

# Evaluation of Religious Plus Program Implementation at Muhammadiyah Nitikan Primary School

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## ABSTRACT

This evaluation research aims to examine the implementation of the Plus Program at Muhammadiyah Nitikan Elementary School through three dimensions: input, process, and output. The study adopts Stake's Countenance Model of evaluation, focusing on how the program is designed, executed, and its resulting outcomes. A qualitative case study approach was used to explore the implementation in depth within its real-life educational context. Instead of a sample, the study identifies key informants—individuals who are most knowledgeable about the Plus Program—namely, the school principal, the program coordinator, and the religious studies teachers. Data were collected using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, guided by the evaluation criteria aligned with the Plus Program standards defined by the Educational Council of Muhammadiyah Branch Leadership of Umbulharjo. The findings reveal that: (1) In the input phase, the program's objectives are well-aligned with its vision, producing graduates who excel in academic performance, religious faith, and moral conduct. First-grade student admissions showed that 3.54% had begun reading the Qur'an, while 96.46% were at Iqro' levels 1 to 6. The infrastructure is highly adequate, with Campus 1 having its mosque. The curriculum is structured and includes evaluation and follow-up mechanisms, although further efforts are needed to integrate it into a formalized school curriculum. (2) In the process phase, the program is systematically managed, involving all school stakeholders, and its implementation is well-coordinated through the Religious Plus Program structure. (3) In the output phase, 100% of sixth-grade students have completed the Iqro' stage, while 77.47% have completed Qur'an memorization (tahfidz), leaving 22.53% who have yet to finish. Regarding non-academic outcomes, student achievements in various competitions indicate that talent development programs are running effectively.

**Keywords:** Elementary School, Evaluation, Memorization, Religious Plus Program



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## INTRODUCTION

The Muhammadiyah Plus Program is an educational initiative to integrate moral, academic, and managerial excellence within Islamic values derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. One of its implementations can be observed at Muhammadiyah Nitikan Primary School, a *private elementary school* in Umbulharjo District, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The school emphasizes character building alongside academic achievement and practical life skills, with the vision of producing future leaders grounded in Muhammadiyah values. The Plus Program represents Muhammadiyah's response to the challenge of shaping quality education that balances religious and general sciences.

Education itself is a systemic process involving interconnected components such as curriculum, management, infrastructure, and human resources [1], [2]. Comprehensive evaluation of an educational program, therefore, requires examining these components and their interactions [3]–[5]. In the national context, education in Indonesia is directed toward developing learners who are faithful, morally upright, and intellectually competent, as mandated by Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. This foundation affirms the importance of aligning school programs with national goals and community values.

Historically, Muhammadiyah schools were established as a critique and alternative to traditional Islamic boarding schools [6]–[10], which often focused solely on religious instruction such as fiqh, tafsir, and Sufism, while neglecting modern scientific knowledge and pedagogical innovation. The Plus Program was developed as a transformative approach to Islamic schooling, integrating general and religious education with modern instructional methods and quality standards. Muhammadiyah Nitikan Primary School has adopted this model to enhance student outcomes holistically.

While previous studies have documented the integration of religious and academic curricula in Islamic schools [11], [12], there remains a lack of evaluative research that comprehensively investigates the implementation process of character-based programs like Muhammadiyah's Plus Program at the elementary level. Most existing evaluations tend to focus on output metrics, such as students' academic scores or memorization achievements [13], [14], without analyzing how the program's components—particularly input and process—interact to influence outcomes. Furthermore, the contextual uniqueness of Muhammadiyah Nitikan Primary School, which applies a localized yet structured version of the Plus Program, provides a significant opportunity to uncover nuanced implementation dynamics. This research fills the gap by using a multidimensional evaluation framework that systematically examines how educational goals, infrastructure, management, and stakeholder involvement affect students' academic and moral development.

Despite the structured design of the Plus Program, challenges remain in its implementation. For example, not all students meet the expected learning targets in specific areas such as Qur'anic reading (Qiro'ah) and memorization (Tahfidh). These discrepancies necessitate an evaluation to determine whether the program's implementation is aligned with its intended objectives. Potential gaps or inefficiencies can be identified and addressed effectively by evaluating the program components and processes.

