

The Effect of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform on Teachers' Creativity and Teaching Innovation at SMK Negeri 9 Kabupaten Jeneponto

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Abstract: This study aims to analyse 1.) the implementation of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) at SMK Negeri 9 in Jeneponto Regency. 2.) The influence of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) on teacher creativity at SMK Negeri 9 in Jeneponto Regency. 3.) To analyse the impact of the Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) platform on teachers' teaching innovation at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto District. This research uses a quantitative research approach. The study was conducted on 55 teachers at SMKN 9 Jeneponto. The sampling technique used in this research is total sampling. This means that the entire population was included as the sample in the study, resulting in a sample size of 55 teachers. Data collection techniques used questionnaires, and data analysis techniques used simple regression analysis, t-test analysis, and F-test analysis using SPSS 26. Research Findings 1.) The Merdeka Mengajar Platform at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto is assessed as having been implemented effectively, and the results of measuring the Merdeka Mengajar Platform indicators at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto indicate that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform has positively impacted teachers' creativity and innovation in teaching at SMKN 9 Jeneponto. 2.) There is a positive and significant effect of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform on teachers' teaching creativity at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto, and 3.) There is a positive and significant effect of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform on teachers' teaching innovation (Y₂) at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto

Keywords: Merdeka Mengajar Platform; Teacher creativity; Teaching innovation

1. Introduction

Digital technology helps develop skills that will require professional performance from teachers, such as problem solving, creating thinking structures, and understanding processes. The quality and skills possessed will be very important for the professional success of teachers. Educational resources and digital tools help improve the classroom environment and make the teaching-learning process more engaging. Additionally, information technology provides greater flexibility to educational institutions and allows for curriculum adaptation based on individual student needs (Kosaretsky et al., 2021).

As a result of the rapid growth of information and communication technology, digital platforms in education have integrated with traditional educational structures, leading to drastic changes in the perspective of learning by offering various opportunities to explore and develop new ways of delivering educational programmes (Salloum et al., 2019). Thus,

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independent teaching platforms have become very common and are used to support teaching and learning programmes by teachers in educational institutions.

Considering the importance and capacity of digital platforms, educational institutions have made significant investments in this area and have sought to integrate them into educational programmes (Kanwal & Rehman, 2017). Independent teaching platforms have been well received by teachers due to their potential and benefits. However, digital platforms sometimes face obstacles such as user acceptance and adoption in some schools because teachers are unwilling to use them (Abdekhoda et al., 2016). Some users believe that digital platforms such as the Merdeka Mengajar platform do not cover all aspects of teaching and do not support all learning features (Abdekhoda et al., 2022).

Lack of understanding of the principles of digital platforms and the underlying theoretical foundations, technophobia, and technical issues are just some of the challenges that may be faced by teachers who are reluctant to use digital platforms (Uğur & Turan, 2018). Additionally, it has been reported that the success of digital platform use depends on teachers' attitudes toward adopting modern technology (Kanwal & Rehman, 2017). It is believed that teachers' attitudes and intentions to adopt and use digital platforms are important factors influencing the success of their implementation. This has been supported by a large number of empirical studies conducted in developed countries (Abdekhoda et al., 2022). Therefore, identifying the determining factors in adopting digital platforms has been recommended (Kanwal & Rehman, 2017).

The success of the implementation of the Merdeka Mengajar platform by teachers in vocational secondary schools depends on the identification and management of determining factors. Limitations in accurately understanding the factors that influence the use of the Merdeka Mengajar platform can hinder the success of its implementation. There have been several studies on the success of using the Merdeka Mengajar platform, but there is still a research gap in studies combining the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Task-Technology Fit (TTF) models.

2. Literature Review

1.1. Merdeka Mengajar Platform

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) developed the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) to support the implementation of the independent curriculum so that it can help teachers obtain references, inspiration, and strengthen their understanding and hone their skills in implementing the independent curriculum with a spirit of collaboration and mutual support (Amalia et al., 2023; Rodi' ah et al., 2022). The Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) provides opportunities for all teachers in Indonesia to continue learning and developing their competencies, whenever and wherever they are. The Learning feature on the Merdeka Mengajar Platform provides Independent

Training facilities so that teachers can obtain quality training materials by accessing them independently (Rohmah et al., 2024).

