Managing Learning Excellence in Educational Institutions: Strategies and Insights

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to identify and analyze the management of learning excellence in education units with different characteristics. **Method:** This research uses a qualitative approach with a multi-case study design. Data collection techniques used in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Data credibility was checked using triangulation techniques, member checking, and peer discussion. Data collected through the three techniques were organized, interpreted, and analyzed repeatedly through within-case and cross-case analyses to develop concepts and abstractions of research findings. **Results:** The results show that the existence of schools in superior schools is determined by the number of learning excellence owned by schools and the involvement of school principals in improving and maintaining progress by making innovations and changes so that schools remain stable and last until now. Future research can be conducted using different research designs and approaches. **Novelty:** Based on the results of the literature search, not many studies have been related to the management of learning excellence in education units. Previous research is mainly related to the characteristics of excellent schools. Only some studies aim to determine and analyze the management of learning excellence in schools. Therefore, the management of learning excellence has the characteristics of applying discipline in the teaching and learning process, demanding creative and innovative teachers, and having seriousness in curriculum development and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Learning excellence is how the learning system becomes superior in classroom management, learning models, and learning content using professional knowledge. Supported by learning support facilities and the preparation of life skills programs to increase learning effectiveness. This means that the learning excellence referred to here is learning that has advantages or virtues, seen from the system, model, and strategy. In education units, the characteristics of learning excellence include (1) having adequate input quality (Luangpaiboon et al., 2024), (2) promoting learning that is not verbally oriented, (3) the availability of learning facilities, and the use of multimedia.

School principals have a strategic role in managing learning excellence in education units. Whatever the form and variety of educational innovations, they will not give much meaning to improving the quality of services to students if schools do not have learning excellence, so learning excellence needs to be appropriately managed in a planned, programmed, and sustainable manner.

The frequency and effectiveness of principal behavior as a learning leader influence student achievement. The influence appears in the principal's ability to organize learning

(instructional organization) and build a school climate conducive to learning activities. According to Heck et al. (1990), there are three variables related to learning leadership that affect student achievement in schools, namely (a) school governance, (b) instructional organization, and (c) school climate.

Research conducted by Donmoyer (1984), when examining one hundred good schools, has developed 12 characteristics which include: (1) the school is part of the educational programme of the wider community; (2) the school's objectives are comprehensive, balanced, realistic, and comprehensible, and they are absorbed into the school's activities; (3) the school has accountability for programme planning by its own personnel; (4) the school climate is friendly, humorous, busy, and school members and staff generally approach work with challenge and satisfaction; (5) a variety of teaching methods and resources are used appropriately for learning purposes; (6) student performance toward all evaluated school objectives is generally satisfactory; (7) students participate fully and enthusiastically in the various activities provided by the school and community; (8) parents and other members of the school community participate fully and enthusiastically in providing opportunities for their wards in the educational programme; (9) libraries and other learning centres are widely and effectively used by students; (10) school programmes provide natural progression for students from dependent to independent; (11) the principal is an influential leader and collaborates effectively within the school and community; and (12) school teachers appear to be reforming and improving continuously. Based on the opinion above, managing learning excellence in schools is urgent to provide excellent learning services to students.

Theoretically, the role of principals' managerial skills in managing learning excellence can be explained as follows. First, managerial skills enable a principal to be successful and succeed brilliantly. Therefore, he must have strong managerial skills, including conceptual, human, and technical skills. This means that the principal must be able to manage and develop the curriculum, improve learning, provide good services to students, manage finances and infrastructure, and foster good relations with the community (Katureebe et al., 2023; Mahardhani, 2023; Palah et al., 2022; Setyaningsih et al., 2023). Second, the principal's role is managerially towards the school's progress, which is that of a planner, organizer, and controller. He must be able to work with and through others whose main task is to improve the quality of learning and manage learning activities professionally.

