



## Benchmarking as a Solution to Increase the Competitiveness of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Era of Globalization

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### Abstract

The era of globalization brings great challenges for Islamic educational institutions to improve their competitiveness. These challenges include a lack of innovation in the learning system, limited branding, and not yet optimal adaptation to global quality standards. This study aims to identify the role of benchmarking in improving the performance of Islamic educational institutions to be more competitive at the national and international levels.

This study uses the library research method, by collecting and analyzing relevant literature, including journals, books, and previous research. Through this approach, the research explores the steps to implement benchmarking, such as need identification, partner selection, data collection, comparative analysis, change implementation, and evaluation and follow-up.

The results of the study show that benchmarking is an effective strategy to improve learning quality, management efficiency, and curriculum relevance. Through benchmarking, Islamic educational institutions can adopt best practices from other institutions, such as the integration of technology in learning, improvement of teacher competence, and more efficient administrative management. In addition, benchmarking also helps in strengthening the branding and reputation of the institution, which ultimately increases public appeal and trust.

This research concludes that the implementation of structured and sustainable benchmarking can help Islamic educational institutions not only improve quality and efficiency, but also maintain the identity of Islamic values in the midst of the challenges of globalization.

**Keywords:** Islamic education, Globalization, Benchmarking, Quality education, Academic standards

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### Introduction

Islamic education today is often compared to general educational institutions. There is also a mindset that assumes that graduates from madrasas are less able to compete with those who graduate from public institutions. In fact, there are at least three things that people consider in choosing an educational institution, namely values (religion), social status, and ideals <sup>[1]</sup>. An educated community is certainly more selective in choosing educational institutions for their children by considering their prospectiveness. The community will choose the ideal institution, namely an institution that is able to produce a spiritual, moral generation, and also able to develop its intellectual aspects. The issues that are developing in society need to be a concern for Islamic educational institutions by constantly making improvements so that their institutions are more productive and produce quality graduates.

Today's education has been faced with the era of globalization, therefore education is needed that can form a creative, innovative, and competitive generation, this can be achieved with quality education. So that efforts to improve the quality of education are non-negotiable.

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<sup>1</sup> Laela Fitriana, "Implementation Of Benchmarking Strategies In Improving Performance In Islamic Educational Institutions," *Prophetik: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2023): 33–49.

The dynamics of the development of an Islamic institution will always develop along with changes in its environment, both internal and external.

The era of globalization has brought significant changes in various sectors, including education. Islamic educational institutions, as an important part of the education system, face the challenge of adapting to the ever-evolving global dynamics. However, several fundamental problems still hinder their efforts to increase competitiveness at the national and international levels.

First, the competitive lag of Islamic educational institutions is one of the main problems. In the global context, competition between educational institutions is getting tighter, both in terms of curriculum, facilities, and graduate achievements. Many Islamic educational institutions have not been able to adapt to global quality standards, so they are often perceived as less able to produce graduates who have high competitiveness in the job market or the academic world [2].

Second, the lack of innovation in the learning system is a barrier for Islamic educational institutions to compete with other educational institutions. Many institutions still use traditional teaching methods without integrating modern technology or competency-based learning approaches. This has an impact on the low effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and limited development of skills relevant to the needs of the times [3].

Third, low branding and promotion are also inhibiting factors. Islamic educational institutions often lack strategic efforts to build a positive image in the eyes of the public. This has led to a lack of appeal for prospective students or potential college students, especially in an era where educational institutions are required to have clear differentiation and a strong reputation [4].

Fourth, the lack of a continuous evaluation system results in difficulties for Islamic educational institutions to identify weaknesses and opportunities for improvement. Without systematic evaluation, it is difficult to ensure that the curriculum, learning methods, and educational services remain relevant to the demands of the times. In addition, the lack of benchmarking with other institutions makes quality development stagnant [5].

From these problems, it is clear that a strategic approach is needed that is able to answer the challenges of globalization, one of which is through benchmarking. By applying benchmarking, Islamic educational institutions can learn from the best practices of other institutions, adopt international standards, and strengthen competitiveness at the global level.

## Method

In completing this study, the researcher used a type of literature study research (*library research*) is a method of collecting data by understanding and studying theories from

various literature related to the research. The data collection uses the method of finding sources and reconstructing from various sources, such as journals, books and researches that have been carried out.

## Results and Discussion

### A. basic concepts of Benchmarking

At first, benchmarking was only known in the business world. However, currently benchmarking has been adopted by various educational institutions abroad, as an effort to improve the quality of education. The definition of benchmarking in both business and education is essentially the same. The definition of benchmarking in the business field is as stated by Watson, who states that benchmarking is an activity of continuous search and the actual application of better practices that lead to superior competitive performance. Meanwhile, the definition of benchmarking in the world of Education is as follows:

*Benchmarking is a way to go backstage and watch another company's performance from the wings, where all the stage tricks and hurried realignments are visible* [6].

Definisi kedua, menyatakan bahwa Benchmarking is a systematic and continuous measurement process; a process of continuously measuring and comparing an organization's business processes against business process leaders anywhere in the world to gain information which will help the organization take action to improve its performance [7].

