

Benchmarking as a Vocational Quality Improvement Strategy Towards SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School)

Rita Aryani¹, Elisah Fanisyah²

¹Universitas Panca Sakti, Bekasi, Indonesia

²Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: ritaar1757@gmail.com

Abstract

Improving the quality of education is an obligation for every educational institution that wants to continue to exist and wants to produce quality graduates to meet the needs and developments of the current times. However, the obstacle is that educational institutions have difficulty determining what strategies must be done to make quality improvement efforts effective. This study aims to know, analyze, and describe benchmarking as a vocational quality improvement strategy towards SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School). This study used a qualitative descriptive method with data collection through observation, interview, and observation. Then, the research data is analyzed through data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusions. The results showed that SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta has carried out benchmarking for two years to improve the quality of education and realize it into SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School). SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta carries out strategies from the pre-benchmarking period, the benchmarking process, to the plan after the benchmarking is implemented. This research is expected to guide other vocational high schools that want to benchmark to improve quality towards SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School).

Keywords: *Benchmarking, Quality of Education, Vocational, Center of Excellence*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Vocational high schools are required to provide learning that leads to the skills of adapting to the industrial world for each student and being able to respond to existing developments in science and technology (Alam, 2023; Hartono & Achmad, 2021) Because the availability of quality human resources in the field of science and technology is very decisive for a country for its ability in global competition that has high competitiveness (Suryana, 2020; Ulum, M, 2017). However, the absorption capacity of Vocational High School graduates in the industrial world is still relatively low (Kusumawati, 2017). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology issued a policy to develop an independent curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka) program offered to education units as an option to restore learning and improve the quality of education (Barlian et al., 2022). SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School) is a program of the Decree of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology Number 165/M/2021, which focuses on developing operational efficiency and improving the quality of human resources in professional

schools through harmonious partnerships with the business world and the industrial world. The purpose of the SMK PK program is to make continuous efforts to improve the quality of human resources of Vocational High School students based on current industry needs and reduce the imbalance that occurs between available labor resources and the expected needs of industry through collaborative efforts with Business and Industrial World (DU/DI) and make SMK PK as reference for other Vocational High School (Mardi, 2021; Nadiya & Andari, 2023). This program is expected to contribute to the advancement of education in Indonesia, especially at the vocational school level (Rahman et al., 2022). It can reduce the number of unemployed in Indonesia (Fathurrahman et al., 2023). On that basis, school principals, as leaders of educational institutions, must think and act to improve the quality of their institutions (Dakir, 2022; Hamdi et al., 2022; Sa'idah & Winarso, 2023), so that it can be accepted in the world of work by what is expected and can become a SMK PK.

Improving the quality of education can be started with school evaluation or school review; after that, the school can compare with other schools, called benchmarking (Mustajab, 2015). It is known that benchmarking is one of the principal's efforts to make improvements in education transformation efforts (Harahap, 2020; Rifangi, 2022). Benchmarking is also an effort to find out further which organizations are superior, why, and how to produce better performance and quality (Billah, 2020). Benchmarking was initially carried out in the business world, where, in practice, a company or entrepreneur compares with other more advanced companies by seeing, studying, and understanding its performance so that it can be applied to companies that make comparisons. In its development to date, benchmarking methods began to be used in the field of education.

The application of benchmarking in education helps identify threats, challenges, weaknesses, strengths, and achievements of educational institutions internally and externally. This benchmarking also optimizes continuous improvement in achieving quality education to produce quality graduates (outcomes) (Kamil & Putridiyanti, 2020; Rusdi, 2018; Syme et al., 2021). The main purpose of benchmarking is to find the key or secret to the success of the best educational institution in its class as a basis for decision-making by the principal based on what potential analysis the educational institution has (Bogetoft & Wittrup, 2017; Caeiro et al., 2020; McCubbin et al., 2022; Suluri, 2019; Trisniarti et al., 2022). Benchmarking results cannot simply be applied to an organization. The benchmarking results must be communicated carefully and it is essential to understand that not all benchmarking results will be suitable for application in comparative educational institutions. Therefore, if they are to be adapted, these results need to be considered, adjusted, and refined (Fitriana, 2023).

SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta is a vocational high school located in Central Jakarta that has an accreditation with expertise programs in office management, accounting, retail business, computer engineering, and networking. SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta is currently trying to become SMK PK (Center of Excellence), but at this time it is certainly not easy to get that status. Therefore, SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta seeks to make

one of the efforts by benchmarking other Vocational High School that have first obtained the status of SMK PK. In the benchmarking process carried out by SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta, it can find out and analyze the quality of education in other Vocational High School. Research related to quality improvement for vocational schools towards SMK PK needs to be carried out, as in research by Fatah et al., (2022) that the Center of Excellence Program of Vocational High School (SMK PK) is a program that encourages harmony and comprehensiveness between schools and industry. The SMK PK program covers the fields of curriculum, learning, increasing the number and role of instructors from industry, industrial practices, competency certification, technology updates, applied research, and the absorption of graduates by the world of work. The SMK PK program is certainly a new challenge for both schools and teachers. Then, according to Firman (2021) in his research, it was revealed that assistance is needed designed to help schools towards SMK PK, and must take place in depth and thoroughly (Fahmayani, 2021). Therefore, this study focuses on the benchmarking strategy carried out by SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta as a quality improvement strategy to achieve SMK PK.

B. METHOD

This research uses a type of qualitative descriptive research, which is a research method used to examine and describe in detail and systematically the state of natural objects in which the researcher is the main instrument (Sugiyono, 2019). With the purpose of the study, namely knowing and analyzing benchmarking as a quality improvement strategy towards SMK PK carried out by SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta. The data collection techniques used by the author are school observations and interviews with school principals, vice principals, and heads of expertise programs. The last data collection technique is documentation related to preparation for SMK PK. Then, the techniques used to analyze the data obtained are data reduction, data display, verification, and conclusions on the validity of data using triangulation of sources and techniques.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study describes benchmarking as a strategy of SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta to improve the quality of its education towards SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School). The background of the school benchmarking is first, to find out other school techniques and strategies that are better quality so that we can adopt these techniques and strategies to be implemented in schools and adjusted to the situation, conditions, and abilities of the school, as well as to realize the vision and mission of the school. Second, the background of the school benchmarking by looking at the results of the education report (Rapor Pendidikan) that has decreased, the school needs to coordinate or hold a visit. Rapor Pendidikan is a platform that provides data on the evaluation results of the Education system. Rapor Pendidikan is based on Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards, which was later revealed to be, Regulation of the Minister of Education,

Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 9 of 2022 concerning the Evaluation of the Education System by the Central Government and Local Governments on Early Childhood Education, Primary Education, and Secondary Education. Data in Rapor Pendidikan is used as a reference in reflecting and evaluating with educators in education units to be utilized as a basis for data-based planning (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). Then, after seeing the results of Rapor Pendidikan, the school set a benchmarking strategy to improve its school's quality. The targeted schools are schools that get the status of center of excellence and schools with the same field of expertise. In this case, SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta collaborates with one of SMK PK in Jakarta, namely SMK X in Jakarta, and has been running for 2 years. The school conducts benchmarking in the field of curriculum and student fields such as how to apply the curriculum, expertise that can be extracted from PK school students, then in terms of managing school administration, school regulations, to how to manage human resources in schools.

The things that SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta does before carrying out benchmarking include: analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of schools (SWOT analysis), making priority scales, forming teams, setting benchmarking goals and appointing who will be targeted in benchmarking, making a budget design needs, then action is carried out, namely by observing and discussing together with the schools that are the target of benchmarking. After benchmarking, SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta did various things, namely: analyzing the benchmarking results, communicating to internal schools, adopting techniques and strategies that were in accordance with school conditions and needs, and determining to establish sustainable cooperation with PK schools. Based on the efforts that have been made by SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta, it is almost the same as several stages that need to be done in benchmarking, namely planning, data collection, analysis, integration, implementation or adaptation, and evaluation (Hakim et al., 2021; Kaolan, 2017). So that the implementation of benchmarking as a strategy to improve the quality of education can be described as follows:

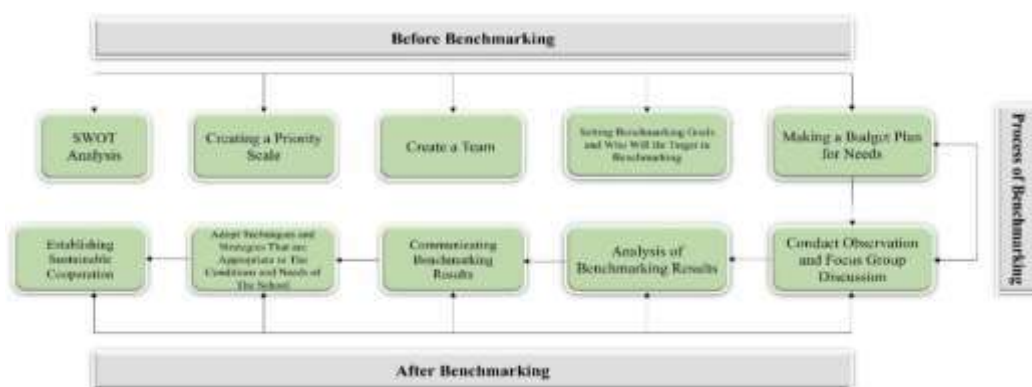


Figure 1. Benchmarking Strategies in Education

In general, the benefits obtained from benchmarking can be grouped into three major groups, namely (1) cultural transformation, (2) performance improvement, (3) improvement of human resource capabilities (Sumirah & Surayya, 2020). The benefits felt by SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta in addition to improving performance, increased

student competence, increased behavior and discipline. In addition, schools are also able to plan roadmaps and compile the necessary documents. The other benefits that can later be felt when becoming a PK Vocational School include: 1) the acceleration of the achievement of graduates with character, business/industrial/work standards and competitiveness by the profile of Pancasila Students, 2) improving the quality of education through links and matches with industry, 3) increasing the competence of principals and teachers in leading changes in Vocational High School, 4) receive intensive assistance for the transformation of education units and acceleration of digitalization, 5) improvement of student practice facilities through the construction/renovation of spaces and procurement of industry-standard equipment, and 6) opportunities to become a Sekolah Penggerak/impacts of change for other vocational schools. Based on this, it is also aligned with the implementation of the SMK PK program, namely to be able to produce graduates who are competent in specific expertise competencies and absorbed in the business world, the industrial world, and the world of work, and can continue to the higher education level with a learning approach tailored to the needs of industry-based students 4.0. Then other quality improvement strategies that principals and teachers can carry out include implementing industry-based leadership and managerial; teachers follow competency strengthening programs through reskilling, upskilling, and competency certification programs (Kemendikbud, 2021).

The form of application after benchmarking includes 1) implementing patterns and strategies that are by the school in terms of improving student and teacher competence, 2) implementing strategies on how to discipline students and teachers, 3) in the field of definite curriculum by implementing changes in the application of Kurikulum Merdeka, and 3) habituation that needs to be done consistently. Then, the obstacles found in benchmarking are related to costs and still lack of understanding about SMK PK for teachers and administrative employees involved in teams towards SMK PK, then also the number of school activities that create obstacles in completing documents and other challenges to increase the amount of cooperation and establish partnerships with industry. These obstacles must be addressed, considering that collaboration between schools and industry is essential because technological developments in the industrial world are very rapid, so schools can be far behind if they do not cooperate with industry. The purpose of the collaboration between the school and the industrial field is to accelerate the time on adjustment for graduates entering the world of work, which in turn can improve the quality of the school (Rohim et al., 2020).

D. CONCLUSION

SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta has carried out benchmarking for two years to improve the quality of education and realize it into an SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School). In the results of the study, it is known that SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta carried out several strategies starting from the pre-benchmarking period, the benchmarking process, to the stage after the benchmarking was carried out. The plan

is more detailed starting from conducting a SWOT analysis, making a priority scale, creating a team that will be in charge, setting benchmarking goals and appointing who will be targeted in benchmarking, making the required budget design, which is then carried out by observing and discussing together with the targeted educational institutions in benchmarking. After benchmarking, SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta analyzes the benchmarking results, communicates the benchmarking results, adopts techniques and strategies in accordance with the conditions and needs of the school, and finally determines to establish sustainable cooperation with PK schools targeted in benchmarking. Although there are still obstacles in the benchmarking process carried out, SMK Negeri 44 Jakarta remains persistent and committed to becoming an SMK PK (Center of Excellence of Vocational High School). Then, the study results can be used as recommendations for researchers to study more profoundly or for other Vocational High School to implement strategies that have been utilized as a guide in carrying out benchmarking to improve vocational quality.

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