Recent literature on Islamic education reform emphasizes the need for holistic models that integrate spiritual, cognitive, and affective development through structured school-based programs. For instance, studies by Sa'adi (2025) and Azis et al (2025) have highlighted the growing demand for value-based curricula that do not merely teach religion as content but embed it in everyday practice and school culture. Evaluation frameworks such as Stake's Countenance Model [17], increasingly adopted in educational assessments, provide comprehensive insights into the contextual effectiveness of such programs. The present study

advances this scholarly discourse by adopting Stake's model to assess the Plus Program on measurable outputs and the congruence between its inputs, management practices, and pedagogical strategies—offering a complete understanding of how Islamic values can be operationalized in elementary education. This study, therefore, focuses on evaluating the implementation of the Plus Program at Muhammadiyah Nitikan Primary School as a representative case of how Islamic-based private elementary education can be managed and improved.

## METHOD

### Research Procedure

This study employed a qualitative research design emphasizing a comprehensive evaluation approach. The procedures followed in this research include the formulation of the research focus, the development of research questions, the determination of appropriate data collection instruments, the identification of analysis units and key informants, and the application of systematic techniques to analyze qualitative data. The main aspects evaluated—input, process, and output—were examined through multiple data sources. The effectiveness of program implementation was further corroborated through interviews and documentary evidence, allowing triangulation of findings across data sources.

### Data Collection

The data in this study were collected using three primary qualitative methods:

1. **Observation.** Observation involves the systematic recording of observable phenomena related to the research focus [18]. In this study, direct observation allowed the researcher to examine the implementation of the Plus Program in its natural setting.
2. **In-depth Interview.** In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain rich and detailed insights from key informants [19], [20]. This method involves a face-to-face question-and-answer process between the researcher (evaluator) and selected respondents to explore their perspectives regarding the program's implementation.
3. **Document Study.** This technique involves collecting qualitative data by examining written or recorded materials relevant to the program. Documents such as school reports, program plans, attendance lists, and progress records were used to support and validate findings from interviews and observations [21], [22].

**Table 1. Instrument Blueprint for the Evaluation of the Plus Program**

Instrument	Evaluation Aspect	Indicator	Data Source / Subject	Type of Data
<b>Observation</b>	Input	Availability of facilities and infrastructure supporting the program	School environment, classrooms, mosque	Field notes, photographs
	Process	Implementation of religious learning activities in the Plus Program	Teachers, students, classrooms	Activity descriptions, narratives
	Output	Student engagement and enthusiasm during program activities	Students, teachers	Behavioral notes, observations
<b>In-depth Interview</b>	Input	Student background and initial readiness to join the Plus Program	Principal, program coordinator, teachers	Interview transcripts

Instrument	Evaluation Aspect	Indicator	Data Source / Subject	Type of Data
	Process	Implementation strategies and stakeholder involvement	Teachers, coordinator, principal	Narrative quotes from informants
	Output	Perceptions of academic and non-academic student outcomes	Teachers, principal, parents	Testimonials, subjective assessments
<b>Document Study</b>	Input	Curriculum documents, student records, facility profiles	School archives, documents from Muhammadiyah Branch (PCM)	Document copies, reports
	Process	Activity schedules, attendance lists, lesson plans, and evaluations	Daily schedules, implementation reports	Hard/soft copies of documents
	Output	Reports on Iqro'/Tahfidz achievements, student awards, and portfolios	Final reports, student achievement records	Quantitative and descriptive data

### Data Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques, which included source triangulation, methodological triangulation, and theoretical triangulation [23]. These approaches allowed the researcher to verify findings by comparing data from different informants, using multiple data collection methods (observation, interview, and document analysis), and interpreting the results within relevant theoretical frameworks.

### Data Analysis Techniques

The data in this study were analyzed using a qualitative analysis framework consisting of three main stages:

1. **Data Reduction.** Organizing and simplifying unstructured raw data into a more coherent and manageable form. At this stage, program management and implementation data were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives.
2. **Data Organization.** Grouping the reduced data into specific themes aligned with the evaluation components: input, process, and output.
3. **Interpretation** – analyzing the grouped data in light of relevant theories and standards, drawing conclusions that reflect the implementation of the Plus Program at Muhammadiyah Nitikan Primary School.

