**JMSP (Jurnal Manajemen dan Supervisi Pendidikan)**
*Volume 10 Nomor 3 Bulan Juli Tahun 2026*

ISSN : 2541-4429 (Online)
: 2580-3417 (Print)
Available Online in http://journal2.um.ac.id/index.php/jmsp/

# Management of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs Based on Academic and Spiritual Outputs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara

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*Article received: June 2026, Revision: June 2026, Approval: July 2026*
**DOI: 10.17977/um025v10i22026325**

**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the management of science and tahfidz excellence class programs based on academic and spiritual outputs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara. The study focuses on the functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the achievement of each program's intended outputs. This research employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. The research participants consisted of the principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, teachers of the science excellence program, tahfidz teachers, and students enrolled in the science and tahfidz excellence class programs. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, and were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the management of the science and tahfidz excellence class programs is implemented through the functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation, which are designed based on the intended outputs of each program. The science excellence program is managed to achieve academic outputs in the form of academic achievement, critical thinking skills, research competence, and competition readiness, whereas the tahfidz excellence program is managed to achieve spiritual outputs through Qur'an memorization targets and the development of students' religious character. These differences in output serve as the basis for designing the management functions of each program. The success of the programs is supported by teachers' commitment, the utilization of educational technology, and the madrasah's religious culture. Meanwhile, the main challenges include limited educational facilities and infrastructure, low learning motivation among some students, insufficient parental involvement, and limited supervision in the non-boarding tahfidz program. The findings further indicate that program management designed based on academic and spiritual outputs effectively supports the achievement of each program's objectives and contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of the madrasah.
**Keywords:** program management; science excellence class; tahfidz excellence class; academic output; spiritual output

According to Wibowo and Noor (2024), the development of education in the modern era requires educational institutions not only to produce students who excel academically but also to cultivate individuals with strong religious and spiritual character. This perspective is consistent with the study by Darling-Hammond et al., (2019), which emphasizes that twenty-first-century education should foster students' academic, social, emotional, and character development in a balanced manner. This condition has encouraged schools and madrasahs to implement various innovations to improve the quality of

education, one of which is through the development of excellence class programs. Excellence class programs have become one of the strategies adopted by educational institutions to provide more focused learning services based on students' potential and needs. According to Bakar (2024), excellence class programs in madrasahs are educational strategies designed to improve institutional quality while simultaneously developing students' specific competencies in accordance with the objectives of each program.

In practice, excellence class programs in madrasahs are not always developed through the integration of science and religion but are also implemented as separate programs with different output bases. The science excellence program focuses on improving academic achievement, critical thinking skills, research competencies, and academic competition performance, whereas the *tahfidz* excellence program is designed to strengthen Qur'an memorization, cultivate worship practices, and develop students' religious character (Pranoto, Assharofi, et al., 2025). These differences in output bases require different learning strategies, student development approaches, and management systems according to the characteristics of each program. Wati (2020), states that managing excellence class programs requires different strategies from those applied in regular classes because of their specific performance targets. Furthermore, differentiated programs and instructional practices have been proven to optimize students' potential according to their needs and characteristics (Tomlinson, 2017), while the effectiveness of specialized educational programs is largely influenced by an institution's ability to systematically manage objectives, curriculum, and evaluation.

This phenomenon can be observed at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara, which has established two excellence class programs, namely the Science Excellence Program and the Tahfidz Excellence Program. In addition to serving as a platform for developing students' potential, these programs have also become one of the madrasah's strategies for enhancing its attractiveness in new student admissions (PPDB) amid competition with public schools and other madrasahs. Students with strong academic potential are assigned to the Science Excellence Program to prepare them for competitions such as the National Science Olympiad (OSN) and the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM), whereas students who are interested in memorizing the Qur'an are enrolled in the Tahfidz Excellence Program, which targets the memorization of five *juz'* of the Qur'an, with a minimum graduation requirement of three *juz'*. Nevertheless, the two programs face different challenges. The Science Excellence Program requires students to develop critical thinking skills, presentation skills, research competencies, and readiness for academic competitions, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Program faces challenges in maintaining consistency in Qur'an memorization, *muraja'ah* (memorization review), and learning discipline outside the madrasah. These differences indicate that the management of excellence class programs requires different management strategies to ensure the optimal achievement of both academic and spiritual objectives.

In this study, the term *output-based* refers to the management of excellence class programs in which program outputs serve as the basis for designing management functions. In the Science

Excellence Program, program management is directed toward achieving academic outputs, including academic achievement, critical thinking skills, research competencies, and success in academic competitions. Meanwhile, in the Tahfidz Excellence Program, program management is directed toward achieving spiritual outputs through Qur'an memorization targets and the development of students' religious character. Thus, these differences in outputs serve as the basis for planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating each program.

