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Public Benchmarking: contributions for subnational governments and Benchmarking Design.

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PUBLIC BENCHMARKING:

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS & BENCHMARKING DESIGN.

BY FEDERICO DEL GIORGIO SOLFA

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LA PLATA
COMMISSION FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

PUBLIC BENCHMARKING

Contributions for subnational governments & Benchmarking Design

FEDERICO DEL GIORGIO SOLFA

National University of La Plata (UNLP)
Commission for Scientific Research (CIC)

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28 No. 2029, 1894 Villa Elisa, Provincia de Buenos Aires
www.researchgate.net/profile/Federico_Del_Giorgio_Solfa2

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Abstract

This work is based mainly on the contents of the Integrative Final Work (TFI), which was carried out and approved in the framework of the Specialization Program in Public Management, jointly organized between the National University of Tres de Febrero and the Undersecretariat for Modernization of the State of the Province of Buenos Aires.

The subject of this work is benchmarking in the public sector.

This research, part of the interest to analyze the importance of benchmarking in the sector - as a tool for improvement and innovation of public management - where States commit efforts to achieve quality, efficiency and effectiveness in the services provided.

In this logic is inscribed the main objective, which consists of making contributions and proposals, for the implementation of benchmarking tools in the transversal and regional dimensions of the State of the Province of Buenos Aires.

The study is exploratory and descriptive, using a qualitative methodology that combines a bibliographic analysis for the development of the theoretical framework and the definition of the types and dimensions of benchmarking, with the identification and description of experiences based on the empirical evidence.

The theoretical starting point of this study is based on the models and approaches of benchmarking, developed by Robert Camp (1991 and 1996), Michael Spendolini (1997), Rolf Pfeiffer (2002) and Fernando Marchitto (2002).

The application of this conceptual framework allows us to examine and understand the different benchmarking methodologies and practices, institutionally undertaken at subnational, national and international levels; which then make it possible to reach the concluding phase.

The different conclusions allow us to situate ourselves in the Province of Buenos Aires and articulate the bases, guidelines, phases and dimensions for the generation of tools and institutional applications of benchmarking in Public Administration.

In short, we will not focus on the precise ways in which the technique can be implemented at the provincial level, but on how it can improve the quality of production of public organizations, through a conscious process of application, where the true potential is revalued which provides its continuous institutional use.

In this sense, we maintain that this proposal is innovative, because at the provincial level, we do not have studies or specific applications of this technique that allow dissemination and installation, as one of the practices of constant use that encourage improvement and allow the development of organizations.

As far as we know, there are only a few isolated cases of benchmarking in the Province of Buenos Aires and most cases are cases that belong to external initiatives.

In short, we understand that this work will reveal how the technique of benchmarking works and what are its possible applications in the provincial public domain.

Chapter I. Introduction

1. The importance of benchmarking in the public sector

Benchmarking (BM) is a management technique that basically comprises a continuous process of measuring products, services and production technologies of a particular organization, to compare them with those of a model organization (leader or model).

Benchmarking is one of the relatively successful management techniques that has been widely used in the private sector. For some years now, applications have been made in the public sector in a sectorized way.[1]

In the last decade, different governments in Europe and the Americas have successfully developed more comprehensive applications of benchmarking methodologies in different thematic areas of the public sector: territories, companies, public services, universities, science parks, and so on.

From its use in the more developed countries, it has become an elementary component of the processes of regulation and concession of public services (Chillo, 2010).

[1] Robert J. Boxwell, in 1995, anticipated that the benchmarking process would be applied in the public sector (Boxwell, 1995: p.145).

The results obtained from the applications of benchmarking in the public sector, have evidenced the development of better services and organizations with more efficient environments.

Therefore, we assume this work that aims to make known in a synthetic and precise way the technique of benchmarking, with its different typologies and levels of application; identify cases of application in the national and international public sector; and propose strategies for its implementation in the Province of Buenos Aires.

The original contribution of the same is based on a simple presentation of the different conceptual forms at the theoretical level and the typologies of the most outstanding cases in the public sector. At the same time, national and regional trends allow us to visualize possible applications in the Buenos Aires area, among which we can highlight alternatives with cross-cutting and regional benchmarking actions, both for the dimensions of public organizations and for private ones of public policies.

Chapter II. The implementation of the technique in the Province of Buenos Aires

2. From the contrast of the organizations to the transversal policies of public management

The significant differences in capacity and institutional development of public administrations in the Province of Buenos Aires expose the different levels of economic, human and technological resources used in the operation and development of each organization.

These differences often undermine the efficiency and efficacy of the governmental actions of the most disadvantaged organisms, and even deteriorate the image of the same - and transitively the whole of the provincial administration - in the unconscious citizen (Jung, 1991).

On these organizational contrasts, we must add that they may be the product of the existing horizontal (between similar organisms) or vertical (with other levels of government) competitiveness (Chillo, 2010); or because of the lack of social recognition of the organizations and their consequent budget, determined - in this reading - by legislators and government officials.

The Province of Buenos Aires, although it has a wide experience in the design and management of transversal policies of public management, has not yet institutionally incorporated benchmarking among them.
Based on the reasoning that governments should undertake all actions aimed at improving their organizations, in order to produce better and more services to citizens, we argue that it is necessary that in the Province of Buenos Aires, the application of benchmarking.

We are also convinced that the homogeneous development of the different Provincial Public Administration Bodies can favor synergistically in the improvement of provincial public services and consequently in greater satisfaction of the citizen as a whole.

In this context, the Provincial Directorate of Public Management, dependent on the Undersecretariat for State Modernization, makes sense as the most conducive area for the development of a transversal policy of benchmarking.

Mainly, innovation actions can benefit from the application of benchmarking methodologies in the reproduction of best practices and processes, to add efficiency to public productions (Clemente and Balmaseda, 2010).

Chapter III. The theory: models and approaches of the main authors

3. Benchmarking

3.1. Etymology of benchmarking

Originally the expression "Benchmark" comes from topography. It is a mark made by surveyors on a rock or a concrete pole, to compare levels.

Benchmarking is a term that was originally used by surveyors to compare heights. Today, however, benchmarking has a more restricted meaning in the management lexicon, being the benchmark of industry best practice (Kouzmin et al., 1999).

3.2. The benchmarking technique: origins and definitions

Benchmarking appeared in the United States in the late 1970s, based on the need for the Xerox Company to understand and overcome its competitive disadvantages.[2]

Later, other business organizations excelled in successfully benchmarking, including Ford Motor Company, Alcoa, Millken, AT & T, IBM, Johnson & Johnson, Kodak, Motorola and Texas Instruments; becoming almost mandatory for any organization that wants to improve its products, services, processes and results.

The denomination of benchmarking is attributed to the publication of Camp (1991) where the application in Xerox is treated as a technique of self-evaluation and search of the best practices with the objective of improving the quality of its processes.

This publication coincided with the distinction of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award from Xerox, which achieved its leadership in quality from benchmarking techniques. This award, included among the evaluation criteria, the implementation of up-to-date information and the development of benchmarking, one of the first phases of what is now considered benchmarking (Czuchry et al., 1995).

Both this US award and the awards granted by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) contain clauses that require participating organizations to share information on process improvements and quality strategies, allowing access to smaller organizations, a good source of information on the practice of benchmarking.

The inclusion of Total Quality Management models in large organizations and the expansion of the Malcolm Baldrige Prize allowed a rapid expansion of benchmarking

[2] Perhaps the first Western antecedent of the method, it goes back to World War II, when among American companies, it became common practice to compare each other in order to determine patterns for payments, workloads, safety, hygiene and other related factors (Bertoncello, 2003: p.20).

in the United States from the late 1980s (Spendolini, 1992).

Other background on performance measurement included the International City / County Management Association (ICMA), which, through W. Edwards Deming and his followers, made innovative efforts to measure municipal activity in 1938.

Table 1. Comparison between Deming and Benchmarking

Deming Cycle (PDCA)	Benchmarking Model
P (Plan)	Benchmarking planning
D (Do)	Survey of useful data
C (Check)	Analysis of deviations
A (Act)	Implementation of improvements

Source: self made.

Usually in the business sector, benchmarking is known as a technique that allows to know the competition and make changes in the processes, products or services to be more competitive, based on the experiences relieved from the leaders.

Different authors define benchmarking as a process of comparative, continuous and systematic evaluation between organizations, processes, products and services; in order to implement improvements in an organization (Spendolini, 1994).

The Benchmarking Clearinghouse of the American Productivity & Quality Center (APQC) defines benchmarking as "a continuous and systematic evaluation process; a process by which the business processes of an organization are analyzed and compared permanently to the processes of leading companies anywhere in the world in order to obtain information that can help the organization in its performance. "(Cited by Montero and Oreja, 2010: p.182).

The benchmarking technique is based on finding, adapting and implementing best practices (Del Giorgio Solfa, 2004).

Bruder and Gray, define it as: "a rigorous and practical process to measure the performance of your organization and processes, in contrast to the best organizations of its kind, both public and private, and then use this analysis to improve services, operations and cost situation drastically." (Bruder and Gray 1994: p.9).

Richard Fischer defines benchmarking in terms of performance measurement: "Through a series of performance measures - patterns known as benchmarks - a person can identify the best in a class among those performing a task in particular.Then best practices are analyzed and adapted for use by others who want to improve their way of doing things." (Fischer 1994, p.3).

Michael Spendolini (1994) argues that finding a precise definition of benchmarking is a nonsensical action, as existing definitions now omit or add stages or characteristics to the techniques used in

organizations. The ideal would be to find a definition in which all organizations agree. Faced with this impossibility, the new organizations, take a definition, compare it with others and adapt it to their own reality and interests.

For Rolf Pfeiffer (2002), benchmarking is not a simple comparison of the indicators of an organization with those of another organization or with other ideals; especially when it is done only once.

It is important to compare the values derived from the processes of the whole organization, to compare them continuously and always look for better solutions; the objective is "the learning organization" (Ibid.).

3.2.1. The benefits of using it

Organizations are using benchmarking for different purposes. Some place benchmarking as part of a general process that seeks to improve the organization. Others see it as a continuous mechanism to keep up to date (Spendolini, 1997).