Benchmarking is an activity to set standards and targets that will be achieved in a certain period. Benchmarking can be applied to individuals, groups, organizations or institutions. There are some people who explain benchmarking as a test of quality standards. The intention is to test or compare the quality standards that have been set against the quality standards of other parties, so that the term quality reference also appears. In general, benchmarking is used to measure and improve the quality of education and academic standards [8].

Goetsch and Davis define it as the process of comparing and measuring an organization's internal operations or processes against those who are best in their class, both from within and outside the institution [9]. Based on the various definitions above, if you look at the many similarities, benchmarking is one way to find the key or secret to success and then adapt and improve it so that it can be applied to the institution that carries out the benchmarking. Benchmarking is a learning process that takes place systematically, continuously, and openly. In contrast to plagiarism (*copywriting*) that is carried out secretly, benchmarking activities are legal actions and do not violate the law. In the modern business world, imitation is considered legal as long as it is not done directly and rawly. Benchmarking can indeed be interpreted as imitating the greatest to make it a reference [10]. This activity is based on cooperation between the two institutions to exchange information and experiences that are both needed.

<sup>2</sup> Firmansyah Firmansyah, Tasurun Amma, and Anis Mudawamah, "The Impact of Globalization and Its Challenges on Islamic Education," *Ta'dib: Journal of Islamic Education and Social Issues* 21, no. 1 (2023): 43–54.

<sup>3</sup> Mawardi Pewangi, "The Challenges of Islamic Education in the Era of Globalization," *TARBAWI: Journal of Islamic Religious Education* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–11.

<sup>4</sup> Deodorizer.

<sup>5</sup> Khairunnisa Khairunnisa, Junaidi Junaidi, and Andy Riski Pratama, "Problems of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Society 5.0 Era: Perspectives on Digitalization and Educational Transformation," *Journal of Management Vision* 10, no. 2 (2024): 1–18.

<sup>6</sup> V. Omachone, *Principle of Total Quality* (New York: CSC Press, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> J Jens, *Fundamental of Total Quality Management* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> R. V. Rusvidino, *Quality Improvement and Benchmarking of Higher Education* (Jakarta: STIE Trisakti, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> A. Tjitono, F., & Diana, *Total Quality Management*. (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> Z. Yami, *Product and Service Quality Management* (Yogyakarta: Ekonisia, 2002).

Based on some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that benchmarking in Education is an activity in which an Educational Institution conducts continuous self-evaluation, by comparing itself with other best institutions, so that the institution can identify, adopt and apply significantly better practices. In other words, the practices that have been carried out by the best institutions are used as *benchmarks* or normative performance standards by educational institutions that want to improve them.

The main purpose of benchmarking is to find the key or secret to the success of an educational institution that is the best in its class, and then adapt and improve it to be applied to the institution that implements the benchmarking, in various fields. Benchmarking is not just about collecting data, but more importantly what is the secret behind the performance achievements seen in the data obtained. Benchmarking requires physical and mental readiness. Physically because it requires the readiness of human resources and mature technology to benchmark accurately. Meanwhile, mentally it is that the education management must prepare themselves if after being compared to competitors, it turns out that they find a fairly high gap <sup>[11]</sup>.

### 1. Definition and Principles of Benchmarking (look for foodnote on Friday)

Benchmarking is a systematic process of comparing the performance of an organization, process, or activity with the best in the relevant industry or sector. The main goal is to identify best practices that can be adopted to improve quality, effectiveness, and efficiency. In the context of the world of education, benchmarking is often used to assess the effectiveness of educational programs, curriculum quality, and managerial policies by comparing the results achieved by other educational institutions that are considered superior. This process allows educational institutions to understand the best standards and adopt more innovative approaches to education management <sup>[12]</sup>.

The basic principles of benchmarking include several important elements that must be used as a reference by every organization, including educational institutions, in carrying out benchmarking. These principles focus not only on comparing outcomes, but also on the process of continuous learning and improvement that must be made in the face of the challenges of globalization. The following are the principles of benchmarking:

#### a. Open Comparison

Organizations that do benchmarking should be open to comparisons with best practices, even if they may come from outside their sector or industry. This is important because often, the most innovative and effective solutions can be found outside the boundaries of the organization or sector in which they are usually operated. For example, in education, an institution can learn from the ways applied in the business sector in terms of human resource management or the use of technology in the learning process.

#### b. Performance Focus

Benchmarking focuses on measuring real performance and

achieved results, not just on the procedures or processes used. In the world of education, this means that it is not only the way to teach or implement a policy that is the focus, but also on the learning outcomes obtained by students, the level of student satisfaction, and the level of graduation and academic achievement. This process allows educational institutions to assess whether they have successfully achieved their predetermined educational goals.

#### c. Continuous Improvement

Benchmarking is not just a tool to compare, but also to encourage continuous improvement. The results obtained from benchmarking are used as a basis for designing improvement strategies in various operational and academic aspects of educational institutions. This continuous development ensures that the institution not only remains relevant, but is also able to consistently improve the quality of teaching, administrative services, and student learning experience.

#### d. Collaboration

The benchmarking process is carried out in the spirit of collaboration, not competition. Although there is an element of competition in benchmarking, the main goal is to learn from the best and improve yourself. In the world of education, this means that educational institutions are not only benchmarking to beat their competitors, but to learn from each other's best practices. This collaboration allows for the exchange of ideas, technologies, and methods that can enrich the educational experience for students <sup>[13]</sup>.

