

BENCHMARKING

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IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN CURRICULUM STANDARDIZATION AND BENCHMARKING AT SPK SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF CONTINUOUS QUALITY DEVELOPMENT AT KGS JAMBI

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Abstract

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This study examines the implementation of quality assurance in curriculum standardization and benchmarking at a Cooperation Education Unit School (SPK), with KGS Jambi serving as a single case. The research aims to analyse how internal quality assurance mechanisms, dual curriculum standardization, and systematic benchmarking practices are designed and implemented to support continuous quality improvement. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving school leaders, curriculum coordinators, senior teachers, and administrative staff. The findings show that KGS Jambi applies a comprehensive quality assurance system that aligns closely with Harvey and Green's five perspectives of educational quality, integrating national and international accreditation, performance monitoring, stakeholder evaluation, and alumni tracking. Curriculum standardization is carried out through the simultaneous adoption of the Merdeka Curriculum and the Cambridge Curriculum, supported by curriculum mapping, integrated syllabi, and regular curriculum reviews, thus balancing national values with global competitiveness. Benchmarking is implemented continuously through participation in SPK associations and the international Cambridge network, enabling the school to compare, adapt, and internalise best practices in management, curriculum, and assessment. The study concludes that KGS Jambi's model of quality assurance, curriculum standardization, and benchmarking offers a viable best-practice framework that can be adapted by Islamic educational institutions and other schools seeking to enhance their educational quality. It recommends the development of comprehensive quality assurance systems, structured curriculum standardization, and sustained benchmarking and networking as strategic pathways for continuous quality improvement in education.

Keywords: Quality Assurance, Standardization, Benchmarking Of Spk School Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

The development of global education demands that every educational institution continuously improve the quality of its educational services in order to remain competitive and produce high-quality graduates. In the Indonesian context, the presence of Cooperation Education Unit Schools (Sekolah Satuan Pendidikan Kerjasama/SPK), commonly known as international schools, has become one of the responses to the demand for high-quality education that meets global standards. SPK is an educational institution that provides

international-standard education programs through cooperation with foreign educational institutions accredited in their home countries, in accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 31 of 2014 concerning Cooperation in the Provision and Management of Education by Foreign Educational Institutions and Educational Institutions in Indonesia. (Kemendikbud 2014:3)

In carrying out their function, SPK schools have the responsibility to maintain and continuously improve the quality of education. The quality of education is not only related to student learning outcomes but also encompasses the entire educational process, including curriculum, teaching methods, teacher quality, facilities and infrastructure, and the quality assurance system. To ensure consistent and continuously improving educational quality, a quality assurance system is required. Edward Sallis (2022:23–25)

The concept of quality assurance in education has attracted the attention of experts over the past few decades. Harvey and Green (1993:9–34), in their monumental work “Defining Quality,” assert that quality in higher education can be understood through five main perspectives. These five perspectives provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how educational quality can be defined, measured, and enhanced within educational institutions. In addition, curriculum standardization is one of the key aspects of quality assurance in SPK schools. A standardized curriculum ensures that all students receive an equivalent and measurable learning experience that aligns with international standards such as Cambridge, IB, or the curriculum of specific countries. This process includes setting quality standards, formulating achievement indicators, as well as continuous evaluation and improvement. Mustafa Kayyali (2023:1–4).

Furthermore, benchmarking, or comparison with best practices, is a strategy for continuous quality improvement. Through benchmarking, schools can identify gaps between existing practices and best practices in other institutions and then adjust them to improve quality. In SPK schools, benchmarking can be carried out in aspects such as curriculum, teaching methods, assessment systems, and school management, both in comparison with international schools within the country and abroad. Accreditation then becomes a crucial component for SPK schools, which must meet dual standards: national and international. Based on Ministerial Regulation Number 31 of 2014, SPK schools must obtain an A accreditation rating from the National Accreditation Board for Schools/Madrasahs (BAN-S/M) as well as accreditation from internationally recognized accreditation bodies. Mahsusi et al. (2024) Accreditation serves as formal recognition of the eligibility and quality of educational provision while also functioning as a mechanism to promote continuous quality improvement through systematic self-evaluation and external review.