1.2. Teachers as Drivers of Creativity

Creativity is very important in learning, and teachers are required to demonstrate and show the process of creativity. Creativity is universal and a characteristic of the world around us. It is marked by an individual's activities or tendency to create something. As creative individuals, teachers recognise that creativity is universal and therefore all activities are supported, guided, and inspired by this awareness. Teachers themselves are creators and motivators at the centre of the educational process. As a result of this function, teachers constantly strive to find better ways to serve students, so that students will perceive them as creative and not merely performing routine tasks. Creativity indicates that what teachers do now is better than what they have done before, and what they will do in the future will be better than what they do now (E. Mulyana 2008).

1.3. Definition of Innovation

The word 'innovation' (English) is often translated as anything new or an update, but some people use the Indonesian word 'inovasi' instead. Sometimes the term innovation is also used to refer to a discovery, because something new is the result of a discovery. The word discovery is also often associated with the terms "discovery" and 'invention'.

Discovery (discovery) is the finding of something that already exists but was previously unknown to the general public. For example, the discovery of the American continent. The American continent had actually existed for a long time, but it was only discovered by Columbus in 1492, so it is said that Columbus discovered the American continent, meaning that Columbus was the first person to encounter the American continent (Udin Saefudin Sa'ud 2008). Meanwhile, invention (invention) is the discovery of something that is truly new, meaning the result of human creation. The object or thing discovered did not previously exist (Udin Saefudin Sa'ud 2008).

3. Proposed Method

This research approach uses quantitative research. The research was conducted on 55 teachers at SMKN 9 Jenepono. The sampling technique used in this research was total sampling, or saturated sampling. This means that the entire population was used as the sample in the research, resulting in a sample size of 55 teachers. Data collection techniques used questionnaires, and data analysis techniques used simple regression analysis, t-test analysis, and F-test analysis using SPSS 26.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Merdeka Mengajar Platform in Enhancing Teaching Creativity at SMK Negeri 9 Jenepono

The Merdeka Mengajar Platform has an impact on teachers' teaching creativity, as although the platform allows students to learn according to their ability level and learning style, not all students are able to manage or utilise this approach to its full potential. In some cases, students may still find it difficult to adapt to more open and unstructured forms of learning, such as problem-based learning (PBL) or group discussions that involve critical thinking and According to Vygotsky's theory (1978), students' cognitive development is greatly influenced by the social and cultural interactions in their surroundings. Therefore, while teachers' creativity in teaching offers various ways to engage students in more active learning, it is important to consider factors such as student motivation, social support, and prior learning experiences. Students who are less skilled in learning due to low teacher creativity may feel more comfortable with more direct and structured instructions, while more developed students may be more receptive to challenges that encourage them to think more critically and analyse problems more deeply.

The implementation of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform often involves problem-solving and more complex tasks aimed at encouraging students to think critically. However, if this learning is not balanced with systematic strengthening of teachers' creativity skills, the results may be less than optimal. This has also been emphasised by Paul and Elder (2014) in *Critical Thinking*, stating that teachers' creativity is not only about analysing information but also about the ability to evaluate information, identify assumptions, and make decisions based on evidence. Therefore, although the Merdeka Mengajar Platform provides space for students to develop these abilities, there are challenges in ensuring that all students can take advantage of every opportunity for teacher creativity.

The impact of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform method by teachers at SMK Negeri 9 Jenepono on improving teacher creativity is also due to limitations in teacher training to effectively implement the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. Therefore, teachers need to have a deep understanding of individual student differences and the skills to adapt their approaches to the needs of each student. If teachers do not fully understand how to differentiate instruction effectively, then creativity, such as differentiation strategies, may not function optimally and have a significant impact on teachers' teaching creativity. Additionally, it is understood that each student has different characteristics in terms of learning style, motivation, prior knowledge, and skills. Teachers' teaching creativity is also crucial for their readiness to apply teaching creativity by having a good understanding of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform theory and adapting instructions and learning activities to meet individual students' needs.

