

Enhancing Pancasila Education Through the Merdeka Mengajar Platform: An Analysis of Its Impact on Teaching Quality in Secondary Schools

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ABSTRACT

The Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) is designed to support Indonesia's Independent Curriculum, aimed at enhancing instructional quality by aligning with the needs of individual schools. Specifically, in Pancasila Education, PMM is expected to facilitate effective, high-quality learning. This qualitative study used a case study approach to examine PMM's effectiveness in Pancasila Education (PKn) at SMP Negeri 51 Palembang. Data were collected through observations and interviews with three PKn teachers, focusing on the challenges they encounter and their strategies to integrate PMM into their teaching. Analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, involving data collection, display, reduction, and conclusion drawing. Findings indicate that PMM aids PKn teachers in delivering high-quality instruction by providing accessible teaching materials and interactive learning media aligned with the Independent Curriculum. However, challenges persist, including limited teacher familiarity with PMM, inadequate devices and internet access, and difficulties in integrating PMM with classroom practices. Teachers employ various strategies to overcome these barriers, including self-directed learning and school-provided training sessions, which enhance their technological competence and understanding of PMM. Additionally, the platform's resources are adaptable, allowing teachers to modify content to meet curriculum standards effectively. PMM has significant potential to improve teaching quality in PKn education, though its effectiveness is influenced by the availability of resources and teacher training. Enhanced support in these areas could maximize PMM's impact in Indonesian schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the Merdeka Curriculum represents a pivotal shift in Indonesia's education system, emphasizing the need for innovation in pedagogical approaches and the integration of technology in classrooms. According to Rogers' theory of diffusion of innovation, embracing technological advancements is essential for educational development and empowering teachers to harness modern educational resources (Rogers, 2003). The Merdeka Curriculum, introduced as part of this shift, encourages educators to utilize dynamic and interactive media, particularly digital tools, to create a more engaging learning experience. However, this shift has introduced new challenges, particularly for teachers who are less familiar with technology, such as senior educators, who often require additional time and resources to adapt to these changes (Romadhon et al., 2023).

In addition to the technological demands, teachers face the task of internalizing and applying a new learning paradigm that significantly differs from previous approaches. Syahriani et al. (2023) identified that adapting to the Merdeka Curriculum involves overcoming both cognitive and practical barriers, as many educators still struggle to fully integrate ICT (Information and Communication Technology) into their teaching. Despite the advancements in educational technology, maximizing ICT's potential in the classroom remains a challenge for some teachers. This issue highlights the importance of providing ongoing training and support to help educators improve their technology skills. In response to this need, the Indonesian Ministry of Education has developed the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM), an application specifically tailored to the Merdeka Curriculum. PMM serves as a tool for teachers to create learning materials and enhance their professional competencies.

The development of the Merdeka Mengajar platform is expected to facilitate the implementation of Pancasila values. This reflects the importance of building and strengthening character education for students (Putri et al., 2023). The platform includes a menu that discusses Pancasila and its application in daily life. This feature aligns with one of PMM's development goals: to provide a foundation for understanding the new paradigm based on Pancasila (Susilawati et al., 2021).

The PMM platform is designed not only to support pedagogical innovation but also to strengthen character education by integrating Pancasila values into the curriculum. Character education, as anchored in the principles of Pancasila, is fundamental to fostering a generation that upholds Indonesian cultural and ethical values. According to Putri et al. (2023), PMM's features are instrumental in encouraging educators to incorporate Pancasila teachings into daily classroom activities. One of the platform's central objectives is to facilitate teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum's new paradigms, which are deeply rooted in Pancasila principles (Susilawati et al., 2021).

The Merdeka Mengajar Platform is expected to cultivate a more innovative learning environment that reflects the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum. Despite these expectations, the platform's usage among teachers remains limited, with only 1.40 million out of 3.36 million teachers actively using PMM. Barriers such as time limitations, insufficient administrative support, and an unsupportive school environment contribute to this low adoption rate (Sholeh et al., 2023). Integrating PMM into Pancasila Education (PKn) offers a strategic opportunity to instill Pancasila values in students, aligning with the national vision of nurturing an advanced, Pancasila-minded society (Wulandari et al., 2021).