Previous studies on excellence class programs have generally focused on a single type of program. Putra et al. (2026) examined the management of the *tahfidz* program in improving students' Qur'an memorization through *muraja'ah* and Qur'an memorization submission (*setoran hafalan*). Meanwhile, Faturrohman et al. (2026) focused on the managerial aspects of the *tahfidz* program at the junior secondary school level. On the other hand, Zakia (2026) investigated the management of the Science Excellence Program in enhancing students' academic achievement through competency-based learning. Several other studies have also examined science and Islamic education primarily from the perspective of instructional integration, such as Hakim (2020), who investigated curriculum formulation and student recruitment strategies for excellence class programs. In addition, Azmi and Aditya (2025) examined the challenges of implementing special programs in non-boarding madrasahs, particularly the need for flexibility in organizing operational schedules.

Based on these previous studies, research on the management of excellence class programs has largely focused on a single type of program, either *tahfidz* or science programs. Meanwhile, some madrasahs have developed more than one excellence program within the same institution, each with a different output base. This condition indicates that the management of excellence class programs requires a broader perspective that not only focuses on a single type of program but also considers the management characteristics of each program within the same institutional context.

Previous studies have generally examined the management of excellence class programs from a partial perspective, focusing separately on either the academic or the religious dimension. Few studies have specifically analyzed the implementation of the POAC management functions (planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling) in Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs that are based on academic and spiritual outputs within the same private non-boarding madrasah. In practice, however, some madrasahs implement both Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs as two distinct programs with different output targets, student development systems, and management characteristics. Therefore, a research gap remains regarding the implementation of management functions in output-based excellence class programs within a single Islamic educational institution. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the implementation of management functions in the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara based on their respective output bases, namely academic outputs in the Science Excellence Program and spiritual outputs in the Tahfidz Excellence Program, through an analysis of the planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation functions.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the management functions in the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs based on academic and spiritual outputs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara, covering the aspects of planning, organizing, implementation, evaluation, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the achievement of each program's intended outputs. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic educational management studies, particularly in the management of output-based excellence class programs. In addition, the findings are expected to serve as a reference and evaluation resource for madrasahs in developing more effective excellence class programs that are responsive to students' needs.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design. This approach was adopted to obtain an in-depth understanding of the management of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs based on academic and spiritual outputs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara. The study was conducted from 7 to 18 May 2026. The research site was selected because the madrasah has implemented two separate excellence class programs with different output bases. The research participants consisted of the principal, the vice principal for curriculum affairs, teachers of the Science Excellence Program, *tahfidz* teachers, and students enrolled in the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement in the management and implementation of the excellence class programs at the madrasah (Sukmadinata, 2010).

**Table 1**. Research Informant

| No. | Status Informan | Gender | Quantity | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Principal | Male | 1 | Policy maker for the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs |
| 2 | Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs | Male | 1 | Responsible for curriculum development and program implementation |
| 3 | Science Excellence Program Teacher | Male | 1 | Coordinator of the Science Excellence Program |
| 4 | Tahfidz Excellence Program Teacher | Male | 1 | Coordinator of the Tahfidz Excellence Program |
| 5 | Student of the Science Excellence Program | Women | 2 | Participant in the Science Excellence Program |
| 6 | Student of the Tahfidz Excellence Program | Women | 2 | Participant in the Tahfidz Excellence Program |

Source: research data analysis, 2026

Data were collected using three primary techniques: (1) semi-structured interviews to obtain data on the management functions, supporting factors, inhibiting factors, and the implications of implementing the excellence class programs, (2) direct observation of the implementation of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs, including learning activities in the Science Excellence Program, the *ziyadah* (new memorization) process, Qur'an memorization recitation, and *muraja'ah*

(memorization review) in the Tahfidz Excellence Program, as well as teacher–student interactions; and, (3) documentation, including the madrasah's vision and mission, the learning schedules of the excellence class programs, students' achievement records, photographs of learning activities, and other documents related to the implementation of the excellence class programs. The trustworthiness of the data was ensured through source triangulation (comparing information obtained from different informants) and method triangulation (comparing interview findings with evidence obtained through observation and documentation). The data were then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. During the data reduction stage, all field data were organized and categorized thematically based on George R. Terry's four management functions, namely planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the data collection process until the completion of the study, enabling the researchers to obtain in-depth findings that were consistent with the research focus.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

#### Planning of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara

Based on the research findings, the Science Excellence Program at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara was planned through science team meetings involving program teachers and madrasah administrators. The program was designed to enhance academic achievement, critical thinking skills, research competencies, and the development of students' scientific and religious character. The planned activities included experiment-based learning, intensive preparation for science olympiads, scientific writing, and the development of public speaking skills. These activities were aligned with the madrasah's vision through coordination between the principal and the vice principal for curriculum affairs.

The Science Excellence Program was designed not only to prepare students for academic competitions, such as the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM) and the National Science Olympiad (OSN), but also to equip them for higher levels of education. Student selection was conducted through written examinations assessing cognitive ability, spatial reasoning, creativity, and interest in science, while also considering teachers' recommendations and students' academic potential. Furthermore, science learning was integrated with Islamic values by relating scientific concepts to Qur'anic verses, Islamic history, and *fiqh*.

