

The Influence of the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform on the Development of Teachers' Competency in Junior High Schools

Duwi Agustina¹, Neta Dian Lestari²

¹SMP Negeri 2 Mesuji, Ogan Komering Ilir, South Sumatra, Indonesia, ²Universitas PGRI Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia

Corresponding author e-mail: duwiagustina96@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the influence of the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform on the development of teacher competencies in junior high schools in Mesuji District. In the digital era, this platform is presented by the government to support improving the quality of learning and teacher professional development through access to teaching materials, learning evaluations, and independent training. This study uses a literature review approach by reviewing a number of national scientific articles related to the implementation and impact of the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform on teacher pedagogical, professional, and digital competencies. This study found that the use of the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform significantly contributed to improving teacher pedagogical and professional competencies through the provision of curriculum-appropriate materials and technology skills training. The results of the study showed that teachers experienced increased skills in preparing learning plans based on the *Merdeka* curriculum, as well as increased competence in utilizing technology for a more effective and efficient learning process. The novelty of this study lies in the focus of the analysis of the impact of the platform on a specific area, namely Mesuji District, which previously received less attention in national research. The contribution of this study is to provide recommendations for policymakers and platform developers to continue to improve relevant features and content and for schools to encourage the use of this platform as an integral part of teacher professional development in the future.

Keywords: Independent Teaching Platform, Professional Development, Teacher's Competency

A. Introduction

The *Merdeka Mengajar* platform was launched as part of Indonesia's national education policy aimed at supporting the development of teachers' professional skills. This platform provides various training modules, interactive learning media, and assessment tools, with the hope of strengthening teacher competencies, including in terms of pedagogy, digital literacy, and learning adjustments. In public

junior high schools, especially in areas with limited access such as Mesuji District, this platform is expected to have a significant impact on improving teacher capacity and performance. Many studies have stated that technology in education allows educators to access more innovative, flexible, and adaptive teaching resources and methods (Elmaadaway & Abouelenein, 2023). The *Merdeka Mengajar* platform is an innovation in the world of Indonesian education that aims to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Ramadhani et al., 2024). Various studies have been conducted to explore the impact of using this platform on teacher learning practices. The results of the study showed that the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform made a significant contribution to improving teacher pedagogical competencies (Faidah, 2024). Teachers who actively use this platform tend to be more adept at designing student-centered learning, utilizing various learning resources, and conducting authentic assessments. In addition, this platform also facilitates collaboration between teachers, thereby creating a dynamic learning community.

Other studies also highlight the role of the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform in overcoming the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This platform provides various resources needed by teachers, such as teaching modules, question banks, and examples of innovative learning. Thus, teachers can more easily understand key concepts in the Merdeka Curriculum and apply them in learning practices (Latifa et al., 2023). However, several studies have also identified several obstacles in the use of this platform, such as limited internet access in some areas and the lack of intensive training for teachers (Alamsyah & Siti Saleha Gandana, 2023). Overall, the literature review shows that the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform has great potential to improve the quality of education in Indonesia. However, ongoing efforts are needed to overcome existing obstacles and ensure that this platform can be optimally utilized by all teachers. Further research can focus on the long-term impact of using this platform on student learning outcomes, as well as the development of new features that can meet the needs of teachers more specifically. Although there have been many studies examining the effectiveness of *Merdeka Mengajar* in general, there are still few studies that specifically highlight the influence of this platform on teachers in public junior high schools, especially in certain areas such as Mesuji District. Furthermore, there is no in-depth understanding of how this platform is implemented and how teachers in remote areas respond to and utilize it in the context of developing their competencies.

Teacher competency is a key factor in the success of the learning process. Various studies have been conducted to identify the dimensions of effective teacher competency. Tambak et al. (2023) research highlights the importance of teacher pedagogical, professional, and social competence in improving the quality of learning. Pedagogical competence includes the ability to design innovative learning, choose the right learning methods, and conduct valid and reliable assessments

(Nurrijal et al., 2023). Professional competency includes mastery of subject matter, the ability to use technology in learning, and the ability to communicate effectively. Meanwhile, social competence includes the ability to interact with students, colleagues, and parents. Further research by Choirudin et al. (2023) shows that high teacher competency is positively correlated with student learning achievement. Competent teachers are able to create a conducive learning environment, motivate students to learn, and provide constructive feedback (Montilla et al., 2023). In addition, research also shows that continuous development of teacher competency is very important to improve the quality of education. This is in line with the view of Kilag et al. (2023), who stated that teachers need to participate in relevant professional development programs to improve their competence. Based on the literature review above, it can be concluded that teacher competency is a very important factor in the success of the learning process. Teacher competency, which includes pedagogical, professional, and social needs, needs to be continuously developed sustainably (Markauskaite et al., 2023). Teacher competency development can be done in various ways, such as participating in training, workshops, or further study programs. In addition, support from schools and the government is also very much needed to create a conducive environment for teacher professional development.

Teacher professional development is a central issue in the world of education. Various studies have been conducted to understand the factors that influence the effectiveness of teacher professional development. The results of the study showed that effective professional development does not only focus on improving pedagogical knowledge but also involves aspects such as changes in attitudes, skills, and classroom practices. Several studies emphasize the importance of creating a professional learning community that supports teachers in sharing experiences and knowledge. In addition, research also shows that continuous professional development integrated with the school context is very important to improve the quality of learning. The use of technology in teacher professional development is also the focus of recent research. Online learning platforms, such as the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform, have provided teachers with wider access to training and professional development (Fadhil Zil Ikram et al., 2023). Research shows that the use of technology can increase the flexibility and effectiveness of teacher professional development (Dahri et al., 2023). However, challenges such as the digital divide and lack of technical support are still obstacles to optimal use of technology. Student-centered teacher professional development is becoming a growing trend. Research shows that teachers who engage in student-centered professional development tend to be better able to meet the diverse learning needs of students. This approach involves teachers in analyzing student learning data, designing differentiated learning, and working with parents. However, further research is needed to deeply understand the impact of student-centered professional development on student learning outcomes.