The city of Jambi has a dynamic educational landscape, and the presence of KGS Jambi as the only SPK school is an important phenomenon to study because, at the primary and junior secondary levels, this school has demonstrated international-standard educational quality and achievement. This success is supported by a strong quality assurance system, as KGS is required to meet two sets of standards simultaneously: Indonesian national standards and the international standards of the curriculum it adopts. This makes research on the implementation of quality assurance, including curriculum standardization and benchmarking at KGS Jambi, highly relevant to be raised as an example of best practice for other educational institutions, particularly Islamic educational institutions seeking to improve the quality of their services. December 2025.

Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia still face challenges in improving their quality so that they can compete with general and international schools. Although Islamic education excels in character building, many institutions need to improve their quality management and curriculum standardization. Therefore, studying best practices from

successful schools such as KGS Jambi can provide important inspiration for the development of Islamic educational institutions.

Continuous quality improvement through the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle is highly relevant to implement because it ensures that quality continues to develop in line with the needs of the times, and this is in harmony with the Islamic values of *ihsan* and *itqan* as emphasized by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Mahfuzhah, Hannah (2018:106–121) Research on the implementation of quality assurance, standardization, and benchmarking at KGS Jambi is important to conduct in order to enrich theory and provide practical benefits for Islamic educational institutions, enabling them to adapt these best practices to enhance their competitiveness and the quality of their educational services.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of how quality assurance is implemented in curriculum standardization and benchmarking at KGS Jambi. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to describe phenomena holistically and contextually, in line with Creswell's view that qualitative research aims to explore the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a problem. The case study method was selected because it allows for detailed analysis of a specific case, consistent with Yin's explanation that this method is suitable for answering "how" and "why" questions related to complex phenomena in real-life situations. John W. Creswell (2018:190)

The research was conducted at KGS (Kalam Global School) Jambi for several main reasons: the school is the only SPK in Jambi City that has demonstrated good educational quality; it has a structured quality assurance system; it granted permission and full access to the researcher; and its location enables intensive and in-depth data collection. By focusing on a single case (single case study), this research seeks to provide a comprehensive picture of quality assurance practices at the school.

This study uses two types of data sources, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and direct field observations with purposively selected informants, such as the principals of KGS Jambi (elementary and junior high levels), vice principals for curriculum affairs, the head of curriculum development, senior teachers, and administrative staff. Primary data were also collected through observations of teaching and learning processes, teacher training, the implementation of the quality system, and the condition of school facilities and infrastructure. Meanwhile, secondary data were gathered from official school documents and relevant literature, such as quality assurance guidelines, curriculum documents, quality evaluation reports, school profiles, benchmarking results, as well as journal articles and regulations related to SPK and quality assurance in education.

Data collection techniques used in this study include interviews, observation, and documentation. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Furthermore, the trustworthiness of the data is ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of Quality Assurance at KGS Jambi

Based on the research findings, the implementation of quality assurance at KGS Jambi shows a very strong alignment with theories of quality assurance in education, particularly Harvey and Green's concept of educational quality. KGS Jambi applies all five perspectives of quality proposed by Harvey and Green, namely quality as exceptional,

quality as perfection, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation.

2. Curriculum Standardization at KGS Jambi

The curriculum standardization process at KGS Jambi demonstrates excellent practice and can serve as a model for other schools, especially SPK schools and Islamic educational institutions seeking to improve their quality. KGS Jambi's decision to use two curricula (the Merdeka Curriculum and the Cambridge Curriculum) is highly strategic and in line with the school's vision. The Merdeka Curriculum provides flexibility and ensures that students remain rooted in Indonesian values, while the Cambridge Curriculum offers global standards and opens up international opportunities. This is consistent with Fullan's view that curriculum should be designed to meet students' needs in both local and global contexts.

The choice of Cambridge as the international curriculum is also very appropriate, given Cambridge's well-proven reputation of more than 150 years, its broad global recognition, and its focus on developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This corresponds to the demands of 21st-century skills emphasized by many education experts. The curriculum integration strategy applied by KGS Jambi through curriculum mapping, the development of integrated syllabi, and carefully arranged timetables reflects a sound understanding of curriculum development principles. This strategy ensures that students are not burdened with overlapping double learning, but instead receive efficient and effective instruction.

KGS Jambi uses ASIC standards in its curriculum evaluation, which indicates a commitment to meeting the highest standards. However, this standardization is not implemented rigidly, but with enough flexibility to adapt to the school's context and students' needs. This is in line with Ornstein and Hunkins' principle that curriculum standardization should provide a general framework while allowing room for contextualization. In addition, the IELTS and HSK programs implemented at KGS Jambi show a strong understanding of the importance of language competence in a global context. These programs not only prepare students for examinations but also develop communication skills that will be highly useful for their future lives and careers.

