

Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform as a Source of Independent Learning

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Abstract: This study aims to examine junior high school teachers' perceptions of the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM) as an independent learning resource. The research method used is a survey with a descriptive approach. Data were collected through questionnaires and limited interviews. The research subjects were 21 general subject teachers at SMP VIP Pesawat Wates, Kulon Progo. The results showed that most teachers understood the concept and purpose of PMM, but many had not optimally utilized its features. The level of teacher satisfaction with PMM features is high, but there are still some teachers who feel less satisfied. The majority of teachers have used PMM as an independent learning resource, but there are still some who are less independent. Support and facilities provided by schools for PMM utilization are still not fully met. The discussion shows that PMM has not been fully utilized by teachers as an independent learning resource. This is due to several factors, such as teachers' lack of understanding about PMM, lack of support and facilities from the school, and teachers' lack of motivation and awareness to learn independently. In conclusion, PMM has not been fully utilized by junior high school teachers as an independent learning resource. Efforts are needed to improve teachers' understanding of PMM, provide adequate support and facilities, and motivate teachers to learn independently.

Keywords: Independent learning; Merdeka mengajar platform; Perceptions

Introduction

Since the Covid outbreak in 2019, learning activities in the world of education have shifted from conventional offline learning to online (Chai et al., 2024; Schleicher, 2020; Segbenya et al., 2024). Since then, technology has begun to be used in the world of education to continue the online learning process (Alam et al., 2023; Segbenya et al., 2022). Technology is used as a means to improve the quality of education so that students can face increasingly complex challenges due to changes in the digital era (Prasetyaningsih et al., 2024). In the current era, the use of digital technology has become a major concern with the aim of developing individuals to be creative and innovative (Mukul et al., 2023). Apart from that, the use of technology in education can also help develop professional learning

communities (Bates et al., 2016). A learning environment supported by technology can also improve the learning experience and provide different situations so that it can increase motivation and autonomy in learning (Moldavan et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology has announced a change in the curriculum from the 2013 curriculum to an independent curriculum. In this new curriculum, technology is one of the tools used to facilitate the implementation of teaching and learning activities in order to improve the quality of education. To improve the competence of teachers and school principals, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbudristek) launched the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. The Merdeka Mengajar platform is designed to develop an education system that is more innovative

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and adaptive to current developments (Maipita et al., 2021). The Merdeka Mengajar Platform is a new policy program from the Ministry of Education and Culture which has the essence of freedom to learn (Santosa, 2021). The Merdeka Mengajar platform was created to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum which is designed to overcome the problems faced by the world of education in Indonesia (Sari et al., 2022). Through the Merdeka Belajar Platform, educators can get references, inspiration and understanding for better teaching and learning activities. The Merdeka Mengajar platform can be used by educators to teach, learn and create. The Merdeka Mengajar platform provides opportunities for all educators to continue learning so they can develop their potential as educators (Arnes et al., 2023). According to Nadiem Makarim, the Merdeka Mengajar Platform is an application for implementing an independent curriculum and learning to become a better teacher (Putra, 2023). Nadiem also said that the existence of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform is expected to support the implementation of Merdeka Belajar and help teachers in teaching, learning and working.

While existing research has explored the Merdeka Mengajar Platform's role in providing references, inspiration, and understanding for implementing the independent curriculum (Amiruddin et al., 2023), this study focuses on a crucial yet under-researched aspect: the platform's potential as a source of independent learning for teachers. From this research, we can see that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform is only used to get references, inspiration, and also to increase teachers' understanding in implementing the independent curriculum. There is also research which states that the level of understanding of elementary school teachers in Bandung Regency regarding the concepts of the independent learning program and its implementation is still relatively low (Silaswati, 2022). This research expands the scope by investigating the platform's broader potential as a resource for teachers' professional development and independent learning across various subject areas. Despite this, Silaswati also mentioned that there were positive impacts with the implementation of the independent learning program, including the freedom for teachers and schools to create their own curriculum that was adapted to the conditions of students, schools and the environment. This research is also limited to elementary school teachers' understanding of the concept of an independent curriculum. The use of PMM is constructive for teachers in developing their potential to inspire and teach better, where around 87.6% of respondents agree that the use of PMM plays a role in helping develop teacher competency through inspirational video features, independent training, and proof of work and 86% of