Through these principles, benchmarking can be a very effective tool in improving the performance of educational institutions, by creating a culture of continuous evaluation and improvement. This allows educational institutions to adapt to changes and challenges that arise, as well as increase their competitiveness at the local and global levels.

### 2. Types of Benchmarking in the World of Education

Benchmarking is a very effective tool to encourage improvement and innovation in various fields, including education. By benchmarking, educational institutions can understand their position, identify areas that need improvement, and find ways to improve the quality of their services. The following is an explanation of the types of benchmarking that can be applied in the world of education:

#### a. Benchmarking Internal

Internal benchmarking is a type of benchmarking that is carried out by comparing units or parts within the same organization. In the context of an educational institution, this can include comparisons between different departments, faculties, or study programs. For example, a university can compare teaching performance between the Engineering study program and the Economics study program to see which is more effective in achieving learning goals or in the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. Through internal benchmarking, educational institutions can identify best practices within themselves and encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience between units to

<sup>11</sup> Suluri Suluri, "Benchmarking in Educational Institutions," *JDM* (*Journal of Educational Management Dynamics*) 3, no. 2 (2019): 82–88.

<sup>12</sup> Mardiah Mardiah et al., "Benchmarking Implementation Strategies in Improving the Performance of School Principals," *Tambusai Education Journal* 7, no. 3 (2023): 30430–37.

<sup>13</sup> Aljan L Tandisau, "Improving School Performance through Benchmarking Strategies in Facing Competition in the Era of Industrial Revolution 5.0 (Case Study of SMAS Kristen Rantepao)" (Indonesian Christian University, 2022).

improve overall performance. It also allows institutions to identify strengths and weaknesses in their operations that can be improved through internal collaboration <sup>[14]</sup>.

#### **b. Competitive Benchmarking**

Competitive benchmarking involves direct comparisons with competitors who have similar goals and services. In the world of education, this can be done by comparing the performance of educational institutions with other educational institutions that offer similar programs, both at the local, national, and international levels. For example, a university may compare its curriculum and teaching methods with competing universities to ensure that they offer a better education or at least on par with that offered by other institutions. Competitive benchmarking helps educational institutions to understand their position in the education market and find ways to excel in terms of the quality of education, costs, infrastructure, as well as services provided to students. It also encourages institutions to continue to innovate to remain competitive in the midst of fierce competition <sup>[15]</sup>.

#### **c. Functional Benchmarking**

Functional benchmarking focuses on comparing specific processes or functions within an organization with best practices that exist in different sectors or industries. In the world of education, this can mean comparing the managerial or administrative processes of an educational institution to other sectors that are known to be efficient, such as large corporations or successful non-profit organizations. For example, educational institutions can compare budget management and resource allocation with companies that have proven successful in financial management. Through functional benchmarking, educational institutions can gain new insights into how to improve operational efficiency and optimize their resources, even though they may be in different sectors. This helps in the management of the institution more effectively and can introduce new, more efficient practices <sup>[16]</sup>.

#### **d. Benchmarking Generik**

Generic benchmarking is a broader type of benchmarking, in which educational institutions compare various functional and operational aspects with the best organizations, regardless of whether they are in the same sector. It includes comparing financial management processes, human resource management, or the use of technology with leading organizations outside the education sector. For example, a school or university can compare the way they manage information and technology with leading technology companies to improve their academic information systems. Generic benchmarking provides an opportunity for educational institutions to open themselves up to various innovations and new approaches from other sectors, which can be applied in the context of education. It broadens the educational institution's horizons on how they can evolve and adapt to global trends <sup>[17]</sup>.

Overall, each of these types of benchmarking offers different

approaches, but all aim to improve the quality and effectiveness of educational institutions. By implementing different types of benchmarking, educational institutions can not only improve their internal processes, but also adapt to changing times and improve their competitiveness at the global level.

### **3. The Relevance of Benchmarking in the World of Education**

Benchmarking has a very important relevance in the world of education because it serves as a strategic tool to improve the quality of education and institution management. With the challenges of globalization and the need to adapt to the times, benchmarking allows educational institutions to evaluate and implement best practices from other institutions that have proven to be effective.

One of the main benefits of benchmarking is the improvement of the quality of learning. By comparing educational programs, curricula, and teaching methods at other superior educational institutions, institutions can identify best practices that can be adopted to improve the quality of teaching and student learning outcomes. For example, educational institutions can see how technology-based learning methods applied in leading institutions have succeeded in improving student engagement and learning outcomes. By adopting these best practices, educational institutions can provide a better learning experience for students and improve their academic outcomes <sup>[18]</sup>.

In addition, benchmarking also plays a role in improving the efficiency of educational institution management. Efficient management in terms of human resources, budget, and technology is essential to support optimal learning activities. Through benchmarking, educational institutions can find more efficient ways to manage their administration and operations. For example, institutions can learn more effective ways to manage budgets or optimize the use of existing resources, which will ultimately improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the institution.

Innovation in teaching and curriculum is also an important benefit of benchmarking. By comparing various best practices applied in other institutions, educational institutions can adopt innovations that have proven effective in improving student learning outcomes and skills. For example, project-based learning approaches or the use of technology in distance learning can be adapted to improve the quality and relevance of the curriculum provided to students.

