# Developing Benchmarking as an Effort to Improve Quality in Islamic Educational Institutions

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**ABSTRACT** :

*The enhancement of educational quality is a necessity for Islamic aducational institusions as high-quality educations is considered a key driver of cross-sector development. One effective approach to improving educational quality is through the practice of benchmarking. Benchmarking in the context of Islamic educational institusions is a continuous evaluation activity that involves comparison with other institusions regarded as the best or most outstanding. Consequently, Islamic educational institutions can identify, adopt, and implement best practices to significantly improve their quality.*

**Key words:** *Benchmarking, Educational Quality*

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, education is faced with the era of the industrial revolution and technological advancements, which demand the formation of creative, innovative, and competitive generations. This emphasizes the need for high-quality education to achieve these goals. Islamic educational institutions, as part of the educational dynamics, will continue to evolve in response to changes in both internal and external environments. The internal environment includes aspects such as knowledge, skills, insights, work habits, and other psychological factors like feelings, expectations, needs, philosophy, and self-belief. Meanwhile, the external environment pertains to elements from outside the institution, such as societal demands, educational issues, technological developments, and the institution's relationships with other agencies.

To position an Islamic educational institution as one of the best, fundamental changes are necessary to compete more effectively. This requires significant attention to education to avoid falling behind in knowledge and technology, which are crucial for accelerating development. Additionally, Islamic educational institutions must have a high adaptability to avoid being overshadowed by ongoing changes.

Given this understanding, improving the quality of Islamic educational institutions becomes a necessity for national progress. Good education quality is believed to support development in various sectors. To achieve this, Islamic educational institutions must have strategic intentions and undergo more complex institutional transformations beyond mere organizational development. This requires political will and strong commitment from all leadership elements. One way to improve the quality of an institution is through benchmarking, which involves comparing standards both internally and externally with the goal of continuous improvement.

Therefore, it is important for Islamic educational institutions to conduct comparative studies with other institutions that have successfully implemented quality measures to gain valuable insights. Benchmarking is one effort to enhance the quality of Islamic educational institutions by focusing on evaluating existing, ongoing, and future standards within the institution.

**Methods**

The research method is based on library research, which aims to explore theories relevant to the issue being studied, namely Islamic education curriculum planning. Data collection is carried out through a review of literature from various sources, including books, scientific journals, news articles, opinions, and popular media articles. The selection of data sources takes authenticity into account to ensure the validity of the obtained data. The collected data is then analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach and integrative reading techniques to understand the impact of each subject within a broader context.

**Result And Discussion**

**Understanding Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is a systematic and continuous process of measuring an organization's business processes over time and comparing them with industry leaders to obtain information that helps the organization improve its performance. According to Prim Masrokan, benchmarking involves setting standards, both for processes and results, to be achieved within a specific period. These standards are reflected from existing realities. Additionally, Syafarudin defines benchmarking as an ongoing process of measuring products, services, and performance against competitors or

industry leaders to identify areas for improvement. The key to successful benchmarking lies in analysis.

In the context of Islamic educational institutions, benchmarking can be summarized as a continuous evaluation process where the institution compares its performance results with those of other institutions considered to be the best or superior. The goal is to identify, adopt, and apply best practices to significantly enhance the institution's quality. By using suitable and effective practices as benchmarks or performance standards, an Islamic educational institution can improve itself and achieve better normative performance levels.

The primary objective of benchmarking is to uncover the keys to success from top-performing institutions and then adopt and improve these practices to apply them within the benchmarking institution. Benchmarking is not merely about data collection; rather, it is crucial to understand the underlying secrets behind the performance achievements evident in the obtained data. Benchmarking requires both physical and mental readiness. Physically, it demands well-prepared human resources and technology for accurate benchmarking. Mentally, education management must be prepared to address significant gaps discovered during comparisons with competitors.

Benchmarking also offers fresh perspectives on standard practices, helps identify excellence goals, and facilitates ongoing improvements and breakthroughs.

**Benefits of Benchmarking**

Benchmarking provides several significant benefits for Islamic educational institutions:

1. **Identifying Best Practices:** Through benchmarking, educational institutions can identify best practices from other successful institutions. Comparing with the best allows institutions to discover opportunities for improving educational quality, management, and services to students and the community.

2. **Expanding Knowledge of Trends and Innovations:** Benchmarking helps institutions stay updated on global and local trends and innovations in Islamic education. Understanding the latest practices and their applications enables institutions to adjust their strategies to remain relevant and effective in addressing future challenges.

3. **Building Collaboration Networks:** Benchmarking fosters collaboration and networking with other institutions, leading to the exchange of valuable knowledge and

experiences. This strengthens the overall Islamic education community and enhances the overall quality of education.

**Benchmarking Process**

According to Andersen and Pettersen, the benchmarking process involves five stages, commonly referred to as the benchmarking wheel:

1. **Plan:** This stage involves assessing past performance and establishing performance metrics to be compared with selected benchmark organizations. The performance assessment provides a basis for comparison.
2. **Search:** Activities include finding potential benchmark partners, comparing candidates to identify the most suitable one, and contacting the chosen partner to confirm their willingness to participate in benchmarking.
3. **Observe:** This stage involves gathering information on key success factors from the benchmark organization. Information is collected through direct observation, internet research, and interviews with managers of the benchmark organization.
4. **Analyze:** Analyze the collected information to identify performance differences and understand key success factors that contribute to superior performance. This analysis forms the basis for developing performance improvement programs.
5. **Adapt:** Develop and implement a performance improvement program to achieve superior performance similar to the benchmark organization. This stage also includes evaluating the implemented improvement program.

As technology and knowledge evolve, benchmarking processes are continuously refined, including steps such as:

- **Self-Assessment:** Essential for identifying actions to address issues or improve situations. It involves evaluating components such as curriculum, administration, facilities, funding, student involvement, and school culture.
- **Comparison:** Identifying exemplary organizations and determining potential benchmarking partners.
- **Analysis and Adaptation:** Reflecting on why performance differs between organizations and adapting successful practices.

- **Planning and Implementation:** Carefully planning actions, communicating alternatives to stakeholders, and implementing designed actions for improvement.
- **Feedback and Evaluation:** Observing and evaluating the results of implemented actions.

## Quality in Islamic Educational Institutions

Quality products attract consumers, while subpar products are discarded. Similarly, educational institutions in the globalization era must be quality-based, offering superior education and human resource development. Thus, improving quality is a demand for educational institutions.

Quality refers to the degree or level of excellence of a product or service, both tangible and intangible. It is about meeting the needs and expectations of both internal (students) and external (community and industry) customers. High quality is marked by exceptional standards and excellence.

According to Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 on national education standards, quality includes:

1. Curriculum content standards
2. Process standards
3. Graduate competence standards
4. Educator and educational staff standards
5. Facilities and infrastructure standards
6. Management standards
7. Funding standards
8. Educational assessment standards: evaluation, accreditation, certification, and quality assurance.

These standards can be incorporated into benchmarking studies, where both visiting and visited institutions adhere to national education standards. According to Suparlan, to ensure the study visit remains on track, clear steps should be outlined:

1. Develop a clear plan
2. Budget and conduct the study visit
3. Prepare a report on the study visit results

4. Finalize and present the study visit report
5. Implement the results of the study visit

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