It is a very efficient technique to introduce improvements in organizations, since processes can be incorporated and adapted whose effectiveness has already been proven by other organizations. For this reason, it helps organizations make improvements quickly.

In addition, benchmarking is a relatively low-tech, low-cost, fast-response technique that any organization can adopt. It also seems to have enough common sense to be easy to understand for managers, managers, workers, suppliers, customers, the media and the general public (Cohen and Eimicke, 1995 and 1996; Cohen et al., 2008).

Typically, an organization, in an attempt to identify the best in its class and duplicate or exceed its performance, can integrate their culture and behavior, a strong spirit of competitiveness, pride, confidence, energy and effort to improve (Cohen and Eimicke, 1996).

Innovation is one of the direct benefits obtained from benchmarking practices and has a direct impact on the ways of doing, based on the incorporation of new conceptions of a theme, ideas or concrete applications (Clemente and Balmaseda, 2010).

3.2.2. Main features

Benchmarking can be understood as a key internal mechanism for the development of a culture of continuous improvement in organizations. The potential of this technique depends mainly on its continuous use; benchmarking is not only a process that is carried out only once, but is a continuous and constant process.

In order to carry out benchmarking processes, the processes themselves and

other organizations must be measured in order to compare them. Comparisons must be made with leading organizations, which changes the practice of internal comparison by comparison based on external standards, derived from organizations recognized as leaders in the sector or in the process.

3.2.3. Benchmarking in the public sector

According to Fernando Marchitto (2001, 2002 and 2009), who has researched, developed and applied benchmarking in the public sector, argues that for public administration, this technique could constitute the appropriate means to appropriate the role of welfare producer for the community, recovering efficiency and effectiveness.

In the public domain, benchmarking could be defined as the continuous and systematic process, through which the public administrations - through a thorough phase of in-depth analysis - individualize areas for improvement and carry out internal and external comparisons, in order to: integrate actions with common objectives, in line with the general objectives of the State; to achieve cooperation between the administrations of the network, in order to provide greater value to the recipients; and planning improvements (Marchitto, 2001 and 2003).

3.3. Types of benchmarking

For Camp (1991) there are four types of benchmarking: internal, competitive, functional and generic.

In contrast, Spendolini (1994) categorizes three types of benchmarking: internal, competitive and generic (functional), grouping generic and functional benchmarking into one category.

The internal benchmarking focuses on the comparison of internal actions for the identification of the best processes of the organization. The competitor identifies and collects information about processes, products and services in direct competition, in order to compare them with its own. The generic identifies and collects information in the same way as the competitive one, but from other organizations that may or may not be competing (Spendolini, Ibid.).

From another perspective, these types of benchmarking (internal, competitive and functional) can be crossed with other characteristics, determining the strategic type, when analyzing organizational objectives, goals and vision; or the operational type, if the research focuses on more specific and operative tasks (Marchitto, 2001; INSS, 2003).

Complementarily, Marchitto (2002) proposes a classification especially adapted for the public administration and is based mainly on

the differentiation of processes: operational, management and strategic.[3]

3.3.1. Internal Benchmarking

This type of technique takes as a frame of action the organization as a whole. It is perhaps the most used in actions of institutional quality, since its main objective is to identify the standards of development of the organization and of the analogous activities that can exist in different areas, departments, regions, and so on.

This type of technique is applicable in large organizations, where it seeks to identify within the same organization the most efficient and effective processes. This way, it is possible to develop benchmarking standards and take them as standards to start continuous improvement processes.
Internal benchmarking helps organizations generate their own knowledge and capitalize on future applications internally, competitively or functionally. In addition, it trains the personnel involved, providing motivation for continuous improvement and excellence.

One of the risks of the internal approach lies in the possibility that in the process of comparing internal methods, it is not perceived that they are significantly less efficient than those of other organizations. Thus, the internal benchmarking approach may prevent the global vision required to understand the efficiency gains achieved outside the organization itself.

3.3.2. Competitive Benchmarking

This type of benchmarking is the best known and consists of identifying, gathering information and analyzing processes, products and services of the competition, to compare them with those of the research organization.

Competitive benchmarking serves organizations that seek to improve their processes, products or services, within the environment (market) in which they participate.

Usually, the rest of the competing organizations use technologies or operations similar to those of the organization itself. Identifying these similarities allows us to understand the competitive advantages of the main organizations and to apply them to the organization itself as innovations.

In this type of evaluation, there may be some limitations resulting from the inability to access key information from competitors' operations, or from the application of competitor's methods or designs that may be protected by registers or patents.

[3] Marchito, integrates to his classification, the concept of strategic benchmarking introduced by Gregory H. Watson (1993).

3.3.3. Functional Benchmarking

Functional benchmarking focuses on analyzing functions and processes that belong to the same sector, but are not subject to competition.

It is determined functional, because it refers to the benchmarking of specific functions with another organization, which has standards of excellence in the specific area where benchmarking is performed.

It is the type of benchmarking most applied between public agencies and large service companies.

3.3.4. Generic Benchmarking

There are actions and processes that can be identical in organizations that belong to different sectors and sectors. Thus, the areas or departments of accounting, billing, purchasing, human resources (etc.) of organizations in different sectors can have similarities and allow logically to compare their best practices and adopt new systems or improvement processes.

It is for this reason that this type of benchmarking identifies, in any type of organization (competitors or not), processes, products and services, in order to identify best practices and results in a specific field.

Generic benchmarking requires a breadth of knowledge in different fields of administration, allowing different ways of producing the good or service to be explored in different sectors, but with a complete understanding of the generic process in which it operates.

It is the type of benchmarking that is more difficult to incorporate and use in organizations, but is likely to produce greater competitive advantage and long-term performance.

3.3.5. Operational Benchmarking

Operational benchmarking is a particularly useful method of comparison in public administration. It allows to keep the organization permanently oriented towards improvement, through processes of continuous self-evaluation of its products and methods, in relation to those of other comparable administrations recognized as a leader (Marchitto, 2002).

Operational benchmarking investigations may include comparisons of the primary processes between the territorial units of the same administration; between administrations which carry out the same types of primary processes and which are subject to the same legislation; between administrations at the international level, which have similar missions and carry out comparable primary processes; and with the external reality, on the processes that can have some analogy with the processes of the public administration (Ibid.).

3.3.6. Management Benchmarking

Management benchmarking research does not encompass primary processes, but rather management processes that involve management, control, facilitation, and support processes; that is, a whole series of processes that allow the operation of the operational or primary processes.

These are processes inherent to personnel, management and control; processes that provide services and support to substantive actions, in achieving the objectives of the organization.

The comparison on the management processes can be carried out with different types of partners. In fact, in the case of processes that are not exclusive to a particular sector, they can be compared to almost any type of organization, without prejudice to structural and environmental constraints.

Management benchmarking projects are executed mainly through the general directorates of management, when it is necessary to implement improvements in all the structures of their competence, in relation to a series of systemic factors (Marchitto, 2001).

3.3.7. Strategic Benchmarking

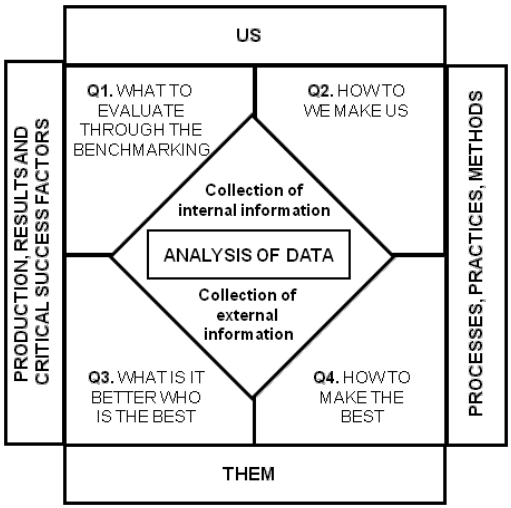
Strategic benchmarking is a systematic process aimed at evaluating alternatives, executing strategies and improving performance, by understanding and adapting the successful strategies of the external organizations with which they work (Watson, 1993).

This type of benchmarking focuses on the decisions that each organization must take when the external environment confronts it with new problems, new threats, new challenges, new opportunities that could jeopardize its very existence. Usually, these are the real situations that mark the future of an organization (Marchitto, Ibid.).

3.4. Benchmarking methodologies

Several authors have proposed subtly different methodologies on how to apply benchmarking; among them Robert Camp (1991 and 1996), Michael Spendolini (1994 and 1997), Bruder & Gray (1994) and Rolf Pfeiffer (2002).

Figure 1. Multidimensional quadrant developed by Xerox Corporation



Source: INSS reinterpretation (2003: p.11).

3.4.1. The Spendolini model

According to Michael Spendolini (1994), benchmarking must contain five main phases:

A. Determine what benchmarking will apply to you

- Determine who the benchmarking participants are.
- Determine the information needs of benchmarking participants.
- Identify critical success factors.
- Make a diagnosis of the benchmarking process.

B. Form a benchmarking team

- Consider benchmarking as a team activity.
- Decide who are the people involved in the benchmarking process (employees, internal specialists, external specialists).
- Define roles and responsibilities of the benchmarking team.
- Define the skills and attributes of an efficient benchmarking manager.
- Train the benchmarking team.
- Establish a calendar with the benchmarking stages.

C. Identify benchmarking partners / participants

- Establish an own information network.
- Identify other information resources.
- Look for best practices.
- Establish benchmarking networks.

D. Collect and analyze benchmarking information

- Know yourself (among benchmarking participants).
- Collect information.
- Organize the information.
- Analyze the information.

E. Act

- Make a benchmarking report.
- Present the results to benchmarking participants.

- Identify possible improvements in products, services and processes.
- Acquire a vision of the project in its entirety.

3.4.2. The Camp Model

In the model adopted by Robert Camp (1996), five phases are established with ten steps:el modelo adoptado por Robert Camp (1996), se establecen cinco fases con diez pasos:

A. Planning Phase: The objective of this phase is to plan the benchmarking research. The main steps are compounded by traditional actions related to planning (definition of who, what and how).

A.1. Identify what benchmarking will be done (process, product or service).
A.2. Identify organizations (partners) that can be comparable.
A.3. Determine the method for relieving the data and releasing them.

B. Analysis phase: Once the who, what and the how is determined, data collection and analysis should be carried out. This phase should include a thorough understanding of current process practices as well as benchmarking partners.

