

PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT IN TEACHING INDEPENDENCE PLATFORM TO IMPROVE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (SMP) TEACHER PERFORMANCE

***¹Ferry Timorochmadi, ²Deti Rostini**

***^{1,2}Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia**

Email: ^{*1}ferrytimorochmadi@uninus.ac.id, ²detirostini@uninus.ac.id

Abstract

This study focuses on the principals' management in utilizing the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM) to improve teacher performance at SMPN 43 and SMPN 73 in Bandung City, two schools that won awards as the best users of PMM in West Java. The research objective is to analyze the effectiveness of PMM in improving teacher competence and performance based on the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as to formulate practical strategies for principals in guiding and motivating teachers to be able to implement innovative learning. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, this study collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation. The theory used refers to Edward Deming's PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) cycle. The results showed that the principal's management in planning, implementing, checking, and following up had run systematically according to Merdeka Belajar policy and education management principles. The principal has succeeded in utilizing PMM as an instrument to improve teacher quality, although there are still obstacles, such as limited access to technology and the IT skills of some teachers, that affect the effectiveness of PMM implementation. Overall, the implementation of PMM has proven effective in promoting a culture of continuous learning in the secondary school environment.

Keywords: Management, Principal, Teacher Performance, Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), Junior High School (SMP)

Abstract

Penelitian ini berfokus pada manajemen kepala sekolah dalam pemanfaatan Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) untuk meningkatkan kinerja guru di SMPN 43 dan SMPN 73 Kota Bandung, dua sekolah yang meraih penghargaan sebagai pengguna terbaik PMM se-Jawa Barat. Tujuan penelitian adalah menganalisis efektivitas PMM dalam meningkatkan kompetensi dan kinerja guru berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka, serta merumuskan strategi praktis bagi kepala sekolah dalam membimbing dan memotivasi guru agar mampu mengimplementasikan pembelajaran inovatif. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Teori yang digunakan mengacu pada siklus PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) dari Edward Deming. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa manajemen kepala sekolah dalam perencanaan, pelaksanaan, pemeriksaan, dan tindak lanjut telah berjalan sistematis sesuai kebijakan Merdeka Belajar dan prinsip manajemen pendidikan. Kepala sekolah berhasil memanfaatkan PMM sebagai instrumen

peningkatan kualitas guru, meskipun masih terdapat kendala seperti keterbatasan akses teknologi dan kemampuan IT sebagian guru yang mempengaruhi efektivitas implementasi PMM. Secara keseluruhan, penerapan PMM terbukti efektif dalam mendorong budaya pembelajaran berkelanjutan di lingkungan sekolah menengah.

Keywords: Manajemen, Kepala Sekolah, Kinerja Guru, Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM), Sekolah Menengah Pertama(SMP)

INTRODUCTION

Merdeka Mengajar platform is an initiative launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). It aims to support teachers in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Indonesia. The platform provides resources, tools, and training for educators, and connects them with various education communities. Although Merdeka Mengajar Platform offers many benefits, some drawbacks need to be considered. Limited internet access in some areas is a major obstacle for teachers to optimally utilize this platform, especially in remote areas with less stable connections. In addition, the lack of training on the use of the platform and challenges in technology adaptation for some teachers hinder maximum utilization. Some features are still limited, especially in terms of comprehensive monitoring of student progress and integration with other learning tools. In addition, the platform also requires further customization to make it more relevant to the local curriculum and region-specific needs.

Permendikbud No. 22/2020 is a benchmark based on the Primary and Secondary Education Process Standards. In this regulation, there are directions on how learning should be more student-centered and provide room for teachers to innovate. Permendikbud No. 22/2020 provides a foundation for teachers to adopt a more dynamic learning approach, which can be optimized through PMM. In addition, it is also strengthened by Permendikbud No. 21 of 2020 concerning the Senior High School and Vocational High School Curriculum. It also supports the development of a more flexible learning model, which is in line with the concept of PMM. These two regulations clarify the direction of Indonesia's education policy which is more flexible, adaptive, and based on student needs. Merdeka Mengajar Platform is a strategic tool to support the implementation of these policies, especially in providing relevant learning resources, encouraging teacher innovation through training and collaboration, facilitating a more integrated and project-based learning approach.