In the midst of increasingly fierce competition in the world of education, benchmarking also helps educational institutions to remain competitive. Educational institutions that conduct benchmarking can evaluate their position in the global education market and look for ways to improve the quality of their education services. This is very important in the era of globalization, where competition between educational institutions is increasingly open and institutions that do not adapt to the changing times will be left behind.

In addition, benchmarking serves as an evaluation tool to assess the performance of educational institutions. By

<sup>14</sup> Suluri, "Benchmarking in Educational Institutions."

<sup>15</sup> Tomy Rubbiyanto, "ANALYSIS OF FUNCTIONAL COMPETITIVE BENCHMARKING STRATEGIES ON IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE DECISION TO PROCURE ATM (AUTOMATED TELLER MACHINE) FACILITIES AT PT. BANK RAKYAT INDONESIA NGANJUK BRANCH," 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Rubbiyanto.

<sup>17</sup> Joanicjusz Nazarko *et al.*, "The General Concept of Benchmarking and Its Application in Higher Education in Europe," *Higher Education in Europe* 34, no. 3–4 (2009): 497–510.

<sup>18</sup> Laela Fitriana, "Benchmarking Strategies in Improving Performance in Islamic Educational Institutions (Multi-Case Study at MTsN Aryojedong and SMPI Al-Azhaar Tulungagung)" (IAIN Tulungagung, 2016).

comparing the institution's performance to the best standards available, the institution can identify areas that need improvement, such as in terms of curriculum, facilities, or student services. This benchmarking-based assessment ensures that educational institutions are always on the right track in achieving their educational goals and continue to innovate to improve existing weaknesses<sup>[19]</sup>.

Overall, benchmarking provides a great opportunity for educational institutions to continue to grow, adapt to the needs of the times, and maintain the quality of education they provide. Through benchmarking, educational institutions can improve the quality of learning, management efficiency, encourage innovation, and increase their competitiveness in facing the challenges of globalization and changes in the world of education.

## **B. Opportunities and Challenges of Islamic Educational Institutions in the Era of Globalization**

Globalization has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the field of education. For Islamic educational institutions, globalization opens up great opportunities to develop and adapt, but it also presents complex challenges. In facing this era, Islamic educational institutions need to understand the impact of globalization, adapt to the needs of international standards, and analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) faced. Here's a more complete explanation:

### **1. The Impact of Globalization on Islamic Education**

Globalization has brought about major changes in the educational landscape, including in the world of Islamic education. The acceleration of global information, technology, and cultural exchanges offers tremendous opportunities for Islamic educational institutions to develop. Through globalization, access to global learning resources has become easier. Academic publications, online learning platforms, cutting-edge educational technology, and a wider global network allow Islamic educational institutions to improve the quality of learning. By taking advantage of these opportunities, students can broaden their horizons, access the best educational resources, and prepare themselves to compete globally<sup>[20]</sup>.

In addition, globalization allows cross-cultural and cross-country collaboration in various forms, such as student exchanges, teacher training programs, and joint curriculum development. Adaptive Islamic educational institutions can take advantage of this collaboration to improve the quality of their education, expand their sphere of influence, and strengthen their reputation in the international arena.

However, globalization also brings challenges that cannot be ignored. One of the main challenges is the inclusion of global cultural values that are not always in line with Islamic principles. These values can affect students' mindsets and behaviors if not managed properly<sup>[21]</sup>. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions must have a clear strategy in filtering the influence of global culture in order to maintain Islamic identity while taking advantage of the positive benefits of globalization.

In addition, globalization increases competition between educational institutions. Islamic educational institutions not only compete with other institutions at the local level, but also with international institutions that offer technology-based programs and global standards. To remain relevant, Islamic educational institutions must continue to innovate in terms of learning methods, curriculum development, and the use of technology. They also need to strengthen their position by highlighting the uniqueness of education based on Islamic values that are its hallmark.

Globalization also affects people's expectations of Islamic educational institutions. Parents and students now expect Islamic educational institutions to not only focus on Islamic values, but also be able to provide education that is modern, high-quality, and relevant to the needs of the times. In this context, Islamic educational institutions must be able to harmonize between strong Islamic traditions and modern innovations in education.

By facing challenges and taking advantage of globalization opportunities strategically, Islamic educational institutions can become educational centers that are not only superior in terms of spiritual values, but also highly competitive at the global level. This makes globalization not a threat, but a great opportunity to strengthen the role of Islamic educational institutions in a world that is constantly changing.

### **2. The Need for International Standards in Islamic Education**

In the era of globalization, the need for international standards in education is very important to ensure the quality and relevance of Islamic educational institutions. International standards provide a framework that allows Islamic educational institutions to align their curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation systems with global best practices. With this standard, Islamic educational institutions can provide greater opportunities for graduates to continue their education at leading universities or pursue careers in an international environment.

The adoption of international standards such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge Assessment can be a strategic step for Islamic educational institutions. However, it is important to ensure that these standards are aligned with Islamic values so as to maintain the identity and mission of Islamic education. For example, Islamic educational institutions can integrate religious studies, Islamic character formation, and Qur'anic memorization into a curriculum based on international standards. With this approach, students not only get a globally recognized education but also stay connected to Islamic values.