In the Tahfidz Excellence Program, planning focused on achieving Qur'an memorization targets and fostering students' spiritual development. The program was formulated through deliberative meetings among *tahfidz* teachers while considering the characteristics of non-boarding students, who had limited opportunities for memorization outside the madrasah. The madrasah established a target of

memorizing five *juz'* of the Qur'an over three years, with incremental targets assigned to each grade level. To support the achievement of these targets, *tahfidz* learning was conducted for 120 minutes each day, covering *ziyadah* (new memorization), *muraja'ah* (memorization review), memorization guidance, and a daily memorization target of at least five lines.

From a managerial perspective, both excellence class programs were designed to support the madrasah's vision of developing the A3 aspects (*Akal*, *Ati*, and *Asta*). According to the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, the differences between the intended academic and spiritual outputs served as the basis for planning each excellence program. The Science Excellence Program was designed to strengthen students' intellectual abilities and academic skills, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Program was designed to achieve spiritual outcomes through Qur'an memorization targets and the development of students' religious character. Consequently, the objectives, targets, learning materials, instructional strategies, and evaluation procedures of each program were designed according to their respective intended outputs.

**Table 2.** Planning of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs

| Aspects | Science Excellence Program | Tahfidz Excellence Program |
|---|---|---|
| Program Objectives | To improve academic achievement, critical thinking skills, and research skills | To improve Qur'an memorization and foster students' spiritual development |
| Planning Basics | Science team meetings and coordination with the madrasah leadership | Deliberative meetings among tahfidz teachers while considering the characteristics of non-boarding students |
| Primary Targets | OSN, KSM, scientific writing, public speaking, and preparation for higher education | Memorization of five *juz'* over three years |
| Student Selection | Academic ability, spatial reasoning, creativity, and interest in science | Interest in and ability to memorize the Qur'an |
| Learning Strategies | Experiment-based learning, Olympiad preparation, scientific writing, and presentations | *Ziyādah* (new memorization), *murāja'ah* (memorization review), and Qur'an memorization recitation |
| Integration of Islamic Values | Integration of science with Qur'anic verses and Islamic studies | Worship habituation and the development of students' religious character |
| Time Allocation | Adjusted according to academic activities and competition preparation | 120 minutes per day |
| Expected Output | Academic achievement and scientific competencies | Qur'an memorization and students' religious character |

Source: research data analysis, 2026

**Organizing the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara**

To support the achievement of the program objectives, the Science Excellence Program and the Tahfidz Excellence Program at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara were organized under the

coordination of the Madrasah Principal and the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs. However, the different intended outputs of the two programs led the madrasah to establish two separate management teams. Teachers in the Science Excellence Program were responsible for academic mentoring and competition preparation, whereas tahfidz teachers were responsible for Qur'an memorization guidance and the cultivation of daily worship practices. This separation of the management structure enabled a more focused learning process and facilitated the monitoring of students' achievements according to the characteristics of each program.

Coordination among teachers was conducted regularly, with different evaluation priorities for each program. In the Science Excellence Program, coordination focused on students' competition readiness, presentation skills, and scientific learning outcomes. Meanwhile, the *tahfidz* team emphasized students' memorization progress, consistency in *murāja'ah* (memorization review), and spiritual development. Coordination meetings also served as a forum for discussing instructional challenges and students' psychological conditions to improve the effectiveness of the guidance provided.

From a technical perspective, the Science Excellence Program was organized by grouping students according to their academic abilities and intellectual potential. High-achieving students received intensive coaching for the National Science Olympiad (OSN) and the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM), while students experiencing learning difficulties received additional support through small-group learning. The use of digital technologies, such as SMART TVs, instructional videos, and presentation media, also fostered a competitive academic environment. In addition, students were assigned presentation tasks and simple research projects on a rotating basis to develop their critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills.

In contrast, the Tahfidz Excellence Program emphasized individualized guidance and spiritual development. Tahfidz teachers provided individual mentoring and grouped students according to their Qur'an memorization abilities to minimize psychological pressure. They also served as both memorization instructors and spiritual mentors by fostering daily worship practices and maintaining regular communication with parents. Overall, the two programs were managed separately to support the achievement of their respective academic and spiritual outputs while enabling more intensive student development and guidance than that provided in regular classes.

**Implementation of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara**

The Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara were implemented through two distinct instructional systems aligned with the intended outputs of each program. The Science Excellence Program adopted active, competitive, and inquiry-based learning, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Program emphasized spiritual habituation, *murāja'ah* (memorization review), and religious mentoring. This separation of instructional approaches was intended to accommodate students' needs and parents' expectations. The Science Excellence Program focused on

improving academic achievement, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Program emphasized strengthening Qur'an memorization and fostering students' religious character. Documentation of the instructional schedule showed that the two programs employed separate curricula and allocated different instructional periods.

The implementation of the Science Excellence Program extended beyond the national curriculum through laboratory experiments, mini seminars, group discussions, project presentations, scientific writing, and intensive preparation for the National Science Olympiad (OSN) and the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM). Students were encouraged to utilize digital learning resources while developing critical thinking skills and confidence in academic competition. Documentary evidence indicated that these strategies contributed to students' achievements in academic competitions at both the district and provincial levels. Although students initially experienced difficulties due to the demanding academic workload, the adaptation process gradually improved their self-confidence, classroom participation, argumentation skills, and public speaking abilities.