4.2 The Impact of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform on Teaching Innovation (Y2) Among Grade XI Students at SMK Negeri 9 Jenepono

Based on the research findings, the Merdeka Mengajar Platform has a significant impact on Teacher Teaching Innovation (Y2) for Grade XI students at SMK Negeri 9 Jenepono. This indicates that the implementation of this strategy is highly effective in enhancing students' understanding of lesson materials, particularly in mastering more complex concepts in Productive TKRO. The implementation of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform in teaching Productive TKRO at SMKN 9 Jenepono is evident in teachers' ability to adapt various methods of delivering material, enabling students with varying abilities to more easily grasp abstract concepts. Additionally, during classroom instruction, teachers can provide supplementary guidance or use visual aids such as diagrams or maps to explain concepts, while tailoring lesson content to students' abilities. to the students' ability levels, enabling them to feel more confident in learning and better able to connect existing knowledge with new concepts, in line with constructivist theory, developed by Jean Piaget (1970), the importance of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform in Teacher Teaching Innovation (Y2) is emphasised. Piaget also argued that children build their knowledge through active interaction with their environment and that they do not simply receive information, but construct their own knowledge based on experience.

The Merdeka Mengajar Platform provides space for students to engage in the process of constructing their own knowledge through tasks tailored to their abilities and opportunities to apply the concepts learned in real-life contexts. Based on research results at SMK Negeri 9 Jenepono, where Teacher Teaching Innovation (Y2) significantly improved students' learning outcomes in Productive TKRO through the implementation of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. Teacher Teaching Innovation (Y2) refers to students' ability to understand, remember, and connect various ideas and information that have been learned and apply that knowledge in relevant situations. Additionally, in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, students are given the opportunity to engage with lesson materials in ways that align with their level of understanding and learning styles. This differentiation strategy also includes the design of challenging yet achievable tasks that help students think more critically and creatively, so that this challenge- or project-based learning process not only develops students' cognitive abilities in understanding concepts but also helps them develop Teacher Innovation skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are essential in productive TKRO learning, as explained by Paul and Elder (2014) that Teacher Teaching Innovation involves the ability to evaluate information, question assumptions, and logically connect different ideas. The Merdeka Mengajar Platform encourages students to engage in problem-solving and think more deeply about the subject matter, contributing to better Teacher Teaching Innovation (Y2).

Although research results indicate that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform has a high impact on Teacher Teaching Innovation (Y2) among students, there are several challenges faced in its implementation, such as the skills required to design and develop flexible instructions tailored to students' needs and the rapidly evolving technological environment. Teachers must also develop the ability to adapt materials and tasks according to students' varying abilities and interests, which inevitably requires additional time and effort. Additionally, another common challenge in implementing the Merdeka Mengajar Platform is the limitation of time and resources. The Merdeka Mengajar Platform requires thorough preparation and the use of various methods and tools that may not always be available in every classroom. Although teachers at SMKN 9 Jeneponto have made efforts to utilise technology and various learning media, there are still limitations in terms of access and infrastructure that could support the optimal implementation of this strategy. Therefore, it is very important for SMKN 9 Jeneponto to continue developing facilities and providing adequate training for teachers to maximise teaching strategies and teaching innovation.

5. Conclusions

The Merdeka Mengajar Platform at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto is considered to have been implemented well, and the results of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform indicator measurement at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto show that the Merdeka Mengajar Platform has had a positive impact on improving the creativity and innovation of teachers at SMKN 9 Jeneponto.

There is a positive and significant influence of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform on teachers' teaching creativity at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto.

There is a positive and significant influence of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform on teachers' teaching innovation at SMK Negeri 9 Jeneponto..

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