International language skills are one of the key elements in the implementation of international standards. Mastery of English and Arabic, for example, opens up students' access to global literature and prepares them to compete in an increasingly connected world of work<sup>[22]</sup>. Innovative language teaching programs, such as project-based or technology-based learning, can be implemented to support students' ability to communicate globally.

International standards also provide a strong foundation for

<sup>19</sup> Fitriana, "IMPLEMENTATION OF BENCHMARKING STRATEGIES IN IMPROVING PERFORMANCE IN ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS."

<sup>20</sup> Dila Fitri Nabila and Abd Hayyi, "The Impact of Globalization on Islamic Education in Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Science* 2, no. 2 (2019): 552–73.

<sup>21</sup> Jane Doe, "Islamic Education in a Globalized World: Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of Islamic Studies and Education*, 14(3), 2020, 45-60

<sup>22</sup> John Smith, "The Role of Language Proficiency in Globalized Education," *International Journal of Educational Development*, 10(3), 2020, 34-50

building cross-border collaboration. Islamic educational institutions can take advantage of this opportunity to develop student exchange programs, professional training for teachers, or joint research with international institutions. This collaboration not only enriches the experience of students and teachers, but also enhances the reputation of the institution at the global level.

In addition, the application of international standards supports the development of education that is more inclusive and adaptive to changing times. For example, the integration of technology in learning, the development of 21st-century skills, and the emphasis on cross-disciplinary learning are becoming important parts of international standards that are relevant to today's needs.

By strategically adopting international standards, Islamic educational institutions can create graduates who are competent, have noble ethics, and are able to compete at the global level. This not only strengthens the institution's position in the midst of global competition, but also supports the mission of Islamic education to make a positive contribution to the formation of a better society.

### 3. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

To effectively face the era of globalization, Islamic educational institutions need to conduct a SWOT analysis as follows:

#### a. Strengths

Islamic educational institutions have a strong foundation in moral and spiritual values. Education based on the teachings of Islam gives a different character and creates a competitive advantage that other educational institutions do not have. This approach can appeal to individuals who want to get an education that is balanced between science and moral formation. A strong Islamic identity is also an attraction in itself, which creates a healthy educational environment, based on high moral principles<sup>[23]</sup>.

#### b. Weaknesses

One of the main weaknesses faced by Islamic educational institutions is the limited resources. This includes limited funds for the development of educational facilities and facilities, as well as limited technology used in the learning process. In addition, many Islamic educational institutions are still experiencing difficulties in recruiting competent and internationally competent educators. This limitation is also reflected in the lack of access to a global network that can support the learning process and international collaboration.

#### c. Peluang (Opportunities)

Globalization provides many opportunities for Islamic educational institutions to develop themselves. One of them is the opportunity to establish partnerships with international educational institutions, which can enrich the experience and educational standards offered. In addition, technological advances have opened up opportunities for Islamic educational institutions to access global educational resources, such as online courses and international research. Participation in international education forums can also

improve the image of the institution and give recognition to the quality of education produced.

#### d. Ancaman (Threats)

Competition with other educational institutions, both public and international, is a major threat to Islamic educational institutions. In the era of globalization, more flexible and modern general education institutions can attract the attention of more students. In addition, the rapidly growing influence of global culture, which is often incompatible with Islamic principles, can threaten the integrity and identity of Islamic educational institutions. If not managed wisely, Islamic educational institutions can lose their way in the face of changing times, which can reduce the attractiveness and quality of education offered.

By utilizing their strengths and overcoming weaknesses, as well as taking advantage of existing opportunities, Islamic educational institutions can adapt and develop in the face of increasingly complex threats of globalization.

Through a deep understanding of the impact of globalization, the application of international standards, and strategic SWOT analysis, Islamic educational institutions can face challenges and make optimal use of opportunities. With an adaptive and innovative approach, Islamic educational institutions can continue to develop, maintain their identity, and make a positive contribution in the global arena.

### C. Implementation of Benchmarking in Islamic Educational Institutions

#### 1. Effective Benchmarking Measures

Benchmarking is a systematic process to compare the performance of an institution with the best standards in a certain field. This process aims to improve the quality of services and educational outcomes through the adoption of relevant and applicable best practices. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, benchmarking not only focuses on technical aspects, but also on strengthening the quality of education based on distinctive Islamic values. Here are the effective steps that can be implemented in the benchmarking process<sup>[24]</sup>:

#### a. Identify Needs

The first step in benchmarking is to identify needs. At this stage, the educational institution needs to determine which areas need improvement or development. Examples of areas that are often in focus are learning quality, curriculum effectiveness, resource management efficiency, and teaching innovation. This needs analysis is carried out through internal evaluations, such as performance assessments, student and parent satisfaction surveys, and analysis of student learning outcomes. Thus, the focus of benchmarking can be set on target according to the needs of the institution.

#### b. Selection of Benchmarking Partners

The next stage is to select a suitable benchmarking partner. Benchmarking partners can be other educational institutions, both at the local, national, and international levels, that have shown superior performance in the area of focus. In the context of Islamic educational institutions, benchmarking partners are ideally institutions that are able to maintain a

<sup>23</sup> Eka Susanti, "Implementation of SWOT Analysis in Planning to Improve the Quality of Education at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 2 Palembang City" (UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Bjorn Anderson, *Understanding Benchmarking and Its Process* (Oslo: Springer, 1999).

balance between modern innovation and strengthening Islamic values. The selection of these partners should be based on valid data, such as awards, accreditation, or recognized academic reputation.