The reality on the ground is that there are still many teachers who have not maximized the use of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform, especially for the self-study feature, there are only a few teachers who actively use this feature, this can be seen from the acquisition of certificates provided by PMM if the teacher has completed the self-study stages given for each learning topic, where there are still a few who get the certificate. In addition to the self-study feature, there is also an observation feature, which in the implementation stage is directly assessed by the school principal, in this feature there are also several teachers

who have not implemented it optimally so that the role of the principal is very important, especially in carrying out the field observation stage to maximize the use of this feature.

With optimal implementation, principals can play an important role in ensuring teachers utilize PMM in accordance with the direction of the Permendikbud, thus creating more meaningful and relevant learning. Management is a process that involves planning, organizing, directing and supervising resources to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. According to various experts, management can be defined as the ability to direct and manage human efforts and other resources to achieve desired results. In implementing a strategy, a PDCA approach is necessary. The PDCA approach was introduced by Dr. Edward Deming, an American quality expert, which was originally known as the Deming cycle. Over time, the Deming cycle became better known as the PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) approach. The PDCA approach is implemented to make changes to a process or system.

According to Sokovic, Pavletic, and Pipan, the implementation of the PDCA approach means continuously looking for better methods to make improvements. PDCA is an effective approach to managing a planned program. The PDCA approach allows for two types of corrective actions: temporary and permanent. The results of temporary actions are aimed at results that can practically address and fix the problem. The outcome of permanent corrective action consists of investigating and eliminating the root cause, thereby targeting sustainability which in the process is continuously improved.

The principal is a figure responsible for leading an educational institution with diverse and complex roles. In addition to being in charge of organizing and managing the school to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, principals also have the obligation to improve the performance of their staff. As a leader, the principal has the authority to design and set policies in the organization or institution in order to achieve the goals that have been formulated (Gaol & Siburian, 2018). The principal's managerial ability includes his expertise in managing educational institutions through various managerial functions (Kristiawan et al., 2017). The success of the principal in carrying out his duties and role as a manager in school management is highly dependent on his competence as a school leader.

The Merdeka Mengajar platform is an initiative launched by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) on February 11, 2022. The main objective of the platform is to support teachers in improving the quality of teaching and learning in Indonesia through the provision of various resources, tools, and training. One of the factors that can influence the improvement of teacher performance is the utilization of the Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) Platform, an application designed to support the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This platform assists teachers in carrying out more effective learning. However, low motivation to teach and a lack of pedagogical understanding can be an obstacle.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, aiming to enrich the results of quantitative research and build knowledge through understanding and discovery. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis is carried out continuously with data reduction techniques, data presentation, and conclusions and verification, providing an in-depth understanding of the Principal's Optimization of the Teaching Freedom Platform to Improve the Performance of Junior High School Teachers at SMP Negeri 43 Bandung City and SMP Negeri 73 Bandung City). t Case study is a series of scientific activities carried out intensively, in detail and in depth about a program, event, and activity, either at the level of an individual, group of people, institution, or organization to gain in-depth knowledge about the event. Usually, the selected event, hereinafter referred to as the case, is an actual thing (real-life events), which is ongoing, not something that has passed.

According to Endraswara (2012: 78), the latter can be referred to as a Collective Case Study. Although more than one case is studied (multi-case), the procedure is the same as a single case study. This is because both Multi-Case and Multi-Site Studies are developments of the Case Study method. Related to the questions commonly asked in the Case Study method, because it wants to understand the phenomenon in depth, even explore and elaborate it, according to Yin (1994: 21) it is not enough if the Case Study questions only ask “what”, (what), but also ‘how’ (how) and “why” (why). “What” questions are intended to obtain descriptive knowledge, ‘how’ to obtain explanative knowledge, and “why” to obtain explorative knowledge. Yin emphasizes the use of “how” and “why” questions, because both questions are considered very appropriate for obtaining in-depth knowledge about the symptoms studied.