Meanwhile, the implementation of the Tahfidz Excellence Program focused on students' spiritual development through *tadarus* (Qur'an recitation), *murāja'ah* (memorization review), Qur'an memorization recitation, and the cultivation of daily worship practices. *Tahfidz* teachers served not only as instructors for *tahsin* and Qur'an memorization but also as mentors who provided individualized guidance and motivation. Students' memorization was evaluated daily through *ziyādah* (new memorization) and *murāja'ah* activities to ensure consistent progress. A family-like learning atmosphere was fostered to encourage students to listen to one another's recitation and provide mutual support.

The findings indicated that both programs produced positive outcomes consistent with their respective objectives. The Science Excellence Program improved students' academic performance, critical thinking skills, and academic achievement, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Program strengthened students' discipline in worship, emotional composure, and closeness to the Qur'an. These findings demonstrate that MTs Masalikil Huda did not integrate the science and *tahfidz* curricula into a single instructional model. Instead, the madrasah managed them as two independent programs to ensure that both academic and spiritual development could be achieved more effectively and systematically.

**Evaluation of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara**

The evaluation of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara was conducted systematically using different success indicators for each program according to their respective characteristics and intended outputs. Based on an interview with the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, the evaluation indicators were not standardized because the Science Excellence Program emphasized the assessment of students' academic competence and scientific

reasoning, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Program focused on the consistency of Qur'an memorization and the cultivation of students' daily worship practices.

In the Science Excellence Program, learning evaluation was conducted flexibly to monitor students' intellectual development. Based on interviews with the science teacher, the evaluation instruments were not limited to students' daily test scores but also assessed their readiness to participate in academic competitions such as the National Science Olympiad (OSN) and the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM), as well as their ability to deliver scientific presentations. The results of these academic assessments were recorded periodically as part of the quality assurance process for teaching and learning within the Science Excellence Program. In contrast, evaluation in the Tahfidz Excellence Program focused on monitoring students' progress toward achieving the program's spiritual objectives. Based on interviews with the *tahfidz* coordinator, daily and weekly evaluations emphasized students' attendance, progress in new Qur'an memorization (*ziyadah*), and consistency in memorization review (*muraja'ah*). Students' memorization progress and daily worship practices were documented regularly in individual progress records as part of the quality control process for Qur'an memorization. In addition to these program-specific assessments, the overall evaluation process was supported by the madrasah's managerial coordination system.

Based on interviews with the madrasah administrators, periodic evaluations were conducted through monthly coordination meetings chaired by the Madrasah Principal and attended by the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, teachers, and administrative staff to discuss students' academic performance, memorization targets, and the implementation of the excellence class programs. In addition to this formal mechanism, the madrasah also implemented an informal coordination system. Through this mechanism, the coordinator of the Science Excellence Program and the *tahfidz* coordinator could communicate directly with the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs or the Madrasah Principal to make timely evaluative decisions without waiting for the scheduled monthly staff meeting.

**Supporting Factors, Inhibiting Factors, and Implications of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs for Student Development and the Madrasah at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara**

The success of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara is supported by teachers' commitment, strong managerial support from the madrasah, the effective use of technology, and a conducive learning environment. In the Science Excellence Program, the primary supporting factor is the active involvement of supervising teachers who provide intensive guidance prior to academic competitions, including during regular instructional hours. The learning process is further supported through efficient content delivery using self-study modules developed based on the National Science Olympiad (OSN) syllabus, as well as the integration of digital technologies such as SMART TVs, artificial intelligence (AI), and educational applications to create an engaging and inquiry-based learning environment. Meanwhile, in the Tahfidz Excellence Program, the

main supporting factors include teachers' strong commitment to individualized mentoring, a structured three-hour daily learning schedule, and the routine practice of tadarus and muraja'ah before classroom instruction begins. External support is also provided by a number of parents who actively encourage their children's Qur'an memorization, although such involvement remains limited.

On the other hand, the implementation of the excellence class programs faces several complex challenges. In the Science Excellence Program, the primary obstacle is the limited availability of laboratory facilities, equipment, and practical materials, requiring students to use them on a rotating basis. Other challenges include students' low intrinsic motivation and the fact that some students joined the program due to parental encouragement rather than personal interest, leading to learning fatigue caused by the demanding curriculum and intensive competition preparation. In the Tahfidz Excellence Program, the main challenge arises from the non-boarding system, which limits teachers' ability to monitor students' memorization activities outside the madrasah. This situation is further exacerbated by limited parental involvement, negative influences from the surrounding social environment, and students' dependence on digital devices, all of which reduce their learning independence.

In addition, these challenges are reinforced by institutional factors, such as the location of the excellence classrooms within the same area as regular classrooms, which has led to feelings of social jealousy among students. In the Tahfidz Excellence Program, differences in students' memorization abilities also present a challenge, requiring individualized approaches through motivation, memorization techniques, and intensive teacher guidance. Nevertheless, teachers continuously adapt their instructional approaches to ensure that the mentoring process remains effective and responsive to each student's individual characteristics.