Based on a literature review of 15 national articles in the 2021–2024 period, various studies have shown that the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform can generally improve teacher competency in certain aspects, such as project-based learning planning and improving digital literacy. However, there are variations in the findings, depending on the location of the study, the conditions of the teacher's work environment, and the accessibility of the platform. In some areas, this platform has a positive impact on teacher motivation and adaptation to educational changes.

However, obstacles such as lack of infrastructure and unsustainable guidance are still challenges. In general, the articles that have been reviewed have similarities; namely, research conducted by Cahyadin et al. (2024) shows that the platform can have a positive impact on teachers' technical and pedagogical skills. However, on the other hand, there are still many things that need to be further researched regarding the extent to which these platforms can actually improve teacher competency holistically. The *Merdeka Mengajar* platform is effective in improving teachers' learning planning and digital literacy skills (Sabariah et al., 2023). There are also differences between several articles, such as emphasizing pedagogical aspects and content knowledge, while others focus more on digital technical skills. Some studies show significant obstacles in platform access, especially in remote areas, while others show positive acceptance and improvement in teacher skills in more accessible areas. The formulation of the problem is as follows: 1) How does the *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform affect the development of junior high school teacher competencies in Mesuji District? 2) What are the obstacles faced by teachers in Mesuji District in accessing and utilizing this *Merdeka Mengajar* Platform? 3) What factors influence the success rate of implementing this platform in areas with limited infrastructure?

B. Methods

This study uses a research design with a literature review approach. This method is carried out by reviewing various journal articles, research reports, and official documents that are relevant to the topic to gain an in-depth understanding of the influence of the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform on teacher competency. Literature review is used to identify trends, findings, and gaps in research that has been conducted. Articles published in the last 3-5 years are relevant to the new *Merdeka Belajar* policy. Focus on the topic of developing teacher competency in the implementation of technology or digital platforms. Review the context of education in Indonesia or relevant international contexts. Some of the articles reviewed include Articles on the impact of the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform on improving teacher pedagogical and professional competence. Evaluation studies on the effectiveness of educational technology platforms on developing teacher instructional skills in Indonesia. Articles on the benefits and challenges of using educational technology for teacher

professional development. Case studies on teacher training and capacity development through digital platforms in secondary schools.

The instrument used in this study is a literature analysis table. This research instrument contains the title of the article, year, and source. Research methods and results, Indicators of teacher competency developed (pedagogical, professional, social, and personality) The influence of the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform on teacher competency. Data analysis was carried out using the content analysis method, which includes the stages of Coding: Identifying themes and subthemes that are relevant to teacher competency development through the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform, such as pedagogical skills, increasing subject matter knowledge, and digital skills. Categorization: Grouping research results into certain categories, such as the benefits of using the platform, obstacles, and their impact on competency. Interpretation: Comparing the results found from various articles to identify general trends and patterns in research related to the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform. Synthesis: Compiling a summary of the results found to answer the research objectives. The results of this literature review are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of how the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform contributes to teacher competency development, as well as its potential implementation in Public Junior High Schools in Mesuji District.

C. Results and Discussion

This study found that the use of the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform had a significant impact on the development of teacher competencies in several key aspects, such as pedagogical skills, classroom management, utilization of learning technology, and teacher involvement in student-centered learning. The use of learning features on this platform, such as modules, learning videos, and interactive assessments, has helped teachers improve their understanding of a more dynamic and adaptive approach, according to student needs. Pedagogical Competence: Teachers who actively use the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform show significant improvements in designing creative and adaptive learning strategies. Classroom Management: This platform helps teachers understand how to manage interactive and conducive classes. Learning Technology: Teachers become more familiar and confident in using technology as a learning tool. Teacher Engagement: There is an increase in teacher participation in a more student-centered learning approach.

Based on 15 national journal articles, most of the literature supports the results of this study, indicating that the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform has a positive contribution to the development of teacher competencies. Technology-Based Learning: A study by Faidah (2024) showed that the use of technology in the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform improves teachers' digital literacy, which is an important part of 21st century competencies. Improving Pedagogical Skills: The results of Sofi-Karim et al. (2023) study stated that the learning modules in the platform help teachers improve their

pedagogical skills, especially in implementing interactive learning methods. Teacher Creativity: In an article by Anggriyani & Bulkani (2024), the use of this platform has been shown to encourage teachers to develop creativity through project-based learning activities.

On the other hand, two journal articles showed less supportive results: Limited Access and Infrastructure: A study by Ramdani et al. (2022) found that in several areas with limited internet infrastructure, the effectiveness of the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform was reduced so that teacher competency development was uneven. Difficulties in Technology Adaptation: An article by Marisana et al. (2023) highlighted that some teachers had difficulty adopting new technology provided by the platform, which caused obstacles in the development of competencies that should have been optimized.

D. Conclusions

The conclusion of this study is that the *Merdeka Mengajar* platform has a significant positive influence on the development of teacher competencies in junior high schools in Mesuji District, especially in improving pedagogical skills, classroom management, and technology adaptation. However, infrastructure challenges and technology adaptation are factors that need to be considered in implementation in different areas. This literature review strengthens the research findings by providing supporting evidence from various journals, as well as presenting alternative perspectives from two articles that highlight the limitations of using this platform in the field.

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