

Managing Independent Teacher Training through the Platform Merdeka Mengajar

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Abstract. This study examines the management of independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) in improving teacher competence at the elementary school level. The research is motivated by the need to strengthen teacher professional development through flexible and sustainable digital learning models in response to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. A qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design was employed. The research was conducted in public elementary schools implementing PMM-based independent training. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis involving school principals, teachers, and school development team members. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, while data trustworthiness was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and audit trails. The findings reveal that independent training based on PMM is managed through four integrated management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. Planning is based on teachers' competency needs and school goals, organizing provides mentoring and collaborative support, implementation emphasizes teacher-centered and reflective learning, and evaluation focuses on learning outcomes and classroom application. The study concludes that systematic management enhances the effectiveness of PMM as a digital professional development platform and supports sustainable improvement in teacher competence.

Keywords: Platform *Merdeka Mengajar*, independent training, teacher competence, educational management, elementary school

1 Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology and the dynamic changes in the global educational landscape have significantly transformed the demands placed on teachers in the 21st century [1], [2]. Teachers are no longer expected merely to deliver subject matter but are required to continuously develop their pedagogical, professional, social, and personal competencies in order to create innovative, effective, and student-centered learning environments [3], [4]. In Indonesia, these demands are further reinforced by the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes flexibility, autonomy, and continuous professional growth for teachers [5], [6].

Teacher competence is widely acknowledged as a key determinant of educational quality. As the frontline actors in the learning process, teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' learning experiences and outcomes. However, various national and international reports indicate that teacher competence development remains a persistent challenge. Limitations in access to professional development, rigid training models, and time constraints often hinder teachers' opportunities to engage in continuous learning. These challenges highlight the need for flexible and sustainable professional development models that accommodate teachers' diverse needs and contexts[7].

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology introduced the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) as a digital learning platform designed to support teachers' independent and continuous professional development. PMM provides teachers with access to learning modules, instructional videos, reflective activities, and communities of practice aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. Through this platform, teachers are encouraged to engage in self-directed learning that is flexible, needs-based, and relevant to classroom practice[8]–[10].

Despite the strategic potential of PMM, empirical evidence suggests that its implementation at the school level has not yet been optimal. Many teachers have not fully utilized PMM as a medium for professional development due to technical barriers, limited digital literacy, low motivation, and the absence of structured guidance and support from school management. Consequently, a gap emerges between the ideal objectives of independent training through PMM and the actual practices observed in schools. Without effective management, independent training risks becoming fragmented and less impactful on teachers' professional competence.

Previous studies have explored the effectiveness of PMM and digital-based training in supporting teacher development. Research by Kurniadi highlights the positive contribution of PMM in enhancing teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum [11], while studies by Putra and Ningsih emphasize the benefits of digital training for teacher flexibility and accessibility. However, these studies tend to focus primarily on the technical utilization of PMM or teachers' satisfaction with training content. There is still limited research that comprehensively examines how independent training through PMM is managed at the school level, particularly from a managerial perspective involving planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the management of independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar, rather than merely its use as a digital tool. This research examines how school principals and school development teams design, organize, implement, and evaluate independent training programs to ensure that PMM contributes meaningfully to improving teacher competence. By adopting a managerial perspective, this study positions PMM not only as a learning platform but also as part of a broader school-based professional development system.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the management of independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar in improving teacher competence at the elementary school level. Specifically, it seeks to examine management strategies applied in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating independent training, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and analyze differences in implementation across

school contexts. The findings of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to educational management literature and practically to school leaders and policymakers in optimizing technology-based teacher professional development in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum[12].

2 Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design. The qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of how independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) is managed to improve teacher competence at the elementary school level. Qualitative research enables the exploration of managerial practices, participant experiences, and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of professional development programs in natural school settings [13]–[16]

The research was conducted in several public elementary schools implementing independent training through PMM. Schools were purposively selected based on their active use of the Platform Merdeka Mengajar and their relevance to the research objectives. This selection allowed for comparative insights into management practices across different school contexts.

The research participants consisted of school principals, vice principals, teachers, and school development team members. Principals and vice principals were selected as key informants due to their roles in planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating independent training programs. Teachers were included as primary participants because they directly engaged in PMM-based training activities, while school development team members provided supporting perspectives on program coordination and implementation.

Data collection was conducted through methodological triangulation, including in-depth interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' perceptions, strategies, and experiences related to the management of independent training through PMM. Observations focused on training-related activities, teacher engagement with PMM, and school-level support mechanisms. Document analysis involved reviewing school work plans, independent training schedules, PMM activity records, teacher learning logs, and evaluation reports to corroborate data obtained from interviews and observations [17]–[20]

In this qualitative study, the researcher served as the primary research instrument, as data collection and interpretation were closely connected to the researcher's interaction with the research setting and participants [21]. Supporting instruments included interview guidelines, observation checklists, and document review matrices, which were developed to ensure consistency and systematic data collection while allowing flexibility to capture emerging themes.