3. Benchmarking Practices at KGS Jambi

The benchmarking practices carried out by KGS Jambi illustrate an excellent implementation of the benchmarking concepts proposed by Camp and Watson. KGS Jambi does not conduct benchmarking sporadically, but systematically and continuously through membership in SPK school associations and the Cambridge school network. Various activities such as annual conventions, workshops, seminars, and roadshows provide regular opportunities to learn from other schools. This is in line with the principle that effective benchmarking must be continuous, not a one-off effort.

KGS Jambi conducts competitive benchmarking with other SPK schools that are direct competitors, as well as functional benchmarking with Cambridge schools in various countries. This combination of benchmarking types yields comprehensive learning, both from schools with similar contexts and from those with different contexts.

What is particularly noteworthy about KGS Jambi's benchmarking practice is its focus on learning from other schools, rather than merely comparing numbers or achievements. Conventions and workshops do not only compare exam results or rankings but concentrate more on sharing best practices and strategies that contribute to school success. This aligns with Seeley's view that effective benchmarking is that which leads to organizational learning and changes in practice. KGS Jambi does not simply copy practices from other schools; instead, it adapts them to its own context. The adaptation process—which includes evaluation, selection, modification, piloting, and full implementation—reflects a mature and careful approach. This is consistent with Bogan and English's

principle that contextual adaptation is key to successful implementation of benchmarking results.

4. Accreditation Management at KGS Jambi

Accreditation management at KGS Jambi shows a solid understanding of the function and meaning of accreditation within an educational quality assurance system. KGS Jambi views accreditation not as an ultimate goal or merely a certificate, but as an integral part of the quality assurance system. Accreditation preparation is conducted on an ongoing basis, not only just before the visitation. The preparation process—which includes establishing an accreditation team, conducting self-evaluation, preparing documents, and simulating visitations—demonstrates a highly professional and systematic approach. A well-organized documentation system, both physical and digital, facilitates the accreditation process and also benefits day-to-day school management.

Follow-up on the assessors' recommendations shows a commitment to continuous improvement. KGS Jambi is not satisfied with simply achieving an A accreditation rating; it continually strives to become better. This is in line with the philosophy of continuous improvement, which lies at the heart of quality management.

5. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors: A Critical Analysis

The identification of supporting and inhibiting factors in this study provides important insight into the conditions needed for successful quality assurance implementation. Support from the foundation and parents is a key factor in KGS Jambi's success. This reinforces Sallis and Barnett's theory on the importance of top-management commitment and stakeholder support in implementing quality management. Without such support, it is difficult for a school to make the necessary investments for quality improvement.

Although not explicitly mentioned as a supporting factor, the leadership of Mrs. Tristan and the rest of the management team is clearly evident in KGS Jambi's success. The challenge of managerial complexity, cited as a hindrance, actually underscores how crucial strong and competent leadership is in running an SPK school. This corresponds with numerous studies that highlight the critical role of leadership in the successful implementation of quality management in educational institutions.

The challenge of managing dual standards (national and international) mentioned as an inhibiting factor actually reveals a fundamental dilemma in education: how to meet demanding standards while still providing education that suits the individual needs of students. KGS Jambi demonstrates that this can be addressed through smart curriculum integration and robust management systems.

6. Relevance for Islamic Educational Institutions

One of the important aims of this study is to identify best practices from KGS Jambi that can be adapted by Islamic educational institutions. Based on the research findings, several highly relevant aspects emerge:

- a. Comprehensive quality assurance system
Islamic educational institutions can adapt the quality assurance system applied at KGS Jambi, including periodic evaluation, teacher performance monitoring, self-evaluation, and follow-up improvements. Such a system does not necessarily require very large resources but does demand commitment and consistency.
- b. Curriculum standardization
Although the curricula used may differ, the principles of curriculum standardization applied at KGS Jambi can be adapted by Islamic educational institutions. Curriculum mapping, the development of clear syllabi, and regular reviews can be implemented for Islamic education curricula.
- c. Culture of evaluation and continuous learning

The culture of self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and continuous learning evident at KGS Jambi is highly aligned with Islamic values of muhasabah (self-reflection) and itqan (striving for excellence). Islamic educational institutions can cultivate this culture by explicitly linking it to Islamic teachings.

d. Networks and partnerships

The benchmarking and partnership practices undertaken by KGS Jambi can be adapted by Islamic educational institutions through membership in bodies such as Madrasah forums, Islamic school associations, or pesantren networks. Sharing best practices among Islamic institutions can accelerate collective quality improvement.

