

Optimizing the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) for Strengthening Teacher Competence and Digital Literacy

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore teachers' perceptions and experiences in utilizing the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) as a pedagogical support tool in teaching and learning processes. A qualitative research method was employed, as it enables an in-depth investigation of individual understandings, perceptions, and lived experiences. The findings indicate that the utilization of PMM encompasses several measurable dimensions, including teacher engagement, competency enhancement, instructional effectiveness, quality of content and learning materials, accessibility and usability, as well as innovation and creativity.

The global education agenda for 2030 highlights numerous challenges within the teaching dimension, one of which is the continuous professional development of teachers. The development of teachers' professional competencies is increasingly integrated with technological advancements to strengthen the overall quality of education in Indonesia. Technological progress across various sectors must be leveraged within the educational context. Teachers' ability to effectively utilize technology serves as a key predictor of improved teaching quality, closely associated with their professional competence. The integration of technology in education has the potential to enhance the fulfillment of teacher needs while increasing efficiency and effectiveness in learning.

Aligned with the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) is introduced as a transformative approach to improving teacher

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quality. PMM provides accessible opportunities for teachers to independently explore innovative teaching materials and resources, offering a strategic avenue for strengthening professional competence in accordance with the current curricular demands.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Merdeka Belajar policy has been implemented with the expectation that it will ensure meaningful learning progress for students, enabling them to become more competent and exhibit strong character. More broadly, Merdeka Belajar seeks to guarantee that learners in remote areas continue to receive access to quality education (Suhartono, 2021). Efforts to improve educational quality align with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which by 2030 aims to ensure that all children complete primary and secondary education with relevant and effective learning outcomes, as well as acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to support sustainable development (Situmeang et al., 2021). In addition to supporting learners, SDG 4 emphasizes the importance of developing high-quality teachers through various strategies and collaborative initiatives at both national and international levels (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2014).

The quality of teachers plays a significant role in shaping students' learning outcomes. Competency test results issued by the Ministry of Education from 2015 to 2022 indicate that approximately 70% of teachers are categorized as not yet competent. Consequently, improving teacher quality has become a core priority within the 2019–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan. Although professional development efforts—ranging from PKG and KKG/MGMP to PLPG and PKB since 2013—have been implemented, they have not yet

succeeded in positioning teachers as true agents of change. Teachers must be prepared to confront emerging challenges, including the rapid advancement of technology (Muhammadiyah, 2022). The Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) is a digital learning application designed to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge through self-directed learning (Marisana et al., 2023). Through PMM, teachers can strengthen their digital literacy skills, which constitutes one of the primary objectives of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Muadz & Pendidikan Pendidikan Kota Batu, 2023).

Despite these initiatives, field data reveal that PMM utilization remains limited. A report by BBPMP West Java Province in December 2023 indicated that approximately 76% of districts and municipalities still need to increase PMM usage. Digitalization of learning and school systems remains a significant challenge. The success of digital transformation through PMM depends largely on teachers' digital literacy competencies (Digitalliteracyforteachers, n.d.). Transforming teachers' professional competencies through PMM is not a simple task; it requires robust digital literacy skills, particularly in information and media literacy, framed within the pillars of digital ethics, digital culture, digital skills, and digital safety (Marín & Castañeda, 2023).

Transforming teachers' professional competencies is essential for supporting current demands in teacher development. The diversity of learners requires teachers to design and implement innovative learning experiences (Karsiwan et al., 2021). Numerous studies have examined various instructional strategies and teachers' use of technology (Ratnasari & Fakhrunnisa, 2021), and other studies highlight the role of teachers as agents of change (Manalu & Bahari, 2024). However, limited research specifically addresses the transformation of teacher

professional competence through the integration of the PMM application. To explore this issue further, the present study formulates the following research questions:

1. What forms of digital literacy are relevant to the transformation of teachers' professional competence?
2. How is the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) utilized as an instructional support tool in teaching and learning processes?

II. METHODS

Findings from previous studies conducted in late 2023 indicate that challenges in using the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) among elementary school teachers remain a persistent issue. Several obstacles were identified, including teachers' confusion in navigating the application and their reluctance to abandon long-established teaching habits. Building upon these earlier findings, the present study seeks to further investigate the use of PMM in supporting the development of elementary school teachers' professional competence. The problems addressed in this study were identified through an extensive literature review and direct observations. The primary focus of inquiry is the transformation of teachers' professional competence through PMM utilization, particularly in enhancing their digital literacy skills.

Relevant literature on teacher professional competency development was collected and analyzed to establish a classification of professional competencies to be examined. Subsequently, sampling and data collection were conducted through interviews and questionnaire distribution to individuals directly involved in the research context. A qualitative research method was employed, allowing for an in-depth

exploration of teachers’ understandings, perceptions, and lived experiences. Data were gathered through interviews with teachers at a public elementary school in Bogor Regency, involving a total of 13 teacher respondents.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Research Findings

Based on the interview data collected directly from the field, it was found that 81.25% of teachers at SDN Rancabungur 03 already possess a belajar.id account. This finding aligns with the statement provided by the school principal during the interview, who explained:

“It is mandatory for every teacher registered in Dapodik to have a belajar.id account. This requirement has encouraged our teachers to continue learning through the materials provided in the PMM application.”

The data on belajar.id account ownership, Furthermore, data obtained from in-depth interviews with teachers indicate that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) is utilized to support the exploration of teaching and learning processes, thereby enabling the effective implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers reported that PMM provides substantial insights for improving their professional capacity. They emphasized that the platform serves as a reference for fostering creativity and innovation in both classroom and extracurricular learning activities, largely because its content and learning materials align with their instructional needs.