The implications of the excellence class programs are evident in both student development and the institutional development of the madrasah. In the Science Excellence Program, intensive coaching, the use of innovative learning media, and continuous competition mentoring have enhanced students' readiness to participate in the National Science Olympiad (OSN) and the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM), as reflected in their participation in various academic competitions. In the Tahfidz Excellence Program, the regular implementation of ziyadah, muraja'ah, and intensive teacher mentoring has contributed to students' Qur'an memorization progress while fostering discipline and responsibility. At the institutional level, the existence of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs has enhanced the madrasah's attractiveness to prospective students and the wider community, thereby supporting its new student admission strategy.

**Table 3**. Analysis of Supporting Factors, Inhibiting Factors, and Implications of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs

| Aspects | Science Classes | Tahfidz Class |
|---|---|---|
| Supporting Factors | - Active and dedicated supervising teachers<br>- Intensive mentoring during regular instructional hours | - Strong commitment of Tahfidz teachers<br>- Individualized mentoring |

| Aspects | Science Classes | Tahfidz Class |
|---|---|---|
| | - Self-study modules based on the OSN competition blueprint<br>- Integration of AI, SMART TVs, and digital learning applications | - Three-hour daily learning sessions<br>- Regular tadarus and murāja'ah practices<br>- Support from some parents |
| Inhibiting Factors | - Limited laboratory facilities<br>- Insufficient laboratory equipment and practical materials<br>- Low intrinsic motivation among students<br>- Some students enrolled due to parental encouragement rather than personal interest<br>- Learning fatigue caused by the demanding curriculum | - Non-boarding system<br>- Limited supervision of students' memorization at home<br>- Limited parental involvement<br>- Negative influences of digital devices and the social environment<br>- Differences in students' memorization abilities |
| Common Challenges | - Excellence classes are located alongside regular classes, leading to social jealousy among students | - Differences in students' memorization capacities |
| Implications for Students | - Increased readiness for academic competitions<br>- Greater participation and achievement in academic competitions<br>- Improved critical thinking and presentation skills | - Improved Qur'an memorization<br>- Enhanced discipline and responsibility<br>- Greater independence in maintaining memorization |
| Implications for the Madrasah | - Serves as one of the flagship programs that attracts prospective students and the wider community | - Strengthens the madrasah's religious identity |
| Institutional Impact | - Increased student participation in OSN, KSM, and other academic competitions<br>- Supports the sustainability of new student admissions | - Increased public trust<br>- Supports the implementation of religion-based excellence class programs |

Source: research data analysis, 2026

## DISCUSSION

### Planning of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs

The findings of this study indicate that the planning of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara is carried out systematically through the formulation of program objectives, the establishment of student achievement targets, the implementation of student selection mechanisms, and the alignment of each program with the vision of the madrasah. The planning process is developed based on the intended outputs of each program, namely academic output for the Science Excellence Program and spiritual output for the Tahfidz Excellence Program. These findings confirm George R. Terry's management theory, which states that planning is the fundamental management function that determines an organization's direction, objectives, and strategic actions in achieving desired outcomes. From the perspective of educational management, effective planning is not

only directed toward achieving short-term goals but also serves as a strategic instrument for ensuring the long-term sustainability and quality of educational institutions (Putri et al., 2025).

The planning of the Science Excellence Program, which emphasizes the development of academic achievement, research skills, and students' readiness to participate in the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM) and the National Science Olympiad (OSN), reflects an orientation toward developing higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), which constitute a key competency required in twenty-first-century education ( Indrianto, N., & Shamilah, M. U., 2020). These findings are consistent with Nurhayati (2024), who argues that the success of excellence class programs is strongly influenced by clearly defined objectives, appropriate student selection, and curriculum planning that promotes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values into the planning of the Science Excellence Program demonstrates the madrasah's commitment to fostering a balance between intellectual and spiritual development. This finding extends the work of Kusumawati (2024), who emphasizes that modern Islamic educational institutions should integrate scientific knowledge with religious values to strengthen students' identities. Therefore, the planning of the Science Excellence Program at MTs Masalikil Huda serves not only as a strategy for improving academic achievement but also as a means of character development consistent with the objectives of contemporary Islamic education.

The planning of the Tahfidz Excellence Program demonstrates different characteristics while remaining within the same strategic management framework. The establishment of a target of memorizing five juz over a three-year period, while considering the circumstances of students who do not reside in an Islamic boarding school (pesantren), reflects a realistic, contextual, and student-centered planning approach. These findings support the theory of strategic educational planning, which emphasizes needs assessment as the primary foundation for educational program development (Mangoki et al., 2025). Unlike many previous studies conducted in boarding-school settings, the present study demonstrates that the success of a Tahfidz program is not solely determined by the boarding system but is also influenced by the quality of planning, the consistency of teacher mentoring, and the suitability of program targets to students' actual conditions (Anisah, 2026). This finding also offers a new perspective by showing that a non-boarding Tahfidz program can be effectively implemented when supported by adaptive planning and continuous monitoring mechanisms.

