Utilization of the Independent Teaching Platform: A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Adoption and Challenges

Joardin[1], Junawati [2], Hidayah Musliha[3], Nasir[4], Ridwan Deluma[5], Mujiati[6]
Master of Educational Administration, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari, Indonesia[1,2,3,4]
Non-Formal Education, Muhammadiyah University Kendari, Indonesia[5]
Educational Administration, Universitas Muhammadiyah Kendari, Indonesia[6]
Corresponding Email: joasayang190@gmail.com

ABSTRACT*:* The Independent Teaching Platform is designed for internal teachers to implement curriculum independence, allowing them to develop themselves in teaching, learning, and creating. This study aims to deeply research and analyze the utilization of the Independent Teaching Platform (Merdeka Mengajar Platform) for the implementation of an independent curriculum. The research method employed is a qualitative approach using interviews as the main data collection technique. This study involves 14 purposely selected teachers. The collected data is analysed qualitatively using a thematic approach to identify patterns, trends, and main findings from the teachers' responses. The research findings indicate that the majority of teachers have adopted the Independent Teaching Platform in their teaching. They have learning ID accounts and adequate access to the platform. However, challenges exist regarding proactivity in handling technical issues, participation in collaborative activities, contribution to the development of additional content, and the utilization of data to improve learning. It can be concluded that although the majority of teachers have adopted the Independent Teaching Platform, there are still challenges in optimal usage. Further efforts are needed to enhance teacher participation in utilizing this platform, including handling technical problems, collaborating, contributing to content development, and leveraging data for learning evaluation.

Keywords: independent teaching platform, teacher involvement, qualitative study.

ABSTRAK: *Platform Merdeka Mengajar adalah sebuah platform yang dirancang untuk guru internal dalam mengimplementasikan kemandirian kurikulum, di mana guru dapat mengembangkan diri untuk mengajar, belajar, dan berkreasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti dan menganalisis secara mendalam pemanfaatan Platform Merdeka Mengajar untuk pelaksanaan kurikulum mandiri. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif dengan menggunakan wawancara sebagai teknik utama pengumpulan data. Penelitian ini melibatkan 14 guru yang dipilih secara purposive. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis secara kualitatif dengan pendekatan tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola, tren, dan temuan utama dari jawaban guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas guru telah mengadopsi Platform Merdeka Mengajar dalam pembelajaran mereka. Mereka memiliki akun ID pembelajaran dan akses yang memadai ke platform tersebut. Namun, terdapat tantangan terkait pro-aktivitas dalam menangani masalah teknis, partisipasi dalam aktivitas kolaboratif, kontribusi dalam pengembangan konten tambahan, dan pemanfaatan data untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran. Dapat disimpulkan bahwa meskipun mayoritas guru telah*

mengadopsi Platform Merdeka Mengajar, masih terdapat tantangan dalam penggunaan yang optimal. Diperlukan upaya lebih lanjut untuk meningkatkan partisipasi guru dalam penggunaan platform ini, termasuk dalam menangani masalah teknis, berkolaborasi, berkontribusi dalam pengembangan konten, dan memanfaatkan data untuk evaluasi pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: keterlibatan guru, platform pengajaran mandiri**,** studi kualitatif.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a key element in a country's development. In the digital and technological era, education has undergone fundamental changes with the integration of technology into the learning process (Zen, 2019). One of the most important developments in education is the use of online platforms, such as the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. This platform provides teachers and students access to various learning resources, interactive learning tools, and features that can enhance the quality of learning at Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School.

As technology advances, the use of online platforms in education becomes increasingly popular and essential. This trend has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced much of the learning process to move online, including at Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School. According to Al Hakim and Azis (2021), the use of online platforms in education is a crucial step in addressing challenges such as physical restrictions in the teaching and learning process.