Efforts to integrate PMM are already being undertaken in schools such as SMP Negeri 51 in Palembang, where teachers—particularly those involved in Pancasila Education—are undergoing targeted training to enhance their skills with PMM and implement the Merdeka Curriculum. These training sessions, which cover various functions of PMM, from resource gathering to report preparation, have significantly improved teachers' confidence and proficiency with the platform. Initially, teachers found the platform challenging due to its novelty and required considerable support. However, with consistent training provided by the school, teachers have become more adept at using PMM and are expected to integrate it regularly into their teaching. For Pancasila Education teachers, mastering PMM and related technological tools is essential for delivering effective education.

This study aims to investigate the use of PMM within Pancasila Education (PKn) and its impact on enhancing learning quality. The PMM platform, aligned with the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, seeks

to foster professional development among teachers as part of broader educational reform efforts. This research will assess PMM's effectiveness in PKn classes and examine how its features can be optimized to elevate the learning experience and promote Pancasila-based character education.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach utilizing a case study method to gain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) and its role in enhancing the quality of Pancasila Education (PKn) at SMP Negeri 51 Kota Palembang. The case study method enables an in-depth exploration of the experiences, perceptions, and challenges encountered by teachers as they integrate PMM into their teaching practices, with an emphasis on descriptive insights rather than hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2019). The research focuses specifically on PKn teachers, purposively selected to represent varying levels of teaching experience and technological proficiency, which provides a richer and more nuanced perspective on PMM implementation within the school. Three PKn teachers serve as the primary informants, offering diverse viewpoints that illuminate the practical application and effectiveness of PMM in a real-world educational setting.

To collect data, the study employs multiple methods to ensure a holistic understanding of PMM's impact. First, participatory observation was conducted to directly observe the integration of PMM in the classroom, noting how teachers utilize its features in the teaching and learning of Pancasila values. Second, in-depth interviews with the selected PKn teachers were conducted to explore their experiences, perceptions of PMM's utility, and the challenges they face, with questions designed to uncover both perceived benefits and areas for improvement. These interviews allow for a deeper understanding of how PMM contributes to learning quality, particularly in fostering character education aligned with Pancasila values. Third, documentation was collected, including training materials, PMM usage reports, and school records related to PMM training sessions, to supplement interview and observational data with factual records. Lastly, an evaluation checklist was used to systematically assess PMM's use, including the frequency and variety of features utilized, the integration of Pancasila-related content, and the alignment with instructional objectives (Sugiyono, 2015).

Data analysis in this study was carried out using thematic analysis, where data from observations, interviews, and documentation were organized and coded to identify recurring patterns and themes. The process began with data reduction to isolate relevant insights into the application and impact of PMM in PKn education, with data categorized into key themes, including teacher challenges, PMM's perceived effectiveness, and its contribution to enhancing teacher competence and confidence in using technology. These themes were further examined to draw connections between PMM's functionalities and the broader educational goals of the Merdeka Curriculum. To enhance the validity of findings, triangulation was employed by cross-verifying data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation, ensuring consistency and credibility of the results.

Finally, conclusions were derived based on the emergent themes, providing insights into PMM's influence on the quality of PKn learning at SMP Negeri 51 Kota Palembang. This study's findings contribute to understanding PMM's potential to not only support technological adoption but also reinforce Pancasila-based character education, ultimately highlighting both the strengths and areas for improvement in PMM's role within the evolving educational landscape of Indonesia (Moleong, 2018).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Teacher Training and the Use of PMM*

Teacher training and the use of PMM have become crucial aspects in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP N 51 Palembang. Based on observations, the researcher found that the PMM is specifically designed to help teachers implement this curriculum more easily. Before using PMM, the

PKn teachers at the school had already received an orientation regarding its use. The school also provided training to ensure that teachers could operate the platform efficiently. In these training sessions, teachers were introduced to the various features within PMM, such as up-to-date information, insights on the Merdeka Curriculum, self-guided training, teaching activities, and community support (Arnes et al., 2023).