B.4. Determine the gap between the actual (actual) performance and that of the leader.
B.5. Plan future levels of performance.

C. Integration Phase: Integration is the action that uses benchmarking results to set operational goals and targets for change.

C.6. Communicate benchmarking results and gain acceptance.
C.7. Establish functional goals.

D. Action Phase: In this instance, benchmarking results and operational principles based on these results should be converted into action. It is also necessary to incorporate processes of evaluation of results and re-evaluate the goals on a regular basis.

D.8. Develop action plans.
D.9. Implement specific actions and monitor progress.
D.10. Recalibrate the reference patterns (standards or benchmarks).

E. Maturity Phase: Maturity is achieved when the best practices of the sector are incorporated into all processes, thus ensuring superiority. Maturity is also achieved, when it becomes a continuous, essential and systemic practice of the management process; in other words, when institutionalizing benchmarking.

3.4.3. The Bruder & Gray model

Specifically for the public sector, Bruder and Gray (1994), established a detailed model, based on the following seven steps:

1. Determinar qué función se beneficiará más con el benchmarking.[4]
2. Identificar las medidas clave de costo, calidad y eficiencia de esas funciones.
3. Llevar a cabo una encuesta de opinión de expertos y revisión de la literatura para encontrar el mejor tipo de organización para cada medida.
4. Medir el mejor rendimiento de su categoría en las áreas clave identificadas.
5. Comparar el rendimiento de su organización con los mejores de su clase y cuantificar la brecha.
6. Especificar las acciones para reducir la brecha de desempeño con el mejor en su clase y, si es posible, determinar las medidas necesarias para sobrepasar al líder actual del sector.
7. Implementar las acciones y supervisar su desempeño.

3.4.4. The Pfeiffer model

The benchmarking process experienced and perfected by Pfeiffer (2002) was developed for the private and mixed spheres. In its category, it is perhaps one of the most current put into practice; the same, identifies the following ten steps:

a. Establish what we should look for in the benchmarking process.
b. Look for comparable companies.
c. Determine the method of data collection.
d. Check that there are no deficiencies in performance.
e. Projecting future performance.
f. Communicate results and achieve acceptance.
g. Set goals in processes.
h. Plan activities.
i. Initiate activities and monitor development.
j. Motivate all involved.

[4] In our view, the authors in this step have incorporated the concept of TOC (Theory of Constraints), as a way of focusing on the bottlenecks of the system, which may be hindering the potential performance of the organization.

Chapter IV. Methodologies and institutional practices

4. Benchmarking experiences in the public domain

Next, in this chapter, we will briefly examine some benchmarking experiences in the public domain, which were selected based on a criterion that allowed us to present different types of applications and at the same time recognize the breadth and effectiveness of the technique.

4.1. Institutions of the international scope

4.1.1. Latin America

4.1.1.1. The case of ADERASA

The case of the Association of Regulatory Institutions for Drinking Water and Sanitation of the Americas (ADERASA), involves Regulatory Agencies of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.[5]

Since its creation, ADERASA has established among its objectives, to promote cooperation and coordination of efforts in the development of the drinking water and sanitation sector in Latin America, facilitating the exchange of experiences and collaboration, around common initiatives in the field of the regulation.

ADERASA brings together countries with a wide range of regulatory frameworks, where Chile and Argentina have more than ten years of experience. On the other, Nicaragua and Venezuela have recently created regulatory organizations. This situation allows the exchange of experiences to be more productive and helps to accelerate the development of the most recent regulators, who can capitalize on the lessons learned in the region (ADERASA, 2009).

Some of the regulatory tools - in particular the regional database on benchmarking parameters - are one of the most important regional public goods developed by ADERASA at the supranational level (ADERASA, op. cit; Molinari, 2001).

For this regional initiative, funds donated by PPIAF[6] which led to the development of

[5] In October 2001, representatives of water and sanitation regulators from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama and Peru, plus the Dominican Republic and Venezuela as observers, agreed in Cartagena to form a regional association of water and sanitation regulators (ADERASA, 2005 and 2009).

[6] El *PPIAFF (Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility),* es un Organismo del Banco Mundial que funciona como un mecanismo consultivo sobre infraestructuras público-privadas, que financia la contratación de consultoras para el asesoramiento sobre procesos de privatización de sectores de agua, energía y telecomunicaciones.

programs and working groups to identify regional best practices and improve the quality of regulatory institutions in the region.

Within this framework, the Regional Benchmarking Working Group, led by Argentina, is forming a database for the calculation of standardized performance indicators, which assists regulators in the detection and elimination of inefficiencies, thus ensuring that users pay rates consistent with the quality of the service received.[7]

4.1.1.2. The CLAD case

One of the most important services of the Latin American Center for Administration for Development (CLAD)[8], is the Integrated and Analytical Information System on State Reform, Management and Public Policies (SIARE). It provides real and consolidated information with the purpose of encouraging the discussion and evaluation of alternatives for the determination of policies, research development, as well as to link different actors involved.

Through the Web, SIARE, allows access to eight databases: Innovations and Trends in Public Management; Experiences of Modernization in Organization and State Management; Bibliographic Information on State, Administration and Society; Training and Research Activities in Public Affairs; Statistics on the State; Institutional Structure and Profiles of the State; Legal Bases of Public Institution; and Directory of Portales in Public Management.

Since its inception in 1985, SIARE has been assisted by the International Development Research Center (IDRC)[9] of Canada, and for some specific activities was supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

[7] In this sector, a benchmarking approach is also applied which, based on the concept of a model company, simulates competitive situations and determines socially optimal rates for health services (Correa Bau, 2001: p.51).

[8] CLAD is an intergovernmental international public body. It was established in 1972, with the initiative of the governments of Mexico, Peru and Venezuela. Its creation was recommended by the General Assembly of the United Nations, with the idea of establishing a regional entity that focuses its activity on the modernization of public administrations, a strategic factor in the process of economic and social development. Its mission is to promote the analysis and exchange of experiences and knowledge related to the reform of the State and the modernization of Public Administration, through the organization of international meetings, publication of works, provision of documentation and information services, conducting studies and research and the implementation of technical cooperation activities among member countries and other regions.

[9] The International Development Research Center (IDRC) is a Canadian Crown organization established in 1970; is led by a Board of International Rulers reporting to the Canadian Parliament through the Minister of Foreign Affairs. IDRC, supports research in developing countries, promoting growth and development.

and the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN)[10].

Although all the resources provided by SIARE can be benchmarking and / or input of the benchmarking processes undertaken by public administrations, only some of the aforementioned bases are key to this technique; namely:

- Innovations and Trends in Public Management.
- Experiences of Modernization in Organization and State Management.
- Statistics on the State.
- Institutional Structure and Profiles of the State.
- Legal Bases of Public Institution.

In the section on Innovations and Trends in Public Management, systematically, the results of research carried out within CLAD are presented on some key aspects of public management, such as: evaluation systems, labor relations and professionalization of the public service. These studies include benchmarking analyzes of innovations to improve efficiency and democracy in public administration, implemented in countries of the region.

The topics covered are:

- Evaluation as a tool for results-oriented public management.
- Electronic Government and Information Society.
- Social control and transparency in public management.
- The professionalization of the public function.
- Letters of commitment to citizenship.
- Quality and Excellence in Public Management.
- Management of the Intersectoriality.

In the section on Modernization Experiences in Organization and State Management, there are about 10,500 records on factual information[11] of the public administrations of the countries of the region.

It has among its objectives:

- Provide a summary of the State Reform processes in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula (administrative, political, social, legal, financial reforms, etc.).
- Show detailed factual information about a set of processes in some countries in order to facilitate an evaluation of the results achieved in attempts to re-articulate State-

[10] The United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) is a United Nations program designed to assist countries, especially developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to respond to the challenges facing Governments in bridging the gap digital and to achieve its development goals.

[11] It is the simplest level of knowledge and understands facts, names, dates, concepts, principles or theories.

Society relations as well as provide an understanding of the repertoire of policies that relate to each process.

The State Statistics database is made up of information obtained from official sources, and also presents a series of statistical tables that allow us to approach the evolution of States since the 1980s.

With respect to the Institutional Structure and Profiles of the State, this section presents systematized information, in order to provide an overview of the institutional profiles that characterize the States and Public Administrations in the countries of Latin America and the Peninsula Iberian The information is grouped in the categories: Structure of the State; Bodies of Control of the Public Administration; Regulatory Agencies, especially privatized public services; and Political-Administrative Structure of the State.

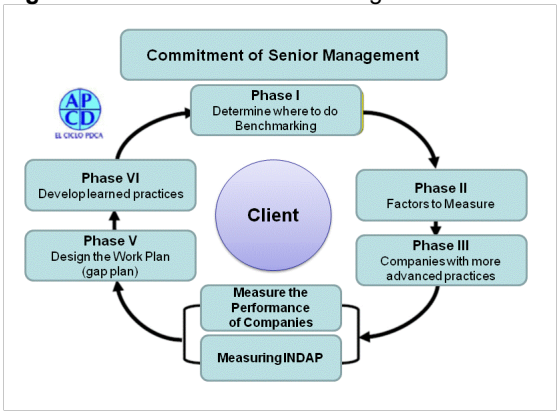
The Legal Bases of Public Institution, have the purpose of supporting the processes of development of norms. In this section, the titles of the legal norms, which serve as input to the processes of State Reform and Modernization of Public Administrations, are presented in an organized way.

4.1.1.3. Chile

4.1.1.3.1. The case of INDAP

The World Class Management of the Institute of Agricultural Development (INDAP), under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Government of Chile, produced a Benchmarking Manual in 2008, in order to use the technique to improve the processes of its organization. Since then, it seeks to compare its improvement processes and techniques with other organizations, as well as to seek the best in any part of the world, and compare with it to improve (INDAP, 2008).

Figure 2. Modelo de Benchmarking INDAP



Source: INDAP (2008).

According to INDAP: "Benchmarking allows us to systematically improve the efficiency of global management and always teach us to look at World Class companies." (Ibid, p.3).

4.1.1.3.2. The case of the SIEGP

The Public Management Experiences Information System is an initiative of the State Reform and Modernization Project (PRYME), developed jointly with the Institute

of Public Affairs (INAP) of the University of Chile.