Judging from the facts in the field. First, the reality on the ground shows that the managerial skills of school principals in managing learning excellence in schools are in demand and require art in the management process. The number of private high schools that are closed and do not get students is inseparable from the managerial role of the principal in managing learning excellence. In addition, many schools still have low student learning achievement, teachers and students lack discipline, teachers' ability to manage learning is low, and administrative staff are slow in serving the needs of students (Alfaris et al., 2021; Chen, 2022; Muljono & Kosasih, 2022; Williams et al., 2022). These problems are a reflection of the principal's lack of skills in empowering his staff, in addition to the low work ethic of the school community as a whole. Secondly, each principal has varied, unique, and intriguing skills in managing learning excellence to lead the school to become a superior school and in demand by the community (Bailey & Gibson, 2020).

Based on the literature search results above, few studies are related to managing learning excellence in schools. Previous studies are mostly related to the characteristics

of superior schools, good schools, and outstanding schools. Few studies aim to determine and analyze the management of learning excellence in schools. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that the management of learning excellence has the characteristics of applying discipline in the teaching and learning process, demanding creative and innovative teachers, students have many activities at school, applying competence based on activities, being oriented to student achievement, and having seriousness in curriculum development and learning.

Theoretical Framework
Management of Learning Excellence
Learning excellence contains the words excellence and learning. Excellence means being (more) superior, excellence, intelligence (skill, goodness, strength, and so on) that is more than others; excellent quality. Meanwhile, learning is a planned and conscious effort through the process of action (one-way communication between teachers and students); interaction (two-way communication, namely between teachers and students and students and teachers); and transactions (many-way communication, namely between teachers and students, students and teachers, and students and students) to produce behavioral changes (Herticia et al., 2021). So, learning is a planned and conscious effort through the process of action, interaction, and transaction using professional knowledge owned by the teacher to produce behavioral changes (Huang et al., 2020). From this understanding, the essence of learning excellence lies in the comparison between learning that one is more valuable than the other. This comparison shows the optimal learning strategy and the learning process developed by existing conditions.

Several things need to be observed about learning excellence: First, learning excellence itself. Second, superior learning. Third, superior learning. Learning excellence is learning that can be seen from the accuracy of the strategy chosen to achieve learning objectives by existing conditions. For example, mnemonics or donkey bridges are very suitable for learning facts. However, mnemonics should not be used to learn concepts or solve problems. Instead, inquiry is an appropriate strategy for teaching concepts. Similarly, process skills are very suitable for learning problem-solving. The excellence of learning lies in the design and implementation of learning that emphasizes providing adequate treatment and opportunities needed by each student with individual differences in certain psychological aspects. Excellent learning (the excellent teaching process) can be interpreted as a teaching and learning process that is developed to teach all students based on their different levels of excellence (individual differences), to make them faithful and devoted to God Almighty, master science and technology independently but still in togetherness able to produce the best work in the face of free world competition. Meanwhile, excellent learning is the condition of the teaching and learning process that allows all children to develop themselves to the maximum extent of their abilities.

As for superior learning, it can be said to be exceptional, at least it must fulfill three requirements, namely, (a) it can serve all students (not only some students), (b) all children get the maximum possible learning experience in superior learning, and (c). However, all students get the maximum learning experience; the process varies greatly depending on the level of ability and characteristics of the child concerned. Eight conditions enable an educational institution to achieve excellence, namely: (1) a rigorous curriculum, (2) competent teachers, (3) characteristics of effectiveness, (4) testing

to prove that students have achieved something, (5) community support and parental involvement, (6) adequate financing, (7) strong discipline, (8) connection to traditional values. These eight conditions are, of course, arbitrary. Therefore, they can be added or subtracted.

Learning excellence needs to be managed well to achieve optimal results. To realize this, learning excellence is the key to success in quality learning. In this case, several things need to be considered, namely (1) learning excellence can increase success in learning, and (2) learning success can be realized if the quality of management determines it. The better the quality of learning, the more effective the learning in achieving its goals; and (3) effective learning requires the ability to create, maintain, and improve learning, both within and outside the school.