From a critical perspective, these findings indicate that planning flexibility has become an essential factor in responding to the increasingly complex characteristics and needs of students in the digital era (Hariyo et al., 2024). Therefore, this study reinforces the view that the success of excellence class programs depends not only on the availability of resources but also on the institution's ability to design planning processes that are responsive to both students' internal needs and society's external expectations. Practically, these findings imply that madrasahs should conduct comprehensive assessments of students' potential before designing excellence class programs to ensure that both

academic and spiritual objectives can be achieved effectively and sustainably (Pranoto, Ulfatussyarifah, et al., 2025).

**Organizing the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs**

The findings of this study indicate that the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara are organized through the establishment of two separate management teams based on the characteristics of each program. The head of the madrasah serves as the strategic policymaker, the deputy head for curriculum acts as the technical coordinator, and teachers function as the primary implementers of the programs (Kurniatun, 2025). This organizational pattern reflects George R. Terry's concept of the organizing function, which emphasizes the division of responsibilities, authority, and coordination. The resulting organizational structure is not merely administrative in nature but also supports program effectiveness and sustainability. This finding is consistent with modern organizational theory, which emphasizes that an appropriate division of labor enhances accountability (Vanthica et al., 2025), and is further supported by findings showing that flexible and decentralized organizational structures improve the effectiveness of educational innovation (Saihu, 2020).

The organizational structure is also competency-based, whereby science teachers are responsible for academic instruction, research supervision, and competition preparation, while Tahfidz teachers focus on Qur'an memorization, religious character development, and spiritual mentoring. This finding is consistent with human resource management theory, which emphasizes aligning individual competencies with assigned responsibilities (Nurwahidah et al., 2025). Within the educational context, such alignment enables teachers to perform their roles more effectively (Yahya, M., & Martha, A., 2025) and supports previous findings that specialized educational programs require educators with specific competencies (Melati et al., 2024). Furthermore, Dzakwan (2024) argues that coordination among teachers reflects the implementation of a professional learning community, which contributes to improving decision-making quality and strengthening organizational culture.

The findings further reveal that the madrasah manages the Science and Tahfidz Excellence class programs separately, differing from previous studies that advocate the integration of general and religious education (Hakim, 2020). Nevertheless, this differentiated approach is considered more effective because the two programs have distinct objectives, instructional strategies, and student needs. These differences indicate that the organizational structure is designed not only according to the type of program but also according to the intended outputs. Consequently, the distribution of responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and roles of each management team are specifically designed to support the achievement of either academic or spiritual outcomes. The Science Excellence Program requires a competitive and inquiry-oriented learning environment, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Program requires a calm atmosphere that supports spiritual development (Kusumawati, 2024). These findings

suggest that integration is not always the most appropriate organizational approach and that differentiation can enhance organizational focus, role clarity, and program effectiveness.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings reinforce contingency theory, which argues that organizational effectiveness depends on the alignment between organizational structure and the organization's context and objectives (Novita et al., 2025). In this study, the organizational context and objectives are reflected in the differences between the academic outputs targeted by the Science Excellence Program and the spiritual outputs targeted by the Tahfidz Excellence Program. The differentiated organizational structure implemented at MTs Masalikil Huda demonstrates the madrasah's adaptation to students' diverse academic and spiritual needs while enriching the discourse on Islamic educational management by showing that organizational differentiation can serve as an effective management strategy (Pranoto, Ikhrom, et al., 2025). From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that educational institutions do not necessarily need to integrate all excellence class programs into a single organizational structure. Instead, organizational arrangements should be adapted to the specific characteristics of each program, with strong leadership from the head of the madrasah to ensure that differentiation enhances effectiveness without creating organizational fragmentation. Future studies are recommended to conduct comparative research across different excellence madrasahs to examine the effectiveness of differentiated organizational models compared with integrated models.

**Implementation of Science and Tahfidz Flagship Class Program**

The findings indicate that the Science Excellence Class Program at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara is designed to develop students' scientific thinking skills through laboratory experiments, simple research projects, scientific presentations, mini seminars, and intensive coaching for the Madrasah Science Competition (KSM) and the National Science Olympiad (OSN). These findings are consistent with the constructivist theories of Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978), hich emphasize the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through learning experiences. According to Ristiani et al. (2025), learning activities such as experiments and scientific projects reflect the principles of experiential learning and are consistent with studies demonstrating that inquiry-based learning enhances scientific literacy, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (Qothrunnada et al., 2025). Ramadan (2025) also argues that participation in scientific investigations promotes higher-order thinking skills and strengthens students' readiness for the demands of the twenty-first century. Overall, the Science Excellence Class Program is designed not only to prepare students for academic competitions but also to strengthen their digital literacy, communication skills, and intellectual capacity as active learners. These findings indicate that the implementation of the Science Excellence Class Program is intended to achieve the academic outputs established during the planning stage through various competency-oriented learning strategies.

Furthermore, the Science Excellence Class Program fosters an active, competitive, and innovative learning culture by creating an environment that encourages discussion, collaboration, and

scientific presentations. This finding is consistent with the principles of social constructivism, which emphasize the importance of social interaction in the learning process (Casfian et al., 2024). A collaborative learning environment has also been shown to enhance students' motivation, communication skills, and learning outcomes through the development of learning communities that encourage active participation (Cao, Y., & Yu, 2023). These findings are further supported by Sahin and Sugiharto (2025), who reported that exploration-based learning improves both academic achievement and career readiness. Herzamzam and Yuda (2025) found that students' involvement in research projects and presentations enhances self-efficacy, academic resilience, and communication skills. Therefore, the Science Excellence Class Program contributes not only to students' academic achievement but also to their psychological development and personal competencies.

