools highlighted several opportunities and challenges. A key opportunity within this program is the presence of a significant number of students with talents and creativity that require support and resources to fully develop. This program is designed to cultivate exceptional students who will serve as symbols of the school's achievements, demonstrating that SMP Muhammadiyah produces high-caliber students. The strong support from parents further bolsters the program, enhancing public trust in SMP Muhammadiyah-Bandung as a choice for their children's education.

However, a significant challenge identified is the financial constraints faced by some students. While many students possess high potential, they lack the financial means necessary to support their education. This observation aligns with Tayibnapis' theory (2000:4), which suggests that context evaluation aids in planning decisions, determining program needs, and setting program objectives. Context evaluation primarily seeks to identify strengths and weaknesses, allowing evaluators to recommend necessary improvements. Koswara and Triatna (2010:275) further emphasized that quality education is evaluated based on inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes.

Quality educational inputs encompass teachers, students, curriculum, facilities, and education providers. A quality educational process is characterized by effective learning experiences, while quality outputs are reflected in competent graduates. The outcomes of quality education are evidenced by graduates' ability to pursue further education or enter the workforce. In line with Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 35 on National Education Standards, these national standards serve as a reference for developing curriculum, educational staff, facilities and infrastructure, as well as management and financing.

4.6. Evaluation of Input for the Implementation of the Excellent Class Program at SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

Input evaluation of the implementation of the Excellent Class Program at Sekolah Muhammadiyah - Bandung shows a change in the approach to student selection. Initially, students were screened through tests before being offered entry into the excellent class. However, currently, students no longer have to take tests to enter the excellent class; they can join as long as they have the will and ability. Class placement is also no longer based on IQ tests, but on students' learning styles.

Strategies implemented in achieving program objectives include the placement of professional educators in certain subjects, the use of additional curricula that are different from regular classes, higher Al-Quran memorization targets, and the implementation of an IT-based learning system. This finding is consistent with the views of Rusydi Ananda and Tien Rafida (2017:46), who stated that input evaluation helps in decision making, determining available resources, formulating alternatives, and planning strategies and procedures to achieve goals. Peter Blatchford (2019) also emphasized that class size does not directly affect achievement, but affects it through strategic decisions that must be taken by teachers in managing and teaching students in groups. A strategic approach to teaching and collaborative learning is needed to better manage the class and achieve the expected results effectively and efficiently.

4.7. Evaluation of the Implementation Process of the Excellent Class Program at SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

The evaluation of the implementation process for the Excellent Class Program at SMP Muhammadiyah Bandung reveals that while the program performs well, it is not yet fully optimized. The rapport between program implementers and students is positive, and the parents have shown strong trust in the school, entrusting their children's development to it. However, there are challenges, including a lack of cooperation between teachers and parents. To address these issues, a revision of the original goals for the excellent class program may be necessary for future improvements.

This finding aligns with the perspectives of Rusydi Ananda and Tien Rafida (2017:47), who argue that process evaluation is crucial for identifying and predicting procedural and implementation issues during the execution phase. Such evaluations provide critical insights for program decisions and serve as a record of the procedures carried out. Process evaluation involves gathering data on the assessments that have been implemented and evaluating how well the plan has been executed, along with identifying areas for improvement.

Arikunto (2009:47), as cited by Nia Mei Istiyani in her journal, also emphasizes that process evaluation focuses on the activities conducted within the program. Djuju Sudjana (2006:55) adds that this evaluation offers feedback on the efficiency of program execution, including both the system and its application. It encompasses the activities of students, educators, educational staff, learning strategies, and parental involvement in supporting the program (Nia Mei Istiyani, 2019).

The principal's leadership plays an important role in effective and efficient school management. As an instructional leader, the principal plays a role in improving the quality of student learning. The principal's instructional leadership is an important factor in achieving academic standards, which are expected to produce students who are independent, responsible, creative, and innovative. Education is expected to produce individuals who like to learn, have high learning abilities, and are able to adapt to new challenges well.