The evaluation in this study focuses on three main components: input, process, and output. The input variables include several key aspects such as the alignment of the program goals with the school's vision, the initial capabilities of students upon enrollment (particularly in Qur'anic literacy), the availability and adequacy of supporting facilities and infrastructure, and the design of the curriculum that integrates both religious and academic content. Regarding the process variables, the study examines how the Plus Program is managed institutionally and how implementation strategies are executed by teachers, coordinators, and other stakeholders. Finally, the output variables are assessed through several indicators, including the completion of Iqro' reading levels up to volume six, achievements in Qur'an memorization (Tahfidz), consistency in performing daily prayers, the embodiment of moral values through the 6S principles (Smile, Greet, Greet Back, Politeness, Orderliness, and Cleanliness) and the successful placement of students in reputable Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) following graduation. Each stage was analyzed based on data collected from interviews and observations,

then compared with established program standards to provide a comprehensive understanding of the program's implementation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an integrated narrative of findings and discussions concerning implementing the Plus Program at SD Muhammadiyah Nitikan. Following the qualitative research paradigm, each theme emerging from the data (classified into input, process, and output) will be interpreted through triangulated data sources and linked with existing theories and previous studies. This approach allows a deeper understanding of why certain phenomena occur within the program's context and how these relate to broader educational practices.

### Input Analysis: Objectives, Student Readiness, and Infrastructure

The Muhammadiyah Nitikan Plus Program was designed as a holistic religious enhancement initiative integrated into the formal school structure. At its core, the program is aligned with Muhammadiyah's broader educational goals, aiming to produce spiritually mature, morally sound, and academically capable students. The school operationalizes these goals into daily routines through early Qur'anic literacy programs (Iqro'), tahfidz (memorization), prayer practice, and moral character building. This approach aligns with what Sukardi (2011) described as affective domain-driven education, where character development is embedded in structured programming.

The student readiness profile revealed a heterogeneous mix of capabilities. Data collected from admissions tests show that most incoming Grade 1 students began at various Iqro levels, ranging from volume 1 to 6, with only a small proportion (3.54%) moving beyond Qur'anic text. This stratification allowed educators to categorize learners and implement differentiated instruction based on their initial literacy stage. As highlighted by [24], differentiated instruction rooted in diagnostic assessment helps bridge initial learning gaps and enables educators to respond to diverse needs.

The infrastructure at SD Muhammadiyah Nitikan supports the religious focus of the Plus Program. Every campus has access to a mosque, and classrooms are utilized for Tahfidz, Kitabah, and moral instruction. Facilities were found to be adequate for both formal instruction and religious practice. This finding is consistent with [25], who emphasized the critical role of facilities in facilitating educational excellence, especially in religious schools. Interviews confirmed that the physical environment and administrative infrastructure—such as student monitoring cards and evaluation tools—supported the delivery of the program.

Curriculum documents further confirmed the strategic planning behind the Plus Program. Learning targets, instructional materials, and evaluation mechanisms were documented, although some gaps remain in curriculum integration into the national system. For example, Tahfidz and Qiroah are still treated as extracurricular in some instances rather than as a core part of the school day. This finding echoes Zahro & Nasikhin [25] claim that institutionalization of religious education often lags behind planning and execution due to systemic rigidity. Similarly, the marginalization of religious programs in formal academic frameworks is observed, calling for policy-level integration [26].

### Process Analysis: Program Management and Implementation Strategies

The implementation of the Plus Program was found to be systematic and collaborative, engaging all school stakeholders (teachers, coordinators, administrators, and parents). Program socialization is conducted at the beginning of the academic year, ensuring teachers and parents understand their roles. Meetings with teachers and religious instructors occur regularly,



aligning daily execution with the overarching goals. Including parents as learning partners, especially for home-based memorization, enhances school and home learning consistency.

In practice, the religious instruction includes two main components: *Qiroah wa Kitabah* (reading and writing the Qur'an using the Iqro' system) and *Tahfidzul Qur'an* (memorization). These activities are scheduled outside regular classroom hours, usually early in the morning. Observation data confirmed that students gather in classrooms and mosques before 7:00 AM for religious activities, demonstrating the seriousness of the implementation. Moreover, students receive personal monitoring cards to track progress.

This practice is in line with findings by Raharjo et al. [27], who noted that program implementation fidelity in religious character education correlates strongly with structural support mechanisms like progress cards and scheduled routines. Furthermore, the integration of parental roles in implementation echoes Anjani [28] concluded that collaborative parental engagement improves motivation and retention in religious learning programs.