respondents also agree that the use of MPP plays a role in helping teaching and learning activities through student assessment features and teaching tools so that PMM can be used as a means of supporting the quality of Mathematics learning (Budiarti, 2022). This research is only limited to Mathematics learning and is not comprehensive in all subjects so there needs to be an expansion of research to all subject teachers. Rima Suryadi found that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform supports teachers in using the independent curriculum with three main functions, namely in making learning plans, then using it during learning activities and also in creating work (Suryadi et al., 2023). In this research, it was not seen whether teachers had awareness of using PMM as a learning resource or whether they were just copying what other teachers had shared in the PMM. Dewa Ayu Made Manu Okta Priantini said that the curriculum and PMM emphasize a proactive attitude in facing change in a progressive and transformative manner. Apart from being proactive, PMM also supports the concept of independent learning because PMM provides access to a variety of learning resources so that it is possible to learn independently to develop one's potential (Arisanti, 2022). Independent learning can be carried out by educators without being limited by space and time, making it very easy for educators to develop their knowledge and potential.

To be able to increase their potential and abilities, educators must realize the importance of utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning. Januszewski et al. (2010) explain that learning resources are all sources including messages, people, materials, tools, techniques, budgets, facilities and settings that students can use either individually or in combination to facilitate learning activities and improve performance. learning (Januszewski et al., 2010). Learning resources are an important need that can be a source of information, a source of tools, a source of demonstration, as well as other needs needed in learning (Pratama, 2023). PMM is designed to be used as an independent learning resource for educators with the hope that educators can improve the quality of learning. From research conducted by Ela, learning resources that use the internet such as PMM have the advantage of being effective because learning activities can be carried out anywhere and anytime (Suryani et al., 2018).

This research aims to find out the perceptions or views of educators at the Junior High School (SMP) level regarding PMM as a source of independent learning. The teacher's perception of PMM as a source of independent learning will be reviewed from indicators of the level of teacher understanding of the concept and purpose of PMM, the level of teacher involvement in utilizing the features offered by PMM, the level of

teacher satisfaction with the features offered by PMM, the level of teacher independence in utilizing PMM as a means to improve the quality of learning, the level of support and facilities provided by the school in utilizing PMM as a means to improve the quality of learning, as well as the level of success in utilizing PMM as a means to improve the quality of learning in junior high schools.

This research is crucial for several reasons: (1) Understanding Teacher Perceptions. It provides insights into how teachers perceive the Merdeka Mengajar Platform as a source of independent learning, identifying their strengths and limitations in utilizing the platform. This information is crucial for informing future platform development and support strategies. (2) Enhancing Teacher Competency. The study explores the potential of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform to enhance teacher competency, particularly in the context of the independent curriculum. This is critical for equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to effectively implement the new curriculum. (3) Promoting Independent Learning. The research investigates the factors that influence teachers' independent learning practices using the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. This information can be used to develop strategies for promoting a culture of independent learning among teachers, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices and student learning outcomes. (4) Supporting Policy Implementation. The findings of this research can inform policy decisions regarding the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, ensuring its effectiveness in supporting the implementation of the independent curriculum and enhancing the quality of education in Indonesia.

This research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform's potential as a source of independent learning for teachers, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and platform developers.

Method

The research method used is a survey research method with a descriptive approach. The research stages include initial observations, determining research themes, preparing instruments, collecting data, analyzing data, describing data, drawing conclusions and preparing research recommendations. Data collection uses a survey and the instrument used is a questionnaire. Apart from using questionnaires, this research also collected data using limited interviews to strengthen the results of the survey conducted.

This research employs a survey research method with a descriptive approach. This means the study aims to describe the current state of affairs regarding teachers'

perceptions of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) as a source of independent learning.

The research process involves several stages: (1) Initial Observations: The researchers started by observing the general use of PMM in the chosen school, gaining a preliminary understanding of the platform's implementation. (2) Determining Research Themes. Based on the initial observations, the researchers narrowed down the focus to specifically investigate teachers' perceptions of PMM as a resource for independent learning. (3) Preparing Instruments. To gather data, the researchers developed a **questionnaire** as the primary instrument. This questionnaire was designed to measure teachers' perceptions based on pre-determined indicators. (4) Collecting Data. The questionnaire was distributed to teachers at the selected SMP. In addition to the questionnaire, limited interviews were also conducted to further support and strengthen the survey results. (5) Analyzing Data. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. This involves tabulating the data, calculating percentages, interpreting the findings, and drawing conclusions. (6) Describing Data. The analyzed data is presented in a clear and concise way, providing a detailed description of the teachers' perceptions. (7) Drawing Conclusions. Based on the data analysis, the researchers reached conclusions about teachers' perceptions of PMM as a source of independent learning. (8) Preparing Research Recommendations. The researchers formulate recommendations for further development and implementation of the PMM platform, taking into account the findings and conclusions of the study.