Mainly, it is an instrument of public management, aimed at identifying, recording, analyzing and disseminating outstanding and innovative experiences in different areas of public management, through the promotion of initiatives of continuous learning in areas of human resources, quality of services and care to the user, information technologies, and management by results, among others (Márquez Poblete, 2004).

The main objectives of this instrument are:

- Disseminate outstanding practices and initiatives, in different areas of management, of Chilean public administration institutions.
- To contribute to the continuous improvement of management in the public administration, through the dissemination of good practices and innovative initiatives.
- Promote accurate learning among institutions and encourage the adoption of good practices in the chilean public sector.

This System constitutes a reference space for the exchange of experiences between the various public organizations, which interact in two ways: by proposing the provision of good practices and innovative initiatives, or as demanders for information on some of the initiatives or experiences of the public sector, registered in the System (Ibid.).

For the process of selection of experiences, there is an Advisory Committee of Experts in Public Management[12], that applying a methodology and criteria previously defined, decides the incorporation, guaranteeing the quality, relevance and replicability of the experiences.

The components that make up the Information System of Public Management Experiences are the Bank of Cases, which includes good practices and notable initiatives; the website[13], as a mechanism for dissemination and interaction with national and international public sector agencies; System Coordination; and the Advisory Committee, which in addition to providing the methodology of operation and validating cases, supports the identification of areas, topics and case studies.

4.1.1.4. Brazil

4.1.1.3.1. The case of the Helio Beltrão Prize

The Helio Beltrão Prize, organized by the Getulio Vargas Foundation, is an Initiative dedicated to local public administration.

[12] As a mechanism for dissemination and interaction with national and international public sector agencies; System Coordination; and the Advisory Committee, which in addition to providing the methodology of operation and validating cases, supports the identification of areas, topics and case studies.

[13] www.gestionpublica.gov.cl

The Prize is part of the Public Management and Citizenship Program of Brazil, which was instituted through a joint initiative of the Getulio Vargas Foundation (FGV) and the Ford Foundation, which years later received support from the National Bank for Economic Development and Social (BNDES) (Armijo, 2004).

The objectives of the Program are:

- Disseminate and reward innovative initiatives of municipal governments and indigenous organizations.
- To stimulate the critical reflection on the processes of transformation in the subnational public management, as articulation between the government and civil society.

Since 1996, more than 5,000 government programs have been registered in the award, and the database of winning experiences has 120 cases (Ibid.).

The winning projects represent contributions to the improvement of public management in the following areas: strategic planning and management, establishment of standards of care and services, simplification and streamlining of procedures, user attention, articulation with associations, human resources management and training, information management, institutional evaluation and performance, and cost management.

4.1.1.5. Colombia

4.1.1.5.1. The case of Education in the Bogota District

In the District of Bogotá, since 2000, an experience of benchmarking in education has been taking place. The project, sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the city of Bogotá, has the purpose of developing a network of quality school culture among public and private schools (Bracho Espinel, 2004).

The main challenges presented by this initiative were: the awareness of communities about importance and convenience; the generation of trust; and opening new spaces for participation and dialogue between actors. After a year of joint efforts, more than 150 schools in the Colombian capital participated in the school quality network. In addition, there were great interests of participation of this educational experience, from schools throughout the country (Ibid.).

4.1.2. Europe

Among the specific actions of the European quality policy, in terms of benchmarking, are several national and regional awards throughout the European Union, which meet the same criteria.

In this context, the European Commission supports the European Quality Platform of the European Foundation for Quality

Management (EFQM) and the European Organization for Quality (EOQ) for the development of:

- Adaptation of the European Quality Award for Public Services (1996) and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).
- The development and publication of manuals for public services (governments and bodies of health and education systems) and for SMEs.
- The coordination of processes and harmonization of criteria, in the different regional and national awards.
- The monitoring of publicity, promotional and information actions.

The awards indirectly seek to disseminate best management practices to all sectors in general and SMEs in particular; which can capitalize on the experience of other organizations, without violating competition rules.

The European Commission also promotes benchmarking activities in the area of electronic components under the programs for Small and Medium Enterprises, and in specific projects such as SPIRIT[14].

Some Member States promote similar programs. There are benchmarking networks in Germany, Sweden and Italy.

In the United Kingdom, some services have been initiated by the industrial sectors and today it has the support of the government. These include the PROBE initiative of the Confederation of British Industry, the program of the British Quality Foundation Assess, the Bywater and the Industry Association Benchmarking, and the Cranfield School of Management, with the Management Today Best Practices Awards[15] (Cranfield School of Management, which holds the Current Management Improvement Award) (New, Colin et al., 1997; Ureña Lopez, 1998).

The UK Department of Trade and Industry coordinates the National Benchmarking Scheme between these and other partners to share statistical data and identify the best ones in the country (Ibid.).

At European level, the EFQM was evaluating the development of a European benchmarking structure, but finally capitalized on its membership in the Global Benchmarking Network, organizing

[14] SPIRIT is an integrated infrastructure initiative funded by the European Commission and comprises eleven ion beam generating facilities. In this area, the use of benchmarking makes it possible to increase user access and the quality of research through the exchange of best practices.

[15] The Export-Akadamie of Baden Württemberg, under the direction of Prof. Dr. Rolf Pfeiffer, runs an awards program and uses a similar methodology, which has enabled them to evolve from comparative performance assessments (New, Colin et al., 1997).

European members with The European Best Practice Benchmarking Award (European Award for Best Benchmarking Practice) (Ibid.).

In the area of public management, the European Benchmarking Network (EBN) is a network of contacts between the Member States of the European Union, which provides free information to officials on benchmarking techniques and helps to identify possible partners. This network is part of the Innovative Public Services Group (IPSG), which is a group of experts appointed by the European Group of Directors General of the public administrations of the Member States of the European Union (EUDG).

EBN was created to encourage and support the exchange of information and ideas among public officials throughout Europe; with the conviction that working together, can face common problems and thus offer better services to citizens.

Also intended for the public sector, both in the Netherlands with the Public-Sector Benchmarking Knowledge Bank[16] (KBPS) and in England with the Public Sector Benchmarking Service[17] (PSBS), successful promotional experiences on good management practices in the public domain.

In the area of environment, between authorities of some European States and private organizations, they put in place different programs to spread the best practices in environmental matters. An example of this is the Environmental Technology Best Practice Program in the United Kingdom.

Different national and European networks, try to develop knowledge of the quality in SMEs, to add best practices in management and that can form a European network of benchmarking. This is helping to promote a more fluid relationship between small and large companies.

From our approach, perhaps the most important aspect, refers to the degree of participation of companies, which allows them to reach new improvement strategies and enables the precise design of strengthening policies by public administrations (Bianchi, 1999; Del Giorgio Solfa, 2001; and Narodowski, 2007).

[16] KBPS coordinates a bench of public management cases with benchmarking activities carried out in the Dutch public sector. It also articulates actions for reciprocal learning among national public organizations; offering also publications and consultation documents.

[17] The PSBS, inaugurated in 2000, is one of the many initiatives of the Cabinet Office, which aims to promote good management practices in the English public domain.

4.1.2.1. Spain

4.1.2.1.1. The case of primary health care in Barcelona

The health administration of Barcelona, with the creation of the Servei Català de la Salut, began in the early 1990s a systematic process of evaluation of primary care teams. Consequently, it implemented health plans and policies, as well as strategic objectives of equity, quality and efficiency of the Servei Català de la Salut, linked to the improvement of services (Plaza Tesías et al., 2005).

The main strategies implemented, used the results of the evaluation, as a key input of the dynamics of quality management. In this context, benchmarking was incorporated as a process that aims to improve services through the adoption of best practices, where benchmarks are used (Ibid.).

With this logic, the Consorci Sanitari of Barcelona developed a benchmarking methodology in the Primary Care Teams of the city, in order to produce changes and improvements in equipment and, consequently, increase the transparency of the results of public health services (Ibid.).

In a later phase, the strategic axes, the conceptual framework, the methodology and the benchmarking indicators of the Primary Care Teams were defined, seeking the participation, consensus and commitment of the professionals.

Consistent with the basic characteristics of primary care and the health system, six evaluative dimensions were established: accessibility, effectiveness, resolving capacity, longitudinality[18], cost-effectiveness and results (Ibid.).

4.1.2.2. Italy

4.1.2.2.1. The case of the "Cantieri"

The program called "Cantieri"[19], is sponsored by the Department of Public Function, under the Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation and is destined to establish a new way to manage the processes of change. This program is a fundamental part of the innovation policy strategy, with which the Italian government promotes a change aimed at lasting improvements in the results and effects of public policies, tangible for citizens and companies.

In short, it proposes an approach to innovation based on the creation of internal

[18] Longitudinality is the follow-up, by the same physician, of the different health problems that a patient may present (Pastor Sánchez et al., 1997).

[19] The Department of Public Service (DFP) was awarded the UN Public Service Awards in the category "Innovation in Public Administration". Among the foundations, it recognizes: "the promotion of the modernization processes of the State", implemented by the DFP through: "three projects, Cantieri, Governance and Quality and Efficiency" (June 23, 2003).

governance capacities (institutional strengthening) instead of continuing to introduce comprehensive reforms.

The different initiatives of the program, since 2002, involved more than 3,500 public administrations, positions in networks of knowledge and construction of horizontal relations, among thousands of innovators.

The Innovators' Day is an annual event organized within the Forum of Public Administration, which presents the results of the activity carried out by the Program. In its last seven editions, some 11,000 agents, public officials and experts dedicated to innovation have participated.

In an attempt to spread the culture of innovation through awareness-raising and coordinated government assistance, the "Cantieri" Program calls for the participation of the protagonists of change, stimulating the collection of experiences, the dissemination of knowledge and the creation of a network of innovators (Di Filippo and Montefiori, 2006).

This choice is due to the conviction that, through "recognition", a network of innovators can be created, capable of creating value, both within their own administrations and throughout the system (ibid.). The "recognition" consists of:

- In the opportunity to make visible the changes initiated and strengthen the image of the management through the valuation in the field of public events, magazines and initiatives of national importance.
- In the opportunity to participate in initiatives for the exchange of experiences between administrations, conducting a reciprocal benchmarking activity.