e. Creative funding strategies

The suggestion from KGS Jambi's principal to seek CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) funds from large companies is highly relevant for Islamic educational institutions that often face financial constraints. Many companies have CSR programs in education and are open to supporting institutions with strong programs.

f. Integration of values with modern management practices

Most importantly, KGS Jambi demonstrates that international standards and modern quality management can be integrated with local values without sacrificing identity. Islamic educational institutions can learn from this: implementing modern management practices and high quality standards does not conflict with Islamic values; in fact, it is consistent with Islamic teachings on excellence and striving for the best..

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion on the implementation of quality assurance in curriculum standardization and benchmarking at SPK schools, using KGS Jambi as a case study, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. Implementation of Quality Assurance at KGS Jambi

KGS Jambi implements a comprehensive and systematic quality assurance system that encompasses various mechanisms, namely: (a) quality assurance through national and international accreditation; (b) periodic evaluations by parents; (c) semester-based performance evaluations of teachers and other school members; (d) monitoring of teacher performance using the AIMSIS application; (e) evaluation of student learning outcomes; (f) alumni tracking; and (g) collaboration with leading universities. The quality assurance system applied shows strong conformity with Harvey and Green's theory of the five perspectives of educational quality, namely quality as exceptional, quality as perfection, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation.

2. Curriculum Standardization at KGS Jambi

The process of curriculum standardization at KGS Jambi is carried out through the simultaneous use of two curricula: the Merdeka Curriculum (national curriculum) and the Cambridge Curriculum (international curriculum). The selection of these two curricula is highly strategic for realizing the school's vision to produce graduates who are rooted in Indonesian values yet able to compete at the global level. Integration of the two curricula is achieved through curriculum mapping, the development of integrated syllabi, careful scheduling of lessons, and the use of appropriate languages of instruction. The curriculum quality standards refer to ASIC standards for the national curriculum and Cambridge standards for the international curriculum. Curriculum review and development are conducted continuously through annual reviews and curriculum development workshops.

3. Benchmarking Practices at KGS Jambi

KGS Jambi carries out systematic and continuous benchmarking practices through membership in the national association of SPK schools and the international Cambridge

school network. Benchmarking activities include annual SPK school conventions, thematic workshops, seminars, meetings with ministries, and roadshow programs among SPK schools. Through these activities, KGS Jambi compares quality, management, curriculum, and various other aspects with other SPK schools, as well as shares and learns best practices. The results of benchmarking are followed up through a systematic process that includes evaluation and selection of best practices, contextual adaptation, piloting, and full implementation.

4. Management of National and International Accreditation

KGS Jambi has successfully obtained and maintained dual accreditation, namely an A rating from BAN-S/M for national accreditation and recognition as a Cambridge International School and Cambridge International Examination Centre for international accreditation. Accreditation management is carried out through highly systematic preparation, including the establishment of an accreditation preparation team, self-evaluation, preparation of complete and well-organized documents, and mock visits. After obtaining accreditation, the school consistently follows up on the recommendations of the assessors as part of its commitment to continuous quality improvement.

5. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The factors supporting the successful implementation of quality assurance, curriculum standardization, and benchmarking at KGS Jambi include: (a) full support from the foundation in terms of policy and funding; (b) strong support from parents in various school programs; (c) high commitment and competence of teachers; (d) supportive systems and technology such as the AIMSIS application; and (e) extensive networks and partnerships with various parties. The inhibiting factors faced are: (a) the complexity of managing an SPK school with dual standards; (b) the need for continuous leadership development; (c) high operational costs required to maintain international standards; and (d) challenges in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers.

6. Best Practices That Can Be Adapted by Islamic Educational Institutions

Based on the analysis of practices at KGS Jambi, several best practices can be adapted by Islamic educational institutions to improve their educational quality, namely: (a) implementing a comprehensive quality assurance system with periodic evaluations involving multiple stakeholders; (b) curriculum standardization through clear mapping, structured syllabus development, and continuous review; (c) developing a culture of self-evaluation and continuous learning that aligns with the Islamic values of muhasabah and itqan; (d) actively engaging in networks and partnerships to share best practices with other educational institutions; (e) adopting creative funding strategies through seeking CSR funds from companies; and (f) integrating modern management practices with Islamic values, demonstrating that high quality standards are not in conflict with Islamic identity.

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