4.8. Evaluation of the Implementation Product of the Excellent Class Program in Junior High Schools. Muhammadiyah - Bandung

Product evaluation of the implementation of the Excellent Class Program at Muhammadiyah Schools - Bandung shows good results although not yet fully optimal. This program has succeeded in producing graduates who can continue to their favorite schools, with 80% of graduates continuing to public schools. In addition, graduates show excellent Qur'an memorization abilities and can read basic yellow books. This program also has advantages compared to regular classes, and its contribution to improving the quality of schools can be seen from the graph of the increase in the number of students each year. This excellent class program is worthy of being continued on the condition that the program objectives need to be reformulated. Continuous improvement and enhancement need to be carried out so that this program can achieve better results in the future.

This finding is in accordance with the views of Rusydi Ananda and Tien Rafida (2017:48), which state that product evaluation aims to assess the achievement or success of the program in achieving the goals that have been set. At this stage, the evaluator can provide recommendations regarding the continuation, development, modification, or termination of the program. Tayibnapis (2000:14) also explains that product evaluation helps make decisions about the results achieved and the next steps for the program. Product evaluation is expected to help project leaders or teachers in determining decisions about continuing, stopping, or modifying the program. Product evaluation includes the results achieved during or after the development of the education system, including the knowledge, abilities, and attitudes of students and graduates. From the explanation above, it can be understood that the principal needs to formulate and implement the right strategy to maintain the existence and improve the quality of the school.

Given the increasing competition and development between schools, schools must be able to implement superior strategies to face competitors.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion of the Evaluation of the Excellent Class Program in Improving the Quality of Education at SMP. Muhammadiyah - Bandung, it can be concluded as follows:

- a. Context evaluation shows that the Excellent Class Program at Muhammadiyah Schools has great potential because many students have talents and creativity that need to be supported. This program is designed to create excellent students who can become icons of the School, showing that Muhammadiyah Schools have quality students. Positive support from parents and the community is the strength of this program. However, there are weaknesses related to the financial condition of students, which is an obstacle because many students are talented but financially disadvantaged.
- b. Process evaluation shows that the performance of the program is quite good although not yet fully optimal. The relationship between program implementers and students is going well, and parents of students give full trust to the School. However, there are obstacles in the form of a lack of cooperation between teachers and parents of students. Therefore, it is necessary to revise the initial objectives of the excellent class program to increase its effectiveness in the future.
- c. Product evaluation shows that the results of the Excellent Class Program are good although not yet optimal. Most graduates can continue their education to their favorite schools, with 80% of graduates continuing to public schools. Graduates also show excellent memorization of the Qur'an and basic yellow book reading skills. This program continues to show superiority compared to regular classes, with a graph of increasing number of students each year. This program is worthy of being continued on condition that it reformulates its initial objectives and makes continuous improvements so that the quality of the program continues to improve.

5.2. Suggestions

Based on the results of the discussion and conclusions, it can be recommended in the form of several suggestions, namely as follows:

- a. For schools, they should be the main facilitators for talented and creative students. Placement in superior classes should be based on students' intellectual abilities, not the financial conditions of their parents. Cross subsidies can be applied, where parents who can pay more can help less fortunate students. Superior classes should be based on intellectual tests that cover affective, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects.
- b. For policy makers, placing students based on learning styles is good. However, teachers need to be more creative in managing classes to overcome variations in student abilities.
- c. For the evaluation of the process and objectives and targets of the superior class program, it needs to be arranged more clearly and directed according to mutual agreement. Schools need to create special regulations for this program and emphasize the differences between superior classes and regular classes.
- d. For product evaluation and superior class programs are good and worthy of being continued with the condition of reformulating its initial objectives. Schools need to make continuous improvements and enhancements. To improve the quality of graduates, Arabic and English should be applied in daily activities in the school

environment, making it a distinctive feature that distinguishes this program from other schools in Bandung.

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