Present Research Work
Benchmarking was selected as the research topic, specifically to investigate the acceptance of this concept in the local manufacturing industries and also certain service organisations. This concept became widely popular in the US during late 1990s' and the researcher was also interested to know why many local industries are not utilising this tool for improvement of their quality practices even in the new millennium. The investigation tries to identify if certain causes exist as drawbacks for the utility of the technique among the local strata of manufacturing and service industries.

Objectives of the research work
The research work focuses on the following objectives
• Define the application of benchmarking in select manufacturing and service organisations.
• Help to understand the role of benchmarking in TQM programme.
• Investigate why the concept is not being practiced in many local organisations.
• Clarifying misconceptions about this tool in the minds of practicing managers.
• Improvements through benchmarking in an on-going quality programme.

The Scope of the research work
The study is specifically aimed at establishing the role of benchmarking in TQM as practiced in some of local, reputed manufacturing and service organisations. The intention is to cover only local organisations because, the researcher is familiar with the organisations and also because it is possible to keep regular interactions with them.

The research is focused on organisations, which have basically an ISO – 9000 certification. Specific to the service sector, the ‘Training and Placements’ function in engineering colleges is identified for an in-depth study. Here, the applicability of a generic benchmarking model to the training and placement activity has been investigated.
Research Methodology

The present research work included the following activities during the course of investigation:

- Literature survey (both conventional library resources and electronic media through internet).
- Visits to industries and professional bodies/agencies.
- Survey through questionnaires, formal interactions with quality professionals in organisations.
- Interaction with experts in the field during conferences and training programmes.

All these gave a good exposure to the researcher in gaining first hand information.

Expected outcomes from the research work

TQM practices have seen a widespread growth in India but still some questions remain unanswered because of wide ranging set of practices being followed by individual companies. This has resulted in variations right from the initiation of the TQM programmes upto its implementation in individual organisations. In the light of these observations, the research work answers the following issues:

- Utility of the benchmarking technique.
- Hurdles in a benchmarking study.
- Generalised benchmarking model specific to Indian context if any.
- Management’s commitment to a benchmarking programme