To maximize the potential of online platforms in education at Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School, the role and participation of teachers in adopting this technology are vital. Recent studies emphasize the importance of teacher participation in using online platforms in the educational environment. For example, research by Nafrin and Hudaidah (2021) states, "Teacher participation in online platforms is key to the successful implementation of technology in learning". A study by Oktavian and Aldya (2020) also highlights the importance of teacher participation in the context of online education. They found that teacher participation in online platforms not only increases students' access to more varied educational resources but also has a positive impact on students' academic progress.

Online education platforms have developed rapidly in recent years. These platforms aim to facilitate interactive learning and provide access to various educational resources for teachers and students throughout Indonesia. The Merdeka Mengajar Platform allows teachers to upload learning materials, conduct online quizzes, interact with students, and more. With this platform, education can become more inclusive and affordable for everyone, regardless of geographical location or resource limitations (Wijaya, 2019).

Understanding how this platform has changed education in Indonesia in recent years is essential. According to Sanjaya (2020), the Merdeka Mengajar Platform has become a highly effective tool in facilitating learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, with millions of students and thousands of active teachers using this platform. Recent research

by Salsabila et al. (2020) describes the Merdeka Mengajar Platform as an "important solution in addressing the challenges of distance learning, as it provides access to various learning resources that support innovative learning processes. Furthermore, the Merdeka Mengajar Platform is known for its diverse features, such as online classes, interactive learning resources, and a teacher community. Research published by Salsabila et al. (2020) in the "Journal of Education and Learning" emphasizes that these features help teachers create a more interesting and effective learning experience. As technology and education rapidly develop, it is important to investigate the extent to which teachers in Indonesia actively use the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. Research published by Surani et al. (2020) in the journal "Technology Education" highlights the need to understand the level of teacher participation on the platform and the factors influencing their participation.

By gaining a deeper understanding of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, we can identify the potential and constraints associated with its use in education in Indonesia. As technology and education evolve, platforms like Merdeka Mengajar become increasingly relevant and instrumental in transforming education (Irawan et al., 2020). Therefore, further research on teacher participation in using this platform will help advance the education system and ensure that technology is effectively used to enhance the quality of learning in Indonesia.

The importance of technology in education is increasingly evident through the use of educational platforms like Merdeka Mengajar. In the last five years, the use of technology in learning has received special attention, as reflected in scientific literature and technology-focused journals on education through platforms like Merdeka Mengajar. Such platforms can expand access to education to previously hard-to-reach areas. According to research by Rahman et al. (2023), online platforms like Merdeka Mengajar have opened access to education in remote areas, helping students who previously had difficulty accessing educational resources.

The Merdeka Mengajar Platform provides tools for more interactive and engaging learning. According to Solviana (2020), the use of this platform enables gamification-based learning and online quizzes that enhance student engagement. This platform allows teachers to tailor learning to individual student needs. Research by Baruta (2023) highlights that "Merdeka Mengajar provides tools to track student progress and adjust materials according to their abilities.

The ability to use technology is one of the essential skills required in today's job market. Research by Sulianta (2020) states that "technology skills, as taught through platforms like Merdeka Mengajar, are crucial in preparing students for an increasingly digitalized working world." The importance of technology in education lies in its ability to provide flexibility in learning. This is supported by research by Sumanyo (2020), which states that "online platforms, including Merdeka Mengajar, have played a significant role in maintaining the continuity of education during the pandemic. Merdeka Mengajar supports innovation in teaching methods. Research by Indrawan et al. (2021) indicates that "the use of this platform has enabled the development of new and effective learning

methods. However, despite the potential for new and effective learning methods, not all teachers are active in using platforms like Merdeka Mengajar. Several factors can influence the level of teacher participation, including digital literacy levels, school administrative support, and the availability of technological resources. Therefore, research on teacher participation in using this platform is very relevant to understanding the potential and obstacles to technology use in education at Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School.

Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School is an upper secondary education institution located on Jalan Pendidikan, Katoi Village, District of Katoi, North Kolaka Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. The role of information technology for high school teachers is to make it easier for them to direct and convey learning to students, creating an innovative and fun learning environment (Sibagariang et al., 2021). Based on interviews with the head of Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School, teachers and educational staff still need training to improve their pedagogical skills, including understanding and using information technology to support teaching and learning activities and other academic support activities.

One very important information technology tool to use now is the Merdeka Mengajar platform developed by the Ministry of Education. The Merdeka Mengajar Platform is designed for teachers to implement the independent curriculum, allowing them to develop themselves in teaching, learning, and creating (Priantini et al., 2022). The platform includes several menus covering the Independent Curriculum (Introduction to the Independent Curriculum), Teaching and Learning Activities (student assessment, teaching tools), personal development (Independent Training, Community), and Finding and Sharing Inspiration (Inspiration Videos, Proof of Work). It also features tools for finding teaching tools, downloading teaching modules, uploading teaching modules/proofs of work, creating new folders, and adding teaching modules to a folder, with offline access capabilities.

The problem is the lack of knowledge and abilities of Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School teachers regarding how to operate the Merdeka Mengajar platform, from logging in, uploading work, to utilizing existing features. Additionally, there are issues related to obtaining login accounts for the platform. Therefore, this study aims to provide training on using the Merdeka Mengajar platform to enhance the understanding and abilities of Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School teachers and educational staff in utilizing information technology for self-development in teaching, learning, and creating.

This research will investigate the extent of teacher participation at Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School in using the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. We will identify factors influencing teacher participation levels and analyze their impact on the learning process at the school. This research is expected to provide a better understanding of the role of the Merdeka Mengajar platform in education and offer recommendations to increase teacher participation in its use.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research methods in studies This done through approach qualitative with use questionnaire interview as technique main data collection . Study This involving 14 teachers as selected participants purposively . The questions asked designed for teachers For explore experience and perception they to use of the Independent Teaching Platform (PMM) in context learning . Questionnaire interview shared using google form to 14 Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School teachers in Regency North Kolaka . As is in table following:

Table 1. Respondent Subject

No	Charging Time Questionnaire	Respondent's Name	School Homebase
1	11/8/2023 15.19.20	Misrawati , S.Pd.I	Religious education
2	11/8/2023 16.46.12	Hidar , S.Pd	Indonesian
3	11/8/2023 19.30.49	Dwi Muawiah , S.Pd	English
4	11/8/2023 19.51.08	Faisal, S.Pd	Civic education
5	11/8/2023 20.04.10	Alda Natalia, S.Pd	Art and culture
6	11/8/2023 20.14.33	Nurlina Nurdin, S.Pd	Mathematics
7	11/8/2023 08.21.05	Arwan Ali, S.Pd	Mathematics Interest
8	11/9/2023 5.33.46	Nurevi , S.Pd	Physical education
9	11/9/2023 7.30.58	Sugiarsih , S.Pd	Chemistry
10	11/9/2023 8.14.14	Rahmi, S.Pd	Physics
11	11/9/2023 9.38.22	Nur Aena, S.Pd	Biology
12	11/9/2023 10.22.16	Juharman , S.Pd	Economy
13	11/9/2023 10.31.32	Shiska , S.Pd	Crafts
14	11/15/2023 7.26.37	Nurul, S.Pd	History

The interviews have been completed to gain a deeper understanding of various aspects related to the use of "the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM)", including the existence of Learning ID accounts, access to necessary hardware and software devices, integration of PMM features in teaching, and proactive approaches to solving technical issues. Additionally, the focus was on participation in collaborative activities, contributions to the development of additional content, and the utilization of data and reports.