### c. Data Collection

Once the benchmarking partner is determined, the data collection process becomes a very important step. The data collected covers various aspects, such as the teaching methods used, curriculum management, the use of technology in learning, teacher competency development, and other supporting programs. This data can be obtained through direct observation, interviews with partners, surveys, or document studies. Data collection must be carried out comprehensively and accurately to ensure valid analysis results.

### d. Comparative Analysis

At this stage, the data that has been collected is compared with the practices applied in the educational institutions themselves. This analysis aims to identify the gap between the standards applied by benchmarking partners and the conditions in educational institutions. These gaps can be weaknesses that need to be fixed or opportunities to adopt certain innovations. The analysis also includes an evaluation of the feasibility of implementing practices from partners in the educational institution itself, taking into account resources, organizational culture, and local needs.

### e. Change Implementation

The results of the comparative analysis are the basis for designing and implementing changes in educational institutions. These changes can be in the form of curriculum revisions, improvements in teaching methods, training for teachers, or the integration of technology in the learning process. The implementation of the change should be done in stages and involve all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, to ensure its success and sustainability <sup>[25]</sup>.

### f. Evaluation and Follow-up

The last step is to evaluate the results of the implementation of the change. Evaluations are carried out periodically to assess the effectiveness of the changes that have been implemented and their impact on the quality of education. If deficiencies are found, additional corrective steps can be formulated to achieve more optimal results. This follow-up process is important to ensure that benchmarking does not stop at one cycle, but becomes part of a culture of continuous improvement in educational institutions.

By following the steps above, Islamic educational institutions can optimize the benchmarking process to significantly improve the quality of learning, management, and innovation. This not only has an impact on the academic success of students, but also on strengthening the character based on Islamic values that are the hallmark of the educational institution.

## 2. Case Study: Examples of Islamic Educational Institutions that Have Successfully Implemented Benchmarking

Al-Firdaus Islamic High School is one of the Islamic

educational institutions that has successfully implemented benchmarking as a strategy to improve the quality of learning and management. The school faces challenges in the form of a lack of technology integration in the learning process, while the demand for mastery of digital skills continues to increase. In addition, school management that is still manual is considered inefficient to support the needs of educational modernization.

In an effort to find a solution, Al-Firdaus Islamic High School conducted a comparative study to the International Islamic School Malaysia (IISM), an international Islamic educational institution known for its success in integrating technology in Islamic values-based learning <sup>[26]</sup>. The study was conducted to study the best practices applied by IISM, including the management of digital learning, the use of communication applications, and a curriculum that blends modern science with religious values.

Based on the benchmarking results, Al-Firdaus Islamic High School adopted several important innovations. One of the steps taken is the implementation of a Learning Management System (LMS) to support online and hybrid learning. This LMS allows teachers to upload materials, assign assignments, and monitor student progress in real time. In addition, the school also provides intensive training to teachers to improve their ability to utilize learning technology.

In the curriculum aspect, Al-Firdaus Islamic High School combines project-based learning methods with Islamic character education, so that each subject not only emphasizes knowledge, but also moral strengthening. To improve transparency and communication with parents, the school developed a special app that makes it easy for parents to monitor students' academic and non-academic progress.

The results of the implementation of this benchmarking are very positive. Students' academic achievement has experienced a significant improvement, while students have become more involved in the learning process, especially through technology-based collaborative projects. Parents are also more satisfied with school services due to increased transparency and ease of accessing information. The reputation of Al-Firdaus Islamic High School is also increasing as a modern Islamic school that has succeeded in combining technological innovation with religious values.

The success of Al-Firdaus Islamic High School cannot be separated from several key factors, such as the strong commitment of the school's leadership, the active involvement of all stakeholders, and adequate resource support. The school also conducts periodic evaluations to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the programs that have been implemented.

The experience of Al-Firdaus Islamic High School shows that benchmarking is an effective strategy to help Islamic educational institutions innovate and remain relevant in the era of globalization. By adopting best practices from other institutions, a school can create positive change that has a far-reaching impact on the entire educational community.

## 3. Key Factors for Successful Implementation of Benchmarking

The success of the implementation of benchmarking in Islamic educational institutions is greatly influenced by several key factors that ensure that each step can be carried

<sup>25</sup> Bjorn Anderson.

<sup>26</sup> John Smith, "The Role of Technology in Islamic Education," *Journal of Educational Innovations* 10 (2) (2020).

out effectively and provide optimal results. These factors include aspects of leadership, stakeholder participation, provision of resources, relevance to Islamic values, and sustainability of the evaluation and learning process. Here is a more in-depth description of the key factors for the success of Benchmarking implementation <sup>[27]</sup>:

#### a. Leadership Commitment

The role of institutional leaders is the main foundation for successful benchmarking. Visionary leaders are able to design strategies, motivate teams, and take decisive steps in implementing change. Leadership commitments include a willingness to support innovation, provide needed resources, and build a collaborative work culture. In the context of Islamic education, leaders who have a deep understanding of Islamic values can ensure that each benchmarking step is in line with the principles embraced by the institution.