To improve learning excellence, a varied learning system development strategy is needed with various innovations, both in classroom management, learning models, and learning content, for example, by (1) moving classroom, (2) CTL (Contextual Teaching and Learning), (3) QTL (Quantum Teaching and Learning), (4) life skills education, (5) competency-based curriculum, and (6) the accelerated learning. In addition, it can be done by humanizing the classroom, active learning, and introducing foreign languages (bilingual program).

Shen (2020) describes effective schools as having the characteristics of a mission, emphasis on learning, and a climate conducive to learning. Various educational institutions use evaluation systems to measure their performance and meet expectations of quality service to students (Taraza et al., 2024). At the same time, Nazari et al. (2022) associate managing learning with organizational learning, and one predictor of learning excellence is school-based management (Muhammad & Fatkuroji, 2024). Other research highlights that to achieve learning excellence, it can be used in workshops or training for school personnel (Mustoip et al., 2023). In this description related to superior learning, more emphasis is placed on effective schools seen from the learning aspect, which includes educators having high expectations, using varied teaching skills, continuous monitoring of student progress, cooperation between teachers, and more focus on curriculum and learning. Hence, this research focused on "How is the management of learning excellence implemented to deliver tailored and innovative learning strategies and services that address individual student differences and achieve learning objectives?"

RESEARCH METHOD
This research focuses on managing learning excellence in education units X, Y, and Z in Central Java. Uncovering the research's focus requires in-depth observation and a natural setting. Thus, the appropriate research approach is qualitative, or, in education, it is known as the naturalistic approach. The setting of this research is three senior high schools, X, Y, and Z, in Central Java. The three schools have different characteristics, among others, which can be seen from (1) vision, (2) culture, (3) values, (4) school management system, (5) region, (6) place, (7) school organization; and (8) boarding school system. Based on the different characteristics of the subjects and research focus, this research was designed using a multi-case study design

Research Design
The multi-case study design was conducted as a scientific accountability effort regarding the logical link between the research focus, the collection of relevant data, and the research data analysis. Considering the existence and reality of each school

mentioned above, the cases and characteristics of the three schools are different, so this research is suitable for a multi-case study design. Applying the multi-case study design starts from a single case (as the first case) first, then proceeds to the second and third cases. In qualitative research, the researcher is the main instrument and plunges himself into the field directly to collect data. The data used in this research is qualitative. Data sources in this study can be divided into two, namely, humans/people and non-humans. Human data sources function as subjects or key informants (key informants). Non-human data sources in the form of documents relevant to the focus of research, such as images, photographs, meeting notes, or writings that have to do with the focus of research (Denzim & Lincoln, 1994; Cresswell, 1994).
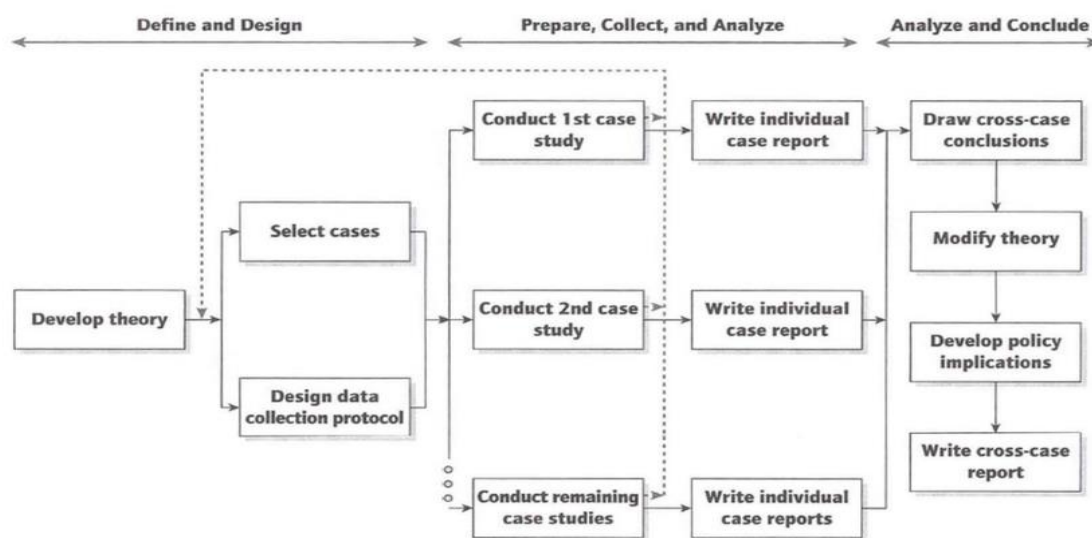