The collected data were analyzed qualitatively using a thematic approach to identify patterns, trends, and key findings from the teachers' responses. These findings were then compiled and interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which teachers have adopted and utilized PMM in their teaching practices.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An Analysis of Experiences and Perceptions from 14 Users

The research aims to delve into the extent to which teachers have adopted and utilized the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) in their teaching practices, offering a comprehensive look at their experiences and perceptions. Through direct interviews with 14 teachers, the study sought to understand the various dimensions of PMM adoption, focusing on critical factors such as the possession of a learning ID account, access to necessary hardware and software, the integration of PMM features in daily teaching, and the proactive resolution of technical issues. Additionally, the study explored teachers' participation in collaborative activities, their contributions to developing additional content on the platform, and their use of PMM-generated data and reports to enhance learning outcomes.

One of the key findings of the study was that all 14 teachers interviewed possessed a learning ID account and had sufficient access to the necessary hardware and software to use PMM effectively. This highlights a significant positive trend in the foundational adoption of the platform, indicating that the basic infrastructure required for using PMM is well established among the teachers surveyed. The study also found that the teachers regularly accessed and utilized the learning materials available through PMM, demonstrating that the platform's resources are being effectively incorporated into their teaching practices.

The teachers' readiness to participate in the platform's development and improvement was another positive outcome. Many expressed a willingness to engage with PMM actively, reflecting an openness to embracing the platform as a tool for enhancing teaching and learning. However, despite this overall positive engagement, the study also uncovered several areas where further attention is needed to maximize the platform's potential.

One area of concern is the proactive resolution of technical problems. While most teachers reported feeling confident in using PMM, one teacher admitted to not being proactive in solving technical issues. This teacher shared, "I feel less confident in resolving technical issues that arise. Maybe additional training would help me become more independent." This highlights a need for ongoing technical support and training to ensure that all teachers feel equipped to handle challenges independently, thereby enhancing their confidence and competence in using the platform.

Another significant finding was the lack of active participation in collaborative activities and online discussions via PMM. Some teachers reported struggling to engage in these activities due to tight schedules and a lack of motivation. One teacher remarked, "I struggle to collaborate online due to a tight schedule and lack of motivation." This indicates that fostering collaboration among teachers through the platform remains a challenge. To address this, schools or educational authorities may need to implement additional strategies or provide incentives to encourage greater participation in collaborative activities, ensuring that the full potential of PMM as a collaborative tool is realized.

The study also revealed that the majority of teachers (8 out of 14) were not actively contributing to the development of additional content on PMM. One teacher noted, "I don't fully understand how to contribute to the development of additional content. Maybe further explanations would help." This suggests that time constraints and a lack of understanding about how to contribute effectively may be barriers to content development on the platform. Providing clear guidance and simplifying the contribution process could help more teachers become involved in this aspect of PMM.

To sum up, the utilization of data and reports generated by PMM for improving learning outcomes showed room for improvement. Although most teachers recognized the value of these tools, only a few were using them to their full potential. One teacher admitted, "I haven't used PMM data and reports to their full potential for evaluating learning. I feel I need more training on how to utilize this data." This highlights the need for increased awareness and skill development in data usage among teachers, ensuring they can leverage PMM's analytical tools to enhance their teaching effectiveness. While the study found that PMM has been positively adopted as a learning tool by the teachers surveyed, several areas require further attention to maximize its potential. Targeted and sustainable strategies, including ongoing training, technical support, and incentives for collaboration and content development, are essential to support teachers in overcoming the challenges they face. By addressing these issues, PMM can become an even more effective tool for supporting the learning process and improving educational outcomes.

Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into the extent to which teachers have adopted and utilized the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) in their teaching practices. Findings from interviews with 14 teachers indicate generally positive adoption of PMM but also highlight several areas needing further attention.

Adoption and Utilization of PMM. Most teachers in this study had a learning ID account and adequate access to the necessary hardware and software for using PMM, and they regularly utilized the learning materials available through the platform. This finding aligns with Hattie's (2009) research, which emphasizes the importance of accessibility and technological support in improving teaching practices. Hattie shows that technology effectively integrated into teaching practices can improve student outcomes when it supports their needs. However, our findings also reveal shortcomings in some areas, such as participation in collaborative activities and development of additional content. Guskey's (2003) research supports this finding by showing that while technology can enhance learning, active and sustained engagement from teachers in using technology is crucial for its effectiveness. Guskey highlights the need for continuous training and support to ensure that teachers can use technology optimally.