In addition, PMM motivates teachers to continually enhance their teaching performance, as the platform includes self-evaluation features that encourage reflective practice aimed at strengthening professional competence. The following figure presents the menu features available on the Merdeka Mengajar Platform.

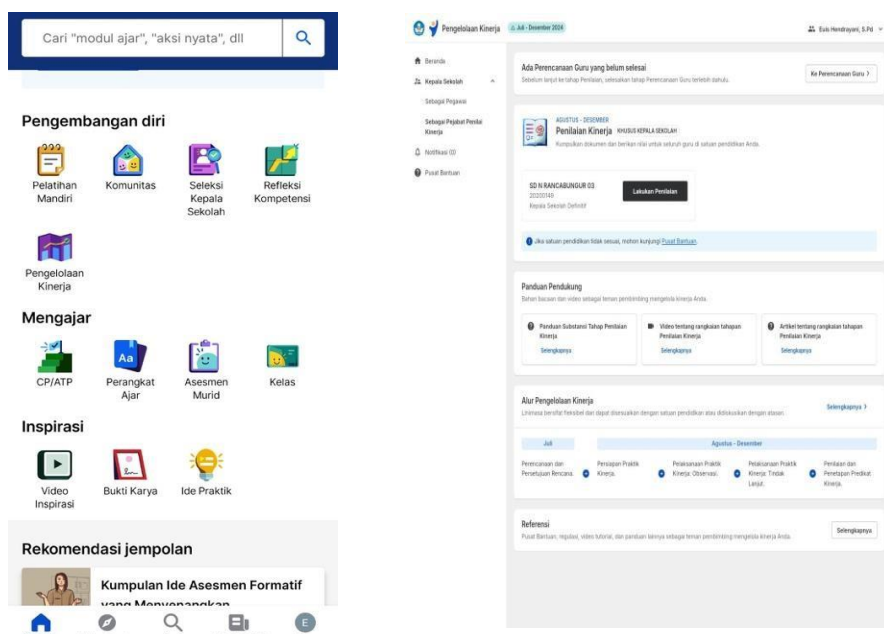


Figure 1. Features of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform

B. Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, the first research question can be addressed by explaining that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) serves as an important catalyst for accelerating digital literacy and plays a pivotal role in the transformation of teachers' professional competencies. Referring to the digital literacy components described by

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SDN Rancabungur 03, PMM is utilized as a tool to strengthen teachers’ basic technological skills. In addition, PMM functions as a key source of information and media literacy, as it encourages teachers to actively explore, access, and utilize the available materials and content provided within the platform. Ultimately, PMM serves as a collaborative and communicative digital space that supports continuous professional development by enhancing digital skills and promoting the application of best practices aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum.

The study further reveals that teachers at SDN Rancabungur 03 fully employ the Merdeka Mengajar Platform to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in a comprehensive manner. The use of PMM comprises several measurable dimensions, enabling teachers to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and learning practices. As such, PMM contributes meaningfully to improving instructional quality and ensuring that pedagogical activities are aligned with curriculum goals.

| No | Dimention | Indications of Utilization |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Teacher Engagement and Learning Effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Account ownership - Teachers’ activities in accessing and using PMM features - Applying the materials for classroom use and measuring their effectiveness through students’ responses when taught using the adopted materials, with students positioned as the center of the learning process - Participating in online training |

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| 2 | Competency Enhancement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conducting reflection or self-assessment using the guidelines available in the PMM feature - Improvement of various competencies and the ability to develop diverse teaching materials based on the Merdeka Curriculum |
| | Quality of Content and Materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevance of the materials provided by PMM. Participating in satisfaction surveys and providing feedback as well as analysis of the content. |
| 4 | Affordability and Accessibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers can provide feedback regarding the extent to which PMM is easy to access. |

The utilization of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) serves as an important effort in transforming teachers' professional competence to accelerate digital literacy within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum. Through the use of PMM, teachers are able to demonstrate greater engagement in teaching and learning processes that are more creative and innovative. In addition, PMM encourages teachers to continuously enhance their competencies by utilizing the available features as references for student learning. Teachers' ability to manage the classroom is strengthened by their capacity to access and operate technological features, reflecting their readiness to undergo professional transformation in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) plays a significant role in supporting the transformation of teachers’ professional competence and the acceleration of digital literacy within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings reveal that teachers actively utilize PMM to access instructional materials, conduct self-assessments, and implement innovative teaching strategies aligned with student-centered learning. The platform not only enhances teachers’ technological skills but also strengthens their ability to design relevant, creative, and curriculum-based teaching resources. Moreover, teachers view PMM as an accessible and supportive tool that facilitates continuous professional growth, fosters reflective practice, and contributes to improved pedagogical quality.

Despite these positive developments, the study also identifies several challenges related to the consistency of PMM usage among teachers and their varying levels of digital literacy. These challenges highlight the need for more structured guidance, ongoing digital training, and reinforcement of PMM integration into daily teaching practices. Strengthening digital culture within schools, providing targeted support for less digitally-skilled teachers, and optimizing PMM features for practical classroom implementation will be essential for sustaining professional transformation. Overall, the findings affirm that PMM is a valuable instrument for advancing teacher competence in the digital era, and its effective utilization will contribute significantly to the realization of high-quality, future-ready education

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