Figure 1. Multiple case study design (Yin, 2014).

Data Collection Technique
The data collection techniques used to gather data and information are highly dependent on the type of study developed in this research. The implementation procedure is adjusted to the conditions of the data source and the location where the respondent carries out his duties. Specifically, this research uses data collection techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. (1) The data collected through the interviews were organized, interpreted, and analyzed repeatedly. To record the results of the interview with the permission of the informant, the researcher used tools such as notebooks and recording machines (tape recorders and digital cameras); (2) To study the management of learning excellence in schools, the observation used in this case is participant observation, including descriptive observation (in general), focused observation, and selective observation. Participation techniques used include passive participation, overt participation (involved in activities), and full participation, where the researcher acts as an insider and is directly involved in school activities; (3) Documentation studies are used to explore non-human data, such as pamphlets, guest books, charters, photographs, daily records, and other essential manuscripts related to the research focus.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is carried out by systematically searching and organizing interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials collected by researchers. Analysis activities are carried out by reviewing data, arranging and dividing it into manageable units, synthesizing, looking for patterns, and finding what is meaningful, researched, and reported systematically. In this study, two types of data analysis were used, namely: (1) data analysis in a single case (individual case) and (2) data analysis across cases (cross-case analysis) (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Data Validity Technique

Data credibility was checked using triangulation techniques, member checking, and peer discussion. Meanwhile, the supervisors checked the suitability of the research data, and someone as an independent auditor was asked to audit it. The data collected through the three techniques were organized, interpreted, and analyzed repeatedly through within-case and cross-case analyses to develop concepts and abstractions of research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of Learning Excellence Strategies

The following conclusions can be drawn from the empirical data on the management of learning excellence mentioned above: First, learning excellence begins with school discipline. Second, learning excellence is supported by good student motivation, readiness to learn, and optimal support from parents; the orientation of student development is expanded by optimizing the role of counseling guidance. Third, learning excellence is a process that is developed by emphasizing that learning material is more in-depth and the existence of a good teaching and learning process at school makes students understand the lessons delivered by the teacher; in the learning process, teachers use a contextual approach, can empower the environment, and use a variety of the latest learning methods. Fourth, learning excellence can be done effectively, creates a sense of fun, and requires teachers to be creative and innovative in providing learning tools (Feiyue, 2022; Hsbollah & Hassan, 2022; Onu et al., 2024; Shidiq, 2023). Fifth, learning excellence emphasizes learning strategies and develops learning methods through quantum teaching and learning (QTL), contextual teaching and learning (CTL), teaching and learning processes with film or video media, and learning outside the classroom (field trips) and live-in. Sixth, learning excellence is carried out by implementing a bilingual program, i.e., English for mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, computers, geography, and economics; implementing accelerated classes so that children who have above-average intelligence can complete their schooling in less than 3 years; and implementing a good academic culture, so that the quality is better and graduates are more readily accepted at universities.