The trustworthiness of the data was ensured by applying four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through triangulation of data sources and techniques, as well

as member checking to verify participants' statements. Transferability was addressed by providing rich descriptions of the research context. Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through audit trails, systematic documentation of research procedures, and reflective notes to minimize researcher bias.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [22], which consists of three interrelated stages: (1) data reduction, involving data selection, coding, and condensation; (2) data display, where organized data were presented in narrative descriptions, matrices, and tables; and (3) conclusion drawing and verification, in which patterns and themes were identified and continuously validated. Data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection, allowing the researcher to refine analytical focus based on emerging findings.

The analytical framework of this study was guided by classical management theory, particularly the management functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. This framework was applied to analyze how independent training through the Platform Merdeka Mengajar is managed as a school-based professional development system aimed at improving teacher competence.

3 Results

3.1 Planning of Independent Training Management Based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar

The planning stage represents the initial and strategic phase in managing independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM). Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis indicate that school principals and development teams conducted systematic planning to ensure that PMM-based training aligned with teacher competency needs and school improvement goals.

Interview data reveal that planning activities began with identifying teachers' competency gaps and professional development needs. Principals emphasized that PMM was positioned as a flexible learning resource tailored to teachers' individual needs. One principal stated:

"Planning for independent professional development begins with mapping teachers' needs. We make use of the PMM because its materials can be tailored to teachers' needs and conditions." (Principal, interview, February 2025)

A teacher also highlighted the clarity of planning in guiding independent learning:

"We are given guidance on which modules need to be studied in the PMM according to the learning needs in the classroom." (Teacher, interview, February 2025)

These statements indicate that planning was needs-based and goal-oriented.

Observational data show that planning activities were conducted through formal meetings, such as school development planning sessions and teacher coordination meetings. Principals and school teams discussed training priorities, schedules, and expected outcomes of PMM-based independent learning. Observations also indicate

that teachers were encouraged to set individual learning targets and integrate PMM learning outcomes into classroom practice.

Document analysis of school work plans (RKAS), independent training schedules, PMM learning plans, and teacher development records confirms that planning activities were systematically documented. Planning documents include lists of recommended PMM modules, timelines for completion, indicators of teacher competence improvement, and monitoring mechanisms. These documents demonstrate alignment between PMM-based training plans and school development programs. Table 1 summarizes the key planning strategies employed in managing independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar.

Table 1. Planning Strategies in Independent Training Management Based on PMM.

No.	Planning Aspect	Strategy	Description
1	Needs analysis	Competency mapping	Identification of teacher professional development needs
2	Training objectives	Goal setting	Alignment of PMM modules with school goals
3	Learning design	Module selection	Selection of relevant PMM learning modules
4	Scheduling	Flexible timelines	Arrangement of independent learning schedules
5	Documentation	Formal planning records	RKAS, PMM learning plans, and monitoring tools

Source: Interviews, observations, and document analysis (2025)

Overall, the planning stage demonstrates that independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar was managed strategically and systematically. By grounding planning in competency needs, aligning training objectives with school goals, and formally documenting learning plans, school leaders established a strong foundation for organizing, implementing, and evaluating PMM-based professional development. These findings suggest that effective planning is essential for optimizing the role of PMM as a sustainable and impactful teacher competence development system.

3.2 Organizing of Independent Training Management Based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar

The organizing stage focuses on how planned independent training programs based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) are translated into structured arrangements of roles, responsibilities, and support mechanisms within the school. Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis indicate that effective organizing plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth implementation of PMM-based training.

Interview data reveal that principals organized independent training by assigning clear roles to school stakeholders. One principal explained:

“The organization is carried out by forming a school development team tasked with mentoring teachers in PMM-based independent professional development.”
(Principal, interview, March 2025)

A teacher highlighted the benefit of structured support:

“We do not learn on our own. There is a school team that helps us if we experience difficulties while using the PMM.” (Teacher, interview, March 2025)

These statements indicate that organizing emphasized role clarity and support systems.

Observational data show that schools established coordination mechanisms such as mentoring schedules, peer support groups, and regular progress discussions. Teachers were grouped into learning communities based on subject areas or competency needs. Observations also indicate that principals facilitated communication and collaboration among teachers to encourage shared learning experiences.

Document analysis of organizational structures, assignment letters, mentoring schedules, and coordination meeting minutes confirms that organizing practices were formally documented. Documents show clear task distribution among principals, school development teams, mentors, and teachers. These organizational arrangements ensured accountability and sustained support for PMM-based independent training. Table 2 summarizes the key organizing strategies in managing independent training based on PMM.