Data collection techniques The process or method applied to collect data is called data collection techniques, which include information, facts, or data from various sources in the context of a research, study, survey, or analysis. The purpose of applying these techniques is to collect relevant, accurate and evidence-based data to answer research questions or achieve specific research objectives. Some of the techniques used in data collection include observation, interviews and documentation studies.

The research instrument grid serves as a guide in designing the questions that will be included in the research instrument. Before making a research instrument, it is advisable to first compile a grid as a first step. The observation guideline is used as a research guide to make observations of aspects related to the research subject. The interview guideline was used as a guide in carrying out the data collection process through interviews. In this study, researchers collected various related documents. Such as teacher data, performance data and evaluation reports.

The data analysis technique used in qualitative analysis has four stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and the last is the stage of drawing conclusions and verification. Among them are data reduction, data presentation and

conclusion drawing. Checking the validity of data is carried out to prove that a research conducted is truly scientific research and also tests the data that has been obtained. To get data that is not in doubt, the researcher checks the validity of the data by means of Extended Participation or Prolonged Engagement, Persistent Engagement or Observation and Triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations, interviews and documentation studies on PMM Program Planning at SMPN 43 Bandung City, it was found that the Merdeka Platform System can be accessed by the Principal Principal who already has an active *belajar.id* account. This system is accessed via <https://guru.kemdikbud.go.id/>, as for the access that can be obtained includes the Education Report Card Dashboard, which is used to analyze school education achievement data, Curriculum Management which functions to view and monitor the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, Monitoring Teacher Activities to see the progress of teacher training and learning in their school.

Guidance and Supervision to assist teachers in competency development and Learning Videos & Training Modules to support the improvement of the quality of education. Meanwhile, at SMPN 73 Bandung City, the use of teaching materials from Merdeka Mengajar helps create a more interesting learning atmosphere for students. There is an increase in student learning outcomes in classes whose teachers actively use this platform. School principals need to ensure more intensive assistance for teachers who are not yet proficient in using the platform, prioritize the procurement of technology devices and internet access in schools with minimal facilities, conduct regular monitoring of the use of the platform and its impact on teacher performance and student learning, and reduce administrative tasks so that teachers have more time to use the platform.

Based on the results of interviews, documentation studies and observations, it was found that the implementation of the principal's management in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) at SMPN 43 Bandung includes the Implementation of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform in the Learning Process. The principal encourages teachers to use digital teaching tools provided in PMM, such as teaching modules, lesson plans, and learning materials based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers are directed to adapt teaching tools according to local school needs, material adjustments are made to accommodate students' level of understanding. Meanwhile, teachers use the student assessment feature in PMM to identify student learning needs. The principal ensures that this assessment is conducted regularly as a basis for designing targeted learning. The principal encourages the implementation of project-based learning, where teachers use references from PMM to design collaborative activities that involve students in solving real problems.

Based on the results of interviews, documentation studies and observations, it was found that the implementation of the principal's management in the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM) at SMPN 73 Bandung includes 1. Implementation of the Teacher Self-Training Program. 2. Implementation of Learning Communities 3. Implementation of Teaching Tools

Features 4. Integration into Merdeka Curriculum 5. Supervision and Mentoring 6. Use of Training and Evaluation Features 7. Implementation of Performance Assessment and Monitoring 8. Collaborative Approach

Based on the results of interviews, documentation studies, and observations, it was found that the principal's management check in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) at SMPN 43 Bandung includes the principal checking teacher activities in PMM through features that include teacher activities, including a) Teacher login frequency. b) Training modules that have been accessed and completed. c) Utilization of teaching tools, such as learning modules, assessments, and teaching materials. d) Teachers are asked to prepare a concise report on: e) What training modules were attended. f) Learning outcomes from the training and g) Application of teaching tools in the classroom. The principal conducts direct classroom observations to ensure that the implementation of teaching tools and PMM-based learning strategies is going well. Principals check whether the self-training modules in PMM have helped teachers in improving their professional competence. Assessment of Impact on Students. Principals examine the extent to which teachers' implementation of PMM has impacted on students' learning processes and outcomes. Principals conduct a joint reflection that includes several activities.