**Table 2. Plus Program Activities**

No	Program	Activities	Learning Indicators
1.	<i>Qiroah wa Kitabah</i>	<i>Iqro'</i> Assistance	Students recite individually and are assessed by the teacher.
		Writing ( <i>Kitabah</i> )	Students accurately write Arabic letters according to standard orthography.
2.	<i>Tahfidhul Qur'an</i>	Classical teaching	Students demonstrate correct articulation and intonation during memorization.
		Student Murojaah	Memorized verses are reviewed and assessed for fluency and accuracy.
		<i>Tahfidh</i> Graduation	Students demonstrate mastery of at least one juz and receive graduation certification.
3	Prayer Worship	<i>Dhuha</i> prayer	Students demonstrate consistency in performing the <i>Dhuha</i> prayer.
		<i>Dhuhur in Congregation</i>	Students show active participation in communal worship.
		Friday Prayers	Students understand and participate in Friday prayer protocols.
4	Moral Development	6S Habit (Smile, Greet, Greet Back, Politeness, Orderliness, Cleanliness)	Students internalize respectful and courteous social interactions.
		Keputrian	Students reflect on their understanding of female-specific religious knowledge and practices.
5	Assistance in Entering Islamic Boarding Schools	<i>Learning Modules</i> : Tahsinul Qur'an, Tahfidh, Arabic, Worship Fiqh, and Motivation.	Students acquire knowledge in tajwid, Arabic grammar, and fiqh essentials.

The moral development program, notably the 6S habit-building strategy (Smile, Greet, Greet Back, Politeness, Orderliness, and Cleanliness), was another standout feature of the process. This daily practice of greeting and encouraging respectful behavior has been observed to create a favorable school climate. It confirms findings by Malti et al. [29], who posited that repeated moral modeling fosters affective development in young learners. The girls' special fiqh classes held during Friday prayers also indicate attention to gender-specific spiritual needs.

A particularly unique component of the process phase is the structured assistance for sixth-grade students planning to enroll in Islamic boarding schools. This assistance includes targeted preparation in *Tahsinul Qur'an*, Arabic, and worship *fiqh*. By familiarizing students with the entrance requirements and curriculum expectations, the school enhances their readiness and confidence, which is consistent with Trainor et al. [30] A framework for religious transition preparation.

### Output Analysis: Academic, Worship, and Character Development Outcomes

The output of the Plus Program was assessed through student achievements in Qur'anic reading (Iqro'), memorization (Tahfidz), prayer practice, moral development, and competition performance. The data show that 75.22% of students completed the Iqro curriculum by the end of sixth grade, transitioning into the Qur'an. While this figure indicates positive results, early-grade completion remains relatively low, with only 49.12% of first-grade students advancing past Iqro. These findings are consistent with research by Kim et al. [31], which found that early-grade literacy interventions require sustained scaffolding and monitoring to achieve full outcomes.

In the *Tahfidz* domain, the average completion rate across all grade levels was 72.22%, with higher success in upper grades. For example, 85.82% of fifth and 77.47% of sixth graders had completed their memorization targets. These figures are encouraging and point to the efficacy of the structured delivery. However, lower completion rates in grades I–III suggest that early scaffolding and parental engagement improvements could help build momentum. This aligns with the findings of [32], who emphasizes the need for sustained teacher support and age-appropriate instructional design in early Tahfidz programs.

Table 3 outlines Tahfidz targets by grade level, demonstrating the memorization scope and implementation status across the semesters.