Table 2. Organizing Strategies in Independent Training Management Based on PMM.

No.	Organizing Aspect	Strategy	Description
1	Organizational structure	Development team formation	Establishment of school training teams
2	Role distribution	Task delegation	Assignment of mentoring and coordination roles
3	Collaboration	Learning communities	Peer support among teachers
4	Support mechanisms	Technical assistance	Guidance for PMM utilization
5	Coordination	Regular meetings	Monitoring and communication forums

Source: Interviews, observations, and document analysis (2025)

The organizing stage demonstrates that independent training management based on PMM requires structured organizational arrangements to be effective. By establishing clear roles, providing mentoring support, and fostering collaboration among teachers, school leaders created an enabling environment for independent professional learning. These findings suggest that effective organizing bridges strategic planning and successful implementation of PMM-based training programs.

3.3 Implementation of Independent Training Based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar

The implementation stage represents the execution of planned and organized independent training activities using the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM). Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis indicate that PMM-based independent training was implemented as a flexible, teacher-centered professional development strategy supported by school leadership.

Interview data reveal that teachers implemented independent training by accessing PMM modules, instructional videos, and reflective activities according to their individual learning needs. One teacher explained:

“Independent training through the PMM gives us the freedom to choose materials according to our classroom teaching needs, making the learning more relevant.”
(Teacher, interview, April 2025)

A principal emphasized the role of leadership in supporting implementation:
“We encourage teachers to actively use the PMM and facilitate discussions so that the outcomes of the training can be applied in classroom learning.” (Principal, interview, April 2025)

These statements indicate that implementation emphasized autonomy and application.

Observational data show that teachers actively engaged with PMM during allocated independent learning times, both at school and outside school hours. Teachers participated in reflective discussions and shared learning outcomes in coordination meetings and peer learning forums. Observations also indicate that teachers began integrating insights from PMM modules into lesson planning, classroom strategies, and assessment practices.

Document analysis of PMM activity logs, teacher learning journals, lesson plans, and supervision records confirms that implementation activities were systematically recorded. Documents indicate increased teacher participation in PMM modules and evidence of pedagogical improvement reflected in revised lesson plans and classroom practices. Table 3 summarizes key implementation practices in independent training based on PMM.

Table 3. Implementation Practices in Independent Training Based on PMM

No.	Implementation Aspect	Practice	Description
1	Learning activities	PMM module engagement	Teachers complete learning modules independently
2	Autonomy	Self-directed learning	Flexible selection of training content
3	Reflection	Learning journals	Documentation of learning outcomes
4	Application	Classroom integration	Application of PMM insights in teaching
5	Support	Leadership facilitation	Guidance and encouragement from principals

Source: Interviews, observations, and document analysis (2025)

The implementation stage demonstrates that independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar was carried out as a flexible and teacher-centered learning process. By providing autonomy, structured support, and opportunities for reflection and application, schools enabled teachers to translate PMM learning into improved classroom practices. These findings suggest that effective implementation depends on both teacher initiative and consistent leadership support to maximize the impact of PMM-based professional development.

3.4 Evaluation of Independent Training Management Based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar

The evaluation stage represents the final management function in independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) and serves as a mechanism for assessing effectiveness, accountability, and continuous improvement. Findings from interviews, observations, and document analysis indicate that evaluation focused on monitoring teacher participation, learning outcomes, and the application of PMM-based training in classroom practice.

Interview data reveal that principals and school development teams viewed evaluation as a reflective and developmental process. Evaluation was conducted to determine whether PMM-based independent training contributed to improving teacher competence. One principal stated:

“The evaluation of independent training is conducted to determine the extent of teachers’ participation in the PMM and its impact on classroom learning.”
(Principal, interview, May 2025)

A teacher also emphasized the role of evaluation in professional reflection:

“Through the evaluation process, we are asked to reflect on the learning outcomes from the PMM and the changes we have already made in our teaching.”
(Teacher, interview, May 2025)

These statements indicate that evaluation emphasized reflection and improvement rather than administrative control.

Observational data show that evaluation activities were conducted through reflective meetings, supervision sessions, and informal discussions. Principals monitored teachers’ implementation of PMM learning outcomes during classroom observations and provided feedback related to pedagogical practices. Observations also indicate that evaluation results were discussed collectively to identify common challenges and best practices in utilizing PMM.

Document analysis of evaluation reports, supervision records, teacher reflection journals, and PMM activity summaries confirms that evaluation practices were systematically documented. Documents include indicators of teacher participation in PMM modules, evidence of pedagogical improvement, and follow-up recommendations. These records demonstrate that evaluation outcomes were used as a basis for revising training plans and strengthening support mechanisms. Table 4 summarizes the key evaluation practices in managing independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar.