4.2. Institutions in Argentina

4.2.1. The cases of the ONIG

Next, we will briefly examine what actions the National Office of Management Innovation (ONIG) can take as a case of application or input for the implementation of benchmarking.

4.2.1.1. The National Award for Quality in Public Administration

The National Quality Award[20], born from the concern to reach a country with greater possibilities and a better standard of living for its inhabitants. Although it is a prize destined for both the public and private sectors, here we will only reveal the objectives and evaluation criteria that compose the bases of the prize for the public sector.

[20] The National Quality Award was established by Law No. 24,127 and was regulated by Decree No. 1513, establishing its symbolic and non-economic character.

The objectives of the Public Sector Award are::

- To promote the development and diffusion of the processes and systems destined to the continuous improvement of the quality in the production of goods and services that originate in the Argentine Public Sector.
- Stimulate and support the modernization and competitiveness of public organizations, to ensure the satisfaction of the needs and expectations of the communities.
- Preserving the human working environment and optimal use of resources.
- To promote a culture of quality throughout the public sphere to achieve a real increase in efficiency and productivity of the State within the framework of the Administrative Reform and thus achieve the National Quality that identifies and distinguishes the Argentine Republic.

The Bases of the National Award for Quality for the Public Sector, determines the following evaluation criteria[21]:

1. Leadership: What is the vision of the top management of the organization, about the Quality process, how it participates in its design and how it transmits the values to the rest of it?
2. Focus on the citizen: What systems does the organization use to meet the needs and requirements of external users and what are the methods to respond quickly and effectively to those needs?
3. Staff Development: How is staff commitment stimulated, how is it managed to be involved in the quality process, and how is the necessary education provided?
4. Information and analysis: What quantitative indicators are used to know the progress of the process of quality improvement throughout the organization, what is the scope of the data and since when are they used?
5. Planning: How is the continuous improvement process integrated into the overall planning of the organization and what are the goals and goals of quality in the short, medium and long term?
6. Quality Assurance and Improvement: What are the ways and systems used to ensure the quality of all goods and services? How do you work to improve and control the quality of suppliers?
7. Impact on the physical and social environment: What does the organization do for other organizations to initiate Quality processes and what resources do you dedicate to it? How is the

[21] It can be considered, that the evaluation of each criterion, implies the analysis of the answers that the organization gives to the questions that each relate to (Technical Secretariat of the National Quality Award, 2010).

environment preserved and resources conserved?

8. Quality management results: What are the most representative numerical or graphical indicators of the achieved levels of improvement of the quality of the goods and services that the organization produces?

The culture that underpins Total Quality Management (objective of the award) emphasizes the commitment to excellence, respect among workers at different hierarchical levels, the decision to take on changes, commitment to users and continuous improvement.

For this reason, the public organizations (belonging to the National Public Administration, Provincial or Municipal) winners of the Prize, constitute themselves as leaders in their type. Thus, an important identification for the organizations that initiate benchmarking studies.

4.2.1.2. The Charter Commitment to the Citizen Program

The Letter Commitment to the Citizen (PCCC) Program is an initiative of the national government, which operates within the Cabinet Secretariat.

The Letter of Commitment, is a public document signed by the adherent body, in which it explicitly states to the citizens its mission and objectives, the rights and obligations of the users or beneficiaries in relation to the services provided by the agency, the way of access and the expected quality of the same. It also incorporates future improvement commitments, implementation deadlines, quality standards and citizen participation mechanisms (Del Giorgio Solfa et al., 2009).

The PCCC sets four minimum criteria that every member must complete to prove that its Program is working correctly. These criteria evaluate the following aspects:

- Quality standards of services.
- System of Communication to the Citizenship.
- System of Claims and Suggestions.
- System of Citizen Participation installed.

The Cabinet Secretariat has a computer tool that registers the data related to the fulfillment of the mentioned quality criteria, by the organizations adhering to the Letter Commitment Program. This monitoring system allows the evaluation of compliance with the four quality criteria in 46 Letters Commitment of national, provincial and municipal bodies.

This tool also enables organizations in each public sector to be identified, which can be distinguished both by their production processes and by their standards in the services provided; which is then a key input for benchmarking.

4.2.2. The INAP cases

Next, we include the cases of the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP), which we consider to be more relevant from the point of view of benchmarking.

4.2.2.1. The PIEEGCE

Within the scope of the Technical Cooperation and International Relations Unit of the National Institute of Public Administration (INAP), the International Program of Studies on Management Strategies for the Conduct of the State (PIEEGCE) was developed, with the support of the United Nations Development Program and under the auspices of the Under-Secretariat for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was intended for public officials at the national, provincial and municipal levels with planning responsibilities, programs and resources (Chumbita et al., 1996).

The purpose of this program, carried out in 1995, was to create conditions that allow senior management to acquire new management technologies, by linking with centers of international excellence where they are developed, experimented and implemented. The initiative was articulated around the principles of benchmarking, which allowed comparing and acquiring knowledge by observing the best practices of organizations of the same gender; achieving the experience and investigation of organizational procedures and methods of solving management problems (Ibid.).

4.2.2.2. The RedMuni

RedMuni is a National Network of Academic Centers dedicated to the Study of Management in Local Governments. It is a meeting place and a means of diffusion, from the activities of the member centers to other users.

RedMuni was created on the initiative of the Research Directorate of INAP and a group of universities interested in the subject, in order to encourage the exchange of research and experiences. The main meeting space is the Seminar that the Network organizes every year in one of the different venues. The objectives of the Network are:

- Integrate the research strategies of the academic centers.
- Strengthen information systems and networks that facilitate their use.
- To link the results of research more closely with the processes of management and training of local governments.

The Network is administered by a Coordination Council and is currently conformed as follows:

- **Presidency:** Research Directorate of INAP
- **Members:** National University of the Center of the Province of Buenos Aires, National University of

Cordoba, National University of La Matanza, National University of Rosario, University of Morón and Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences.

- **Alternate Members:** National University of General Sarmiento and the National University of Quilmes.

4.2.2.3. The RENDIAP

The National Network of Documentation and Information on Public Administration (RENDIAP), is a cooperative and solidarity organization of national scope, which allows governmental, non-governmental and academic organizations to know and exchange documentation and information on the public sector.

The Network is coordinated by the Directorate of Documentation and Information of INAP and has cooperating units from the different spheres of society. It is based on normative and informative centralization and operational and documentary decentralization.

Its main objective is to contribute to the knowledge, proper management and exchange of documentation and information on public administration at the national level. It has a database, which uses the CEPAL format adapted by CLAD, integrates 25,000 documentary records, 17,000 of the country and the rest of Latin America.

4.2.2.4. The Federal Network INAP-Universities

The Federal Network INAP-Universidades, aims to facilitate the linking of teachers, researchers and personnel from universities throughout the country with the State and Public Administration, in order to research, training, approach to study centers the Public Sector and the exchange of data and information.

It is a virtual network with INAP administration, through which general and individual communications circulate among all members. This Network, officials, teachers, researchers and staff of the National Universities of San Juan, Southern Patagonia, San Martin, Technological, Buenos Aires, Catamarca, Comahue, San Luis, Misiones, Cuyo, Centro, Lanús, Litoral, Northeast, La Plata, Tucumán, Formosa, Quilmes, Tres de Febrero, La Rioja, La Matanza, as well as the Universities of El Salvador, San Andrés, Kennedy, Di Tella, Maimónides, Abierta Interamericana, and different state units and organizations non-governmental organizations.

4.2.3. The case of ERAS

The benchmarking application of the Water and Sanitation Regulatory Entity (ERAS) is perhaps the one that has achieved greater institutionalization at the national level. From

the Regulatory Framework[22] up to the organizational structure, is included in the benchmarking, where the existence of the Benchmarking Management in the ERAS is its greatest confirmation.

Usually, the provision of public health services is carried out under monopoly conditions, because the coexistence of more operators in the same region is inefficient. Lenders, when operating without direct competition, lose efficiency incentives and tend to pay unnecessary costs, which are subsequently transferred to Users through tariffs, or indirectly to the community through subsidies. In addition, in monopolistic regimes, there is a tendency to decrease efficiency levels in the provision, obtaining services of lower quality (ERAS, 2011).

In ERAS, the benchmarking practice was started in May 2003, when its predecessor body, the Tripartite Entity of Works and Sanitary Services (ETOSS), joins the initiative of the Association of Water and Sanitation Regulatory Institutions of the Americas (ADERASA, 2005).

For the analysis of the performance indicators, the ERAS adopts a Comparative Analysis Guide, where it interleaves the relevant indicators of the ADERASA scheme. Comparisons with other providers are made possible through ADERASA's

[22] National Law No. 26,221, which approves the Tripartite Agreement between the Ministry of Federal Planning, Public Investment and Services, the Province of Buenos Aires and the Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires; Provision of the service of provision of drinking water and collection of sewage; the Agua y Saneamientos Argentinos SA Society; the dissolution of the Tripartite Entity of Works and Sanitary Services (ETOSS); the creation of the Water and Sanitation Regulatory Authority and the Planning Agency; and the Regulatory Framework - introduced, among the objectives for the plan and manual of regulatory accounts to be applied by the Concessionaire:
"That the regulatory plan of accounts provide information for the calculation of management indicators in order to apply mechanisms of comparative analysis or benchmarking whenever possible." (Article 97 - Plan and Manual of Accounts and Regulatory Accounting).
In the same sense, it defines:
"COMPARISON ANALYSIS (BENCHMARKING)
For the preparation of the comparative studies and analysis of the efficiency levels projected and achieved by the Concessionaire, the Enforcement Authority will establish, following consultation with the Concessionaire and the Regulatory Entity, information mechanisms and monitoring of management indicators that facilitate comparison between sectors of the same service or with other services provided in the country and abroad. The Ministry of Federal Planning, Public Investment and Services will finally define the criteria and regulatory parameters to be used.
The data necessary to form these indicators shall be submitted periodically by the Concessionaire to the Regulatory Entity, together with the annual reports provided for in this chapter in order to allow a better understanding and control of the management.
The implementation of this comparative mechanism must be based on technical guidelines undoubtedly recognized as useful and viable by the regulatory practice for this service "(Article 101).

Annual Benchmarking Reports (ERAS, 2011).