Proactivity in Solving Technical Problems. Only one teacher reported not being proactive in solving technical problems. This indicates a need for additional training and ongoing support. This finding is consistent with Ertmer's (1999) research, which found that lack of technical skills can hinder effective technology use. Ertmer emphasizes the

need for support-based approaches to help teachers overcome technical issues and enhance their technological capabilities.

Participation in Collaborative Activities. Some teachers were not active in collaborative activities or online discussions via PMM, indicating challenges in fostering collaboration. Vygotsky (1978)'s research shows that collaboration and social interaction are key aspects of effective learning. Vygotsky argues that interactions with peers and collaborative discussions can deepen understanding and improve teachers' skills. These challenges highlight the need for additional strategies or incentives to encourage teachers' involvement in collaborative activities.

Development of Additional Content. Most teachers were not active in developing additional content through PMM. This could be due to time constraints or a lack of understanding of how to contribute. Fullan (2007)'s research indicates that ongoing professional development and adequate support are crucial for increasing teacher engagement in content development processes. Fullan emphasizes that appropriate support and collaborative learning can enhance teachers' contributions to content development.

Utilization of Data and Reports. The utilization of PMM-generated data and reports for improving learning also shows a gap. Only one teacher reported not using data for evaluation and improvement, while others may require further training. Shulman (1987)'s research on pedagogical content knowledge shows that utilizing data to enhance learning requires a deep understanding and analytical skills from teachers. Shulman emphasizes that adequate training in using data for evaluation and improvement is essential.

CONCLUSION

This initial study demonstrates a positive adoption of "the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM)" by the teachers at Haji Agus Salim Katoi High School in their teaching practices. Most teachers have their Learning ID accounts and sufficient access to the necessary hardware and software for using PMM. They actively engage with and utilize the learning materials available on PMM and express positive responses toward the platform's development and improvement. However, there are still areas that need attention. Some teachers need to be more proactive in finding solutions to technical issues related to PMM usage, and there are challenges in encouraging participation in collaborative activities through the platform. Additionally, some teachers are not actively involved in developing additional content via PMM, and there is room for improving teachers' awareness and skills in using data to enhance the quality of learning. Continued efforts are needed to provide training or support to increase teacher involvement in the optimal use of PMM. In conclusion, while the adoption of PMM is already positive, there are areas that require further attention to enhance the platform's effectiveness in supporting education.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Ariani, M., Zulhawati , Z., Haryani , H., Zani, BN, Husnita , L., Firmansyah, MB, Karuru, P., & Hamsiah , A. (2023). *Application of Digital Era Learning Media* . PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia.

Baruta , Yusuf. 2023. *Assessment Learning in the Independent Curriculum : Early Childhood Education , Basic Education, and Secondary Education* . P4I Publisher .

David Wijaya, S E. 2019. *Inclusive Education Management Elementary school* . Prenada Media.

Hakim, Muhammad Fadhil Al, and Abdul Azis. 2021. "The Role of Teachers and Parents: Challenges and Solutions in Online Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *History: Educational Journal of History and Humanities* 4 (1): 16–25.

Indrawan , Febrianto Yopi , Edi Irawan, Titah Sayekti , and Izza Aliyatul Muna. 2021. " Effectiveness of Online Jigsaw Learning Methods in Improving Skills Collaboration Middle school students ." *Indonesian Tadris IPA Journal* 1 (3): 259–68.