Table 4. Evaluation Practices in Independent Training Management Based on PMM.

No.	Evaluation Aspect	Evaluation Practice	Description
1	Participation monitoring	PMM activity tracking	Monitoring teacher engagement in PMM
2	Learning outcomes	Reflective assessment	Evaluation of learning achievements
3	Classroom application	Supervision feedback	Observation of PMM application in teaching
4	Reflection forums	Evaluation meetings	Collective discussion of results
5	Follow-up planning	Improvement actions	Basis for revising training strategies

Source: Interviews, observations, and document analysis (2025)

The evaluation stage demonstrates that independent training management based on PMM emphasizes reflective and continuous improvement processes. By combining participation monitoring, reflective assessment, and classroom supervision, school leaders ensured that PMM-based training contributed meaningfully to teacher competence development. These findings suggest that systematic evaluation is essential for sustaining the effectiveness of independent training and for integrating digital professional development into school-based management systems.

4 Discussion

This study examined the management of independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) in improving teacher competence through four core management functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. The findings indicate that effective school-level management plays a decisive role in optimizing the use of PMM as a sustainable professional development system rather than merely a digital learning platform.

The findings from the planning stage demonstrate that PMM-based independent training was designed based on teachers’ competency needs and school development priorities. Competency mapping and alignment with school goals enabled principals to select relevant PMM modules and define clear learning outcomes. This aligns with classical management theory, which emphasizes planning as a strategic function that guides organizational activities[23].

These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that professional development is more effective when it is needs-based and contextually relevant [24], [25]. By positioning PMM as a flexible learning resource tailored to teachers’ needs, school leaders ensured that independent training was meaningful and directly connected to classroom practice.

The organizing stage highlights the importance of structured support systems in facilitating independent training. The formation of school development teams, mentoring arrangements, and learning communities provided teachers with guidance

and peer support while maintaining autonomy in learning. This finding supports contingency theory, which posits that organizational effectiveness depends on the alignment between structure and task demands.

The collaborative structures observed in this study resonate with findings from dufour, who emphasize the role of professional learning communities in enhancing teacher competence [26]. This study extends existing literature by demonstrating that independent digital training requires organized support mechanisms to prevent isolation and ensure sustained engagement.

The implementation findings indicate that PMM-based training was carried out as a teacher-centered and self-directed learning process. Teachers actively engaged with PMM modules, reflected on their learning, and applied new insights to classroom practice. This aligns with adult learning theory, which emphasizes autonomy, relevance, and reflection as key principles of effective professional learning [27].

Furthermore, leadership support played a crucial role in sustaining teacher engagement during implementation. Consistent encouragement, facilitation of reflective discussions, and recognition of teachers' efforts contributed to positive learning experiences. These findings support previous studies that highlight the importance of leadership support in technology-based professional development [28]–[30].

The evaluation stage underscores the importance of reflective and developmental evaluation practices in independent training management. Rather than focusing solely on participation metrics, evaluation emphasized learning outcomes, classroom application, and reflective feedback. This approach aligns with continuous improvement principles in educational management.

The use of evaluation results to inform follow-up actions and planning revisions reflects a cyclical management process. These findings corroborate earlier research suggesting that reflective evaluation enhances the impact of professional development programs and supports sustainable teacher competence improvement. This study contributes new insights by demonstrating how evaluation integrates digital training outcomes into broader school management systems.

Overall, this study contributes to educational management literature by illustrating how independent training based on PMM can be effectively managed through integrated management functions. The findings reinforce the relevance of classical management theory in contemporary digital learning contexts and highlight the role of principals as facilitators of teacher professional growth.

Practically, the study suggests that successful implementation of PMM requires more than technological access; it demands strategic planning, organized support, reflective implementation, and systematic evaluation. School leaders are encouraged to view PMM as part of a comprehensive professional development system that supports continuous learning and instructional improvement in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum.

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that the management of independent training based on the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) plays a significant role in improving teacher competence at the elementary school level. The findings show that effective implementation of PMM-based training depends on systematic management through the functions of planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. Needs-based planning ensures the relevance of training content, organizing establishes support systems and mentoring structures, implementation promotes teacher-centered and reflective learning, and evaluation provides feedback for continuous improvement.

The study also indicates that PMM functions optimally not merely as a digital platform but as part of a comprehensive school-based professional development system when supported by strong leadership and management practices. Despite challenges related to digital literacy and teacher motivation, structured support and reflective evaluation enable sustainable professional growth. This research contributes theoretically to educational management literature and practically provides guidance for school leaders and policymakers in optimizing digital professional development to enhance teacher competence in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum..

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