In the analysis of benchmarking practiced by ERAS, it was carried out with the Comparative Analysis Guide, in which performance indicators are arranged according to ISO 24500 standards. In the first instance, service objectives are set, the evaluation criteria and finally the most adequate performance indicators to evaluate the criteria (ERAS, 2011).

The main objectives set in the Guide for Comparative Analysis for its evaluation are the following:

A. Drinking water and sewage, respectively:

A.1. Accessibility of the service.
A.2. Protection of public health (quality and continuity).
A.3. Provision of service under normal and emergency conditions.
A.4. Conservation of assets and ability to meet present and future demand.
A.5. Preservation of the environment.

B. For both services together:

B.1. Fulfillment of the needs and expectations of the users.
B.2. Operational sustainability.
B.3. Financial Sustainability.
B.4. Costs per activity.

4.2.4. The case of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the UNP

The case study of public policies, carried out in the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the National University of Patagonia, by the Observatory of Public Policies of the Corps of Government Administrators of the Nation, reveals a concrete application of benchmarking.

The incorporation of graduates in the strengthening of benchmarking, in years prior to 2008, generated together with the planning of the information, criteria, links and methodologies that made possible a strategic action in the improvement of results, management processes and related activities (Bonelli et al. al., 2008).

This Faculty and its two headquarters have had contact with other institutions of the country and abroad[23], where it stands out to the University of Valencia. Among the areas in which benchmarking is carried out, we identify: student enrollment, student dropout, career length, academic programs, extension processes, research, postgraduate courses, methodologies for analysis and evaluation (Ibid.).

Each year, the information process is evaluated in terms of data obtained,

[23] Existing agreements with the National University of La Plata, Universidad Pedro de Valdivia and the University of Alicante are capitalized; in order to exchange experiences on benchmarking methods.

registration, use and linkage with the results of the management processes of the Faculty. The formation of the Benchmarking Team (formerly Improvement Team), together with the academic directors, has made it possible to link the use of information with the improvement of results, thus achieving improvements in the performance of the indicators.[24]

The Faculty has a Manual of Benchmarking in which it details the selected methods, which evaluates taking into account the utility and quality of the information obtained in relation to results of improvement achieved.[25]

The methodology used includes the following phases:

1. What it compares.
2. Selection of the best of its kind.
3. Data collection.
4. Determining the competitive gap.
5. Projection of performance levels.
6. Communication of conclusions.
7. Establishment of operational objectives.
8. Development of action plans.
9. Implementation and follow-up.

[24] See Bonelli, Armido [et al.] (2008), Quality Management in the State: Faculty of Natural Sciences of the National University of Patagonia, Observatory of Public Policies, Secretariat of Cabinet and Public Management, Buenos Aires, pp. 64-68.

[25] The process of improving benchmarking methodology is a systemic process that integrates the roles of the Quality Council and the Benchmarking Team.

4.3. Institutions of the Argentinean subnational scope:

4.3.1. Autonomous City of Buenos Aires

4.3.1.1. Award for Quality Management in Health

The Award for Quality Management in Health of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, aims to promote the principles of quality, promote the improvement of management from the continuous improvement of processes and recognition of the effort of workers of health in improving them and their results.

Its implementation links the management model with the recognition of the achievements of the workers and is based on four fundamental principles: the focus on user satisfaction, participation, continuous improvement of processes and the promotion of social networks.

The model, aligned with the National Quality Award, is the result of a critical review of this and other models of quality awards, adapting it to the Public Health sector.

The management units that can be candidates for the Prize are defined as associations of persons and means, which share a specific mission and values, that are involved in tasks, activities or processes that are for the fulfillment of the same; and may be sections, units, divisions, departments, committees, work teams, networks or

programs, whether or not they are part of the organizational chart of an organization.

On the other hand, in a coherent whole, the Quality Management Program defines the criteria and guideline guidelines for examining the strengths and opportunities for improvement, and for evaluating and supporting the implementation of the proposed quality management model for the Prize.

This award allows for the incorporation of best practices in health management and is also the enabling framework for organizations in the sector to interact with each other (network), so that they gradually incorporate these practices based on the recognition of their leading organizations: the winners.

4.3.2. Buenos Aires province

4.3.2.1. The case of the Bank of Innovation Projects

It is an evolution of the Bank of Successful Projects of the Public Management of the Province of Buenos Aires (BPE)[26] established in 2002, which incorporates the participation of Municipalities, Third Sector Organizations and Citizens in general.

The Bank for Public Management Innovation Projects (BPI), created in 2004, is related to the Provincial Prize for Innovation in Public Management and is an initiative whose purpose is to enhance the intellectual heritage of the provincial State as a form to contribute to the efficient use of public resources and to the achievement of the objectives and goals of public policies. The application authority of the BIS and the Prize is the Undersecretariat for Modernization of the State, under the General Secretariat of the Interior.

The Provincial Prize for Public Management consists of the recognition of agents or institutions of the provincial or municipal public administration, organizations of the third sector, or citizens. And it establishes recognitions in the following categories:

1. Economic awards for innovative experiences in provincial management
2. Subsidies for the implementation or replication of innovative projects or experiences.
3. Scholarships for the development of ideas or innovative projects.

While this award is a useful benchmark for benchmarking, the guarantee of success of the winning proposals would better support

[26] The Bank of Projects and Successful Experiences of the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning for Latin America and the Caribbean (ILPES), was designed to ensure that countries have a tool that allows them to learn about experiences and projects, and to incorporate lessons in actions financed with investment resources. One of the pilot programs was developed in the Republic of Colombia and its antecedents were taken into account for the elaboration of the Provincial BPE.

a selection of practices in the BIS. The relationship between the Prize and the Bank of Innovation Projects is perhaps the main feature to highlight in this case.

4.3.2.2. The case of the Water Control Agency of Buenos Aires

The benchmarking activity, carried out institutionally in the Water Control Agency (OCABA), has to do with an external indicator survey initiative, adopted by its predecessor body[27] in the framework of the Federal Association of Water and Sanitation Regulatory Entities (AFERAS).

This action was adopted in May 2000 by AFERAS on the basis of a proposal from the Tripartite Entity of Works and Sanitary Services (ETOSS), which included a list of management indicators for regulation by comparison. The AFERAS Board of Directors approved the work plan for the project and began the tasks of adjusting the proposed list; the Manual of Management Indicators for Comparison Regulation (Molinari, 2001) emerged in this way.

The AFERAS Manual was based on a broad perspective of the provision of public health services and evaluated indicators of all types: environmental, economic, structural and operational, and cost (Ibid.).

Subsequently, this project with some modifications, happened to operate from the structure of the Association of Entities Regulating Water and Sanitation of the Americas (ADERASA).

[27] The Buenos Aires Water Regulatory Agency (ORAB) is the predecessor body of OCABA.

Chapter V. Benchmarking in the Province of Buenos Aires

5. Possible applications in the provincial public domain

Previously, we have observed different cases of application of the benchmarking tool in the public sector, through international, national, subnational and municipal organizations.

It is very likely that there will be many more organizations at the provincial level that have applied or are currently applying the benchmarking technique for improvement and institutional development; Unfortunately, there are no documents or regulations of public scope that can give evidence of this. Undoubtedly, the organizations that have been leading the processes of provincial modernization in recent years, are those who have more experience in these applications.[28]

It should be noted that the proven potential of this tool and the heterogeneity in the levels of development of the organizations in the Province of Buenos Aires obliges us to consider some possible benchmarking applications for this area.

In this sense, the applications in the form of benchmarking policies (Marchitto, 2001, Plaza Tesías et al., 2005), can articulate transversal, regional and sectorial actions (Marchitto, Ibíd.; Caligiuri, 2003). In turn, these actions can be grouped based on two types of dimensions:

1. Support to public administrations (internal scope).
2. Support to private organizations (external environment).

In the Province of Buenos Aires, the possible use of benchmarking at the state level, includes all Provincial Public Administration Organizations (central administration, decentralized and autarchic bodies). According to their purpose, they can incorporate benchmarking both for the development of their own organizations and for the support of other public, private or mixed organizations that may be subject to their regulations, controls or policies.

With this logic, the different ministerial portfolios could form benchmarking networks to share experiences and indicators in some of their substantive areas.

As an example, the Ministry of Health could form benchmarking networks aimed at improving and developing hospitals and prevention processes, linking health institutions and municipalities.

Also in this sense, the Ministry of Production could shape and manage benchmarking networks geared to the economic and

[28] Among the most advanced provincial bodies in modernization processes, we consider those who have implemented Charter Commitment to the Citizen, certified or initiated certification processes of Quality Management Systems (Del Giorgio Solfa et al., 2009).

productive development of regions and / or their productive organizations (eg, MSMEs).[29]

On the other hand, for the regulation and control of public services privatized (or provided by private providers), this technique can also be used. In this way, the Governing Bodies in these matters will be able to regulate, control and require efficiency improvements to the borrowers, as a way to reach new standards of service for their Users.

Specifically, in the implementation of provincial regionalization policies benchmarking next to the control panel would constitute the most appropriate set of tools for the monitoring of the management and development indicators as a way to evaluate the impact of the different policies in each region.

In order to enable these actions - from another perspective - the Provincial Management of Public Management could implement transversal policies of benchmarking, supporting the provincial public organizations from:

- Preparation of a benchmarking bibliographical guide.
- Elaboration of a benchmarking methodology guide.
- Formation of a provincial benchmarking network (in terms of public management).
- Benchmarking technical assistance.

From these cross-cutting actions and particularly from the preparation of the benchmarking methodological guide, the Provincial Bodies will be able to implement the benchmarking in their management and begin their studies in the matter, so that they can develop their own manuals on substantive matters and / or benchmarking network.

[29] An example of this type of actions can be: the "Guide to Good Design Practices. Tools for the management of design and product development.", Developed by the Industrial Design Research and Development Center of the National Institute of Industrial Technology, to bring good practices to companies that allow them to improve their performance (INTI-Industrial Design, 2001).