Irawan, Edi, Syaiful Arif, Arif Rahman Hakim, Ulum Fatmahanik , Wirawan Fadly, Sofwan Hadi, Faninda Novika Pertiwi, Hanin Niswatul Fauziah, Lukman Santoso, and Farida Sekti Pahlavi . 2020. *Higher Education During the Pandemic : Transformation , Adaptation , and Metamorphosis Welcoming the New Normal* . Zahir Publishing.

Leavy, P. (2022). Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches. books.google.com. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=yj2VEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1& dq=mixed+meth ods&ots= Yki4lGynUf&sig=mhRhUuKvXWuIoyly3UymwOrFtv0

Mulyasa, H. E. (2023). *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka*. Bumi Aksara.

Mulyono, R., & Sulistyani , F. (2022). Implementation Independent Curriculum (IKM) As A Choices for Educational Units : Literature Review. *Didactics : Journal Scientific PGSD STKIP Subang , 8* (2), 1999–2019.

Mustari, M. (2022). *Management education in the independent era Study* . Master of Religion Studies Study Program at UIN Sunan Gunung Jati Bandung.

Nafrin, Irinna Aulia , and Hudaidah Hudaidah . 2021. " Development of Indonesian Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic ." *Educational : Journal Educational Science* 3(2): 456–62.

Oktavian, Riskey, and Riantina Fitra Aldya . 2020. " Effectiveness Integrated Online Learning in the Era of Education 4.0." *Didactics : Journal of Education and Science Knowledge* 20(2): 129–35.

Priantini , Dewa Ayu Made Manu Okta, Ni Ketut Suarni , and I Ketut Suar Adnyana . 2022. " Analysis Independent Curriculum and Independent Learning Platform For Realizing Quality Education ." *Journal Quality Assurance* 8(02): 238–44.

Rahman, Eka Yuliana, Megalia Riane Kaseger , and Ressy Mewengkang . 2023. *Education Management* . Mafy Media Literacy Indonesia.

Rohimat , S., Sanusi, S., & Munthahanah , M. (2022). Dissemination of the Independent Teaching Platform For Teachers of State High School 6, Serang City . *ABDIKARYA: Journal Community Service and Empowerment* , *4* (2), 124–132.

Salsabila, Unik Hanifah, Lailli Irna Sari, Khusna Haibati Lathif, Ayu Puji Lestari, and Asyharinur Swinging . 2020. "The Role of Technology in Learning During the Covid-19 Pandemic ." *Al- Mutharahah : Journal Research and Social Studies Religion* 17(2): 188–98.

Sanjaya, Ridwan. 2020. *21 Reflections Online Learning in Times of Emergency* . SCU Knowledge Media.

Sibagariang , Dahlia, Hotmaulina Sihotang , and Erni Murniarti . 2021. "The Role of Driving Teachers in Independent Learning Education in Indonesia." *Journal Educational Dynamics* 14(2): 88–99.

Solviana , Meita Dwi. 2020. " Utilization Educational Technology During the Covid-19 Pandemic : Use Online Gamification at Muhammadiyah University Pringsewu Lampung." *Al Jahiz: Journal of Biology Education Research* 1 (1): 1–14.

Sulianta , Feri. 2020. Digital *Literacy , Research and Development from a Social Studies Perspective* . Sulianta Ferry .

Sumantyo , Franciscus Dwikotjo Sri. 2020. "Higher Education During and After Covid-19." *Journal of Scientific Studies* 1 (1).

Surani, Dewi, Jaka Wijaya Kusuma, and Nugrahini Kusumawati . 2020. "Online Platforms in Lectures During the Covid-19 Pandemic ." *Journal of Education: Theory, Research , and Development* 5 (9): 1338–49.

Susilowati, E. (2022). Implementation curriculum independent learn by eye lesson Islamic education . *Al- Miskawaih : Journal of Science Education* , *1* (1), 115–132.

Zen, Zelhendri . 2019. " Based Education Innovation Technology Information : Towards Future Education ." *E-Tech: Journal Scientific Educational Technology* 6(2).