Over time, the teachers at SMP N 51 Palembang have shown significant improvement in using PMM. They are now able to access various features, especially those related to PKn learning, such as assessments and teaching tools. The teachers have also successfully adapted the materials available on PMM to meet students' needs, enabling them to achieve the learning objectives of PKn more effectively. However, challenges remain, particularly in fully utilizing the assessment feature within PMM. Some teachers have not yet mastered how to use the assessment tools for evaluating learning outcomes, resulting in assessments being conducted manually according to their own methods (Arisanti, 2022).

The discussion surrounding teacher training and the use of PMM is highly relevant in supporting the improvement of learning quality in the Merdeka Curriculum era. PMM provides a platform that facilitates teachers in accessing materials, references, and enhancing their competencies. This is an essential step in ensuring that educators have the right tools and skills to deliver learning that meets students' needs in the digital age (Ikram et al., 2023).

In practice, intensive training and support for teachers are crucial, especially in introducing the various features available within PMM. Research at SMP N 51 Palembang shows that although teachers initially faced challenges in operating PMM, through training and collaboration with the school and fellow teachers via MGMP (Subject Teacher Discussion Forum), they managed to overcome these difficulties. This training enabled teachers to become more proficient in using PMM, whether for accessing teaching materials, selecting effective teaching techniques, or designing engaging learning media.

Furthermore, training is not only aimed at improving technological competency but also helping teachers integrate PMM with teaching materials and methods aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. This process requires time and patience, as each teacher needs to adapt to the ongoing changes, particularly in maximizing the use of technology. Support from the school, including PMM expert-led training and continuous orientation, is a critical factor in ensuring that PMM can be optimally implemented in classrooms (Soedjono, 2023).

The use of PMM, supported by adequate training and guidance, plays an important role in enhancing the quality of PKn education at SMP N 51 Palembang. Collaboration among teachers and support from the school are strategic steps in addressing the challenges that arise, making the learning process more effective and meaningful for students. The training and use of PMM at SMP N 51 Palembang have progressed well. Although there are still some challenges, especially in fully integrating PMM with the PKn teaching process, efforts to continually improve teachers' competence in using the platform are ongoing. Additional in-depth training is required to optimize PMM usage, especially in aligning it with all aspects of PKn learning, from materials to assessments, so that the teaching and learning process can be conducted more effectively and efficiently (Hale, 2024).

3.2 Challenges in Integrating PMM

The introduction of the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) in Indonesia's education system aims to facilitate teachers in the learning process by providing materials and tools to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. However, teachers and schools face several challenges in integrating PMM into their teaching practices.

First, the primary challenge lies in technology readiness and teachers' digital skills. As revealed in the research, teachers at SMP N 51 Palembang initially struggled with using the features provided by PMM. These difficulties were due to a lack of technological understanding and inadequate support devices, such as sufficient internet access and computers. Nonetheless, with the support of the school, including training and the presence of experts, teachers were able to overcome these obstacles. This

aligns with research by Virgiyanti et al. (2023), which indicates that a common barrier to PMM usage is the limited technological competence of teachers.

Second, the integration of PMM with learning materials poses another challenge. Teachers are required to align the content available on PMM with the teaching methods used in the classroom, but often, they are unable to connect PMM with instructional media. Teachers tend to focus only on integrating the content, without maximizing the use of media that could enrich the students' learning experience. According to Asfiati (2023), effective integration of PMM with the Merdeka Curriculum requires thorough preparation, including training that enables teachers to align PMM, the curriculum, and classroom instruction.