Chapter VI. Implementation proposals

6. The articulation of bases, guidelines, phases and dimensions of application

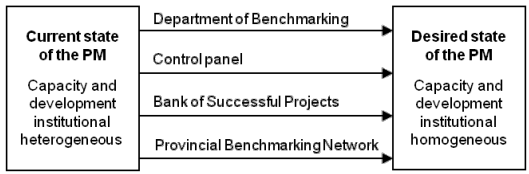
Although, in the previous chapter, we examined the different types of benchmarking applications that can be implemented in the Province of Buenos Aires, we will now focus specifically on those that will form our proposal for implementation in the scope of the Provincial Department of Public Management, dependent of the Undersecretariat for Modernization of the State

Firstly, we propose to incorporate benchmarking into the provincial public administrations, based on a systemic and integral approach, so as to be able to capitalize on the synergies that can be provided by the combination of different methodologies, techniques and management tools.

In this sense, we understand that the systemic approach of the Modernization of the State in the Province of Buenos Aires, must maintain a coherent balance between the different policies of: Bank of Public Management Innovation Projects (BPI); Training of Public Agents; Benchmarking of Public Management; Administrative Career; Letter Commitment to the Citizen (CCC); Design of Organizational Structures; Design of Administrative Processes; Public Management Editorial; Knowledge Management; Management by Objectives and Results (GPOR); Electronic Government (e-Gov); Infrastructure, Physical Space and Work Furniture; Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E); Strategic Planning (PE); Provincial Award for Innovation in Public Management; Continuous Improvement Process (PMC); Expert Program in Public Management; Provincial Program for Improvement of Institutional Quality (ProMeCI); Quality Management Systems (QMS); Transversal and Vertical Information Systems; Control panel; and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Therefore, in the second place, we propose to strengthen some actions already initiated and introduce new ones, within the scope of the Provincial Directorate of Public Management.

Figure 3. Benchmarking approach for provincial public management



Source: self made.

6.1. Benchmarking in the organizational structure of the DPGP

Based on the idea that the maximum benefits of benchmarking result from its continuous application, we plan to create an entity with a Department level in the Innovation Programs Department, which is under the Provincial Management of Public Management.

This Department would have among its actions, to elaborate and propose the provincial program of benchmarking, which - in matters of public management and modernization of the State - would include: the methodological definition of benchmarking and its diffusion; monitoring and evaluation of the development of provincial public organizations; the Bank of Successful Projects; and the Provincial Benchmarking Network. In other words, to provide the Innovation Programs Department with a Benchmarking Department that guarantees the continuity of these components.

6.2. Provincial Public Management Benchmarking Control Board

The incorporation of a Benchmarking Control Board of the Public Management, would allow comparative evaluation - from the point of view of Public Management and Modernization of the State - the status and degree of development of provincial public organizations, in relation to the resources employed for its funtionability.

At the same time, this management tool would enable identifying and determining which are the Priority Bodies, to guide policies and assistance actions in the field of public management and modernization of the State. Also, public organizations with better management performance could be identified, which would place them as leaders for benchmarking.

6.3. The Successful Projects Bank and the Provincial Benchmarking Network

Modifications are proposed to the Bank of Public Management Innovation Projects (BPI), so that it can resume its name and function as Successful Project Bank (BPE). This, together with new search systems, will enable the Bank to capitalize on the benchmarking actions that are undertaken.

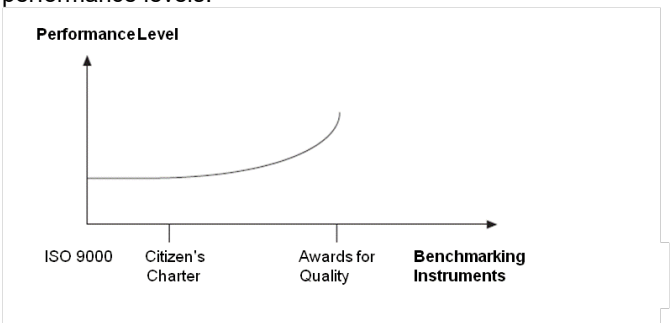
The intention of forming a Provincial Benchmarking Network, which integrates the different Provincial Bodies concerned, aims to: support the joint work, facilitate the search for partners for benchmarking and assist in the determination of public management indicators.

The Bank of Successful Projects and the Benchmarking Network, would form a solid nucleus to share and find successful experiences in the provincial public domain.

6.4. Relations with other priority tools or actions

The ideal environment, for the application of the technique of benchmarking at its highest level, requires the systemic operation with policies of: Charter Commitment to the Citizen; Management by Objectives and Results; Improvement of Institutional Quality; and Provincial Award for Quality.

Figure 4. Benchmarking tools and target performance levels.



Source: Löffler (1996: p.147).

Final Considerations

In the first instance, the review of the benchmarking literature and the cases surveyed allow us to conclude that it is a technique from the private sphere that can perfectly be applied to the public domain without alterations.

A broad conceptualization and use, would not interpose barriers between the nature of the scope to be applied, be it public or private. This because, a correct application would not differentiate origin in the search and selection of the best process, product or service.

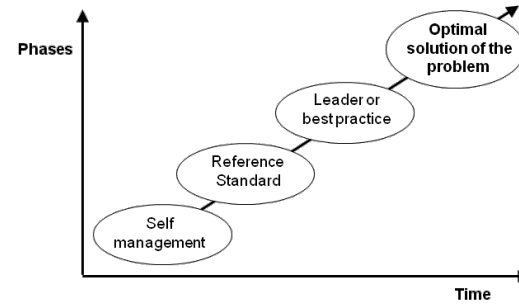
We emphasize, in the words of Robert Camp: "The fundamental reason for Benchmarking is that it does not make sense to be locked in a laboratory trying to invent a new process that improves the product or service, when this process already exists."[30].

On the other hand, we know that usually the provincial public administrations must continuously improve their products and services, focusing on the needs of citizens and the new challenges that they must face accordingly.

It is in this instance, where self-evaluation and comparison with other public organizations, can play a transcendental role. Benchmarking is presented as an opportunity to capitalize on the knowledge and developments that have reached other organizations throughout its existence. Perhaps its greatest benefit is based on discovering new and better ways of doing things.

Of course this, that initiating a benchmarking process, involves the efforts made by the organization, in relation to: the allocation of resources, teamwork, information exchange and search, and so on.

Figure 5. The course of benchmarking.



Source: Filippo (2006: p.493).

For this reason, the Provincial Management of Public Administration plays a key role in the implementation of benchmarking at the provincial level. Their actions could support these processes, assisting technically in the introduction of various related management or modernization tools.

With the ultimate aim of leveling institutional capacities and increasing the quality of provincial public services, we propose to

[30] Cited in the Manual of Benchmarking, produced by the World Class Management of the Institute of Agricultural Development (Ministry of Agriculture of Chile, 2008: p.11).

revalue the benchmarking and propose proposals for its continuous implementation.

In short, we are convinced that it is worthwhile to allocate resources to a benchmarking policy in the Province of Buenos Aires. Because it is not only that we do not perceive inconveniences, but rather the opposite, we visualize important perspectives with its application.

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Special Chapter. Benchmarking Design[31]

7. Technical assistance to MSMEs in design and product development

This work takes as challenge-level exploratory study in the importance, scope and dimensions of the benchmarking of product design (BMD) for the state advisory in design and product development for micro, small and medium producers.

The initiative falls as the zero phase of the project made for the Admission to the Research Career of Scientific and Technological Research Commission of the Province of Buenos Aires (CIC-PBA).

Our approach comprises the sub-national policies and actions to support micro, small and medium industries (MSMIs).

This study allows us to glimpse how benchmarking can contribute design-in a system of institutional support for technical assistance MSMIs based and network-to new product designs multiply their effects.

7.1. Introduction

Benchmarking (BM) is a management technique, comprising a continuous process of measuring products, services and technologies for production of a particular organization, for comparison with a model organization (leader or exemplary). Has been widespread and used in the private sector, although in recent years, specific applications are being made in the public sector.

In the last decade, different governments of Europe and America are developing successfully integrated applications benchmarking methodologies in different thematic areas of public sector areas, businesses, utilities, universities, science parks, and so on. From its use in most developed countries, has become a basic component of the regulatory processes and provision of public services.

The results obtained from application of benchmarking in the public sector, have shown a development of better services and more efficient organizations with environments.

Therefore, we assume this work, which aims to make this particular perspective of the art of benchmarking and exploratory study-at-the importance, scope and possible dimensions of benchmarking design (BMD), for technical advice to state in MSMIs Province of Buenos Aires (Del Giorgio Solfa, 2012b).

[31] Concept presented at the Leading Innovation through Design, DMI 2012 International Design Research Conference, 8–9 August 2012, Boston, MA, USA.

7.2. Metodology

This exploratory study is based on the presentation of the ways existing theoretical concepts of benchmarking, we consider the benefits and features of your application, we analyze the particularities of the public sector and in a logical and synthetic route, it evaluates its application in the Province of Buenos Aires, describing a proposed operation in the structure of the CIC.

The proposed actions are divided into two main parts: 1. the technical assistance in design and product development, and 2. The Bank of Successful Projects in Industrial Design and Design Benchmarking Network.

After the definition of benchmarking design, the main conclusions are drawn (Del Giorgio Solfa, 2012b).

7.3. Development

7.3.1. Benchmarking: theory and approaches of the authors

Originally the term –Benchmark- comes from the topography means a surveyors mark made on a rock or a concrete post, to compare levels. Benchmarking is a term that was originally used by surveyors to compare elevations. Today, however, benchmarking is a more restricted to the management lexicon, with the benchmark of best practice (Kouzmin et al., 1999).

Benchmarking appears in the U.S. in the late seventies, from Xerox to the need to understand and overcome their competitive disadvantages. Subsequently, other companies were highlighted with benchmarking: Ford, Alcoa, Millken, AT & T, IBM, Johnson & Johnson, Kodak, Motorola and Texas Instruments, thus becoming almost mandatory for every organization wishing to improve their products, services, processes and results.

The term benchmarking is attributed to the release of Camp where the application comes from Xerox, as a technique of self and search for best practices in order to improve the quality of their processes (Camp, 1991). This publication coincided with the distinction of National Quality Award Xerox Malcolm Baldrige, who got his quality leadership from benchmarking techniques. The award, included in its assessment, the implementation of updated and the development of benchmarks, one of the early stages of what is now considered benchmarking (Czuchry et al., 1995).