In contrast, the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program places greater emphasis on cultivating students' spiritual development through murojaah, ziyadah, tadarus, daily religious practices, and individualized teacher mentoring. These findings can be explained through the perspectives of character education and spiritual pedagogy, both of which emphasize the role of habituation in character formation. Pike et al. (2021) rgue that effective character education should be grounded in continuous practice rather than merely the transmission of moral knowledge. In this context, tahfidz activities function not only to improve Qur'an memorization but also to internalize the values of discipline, responsibility, perseverance, and self-control. This finding is consistent with Naziyah and Gufron (2025), who reported that tahfidz programs enhance students' self-discipline, emotional stability, and moral awareness. Accordingly, the implementation of the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program is directed toward achieving the spiritual outputs established during the planning stage through the improvement of Qur'an memorization alongside the development of students' religious character.

Another significant finding is the existence of two distinct learning cultures within the same institution: an academic culture in the Science Excellence Class and a spiritual culture in the Tahfidz Excellence Class. According to Shunhajir and Syaifullah (2025), science classes emphasize competitiveness and innovation, whereas tahfidz classes emphasize reflection and religious values. This finding enriches the concept of differentiated educational environments, which advocates aligning educational practices with students' characteristics and learning needs. Such differentiation does not fragment educational objectives; rather, it strengthens the effectiveness of each program, differing from the perspective that promotes a single integrated educational culture (Yohan, 2025). At MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara, this differentiated approach has become a strategic strength in optimizing students' diverse potentials. Theoretically, these findings contribute to the literature on excellence program management in Islamic schools by demonstrating that differentiated program implementation can effectively support diverse educational outcomes. Practically, the findings suggest that madrasahs can develop innovative learning models grounded in Islamic values while accommodating different student needs. Future studies are recommended to examine the long-term effects of Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs on students' academic, spiritual, social, and career development.

**Evaluation of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs**

The findings of this study indicate that the evaluation of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara employs different indicators based on the characteristics and objectives of each program. The Science Excellence Class Program is evaluated through students' academic achievement, competition readiness, scientific presentation skills, and critical thinking abilities, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program is evaluated through students' Qur'anic memorization achievement, consistency in murojaah, regularity of memorization submission, and the development of religious behavior. These differences indicate that the evaluation system for each program is designed according to its intended outcomes. This finding supports the concept of outcome-based evaluation, which emphasizes that evaluation indicators should be aligned with program objectives to provide accurate information regarding program effectiveness (Sibarani, et al., 2025). Furthermore, the differentiated evaluation indicators reflect the principle of accountability in educational management, as each program is assessed according to the competencies it is intended to develop (Saputra, 2025).

Furthermore, evaluation serves not only as a tool for measuring students' learning outcomes but also as an instrument for quality control in program management. This finding is consistent with George R. Terry's controlling function, which emphasizes comparing actual performance with predetermined standards as the basis for corrective action. Evaluation in the Science Excellence Class Program is conducted continuously through monitoring students' academic performance, readiness for academic competitions, and scientific presentation skills. In contrast, evaluation in the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program focuses on daily monitoring of ziyadah, murojaah, and students' memorization progress (Pranoto, Raharjo, et al., 2025). This continuous evaluation process is consistent with Nur and Junaris (2023), who argue that continuous assessment enables educators to provide timely interventions, thereby improving the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes. Therefore, continuous evaluation constitutes an essential component of continuous improvement in the management of excellence class programs.

In addition to evaluating students' learning outcomes, the madrasah also evaluates program management through both formal and informal mechanisms. Formal evaluation is conducted through monthly meetings involving the head of the madrasah, the deputy head for curriculum, teachers, and educational staff to review program implementation and address emerging challenges. Meanwhile, informal evaluation takes place through direct communication between program coordinators and the madrasah leadership whenever immediate decision-making is required. These practices indicate that quality control is achieved not only through administrative procedures but also through adaptive organizational communication. From the perspective of organizational learning, Fauzan et al. (2024) argue that effective organizations foster collective learning through open communication, which is

consistent with Tahalele et al. (2026), who emphasize that informal communication accelerates decision-making processes within educational organizations.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the evaluation function of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara is developed based on the different academic and spiritual outcomes targeted by each program. Consequently, the evaluation indicators, monitoring mechanisms, and follow-up actions are tailored to the characteristics of each program to ensure effective quality control. From a practical perspective, madrasahs should maintain an adaptive evaluation system by integrating formal and informal evaluation mechanisms while developing balanced indicators that assess not only cognitive achievement but also affective, spiritual, and behavioral development (Malintang et al., 2025).

