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**DEVELOPMENT OF A BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK TO
ASSIST EDUCATIONISTS AND SCHOOLS ON SHARING
STRATEGIES AND APPLICATION OF BEST PRACTICES**

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ABSTRACT

Benchmarking is used by organisations for comparing performance and for the learning and implementation of best practices. While benchmarking remains a widely recognised improvement tool for practitioners, its application by school systems and schools still remains to be investigated. In this research, an exploratory pragmatic multiphase mixed methods research approach is adopted to investigate the use of benchmarking by school systems and schools. Through the preliminary literature review, school systems and schools were recognised to be using benchmarking informally without being aware of its application. Further research showed that informal benchmarking brought improvements to school systems and schools. It is envisaged that school systems and schools can obtain greater improvements through the systematic use of benchmarking. Therefore, a benchmarking framework has been developed to assist school systems and schools in the planning and application of benchmarking.

At the start of the research, a preliminary conceptual model of effective benchmarking was developed and this model has guided the research methodology. Then, a literature review was conducted to validate the use of benchmarking by school systems and schools. Next, a quantitative-qualitative survey was administered to school systems (n = 20) and schools (n = 183) to determine the frequency of benchmarking used by school systems and schools and its contribution to their performance, along with an identification of the benchmarking techniques used. The survey also recognised school systems and schools obtaining effective performance through benchmarking. Subsequently, qualitative structured interviews were conducted with these school systems (n = 4) and schools (n = 19) for an exploration of their benchmarking techniques and success factors. Finally, findings from all three phases of the research were integrated to develop a benchmarking framework to assist school systems and schools in the planning and application of benchmarking for the learning and implementation of best practices. The theoretical contributions of the research include the acknowledgement of use of benchmarking by school systems and schools and the confirmation of the association between benchmarking and performance improvement. The practical contribution is the Benchmarking Framework developed to assist school systems and schools in the application of benchmarking approaches and to guide them in the identification and implementation of best practices. Finally, the limitations and

future research opportunities have been outlined. One of the most significant research opportunities is to apply the Benchmarking Framework for an actual benchmarking project for the learning and implementation of best practices.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APQC	American Productivity and Quality Centre
BPIR	Business Performance Improvement Resource
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
CSNS	College Street Normal School
CSSD	Charter School of San Diego
GBN	Global Benchmarking Network
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
MCPS	Montgomery County Public Schools
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Program for International Students Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

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