#### b. Partisipas Stakeholder

Active engagement from all stakeholders, including teachers, staff, students, and parents, is a critical element in the success of benchmarking. Teachers play the role of the main implementer of change in the classroom, while the support of administrative staff helps keep operations running smoothly. The involvement of students and parents ensures that the changes implemented are in line with their needs and expectations. By involving all parties, educational institutions can create a sense of belonging to the benchmarking program, so that each individual feels responsible for its success.

#### c. Adequate Resources

The success of benchmarking is greatly influenced by the availability of sufficient resources, both in the form of finance, technology, and human resources. Educational institutions need adequate investment to adopt technology, conduct teacher training, or conduct curriculum development. In addition, the existence of a competent and committed team is indispensable to ensure that every step of benchmarking can be carried out effectively. The availability of these resources must be managed optimally in order to provide maximum results.

#### d. Alignment with Islamic Values

Islamic educational institutions have a distinctive feature that distinguishes them from other institutions, namely the emphasis on Islamic values in every aspect of education. Therefore, any strategy adopted through benchmarking must be tailored to the vision, mission, and principles of Islam. This alignment not only maintains the identity of the institution, but also ensures that the changes made have a positive impact on shaping the morals and character of students in accordance with Islamic teachings.

#### e. Evaluation and Continuous Learning

Benchmarking is not a one-time process, but a cycle that requires continuous evaluation and learning. Regular evaluations are carried out to assess the effectiveness of the changes that have been implemented, identify weaknesses, and determine the next steps to improve. Continuous learning

allows institutions to continue to adapt to the latest developments, both in technology, learning methods, and education management. Thus, benchmarking can be part of the culture of continuous quality improvement <sup>[28]</sup>.

The application of these key factors helps Islamic educational institutions not only improve the quality of learning, but also create sustainable transformation. With an integrated, quality-focused approach, Islamic educational institutions can achieve the best standards while remaining relevant in the midst of global challenges.

### D. Benefits of Benchmarking for the Competitiveness of Islamic Educational Institutions

Benchmarking is an effective strategy to help Islamic educational institutions improve their competitiveness in the midst of global challenges. By comparing the performance and practices of institutions against the best standards, benchmarking allows institutions to identify opportunities for improvement and innovation. The main benefits of benchmarking include improving academic and non-academic quality, adapting to technological developments, and strengthening the institution's brand and reputation. Here is a more in-depth explanation of the benefits of benchmarking for the competitiveness of Islamic educational institutions:

#### 1. Improving Academic and Non-Academic Quality

Benchmarking makes a significant contribution to improving the quality of education in various aspects, both academic and non-academic. In the academic field, benchmarking helps Islamic educational institutions to identify and adopt innovative and effective learning methods from other, more advanced institutions. For example, project-based learning or flipped classroom approaches can be adapted to encourage active student engagement and improve their learning outcomes. In addition, benchmarking also allows institutions to improve their curriculum to be more relevant to the times, including adding materials that support 21st century skills, such as digital literacy, problem-solving, and collaboration. Not only limited to the academic aspect, benchmarking also encourages the development of non-academic programs that play an important role in shaping students' character. Programs such as extracurricular activities based on Islamic values, leadership training, and strengthening Islamic culture in the school environment can improve the balance between students' intellectual and emotional intelligence. Educational institutions that have successfully benchmarked this aspect often create unique programs, such as social skills training, technology-based memorization of the Qur'an, to Islamic entrepreneurship programs for students <sup>[29]</sup>.

Benchmarking also contributes to building an educational culture that is oriented towards excellence. By referring to the best standards, Islamic educational institutions can not only optimally meet the needs of students but also create a learning environment that is conducive to the development of their overall potential. In the long term, improving the quality of education will strengthen the institution's position as an institution that is able to produce a generation that is competent, competitive, and noble.

<sup>27</sup> Bambang Sunaryo, "The Effectiveness of the Implementation of Benchmarking Education and Leadership Training at the Regional Human Resources Development Agency of Central Sulawesi Province," *Journal of Welfare* 4, no. 2 (2019): 229–42.

<sup>28</sup> Jane Doe, "Sustainable Improvement through Continuous Evaluation in Educational Institutions," *Journal of Educational Management* 8(4) (2021): 34–45.

<sup>29</sup> John Smith, "Integrating Character Education through Extracurricular Activities," *International Journal of Islamic Education* 8(2) (2020): 67–75.

Through benchmarking, Islamic educational institutions have a great opportunity to not only match the best standards, but also create innovations that differentiate them from other institutions. Thus, they can play a more significant role in producing students who are intellectually superior, emotionally resilient, and firm in Islamic values.

## 2. Adaptation to technological developments and digitalization

The development of technology and digitalization presents opportunities as well as challenges for Islamic educational institutions. To remain relevant and competitive, educational institutions need to continue to innovate in integrating technology into the learning and management process. Benchmarking is one of the effective strategies to learn best practices from other institutions that are more advanced in terms of educational technology. Examples are the use of *Learning Management Systems* (LMS) to manage online and hybrid learning, interactive learning applications to increase student engagement, and digital communication platforms that facilitate effective communication between teachers, students, and parents.