**Supporting Factors, Inhibiting Factors, and Implications of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs**

The findings indicate that the success of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara is influenced by several key supporting factors, including the quality of human resources, school culture, educational technology, and environmental support. The most influential factor is the commitment and dedication of teachers, who serve not only as instructors but also as mentors, facilitators, and motivators. In the Science Excellence Class Program, teachers facilitate academic competitions and research activities, whereas in the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program, they serve as Qur'anic memorization instructors and spiritual mentors. These findings are consistent with the concept of instructional leadership, which emphasizes teacher quality as a key determinant of educational success (Ardi, 2025), and are further supported by international studies highlighting the importance of high-quality teacher–student interactions in promoting student development (Jumrawati & Lina, 2025). Furthermore, the integration of technologies such as SMART TVs, digital learning media, and educational applications enhances the quality of science instruction, supporting the findings of Abas (2025) regarding technology integration in twenty-first-century education. Likewise, the school culture, characterized by tadarus and the habituation of Islamic values, strengthens the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program. These findings suggest that the success of both programs depends on the synergy among teachers, technology, school culture, and environmental support.

However, the study also identified several inhibiting factors affecting program implementation. In the Science Excellence Class Program, the primary constraints include limited laboratory facilities, inadequate practical equipment, and insufficient learning resources, supporting previous findings that educational facilities play a crucial role in the quality of science learning (Randan et al., 2025). In addition, students' low intrinsic motivation, particularly among those enrolled primarily due to parental expectations, reinforces self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation in achieving optimal learning outcomes. In the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program, limited

parental involvement and the non-boarding system reduce teachers' ability to monitor students' Qur'anic memorization outside school (Suryanto et al., 2024). Moreover, digital distractions further diminish Generation Z students' learning concentration. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of the excellence class programs is influenced by multiple interconnected factors involving the school, family, technology, and students' social characteristics.

From the perspective of educational outcomes, the excellence class programs have generated positive impacts that correspond to the objectives of each program. In the Science Excellence Class Program, students' participation in experiments, research projects, scientific presentations, and academic competitions contributes to the development of critical thinking, communication skills, and self-confidence. These findings are consistent with Astuti et al. (2025), who argue that project-based learning and scientific activities effectively promote higher-order thinking skills and student competencies. In the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program, the regular practice of murojaah and Qur'anic memorization submission sessions enhances students' discipline, responsibility, and spiritual independence, supporting the findings of Shodiq and Kuswanto (2024). Despite their different orientations, both programs contribute positively to holistic education by fostering students' cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social development.

The implications of these programs also extend to the institutional development of the madrasah. The Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs constitute strategic initiatives that enable the madrasah to provide educational services aligned with students' diverse needs and potentials. Based on interviews with the Vice Principal for Curriculum Affairs, these excellence class programs have become one of the institution's primary attractions for prospective students during the student admission process. This finding is consistent with the concept of strategic educational management, which positions excellence programs as strategic instruments for strengthening the competitiveness and institutional reputation of educational institutions (Salsabila, 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the management of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs at MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara is implemented through the four core management functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation, all of which are designed according to the intended outputs of each program. During the planning stage, the two programs are developed with distinct objectives while remaining aligned with the madrasah's vision of nurturing students who possess faith (iman), piety (taqwa), noble character (akhlaqul karimah), and well-developed intellectual, spiritual, and practical competencies. The Science Excellence Class Program focuses on strengthening academic achievement, critical thinking, research skills, and competition readiness, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program emphasizes Qur'anic memorization and the development of students' spiritual

character. These differences in objectives serve as the foundation for program design, student selection, instructional strategies, and evaluation indicators in each excellence class program.

The organizing function is implemented through the establishment of separate management teams that reflect the distinctive characteristics of each program, thereby enabling clearer task distribution, coordination, and teacher responsibilities. During the implementation stage, the two programs cultivate different learning cultures. The Science Excellence Class Program promotes an academic culture through experiment-based learning, research activities, and academic competitions, whereas the Tahfidz Excellence Class Program fosters a spiritual culture through ziyadah, murojaah, worship habituation, and individualized Qur'anic memorization guidance. Furthermore, evaluation is conducted continuously using indicators tailored to the objectives and characteristics of each program and is supported by both formal and informal coordination as part of the madrasah's quality assurance process. The successful implementation of the programs is supported by teachers' commitment, innovative instructional practices, the effective use of educational technology, the madrasah's religious culture, and a supportive learning environment. Conversely, the programs face several challenges, including limited educational facilities and infrastructure, low learning motivation among some students, insufficient parental involvement, the influence of digital technology, and limited supervision of students enrolled in the non-boarding Tahfidz program. The findings demonstrate that designing management functions based on distinct academic and spiritual outputs enables the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs to be managed more effectively in accordance with their respective objectives. This management approach has also contributed to strengthening public trust and enhancing the competitiveness of MTs Masalikil Huda Tahunan Jepara as an Islamic educational institution.

## SUGGESTION

This study is limited to examining the management of the Science and Tahfidz Excellence Class Programs in a single madrasah using a qualitative approach that focuses on the management functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. Therefore, future studies are recommended to investigate the effectiveness of excellence class program management using quantitative or mixed-methods approaches in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between management practices and the achievement of students' academic and spiritual outcomes. Furthermore, comparative studies involving several madrasahs or schools that implement excellence class programs with different characteristics are recommended to generate broader insights into the application of excellence class program management across diverse educational contexts.

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