Third, time constraints and workload management also affect the effectiveness of PMM usage. Teachers often find it challenging to allocate time for using PMM amidst their heavy teaching responsibilities. This impacts the optimal utilization of PMM. According to Widiastuti et al. (2023), schools need to prepare educational units to make the most of PMM in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum. Despite the various challenges in integrating PMM, whether related to technology, time, or teacher preparedness, efforts made both independently and through school support have shown positive results. PMM has been able to improve the quality of education, particularly in Civics education at SMP N 51 Palembang. Effective integration between PMM and teaching materials has positively impacted the achievement of learning goals and enhanced educational quality.

During the observation process, several findings highlighted the challenges in integrating PMM with Civics lessons at SMP N 51 Palembang. From the observations, eight aspects aligned with the initial plan, while 7 did not. In general, PMM is designed to assist teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, with prior training provided to Civics teachers at SMP N 51 Palembang to ensure they can understand and operate PMM efficiently. Although teachers were able to quickly access PMM, the main challenge lay in their ability to maximize the platform's use in every aspect of teaching.

A significant challenge is the teachers' limited capacity to fully integrate PMM into the overall Civics learning activities. While menus in PMM, such as assessments and teaching tools, have been utilized, teachers have not yet been able to optimize these features in all learning activities. This is related to the teachers' limited understanding of how to connect the assessments available in PMM with evaluation methods appropriate for Civics lessons. Furthermore, PMM is not yet available for direct use by students, so teachers have to find alternative ways to assign tasks and assessments (Triwibowo et al., 2024).

Another challenge involves teachers' limitations in linking PMM with teaching methods and instructional media. Although teachers have become accustomed to using various methods such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL), integrating these methods with PMM still requires further effort. Regarding media, while some teachers believe that PMM and media can complement each other, many teachers have not fully exploited this integration.

Additionally, in terms of delivering content and teaching techniques, even though teachers have employed a variety of techniques and media, they still face challenges in blending the materials provided by PMM with the local context and students' needs in the field. Adjusting PMM's teaching materials to real classroom conditions is one area that requires more attention. This is also evident in the conclusion delivery process, where teachers still prefer using reflection and traditional methods rather than utilizing PMM, despite the platform's potential to facilitate these activities.

3.3 Benefits of PMM for Learning Materials

The benefits of the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) in educational materials are significant, especially in enhancing the quality of teaching in schools that have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. PMM is designed to provide easier access for teachers to obtain learning materials that align with the curriculum, while also helping to improve their competencies through various available resources and references. Teachers can access materials, learning resources, and innovative teaching

methods that not only enhance student understanding but also create a more engaging and interactive learning environment (Cholilah et al., 2023).

For instance, the use of PMM at SMP N 51 Palembang demonstrates that despite initial challenges such as adaptation difficulties and limited technological resources, teachers have been able to overcome these barriers with support from the school, training, and collaboration with fellow teachers through subject teacher deliberations (Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran, MGMP). By integrating the materials available in PMM into their teaching, teachers—particularly in the subjects of Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan (Civics Education)—can develop teaching methods that are more relevant and appealing to students.

Another advantage of PMM is its ability to provide teaching materials that can be adopted and customized by teachers, inspiring them to design effective learning media. Although PMM does not directly supply instructional media, the platform offers valuable references to help teachers find appropriate solutions for creating more efficient learning experiences. Through the utilization of PMM, the learning process becomes more effective and of higher quality. Teachers can achieve learning objectives more successfully, while students enjoy a more meaningful and engaging learning experience, ultimately contributing to improved overall student learning outcomes (Azizah & Prasetyo, 2023).

PMM offers a variety of features and menus that teachers can access to enrich their teaching. One of the frequently used features is the Kegiatan Belajar Mengajar (Teaching and Learning Activities), which includes assessments and teaching tools as references for developing learning materials. Civics teachers at SMP N 51 Palembang utilize this feature to access content and tailor it to the needs and characteristics of their students. Additionally, PMM facilitates teachers in obtaining learning materials that can be adapted to local contexts and diverse learning needs (Rahayu et al., 2022).