Seventh, learning excellence is seen from the superior quality of input, where children who enter have exemplary academic and non-academic achievements. Eighth, learning excellence involves the skills of the principal and is supported by resources that perform well in learning activities at school. Ninth, learning excellence is supported by principals who can empower the existing human resources in schools in totality and sincerely so that children master the lessons and the involvement of

parents/stakeholders in their children's education. Tenth, improving learning excellence can be achieved through the application of a digital library, which looks for soft copies of each book so that children can access it anywhere and can be used in the classroom; children need to prepare a flash disk; class management is done by using team teaching and cooperation with MGMP (*Musyawarah Guru Mata pelajaran*)(re: Subject Teacher Deliberations) so that classes are not empty. Eleventh, improving learning excellence can also be done through experienced teachers and providing information to teachers who do not have teaching experience on how to teach well. Twelfth, the application of excellent service to the community can be a learning advantage at school, so the school remains in demand until now.

Table 1. Research findings.

Management of learning excellence	School discipline
	Student motivation, readiness to learn, and optimal support from parents
	Developed by emphasizing that learning material is more in-depth and the existence of a good teaching and learning process at school
	Creates a sense of fun, and requires teachers to be creative and innovative in providing learning tools
	Emphasizes learning strategies and develops learning methods through quantum teaching and learning (QTL), contextual teaching and learning (CTL),
	Implementing a bilingual program, i.e., English for mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology (MIPA), computers, geography, and economic
	Superior quality of input, where children who enter have exemplary achievements, both academic and non-academic achievements
	The skills of the principal and is supported by resources that perform well in learning activities at school
	Supported by principals who are able to empower the existing human resources in schools in totality and sincerely
	The application of a digital library, which looks for soft copies of each book
	Experienced teachers and providing information to teachers who do not have teaching experience on how to teach well
	The application of excellent service to the community

Discussion
Implementation of Learning Excellence Strategies
The research findings show: (1) learning excellence is carried out by providing learning materials in more depth and being able to offer excellent services to students; (2) learning excellence is a teaching and learning process developed through ICT-based learning, the application of the moving class learning system, the application of Olympic classes, the application of accelerated classes, problem/case-based learning, project-based learning and the application of competencies based on activities; (3) learning excellence is a teaching and learning process developed through English-interpreted learning for mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, computers and other allied subjects.

The characteristics of learning excellence found in this study are based on the opinion of Afandi et al. (2021) that all children get the maximum possible learning experience in superior learning. Excellent learning needs to be managed well to achieve optimal results. To realize this, superior learning is the key to success towards quality learning.

A school is said to have quality if it has a quality process as well; this can be identified as follows: English for science, mathematics, and relevant subjects; compulsory foreign languages (Arabic and English); optional foreign languages (Japanese, German and Mandarin); natural acceleration/self-paced learning; moving class; multi programs; academic and multicultural harmony; independence education; democratic; multimedia/IT; competency-based learning; product-based learning/training; use of laboratories/production units as learning facilities (Afandi et al., 2021).

The learning process developed in the three schools, namely ICT-based learning/the use of modern technology in education, supports the opinion of Mugendawala & Muijs (2020) regarding the benefits of ICT in assisting the learning process: First, presenting the information. ICT has an extraordinary ability to deliver information. Encyclopedias of various volumes can be stored on a hard disc. Even now, Google Earth has been born, which shows us all areas on the face of our earth from awe-inspiring aerial photographs. By opening www.google.com, we will quickly obtain data and information. Second, quick and automatic completion of routine tasks. Our routine tasks can be completed quickly and automatically with computer assistance. Making graphs, creating animated presentations, and so on can quickly be done with the help of computers. Third, assessing and handling information. With computers connected to the internet, we can easily and quickly obtain and send information. We can create a website that reaches any corner of the world through the internet. Do not be surprised if our children can easily cheat or talk to their friends in the middle of the world.