This comprehensive approach allows the researchers to gather a wide range of data on teachers' perceptions of PMM, providing valuable insights into the platform's strengths, weaknesses, and potential for improving independent learning practices among teachers.

Research subjects are individuals who take part in research (Hajar, 1996). The research subjects in this study were teachers at the Wates Airplane VIP Middle School. Of the total 29 teachers, 21 teachers teach subjects according to the national curriculum, while the rest teach special subjects, namely Islamic boarding schools, then this research took 21 general subject teachers as subjects in this research. The research location is at Wates Airplane VIP Middle School in Kulon Progo Regency, DI Yogyakarta Province. This school is a school that is under the Islamic boarding school foundation but is part of the Education Department.

The indicators used to determine teachers' perceptions of the use of PMM as a source of independent learning can be seen in Table 1. This

indicator was developed by researchers with the aim of the research, namely to analyze the perceptions of teachers in junior high schools regarding PMM as a source of independent learning. The instrument was developed in consultation with the school supervisor for SMP in Kapanewon Wates, Kulon Progo. These

indicators were then developed in the form of a list of questions which were used to compile respondent questionnaires. Data analysis uses descriptive statistics with the steps of data tabulation, data percentages, data interpretation, and drawing conclusions.

Table 1. Respondent Questionnaire Instrument

Indicator	Question
The level of teacher understanding of the concepts and objectives of PMM	Do you feel you understand the concept and objectives of PMM?
Teacher involvement in utilizing the features offered by PMM.	Have you taken advantage of the features offered by PMM?
Teacher satisfaction with the features offered by PMM.	What is your level of satisfaction with the features offered by PMM?
Teacher independence in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning.	Do you feel that you are independent enough to use PMM as a source of independent learning?
Support and facilities provided by the school in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning.	Is the support and facilities provided by the school sufficient to utilize PMM as an independent learning resource?

Result and Discussion

Result

Teachers' perceptions of the use of PMM as a source of independent learning can be seen from the six perception indicators that have been developed. There are six indicators developed for use in collecting data, including: the level of teacher understanding of the concept and objectives of PMM, teacher involvement in utilizing the features offered by PMM, teacher satisfaction with the features offered by PMM, teacher independence in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning, support and facilities provided by the school in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning, and success in utilizing PMM as a learning resource to improve the quality of learning at the Wates Airplane VIP Middle School, Kulon Progo. The six main indicators that describe teacher expectations can be described as follows.

The level of teacher understanding of the concepts and objectives of PMM.

understand the concept and objectives of PMM is 4.80% of the 21 teachers surveyed. The number of teachers who claimed to understand the concept and objectives of PMM was 76.20%, while those who did not understand were 14.30%. From the diagram it can also be seen that 4.80% of teachers admitted that they did not understand the concept and objectives of PMM.

This shows that the majority of teachers have a good understanding of the concept and objectives of PMM, but there are still a small number of teachers who do not understand it or even do not understand it. Therefore, efforts need to be made to increase teachers' understanding of the concepts and objectives of PMM, either through training, guidance, or other resources so that all teachers can understand and implement PMM well.

Teacher involvement in utilizing the features offered by PMM.



Figure 1. Level of teacher understanding of the concept and objectives of PMM

Figure 1 shows how much the teacher understands the concept and objectives of PMM. From this diagram we can see that the number of teachers who really

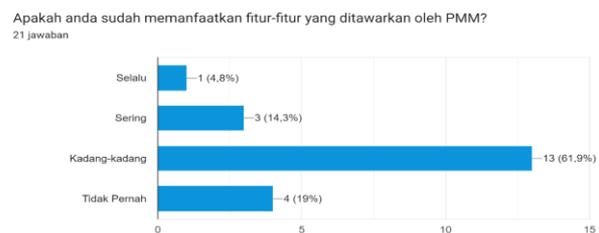


Figure 2. Teacher satisfaction with the features offered by PMM

The results of the research show that the use of the features in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) is still not fully utilized by teachers at the Wates Airplane VIP Middle School, Kulon Progo. The bar diagram in Figure 2 depicts teacher perceptions regarding the use of the features in PMM. The survey results show that 4.80%

of teachers always use the features in PMM, 14.30% often use them, 61.90% sometimes use them, and 19% never use them.

From these results, it can be concluded that there is potential to increase the understanding and use of PMM features by teachers at the Wates Airplane VIP Middle School, Kulon Progo. Steps to increase the use of PMM features with training and assistance for teachers to be able to understand and utilize these features optimally. Thus, it is hoped that the use of PMM can provide greater benefits in the teaching and learning process at the school.