Based on the results of interviews, documentation studies and observations at SMPN 73 Bandung, it was found that most teachers have utilized the main features of PMM, such as teaching modules, lesson plans based on Merdeka Curriculum, and digital teaching materials. The principal noted that the majority of teachers began to engage in making lesson plans that were more structured and based on project-based learning (PjBL). Principals found that teachers who actively used the platform reported improved competencies through self-training in PMM. This training helped them adopt new approaches to learning that are more innovative and based on student needs. Teachers use the assessment features in PMM to evaluate student progress, provide constructive feedback and conduct formative assessments more regularly. The principal appreciates the use of diagnostic assessments that allow teachers to adjust learning according to students' level of understanding.

Based on the results of interviews, documentation studies and observations, the findings regarding the Follow-up Act of the principal's management in the Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) Platform at SMPN 43 Bandung include the principal's role in deciding to improve the technology infrastructure at school, such as increasing internet speed and providing more adequate devices (for example, laptops or tablets) for teachers who have difficulty accessing the PMM platform. The principal coordinates with the education office and related parties to speed up the provision of a more stable internet connection throughout the school. Given the amount of time required for teachers to attend training and utilize PMM, principals adjusted the training schedule to be more flexible and not disrupt teaching and learning activities. In addition, principals organize additional training sessions and intensive mentoring for teachers who need further assistance, both online and face-to-face. Principals

also appoint some senior teachers or facilitators who have experience in using PMM to provide one-on-one or group mentoring for teachers who find it difficult. This aims to guide teachers in integrating the PMM training results into their daily learning practices. Given the many successes in using project-based learning (PjBL) driven by PMM, the principal decided to further strengthen the implementation of PjBL in all subjects by providing examples of suitable modules and project development training.

Based on the results of interviews, documentation studies and observations, it was found that the follow-up of the principal's management in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) at SMPN 73 Bandung was shown by the principal directly reporting to the District Education Office regarding the internet access constraints faced by teachers and working with them to find more permanent solutions, such as installing a stronger internet network or procuring mobile devices for teachers. To overcome the limited training time, principals introduced more flexible ongoing training programs, such as using offline training modules that can be accessed outside of school hours, or holding regular webinars and mentoring sessions that allow teachers to learn at any time that suits them. In addition, the principal asked teachers to provide feedback on the PMM training materials and the limitations they faced in applying them. Based on the results of the feedback, the principal made adjustments to the training materials, ensuring that the training was more in line with the context and challenges faced by teachers in the field. To address the differences in digital skills among teachers, principals created collaborative groups where teachers could share experiences and teach each other effective ways to use PMM. This collaboration is expected to improve teachers' technical and pedagogical understanding of each other.

DISCUSSION

The principals at SMPN 43 Bandung and SMPN 73 Bandung planned the use of PMM by considering Merdeka curriculum and training needs for teachers. They plan to introduce PMM features thoroughly, ensure all teachers understand the use of the platform, and facilitate intensive and continuous training. Merdeka Belajar policy prioritizes flexibility and teacher empowerment in developing learning methods, which is in line with the principal's plan to use PMM as a tool to improve teachers' professional competence.

The principal's management in utilizing Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) Platform has been implemented optimally and continuously. The principal carries out his role well in five main managerial aspects including The principal encourages the use of digital teaching tools based on the Merdeka Curriculum available on PMM. Teachers are directed to adapt these tools to the local context and student needs, and utilize the assessment feature as a basis for targeted learning planning. Independent training through PMM is utilized in a structured manner, with monitoring by the principal of the modules that teachers follow. Providing special time and appreciation also strengthens teachers' motivation to improve their competence on an ongoing basis. Principals actively supervise the implementation of PMM in lesson plans, learning methods and assessments. Evaluation is conducted regularly through discussion and reflection with teachers for continuous improvement. Principals

ensure the availability of supporting facilities such as computers, internet and projectors, and provide initial training on the use of PMM to ensure all teachers can access the platform optimally. Monitoring of teachers' activities on the PMM is carried out regularly. The principal instills the values of independence, creativity, inclusiveness, and diversity as part of a work culture that supports the philosophy of Merdeka Belajar. Overall, the principal's management in utilizing PMM at SMP Negeri 43 Bandung City shows adaptive, collaborative learning, and is oriented towards developing students' character and potential as a whole.