The implementation of moving classes can improve the quality of learning. Moving class is a learning model created for active, creative, and innovative learning with a learning system that has the following characteristics: (1) students come to the teacher in class, not the other way around; (2) each teacher and subject has a private class; (3) to follow each lesson the student must move from one class to another that has been determined; (4) there is a class naming based on the field of study; for example, biology, language, physics, religion, mathematics, and allied subjects can be made into one class. (5) every time the subject changes, the students will leave the class and come to another class according to the scheduled field of study (Marina et al., 2019). Similarly, according to Aisyah, moving class is a learning model in which students move from one class to another at each lesson change, according to the schedule of subjects that must be taken on that day. Meanwhile, Sunarto defines moving class as a pattern of moving classes (study groups) from one mapel room to another mapel room or to a learning environment that is their responsibility (Marina et al., 2019).

In implementing the moving class, several things need to be considered, namely, not moving the moving class only from one class to another. However, what must be emphasized is that moving classes need to be equipped with mini-laboratories, for example, mathematics classes, in the classroom there are at least pictures or formulas that support these subjects and also the provision of secure lockers (availability of wardrobes), managing the movement of students from one class to another, dividing classroom responsibilities and requiring high discipline to move from one class to another both teachers and students. Do not let the teacher be picked up by students when giving lessons. Therefore, moving classes should be carried out correctly and significantly improve student graduates' learning quality. So, teachers need to develop an implementation strategy by paying attention to pedagogical aspects,

strengthened by the regulatory and administrative tools required for these activities (García-Campos et al., 2020).
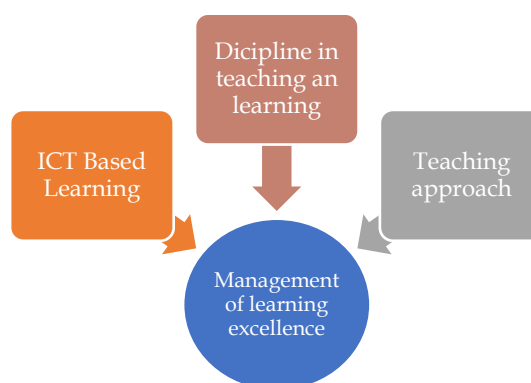

Figure 1. Strategies creating management of learning excellence.

Implementation of Learning Excellence Services

Other research findings are: (1) learning excellence requires teachers to be creative and innovative in providing learning tools, using contextual processes, being able to empower the environment and being skilled in using the latest learning strategies and methods; (2) learning excellence begins with school discipline and the application of discipline in the learning and education process; (3) learning excellence is supported by high student motivation and learning readiness; (4) learning excellence is carried out by providing more educational provision for children through mastery of methods, enrichment and deepening of material.

A superior learning process can be seen in the actions of teachers who can combine various elements of education to improve student achievement in cognitive (intellectual), affective, and psychomotor skills according to the potential of each student. For example, a school that has students with an initial score of 6.0 and a final score of 7.0 and students with an initial score of 7.0 and a final score of 8.0 is superior because the school can improve students' intellectual achievement according to their respective potentials including improvements in students' affective and psychomotor development at school (Noor et al., 2020). To improve excellent learning, a varied learning system development strategy is needed with various innovations, both in classroom management, learning models, and learning content, for example, by moving classrooms, contextual teaching and learning (CTL), quantum teaching and learning (QTL), life skills education, competency-based curriculum and accelerated learning.

The learning process in education will become more interesting, giving excitement to the spirit of learning students if students see the usefulness, benefits, and meaning of learning to face various life problems they face today and even in the future. Learning will provide a joyful atmosphere (joyful learning) if it is related to the potential, interests, hobbies, a n d talents of learners and students' acceptance that what they learn will be helpful in their lives in the future because students feel they get valuable skills to face life (Atitallah et al., 2020). One of the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) principles i s interdependence. The principle of interdependence makes educators aware of their interdependence on each other, their students, the surrounding community, and the earth (including the local potential contained in the earth). They are in a network of interdependence that creates a learning environment. Contextual learning easily

flourishes in an environment where everyone knows their interdependence (Cripps, 2023; Davis, 2022; Ngubane & Makua, 2021; Nieminen, 2024).