In addition, benchmarking provides insight to develop technology-based education programs that are more adaptive and responsive to the needs of the times. Islamic educational institutions can adopt online and hybrid learning models, which allow students to learn flexibly without compromising the quality of learning. The use of digital tools in student assessments, such as computer-based exams or learning outcome monitoring applications, can also improve the accuracy and efficiency of the evaluation process<sup>[30]</sup>.

The integration of technology in education is not only limited to learning, but also includes management and administrative aspects. By studying the implementation of technology-based management systems, such as academic information systems (SIA) or digital financial management, Islamic educational institutions can improve operational efficiency. Digitization of administration also allows for a more transparent, integrated, and easily accessible process for all stakeholders. In addition to efficiency, technology also helps create a learning experience that is more interesting, modern, and in accordance with the learning style of the digital generation. For example, educational institutions can adopt video-based, simulation, or augmented reality-based learning media to make the subject matter more interactive and easy to understand. Technology also opens up access to global learning resources, such as international online courses, e-books, and digital journals, which enrich the insights of students and teachers.

Adapting to digitalization also allows Islamic educational institutions to reach a wider audience. By opening online or hybrid classes, institutions can serve students from various geographical locations without physical limitations. This not only increases the competitiveness of the institution, but also supports the mission of Islamic educational institutions to spread Islamic values globally.

By utilizing technology optimally through benchmarking, Islamic educational institutions are not only able to improve quality and efficiency, but also build an image as a modern and adaptive institution. This will ultimately strengthen the

institution's position in the midst of increasingly dynamic global competition.

## 3. Strengthening the Brand and Reputation of the Institution

Another important benefit of benchmarking is the ability to strengthen the brand and reputation of Islamic educational institutions in the eyes of the public. By implementing relevant best practices, institutions not only improve the quality of educational services, but also demonstrate a commitment to innovation and continuous improvement. The quality of services perceived by students and parents, such as effective learning, adequate facilities, and professional management, is the main factor that builds public trust. This trust will ultimately strengthen the institution's position as a reliable and competitive educational institution.

A strong reputation also opens up opportunities to attract more students, including from the wider community, both at the national and international levels. Educational institutions with a good reputation are often the first choice for parents who are looking for quality education with an approach based on Islamic values. Additionally, success in benchmarking can increase the visibility of the institution through formal recognition, such as superior accreditation, educational awards, or invitations to collaborate with leading institutions. Furthermore, a strong brand allows the institution to be a pioneer or reference in the Islamic education system. For example, institutions that successfully integrate technology in Islamic-based learning can be an inspiration for other institutions, thereby expanding their influence in the world of education. A good reputation also has an impact on increasing opportunities for partnerships with external parties, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, or technology companies, that can support the development of educational programs.

In addition to attracting students, a strong reputation also increases student and alumni loyalty. Alumni of institutions in good standing often become unofficial ambassadors who promote institutions to their communities. Thus, alumni play a role in expanding the network and strengthening the brand of the institution at various levels of society<sup>[31]</sup>.

In the long term, a solid reputation is one of the strategic assets that supports the sustainability of Islamic educational institutions. By effectively managing brands and reputations through benchmarking, institutions can continue to innovate, adapt, and compete in the midst of increasingly complex global challenges. This not only strengthens the competitiveness of the institution, but also supports its mission in producing a superior generation based on Islamic values that has a positive impact on the wider community.

By implementing benchmarking effectively, Islamic educational institutions can improve their overall quality, adapt to changes, and build a competitive advantage that supports their mission in producing a superior generation based on Islamic values. This not only provides benefits for the institution itself, but also for the communities it serves.

## Conclusion

The results of this paper show that the implementation of benchmarking strategies in Islamic educational institutions

<sup>30</sup> John Smith, "Hybrid Learning Models in Islamic Education," *International Journal of Islamic Education and Technology* 8(3) (2020): 38–48.

<sup>31</sup> John Smith, "The Role of Alumni in Strengthening Institutional Branding," *International Journal of Educational Leadership* 9(3) (2020): 45–60.

has a significant positive impact, especially in improving the quality of education, adapting to technological developments, and strengthening competitiveness.

### 1. Improving the Quality of Education

Benchmarking encourages Islamic educational institutions to adopt best practices from other institutions, thereby improving the quality of learning, curriculum effectiveness, and teaching methods. An example is the application of technology in the learning process, such as the Learning Management System (LMS), which improves the student learning experience and teacher effectiveness.

### 2. Management Efficiency and Innovation

By utilizing benchmarking, many Islamic educational institutions have succeeded in improving efficiency in resource management and administration. This step also allows them to integrate modern innovations without neglecting Islamic values.

### 3. Strengthening Branding and Reputation

Islamic educational institutions that have successfully implemented benchmarking improve their image and attractiveness in the eyes of the public. This reputation allows the institution to attract new students, increase parental trust, and expand their influence at the local as well as global level.

### 4. Global Collaboration and Adaptation

Benchmarking opens up opportunities for cross-institutional collaboration, both nationally and internationally. This allows Islamic educational institutions to access a wider educational network, update the curriculum according to global standards, and provide opportunities for students to compete internationally.

These results show that benchmarking is an effective strategic tool to help Islamic educational institutions not only survive, but also excel in the era of globalization.

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