Teacher satisfaction with the features offered by PMM.



Figure 3. Teacher satisfaction with the features offered by PMM

The diagram above shows the level of satisfaction with the features offered in PMM. Based on this picture, it can be seen that 14.30% of teachers answered that they were very satisfied with the features offered, then 66.70% answered that they were satisfied with the features offered, while those who answered were less capable were 9.50% and 9.50% were dissatisfied. 5%. From the results of this research, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the features offered in PMM. This shows that the features provided in PMM have a fairly high level of satisfaction among teachers. Thus, steps can be taken to maintain and improve the quality of these features so that they can continue to meet the needs and satisfaction of their users.

Teacher independence in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning.



Figure 4. Teacher independence in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning

This diagram illustrates teacher independence regarding the use of PMM as a source of independent learning. The survey results show that 47.60% of teachers have used PMM as a source of independent learning, 33.30% are still less independent, and those who are very independent and not independent are the same, namely at 9.50%.

From the diagram in Figure 4, it can be seen that the majority of teachers have used PMM as a source of independent learning, but there are still some who do not use PMM as a source of independent learning. PMM is a learning application that has been prepared by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology for teachers so they can improve their skills independently. It is hoped that PMM can be used to improve the quality of the competence of educators in Indonesia, assist teachers in carrying out self-development on an unpaid basis, and can also increase the knowledge of teachers and educational staff independently. Therefore, teachers should be able to complete independent training in PMM so they can make good use of PMM as a source of independent learning.

Support and facilities provided by the school in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning.



Figure 5. Support and facilities provided by the school in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning

The diagram in Figure 5 shows that the support and facilities provided by the school in utilizing PMM as a source of independent learning are still not fully met. It can be seen from the 21 teachers surveyed that 57.10% answered sufficient, 28.60% answered very sufficient and 14.30% answered not enough. This data illustrates that schools still have to provide support and facilities so that PMM can be used by teachers as a source of independent learning.

Based on the research results, it can be seen that some teachers have used PMM as a source of independent learning. This can be strengthened by data showing that some teachers are aware of the importance of PMM as a source of independent learning. Some teachers have also felt the benefits that can be obtained from using PMM as a source of independent learning.

However, there are still several things that need to be considered so that the use of PMM as a learning resource can be utilized optimally. There are still teachers who do not understand the concept and purpose of PMM in the Merdeka curriculum application.

Discussion

Merdeka Mengajar is a new policy program of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Mendikbudristek RI) of the Advanced Indonesia Cabinet. The essence of freedom of thought, according to Nadiem, must be preceded by teachers before they teach it to students (Hasim, 2020). In this curriculum, the aim of education is to hone students' interests and talents by focusing on important material, character development and students' competencies. This curriculum gives each educational unit the freedom to be able to innovate and teach according to the wishes and interests of students. Learning activities can be designed so that students feel relaxed, calm, happy, not stressed or under pressure, showing good character and natural talents possessed by students during the learning process (Purwanti et al., 2023).

Humanistic learning theory aims to humanize humans, both teachers and students. In humanistic learning, a teacher does not act as a teacher who only provides material intake that students need as a whole, but the teacher only acts as a facilitator and dialogue partner (Qodri, 2017). Implementation of the Merdeka curriculum is an independent choice by adjusting the readiness and characteristics of students. Teachers or educators must have a view of the importance of education that supports students. So that learning activities prioritize students, they do not tend to be in only one direction, namely from teacher to student, but teachers must be more open to the freedom of students.

To better understand the implementation of the independent curriculum, teachers are expected to learn about how to implement the independent curriculum using the Merdeka Mengajar Platform which has been released by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research and Technology. In the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, teachers can find out how to become teachers who can accommodate the characteristics and needs of students.

Conclusion

The research findings indicate that while most teachers understand the concept and purpose of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM), its features are not fully utilized. Teachers generally express satisfaction with the platform's features, but some feel less satisfied.

While the majority of teachers have used PMM as an independent learning resource, a significant number lack independence in its use. Additionally, schools have not fully provided the necessary support and facilities for PMM utilization.

The discussion reveals that PMM has not been fully leveraged as an independent learning resource due to several factors. These include teachers' limited understanding of the platform, insufficient support and facilities from schools, and a lack of motivation and awareness among teachers regarding independent learning. Therefore, efforts are needed to improve teachers' understanding of PMM, provide adequate support and facilities, and motivate teachers to embrace independent learning practices.

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Conflicts of Interest

No conflict interest.

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