The similarities regarding learning excellence in these three high schools are (1) the application of ICT-based learning. Examples of ICT as a learning tool include tools for educators, such as event animation, event simulation, and visual multimedia, for instance, in presenting learning materials using IT. Tools for learners, such as the internet and mobile communication tools, are a medium of communication between fellow educators, fellow learners, and between educators and learners, as well as self-learning systems, learning radio broadcasts, and learning television broadcasts. The primary substance of ICT (information and communication technology) is technology as a "vehicle" and data as a "service that is transported" and distributed from source to user; (2) the existence of professional human resources, namely teachers who have the ability in the field of study taught and are willing to assist students; (3) the existence of professional development programs; (4) the involvement of parents and the community in improving the quality of learning: (5) the creation of a climate that focuses on students and the improvement of learning; (6) learning based on the individual needs of students; (7) the involvement of the principal's managerial skills to improve and maintain progress in learning and (8) having seriousness in curriculum development and learning.

Steps taken in the development of learning in the future are (a) teachers must be skilled in the teaching and learning process; (b) the use and provision of learning facilities to facilitate the teaching and learning process; (c) the use of information technology (IT); (d) paying attention to learning tools used in the teaching and learning process; (e) learning by using the competence-based project method; (f) teachers who are experienced and professional in teaching provide information to inexperienced teachers; (g) innovative learning by empowering MGMP, attending workshops, and conducting MGMP at the district/city, provincial and central levels; (h) coordination with the head of curriculum and other heads of departments; (i) use of team teaching; and (j) every teacher needs to provide excellent service to the community.

From the description above, it can be concluded: (1) the management of learning excellence in Science X includes the existence of ICT-based learning, high learning motivation supported by good student learning readiness, more in-depth learning materials, creating a sense of fun, introducing English, and implementing digital libraries and the ability to conduct scientific experiments; (2) the management of learning excellence in Science Y, learning excellence includes the application of discipline in the teaching and learning process, providing more educational provision, case-based learning, ICT-based learning, project-based competence, having many activities at school, having seriousness in curriculum development and learning, sharing experiences with the tutorial system and active learning patterns by doing; (3) the management of learning excellence in SHS Z has several learning excellence, which can lead this school to become an advanced school and community interest. These learning excellence include the implementation of a moving class learning system, English language introduction, Olympic class implementation, ICT-based learning, mother class system implementation, boarding public school model implementation, activity-based competency implementation, project-based learning, and the approach in the teaching and learning process begins with respecting children.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Based on the research focus, data exposure research findings, and data analysis and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the characteristics of learning excellence found in excellent schools include the application of discipline in the teaching and learning process; the approach in the teaching and learning process starts with respecting children, supported by high learning motivation and student learning readiness; provision of more educational supplies; learning materials delivered more in-depth; learning that creates a sense of pleasure; demands creative and innovative teachers; students have many activities at school; application of competencies based on activities; oriented to student achievement; supported by the ability in scientific experimentation activities; and has seriousness in curriculum development and learning. Secondly, the process of learning excellence developed in excellent schools includes moving class learning patterns; project-based learning; application of Olympic classes; introductory English; mother class system; ICT-based learning; self-study program; problem/case-based learning; application of digital library; various experiences with the tutorial system; and live-in activities outside the classroom. **Implication:** The results of this study can be carried out in the future using different research designs and approaches. Through learning excellence it is expected that learning excellence in this study is the main characteristic of excellent schools. **Limitation:** Learning excellence developed in schools must be able to provide excellent service to every student. For this reason, student learning facilities/ infrastructure are needed. Realizing this requires many management costs. **Future research:** (1) to conduct further research that can reveal more deeply about superior schools in terms of other focuses; (2) to follow up the steps of this research by conducting the same study in other settings to provide additional data to test the validity of this study's findings; (3) Other researchers who are interested in the research topic of managing learning excellence should be able to develop and explore more aspects related to leadership skills, learning leadership, and cultural leadership associated with learning excellence.

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