However, there are challenges in utilizing PMM, such as the limitations on using PMM for tasks assigned to students. Nevertheless, teachers continue to use materials and assessments from PMM as a guideline for assigning tasks, even though direct student access to PMM is not yet available. In addition to providing ease in finding and adapting learning materials, PMM also serves as a means for enhancing teacher competencies through the *Pelatihan Mandiri* (Self-Directed Training) feature, which allows teachers to learn flexibly and independently. PMM positively contributes to improving the quality of Civics education by providing up-to-date materials, promoting collaboration among teachers, and allowing flexibility in tailoring instruction to meet students' needs (Elpin et al., 2024).

Interviews with civics teachers also affirm that PMM has helped them establish structured learning materials that are aligned with the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum while also creating a more enjoyable learning atmosphere that is relevant to students' everyday lives. Although there are still challenges in optimizing its utilization, PMM has provided significant benefits overall in supporting civics education at SMP N 51 Palembang.

3.4 Enhancing Teacher Competence and Learning Quality with PMM

The findings from this study underscore the significance of PMM as a tool that enhances teaching practices and supports the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP N 51 Palembang. Teacher training plays a fundamental role in realizing PMM's potential; through structured orientation and practical training, teachers become more proficient in utilizing PMM's features. This competence development has enabled teachers to effectively access and adapt resources within PMM, promoting improved teaching quality in Pancasila Education (PKn) and aligning with curriculum goals. Notably, these training sessions, which cover essential features of PMM, are essential for helping educators overcome initial challenges, particularly those related to technology proficiency and classroom integration (Arnes et al., 2023).

Despite substantial progress, the findings reveal persistent challenges in fully integrating PMM with PKn lessons. Teachers continue to face obstacles related to limited understanding of certain features, such as digital assessments, and the technological infrastructure necessary to use PMM effectively. Teachers' reliance on alternative assessment methods highlights the need for ongoing

support, both in training and resource provision. Addressing these challenges will further empower teachers to use PMM comprehensively, enhancing their ability to evaluate student learning within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum (Arisanti, 2022).

In conclusion, PMM has shown considerable benefits in enhancing instructional quality by providing accessible resources that are aligned with the curriculum. With continued support, including training and collaborative initiatives, teachers can more effectively integrate PMM's features into their practice, creating a more dynamic and interactive learning environment for students. By supporting teachers' adaptability to new educational technologies, SMP N 51 Palembang is fostering a progressive approach to PKn that promotes both professional growth for teachers and meaningful learning experiences for students (Hale, 2024).

The findings from this study highlight the transformative potential of PMM in enhancing teaching quality and aligning educational practices with the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP N 51 Palembang. Teacher training emerges as a critical enabler, equipping educators with the skills needed to effectively navigate PMM's features and integrate them into Pancasila Education (PKn) lessons. While notable progress has been made, persistent challenges such as limited technological infrastructure and insufficient familiarity with advanced PMM features underscore the need for ongoing professional development and resource enhancement. Addressing these challenges is pivotal to unlocking the full potential of PMM as a tool for dynamic and interactive teaching. By investing in continuous support and fostering a culture of collaboration, SMP N 51 Palembang can ensure that PMM not only supports curriculum delivery but also contributes to sustainable professional growth for educators and enriched learning experiences for students.

4. CONCLUSION

The research concludes that teacher training and the use of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) are pivotal in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP N 51 Palembang. Findings indicate that PMM effectively supports teachers in accessing and adapting teaching materials, enhancing their competencies, and achieving more interactive and relevant learning objectives in Pancasila and Civic Education (PKn). The training provided has equipped teachers with a practical understanding of PMM's features, particularly for assessments and teaching tools, fostering a more engaging and contextual learning environment. However, limitations remain, including technological constraints and challenges with the platform's assessment tools, underscoring the need for continued school support, collaborative teacher forums (MGMP), and intensive training. These findings imply that with adequate support, PMM can significantly enhance educational quality, though further optimization is necessary for fully integrating assessments and instructional media. This study's limitations include its focus on a single school and the limited sample of teachers, which may impact the generalizability of findings. Future research should explore PMM's impact across diverse educational settings and investigate methods for more seamless integration of its features with teaching methodologies and media.

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