The inspection carried out by the principal on the utilization of PMM by teachers shows a systematic and continuous effort in supervising and evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The principal regularly monitors the frequency of logins, modules accessed, and the use of digital teaching tools. Teachers are asked to make a brief report on the training and its implementation. Principals observe the implementation of PMM-based learning firsthand, evaluating teacher creativity, method effectiveness, and student response through performance assessment rubrics. Principals analyze the extent to which self-training through PMM has an impact on improving teachers' competencies, learning innovation, and the relevance of materials to classroom needs. Student engagement and development are key indicators, including the implementation of formative assessments and student feedback on learning methods. Reflection and Recommendations Improvements were made by principals in facilitating reflection forums with teachers, compiling performance recaps and providing recommendations for improvement, including the utilization of more appropriate teaching tools and strengthening collaboration between teachers. Overall, the principal's management inspection at SMPN 43 Bandung is comprehensive, covering technical, pedagogical, and evaluative aspects, to ensure the optimization of PMM utilization in supporting quality learning.

The Principal's Follow-Up on the Merdeka Mengajar Platform to Improve the Performance of Junior High School Teachers at SMPN 43 Bandung and SMPN 73 Bandung that The principal takes corrective measures to overcome the challenges that arise, such as improving technological infrastructure, providing further assistance for teachers who have difficulty using PMM, and providing continuous training programs. Teacher professional development policies that support continuous training and technical assistance for teachers to improve their skills in using technology. A digital transformation in education policy that aims to strengthen the use of technology in schools and provide access to additional training for teachers. Change Management Theory that advises education leaders to take corrective and continuous action based on evaluations and feedback obtained. School principals conduct purposeful follow-ups to correct problems that arise during implementation.

CONCLUSION

Secara umum, penerapan Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) oleh kepala sekolah di SMPN 43 Bandung dan SMPN 73 Bandung telah berjalan sesuai dengan kebijakan dan

teori yang ada. Manajemen kepala sekolah dalam perencanaan, pelaksanaan, pemeriksaan, dan tindak lanjut menunjukkan pendekatan yang sistematis dan berbasis kebijakan Merdeka Belajar, teori manajemen pendidikan, serta kepemimpinan transformasional. Meskipun secara umum program ini telah berjalan dengan baik, masih terdapat tantangan dalam aspek akses teknologi dan infrastruktur digital, yang dapat mempengaruhi efektivitas implementasi PMM. Oleh karena itu, penyempurnaan pada aspek ini diperlukan agar pemanfaatan PMM semakin optimal dalam meningkatkan kinerja guru dan mutu pendidikan di sekolah.

Perencanaan pada integrasi PMM dengan baik sebagai upaya meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan melalui pemberdayaan guru. Rencana ini sejalan dengan kebijakan Merdeka Belajar serta teori manajemen pendidikan dan kepemimpinan transformasional, yang menekankan pentingnya perencanaan terstruktur dalam peningkatan mutu pembelajaran. Pelaksanaan dalam meningkatkan kinerja guru telah sesuai dengan kebijakan yang berlaku, terutama dalam aspek pelatihan guru. Namun, masih terdapat tantangan terkait akses teknologi, yang menunjukkan perlunya peningkatan infrastruktur digital untuk mendukung efektivitas pelaksanaan program ini. Pemeriksaan dilakukan dengan melakukan monitoring dan evaluasi secara sistematis, sesuai dengan prinsip penilaian berbasis kompetensi dan akuntabilitas pendidikan. Proses pemeriksaan ini memastikan bahwa pelaksanaan PMM tetap berjalan sesuai tujuan yang telah ditetapkan. Tindak Lanjut yang dilakukan dengan tindakan korektif yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan penggunaan PMM serta memperbaiki kinerja guru. Langkah ini menunjukkan komitmen dalam memastikan keberlanjutan dan efektivitas penerapan PMM di sekolah.

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Jurnal Visionary : Penelitian dan Pengembangan dibidang Administrasi Pendidikan
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