Commonly in the business sector, is known to benchmarking as a technique to meet competition and changes in processes, products or services to be more competitive, from the experiences of the leaders surveyed. Different authors define benchmarking as a process of benchmarking, continuous and systematic inter-organizational processes, products and services to implement improvements (Spendolini, 1994).

Benchmarking is an independent management strategy that integrates a set of techniques evolucionadamente quality. Therefore, it is also a technique of management innovation (Clemente & Balmaseda, 2010).

Bruder & Gray, defined as: "a rigorous and practical to measure the performance of your organization and processes, in contrast to the best organizations of its kind, both public and private, and then use this analysis to improve services, operations and situation costs dramatically." (Bruder & Gray, 1994: p.9).

Fischer (1994: p.3) defines benchmarking in terms of performance measurement: "Through a series of performance measures-patterns known as 'benchmarks' [benchmark] - a person can identify the best in class between those who perform a task in particular. Then, best practices are analyzed and adapted for use by others who want to improve their way of doing things.".

For Pfeiffer (2002), benchmarking is not a simple comparison of indicators of an organization with another organization or with other ideals, especially not, when performed only once. It is important to compare the values derived from processes throughout the organization, continually comparing and always seek better solutions, the goal is –the learning organization-.

7.3.2. Application benefits

The organizations are using benchmarking for different purposes. Some lie to benchmarking as part of an overall process that seeks to improve the organization. Others view it as an ongoing mechanism to keep updated (Spendolini, 1997).

This technique is very efficient for improvement in organizations, and that can be incorporated and adapted processes whose effectiveness has been proven by other organizations. For this reason, it helps organizations to make improvements quickly.

Furthermore, benchmarking is a relatively low technology, low cost and fast response, that any organization can adopt. It also seems to have enough common sense to make it easy to understand for both officers, directors, employees, suppliers, customers, and for the media and general public (Cohen & Eimicke, 1995; Cohen et al., 2008).

Typically, an organization in an attempt to identify the best in its class and duplicate or exceed their performance, you can also integrate their culture and behavior, a strong competitive spirit, pride, confidence, energy and effort improvement (Cohen & Eimicke, 1996).

Innovation is one of the direct benefits obtained from benchmarking practices and has direct impact on the ways of doing, from

the incorporation of new ideas about a problem, ideas or specific applications.

7.3.3. Benchmarking in the public sector

According to Marchitto (2001), who has researched, developed and implemented in Italy on benchmarking in the public sector, argues that to the public, this technique may offer the right to appropriate the role of producer welfare for the community, restoring efficiency and efficacy.

In the public sector, benchmarking can be defined as the continuous and systematic process by which government-from a thorough in-depth analysis phase, individualized areas for improvement and carry out internal and external comparisons, in order to: integrate shares common objectives, consistent with the overall objectives of the State; get the cooperation between the network, in order to provide increased value to recipients, and planning to make improvements (Marchitto, 2002).

7.3.4. Types of benchmarking

For Camp (1991), there are four types of benchmarking: internal, competitive, functional and generic. Instead, Spendolini (1994) categorizes three types of benchmarking: internal, competitive and generic (functional), grouped in one category to the generic and functional benchmarking.

The internal benchmarking focuses on the comparison of internal actions to identify the best processes of the organization. The competition identifies and collects information about processes, products and services in direct competition, for comparison with our own. The generic, identifies and collects data in the same way that competitive, but other organizations that may or may not competitors.

From another perspective, can cross at these types of benchmarking (internal, competitive and functional) with other characteristics, determining the strategic, if you look at objectives, goals and organizational vision, or operational, if the research focuses on the tasks more specific and operational.

Additionally, Marchitto (2001) proposes a classification especially adapted for the civil service and is based primarily on the differentiation process: operational and strategic management.

7.3.5. Applications of Benchmarking in the province of Buenos Aires

In previous work, we surveyed and analyzed various applications benchmarking tool in the public sector through international organizations, national, subnational and local (Del Giorgio Solfa, 2012a).

In the provincial public sphere, different organizations currently applying the technique of benchmarking for improvement

and institutional development. In this sense, the policy applications as benchmarking, joint actions can be cross-regional and sector (Plaza Tesías et al., 2005).

In turn, these actions can be grouped into two basic types of dimensions: 1. Government support (internally); 2. Support for private organizations (external environment).

In the Province of Buenos Aires, the possible use of benchmarking at the State level includes all the Provincial Public Administration (central, decentralized and self-sufficient). According to its purpose, can incorporate benchmarking, both for the development of their own organizations and for support of other public, private or mixed, that may be subject to its regulations, controls or policies.

Under this approach, the Ministry of Production, Science and Technology could build and manage networks aimed at benchmarking and productive economic development of regions and / or production organizations (e.g. MSMIs).

Specifically, the implementation of provincial regionalization policies, benchmarking with the control board, constitute the most appropriate set of tools for monitoring the management and development indicators, as a way of assessing the impact that various policies in each region.

To facilitate these actions, from the perspective of the whole production policies- the Ministry of Production, Science and Technology benchmarking could implement policies, supporting MSMIs from:

- Development of a bibliography and methodology of benchmarking.
- Establishment of networks of provincial benchmarking (in materials production).
- Survey and systematization of technical assistance to industries.

From these actions, and particularly from the permanent disposal networks, methodologies and results achieved with the technical assistance, micro and small industries could learn, evaluate and implement best management practices in their industry (both organizational as product) systematically incorporating benchmarking between its processes.

7.4. Benchmarking design in the organizational structure of the CIC

In Currently, CIC-PBA is the organization of the Ministry of Production, Science and Technology, Buenos Aires, which is responsible for promoting research and providing technical assistance through its various research centers.

Among its twenty-six centers, rescue Industrial Design Center (IDC) -created by agreement with the National University of Lanus- which acts on the translation that makes the CIC, on policies issued by ministerial portfolio.

The CDI investigation, is assisting and advising the seat MSMIs with Buenos Aires, but by its strategic geographical location and involves mainly the territorial patches of the following industrial sectors (OPPA, 2001):

- Clothing.
- Leather, footwear and leather goods.
- Furniture and parts.

Understanding that the CDI is the most immediate operational core of public policy, in research and industrial-design assistance that is targeted to the industries of strategic dimension, is that we consider as most suitable to incorporate and develop benchmarking activities.

7.5. Technical assistance in design and product development

The technical assistance MSMIs, form, in terms of industrial design, require significant resources and professional endeavors.

On the other hand, considering that these public policies, in the form of technical assistance, can not respond in a timely manner, increasing and varied demands of design and development of new products, we feel obliged to propose creative solutions to reach the as many productive organizations.

Also, from the standpoint of public administration responsible, we owe a commitment to use resources on a basis that allows us to capitalize on the present and future, the different experiences that are acquired in the processes of technical assistance in industrial design.

It is then, under this approach, the technical assistance and take a more important dimension, with the multiplier effect of digital media.

In this logic, also fits the idea that government should not assist technically in "black box" and get involved in the generation of competitive differences between companies.

Therefore, these proposed technical assistance, will endure, transparent and easy arrival to producers, is expected to collaborate with more uniform sectoral developments.

7.6. The bank of successful projects industrial design and design benchmarking network

Within the Commission, proposed the creation of the Bank of Industrial Design Successful Projects (BPE-DI) and Benchmarking Network Design.

The BPE-DI, with a smart search system, will capitalize on CDI's technical assistance in benchmarking actions undertaken.

The idea of forming a Benchmarking Network Design, which integrates the various MSMIs interested aims: to support and produce synergies cross (within and between sectors) work together (networking), facilitate the search for benchmarking partners, and assist in improving indicators of design management and new product development (Del Giorgio Solfa, 2001).

The BPE-DI and Benchmarking Network, would form a solid core to share successful experiences and find-in-industrial design at the provincial level.

7.7. Design dimensions of Benchmarking

The application of benchmarking of product design or simply benchmarking design, requiring different dimensions and indicators set design, which allows them to be measured and compared with other products (Del Giorgio Solfa, 2012b).

Although these findings may somewhat complex and include more dimensions, we show in Table 2, we define groups in an exploratory way:

Table 2. Some dimensions of Benchmarking Design (BMD)

A. Market
A.1. Price
A.2. Target
A.3. Date of entry into the market
A.4. Average life
A.5. Positioning
A.6. Sales volumes
B. Technology
B.1. Number of parts
B.2. Material / s.
B.3. Quantity of each material
B.4. Production processes
B.5. Production scale
B.6. Standardized parts
B. Dimensions
B.1. General: height, length and width
B.2. Parties: height, length and width
B.3. Anthropometric dimensions
B.4. Variable dimensions
C. Use
C.1. Physical ergonomics
C.2. Psychological ergonomics
C.3. Guarded
D. Maintenance
D.1. Cleaning
D.2. Repair
D.3. Spare parts
E. Recycling
E.1. Reuse rate
E.2. Environmental impact

Source: Del Giorgio Solfa (2012b: p.114).

7.8. Conclusions

In the first instance, review of benchmarking literature and the cases studied, we can conclude that it is a technique that can be perfectly applied to the CDI.

We emphasize, in the words of Camp: "The rationale for benchmarking is that it makes no sense to be locked in a lab trying to invent a new process to improve the product or service, when this process already exists." (cited in MAC, 2008: p.11).

On the other hand, we know that typically MiPyMIs must continually improve their products, focusing on the needs of citizens and the new challenges they face as a result.

It is in this instance, where the self-assessment, assists the CDI, the BPE-DI, Benchmarking Network Design and the subsequent comparison of productive organizations can play an important role.

Benchmarking is presented as an opportunity to capitalize on the knowledge and developments that have reached other organizations throughout its existence. Perhaps its greatest benefit, is based on the discovery of new and better ways of doing things.

Course, you have to initiate a process of benchmarking involves making efforts by the organization in terms of: resource allocation, teamwork, sharing and finding information, and so on.

Therefore, the CDI, has a key role in implementing benchmarking pilot at the provincial level design.

With the ultimate aim of improving the capabilities of MiPyMIs and increase the quality of their products, we propose to revalue to make proposals for benchmarking and continuous implementation.

In short, we believe it is worth devoting resources to a benchmarking policy design in the Province of Buenos Aires. Because not only does not perceive problems, if we visualize important insights with your application.

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