**Table 3. Qiro'ah Learning Targets Iqro' System**

<b>Iqro'</b>	<b>Teaching Materials</b>
1	a. Introduction to reading <i>hijaiyah fathah</i> letters. b. Distinguish between letters that are similar in shape and sound.
2	a. Introduction to reading cursive letters b. Introduction to reading <i>Mad Alif</i> and <i>Mad Fathah</i>
3	a. Introduction to reading <i>katsrah</i> and <i>dhammah</i> b. Introduction to <i>Mad Ya</i> and <i>Mad Katsrah</i> reading c. Introduction to reading <i>mad waw</i> and <i>mad dhammah</i>
4	a. Introduction to reading <i>fathah tanwin</i> , <i>kasrah tanwin</i> , <i>dhammah tanwin</i> . b. Introduction to reading <i>ya' sukun</i> , <i>waw sukun</i> , <i>mim sukun</i> and <i>nun sukun</i> . c. Introduction to reading <i>qalqalah</i> and <i>sukun</i> letters. d. Differentiate the reading of <i>sukun</i> letters that sound similar.
5	a. Introduction to <i>Alif Lam Qomariyah</i> and <i>Syamsiyah</i> reading b. Introduction to signs and reading of obligatory <i>mad/jaiz</i> c. Introduction to <i>tasydid</i> signs and Allah's pronunciation d. Introduction to reading <i>Idgham Nun</i> and <i>Idgham Mim</i> e. Introduction to reading <i>idgham bilaa ghunnah</i> and <i>Ikhfa' Syafawi</i>
6	a. Introduction to reading <i>Idgham Bighunnah (Waw and Ya')</i> b. Introduction to reading <i>Iqlab</i> and <i>Ikhfa'</i> c. Introduction to the signs of <i>waqaf</i> and various ways of <i>waqaf</i> . d. Introduction to reading the first letters of letters

The structured Dhuha and Dhuhur prayer sessions demonstrate the effectiveness of prayer practice. Conducted daily and monitored by teachers, these practices have helped students

internalize prayer routines, as reflected in the 100% pass rate on the prayer practice exam for sixth graders. The consistent reinforcement of spiritual habits reflects Douglas & Brauer [33] theory that behavior change is most effective when aligned with environmental structure and support.

Moral development was another clear output of the program. Through daily implementation of the 6S values, students were observed to exhibit positive and respectful behavior. The school's routine of welcoming students each morning with greetings and gentle reminders helps instill a culture of politeness. These findings align with Haniah et al. [34] assertion that character education requires ongoing, daily reinforcement.

Non-academic achievements also offer insights into the program's success. Students from SD Muhammadiyah Nitikan have consistently won awards in Qur'anic competitions, MTQ, *adhan* recitations, and Olympiads. This level of external validation confirms the depth and breadth of talent development efforts within the Plus Program. Moreover, the data confirm that 100% of students participating in the boarding school entrance preparation program were accepted, showing that the preparatory curriculum is relevant and highly effective in achieving its intended goals. This finding resonates with Early et al. [35], who report that structured spiritual development programs significantly influence students' readiness for post-primary Islamic education.

The output indicators strongly suggest that the Plus Program has successfully promoted academic, spiritual, and moral development. However, discrepancies in completion rates between lower and upper grades point to the need for differentiated strategies and early intervention. The school can further refine its program design by identifying these trends, especially in early-grade implementation and family engagement.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and integrated discussion, it can be concluded that the Plus Program initiated by PCM Umbulharjo aligns strongly with the vision and mission of Muhammadiyah Nitikan Primary School, emphasizing balanced development in faith, knowledge, and moral character. The program is systematically managed under a dedicated coordinator, enabling structured implementation of Qur'anic reading (*Iqro'*) and memorization (*Tahfidz*), achieving 75.16% and 72.00% completion rates, respectively. Non-academic accomplishments are equally notable, with nine students winning in *Tahfidz* Qur'an competitions and other religious contests. Moral development activities—such as the 6S habit (smile, greet, return greetings, be polite, orderly, and clean), prayer habituation, and female student Islamic studies—have been effectively instilled within daily routines, reinforcing positive behaviors at school and within the broader community. Furthermore, the preparatory program for Islamic boarding school admission proved highly effective, as all participating sixth-grade students were accepted into their targeted schools. These outcomes suggest that the Plus Program strengthens academic and religious capabilities and nurtures student character and life readiness. However, some areas still require refinement, particularly in early-grade support and parental engagement. The school is therefore encouraged to institutionalize the Plus Program as a sustainable model, enhancing it through continuous improvement in planning, execution, and evaluation. This includes strengthening curricular integration, assessment standards, and stakeholder collaboration. For students, active participation should be fostered through consistent guidance from both teachers and parents, especially in core components such as *Qiroah Kitabah*, *Tahfidz* Qur'an, daily worship, and moral character development. Ensuring the program's continuity and responsiveness to student needs will further optimize its impact on holistic student growth.



## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest between authors.

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