# IMPROVING TEACHER COMPETENCE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM: AN INTENSIVE MENTORING APPROACH IN MADRASAH

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## Abstrak

*Tujuan kegiatan pengabdian ini adalah memberikan pelatihan kepada guru-guru di Madrasah yang berada dibawah naungan Yayasan Pendidikan Ridlol Walidain (YPRW) Nahdlatul Wathan Diniah Islamiyah (NWDI) Batu Bangka dalam mengimplementasikan Kurikulum Merdeka. Metode pelaksanaan pendampingan yang akan dilakukan sebagai berikut: 1) Workshop penyusunan kurikulum satuan madrasah (KSM), 2) Workshop penyusunan tujuan pembelajaran (TP) alur tujuan pembelajaran (ATP) dan modul ajar dan 3) Worshop penyusunan projek penguatan profil pelajar pancasila (P5). Selain whorshop dilakukan juga program pendampingan implementasi dari ketiga workshop tersebut. Adapun hasil evaluasi dari kegiatan pengabdian ini sebagai berikut: 1) 90% guru menyatakan bahwa kegiatan ini sangat puas dengan pola pengabdian ini, 2) kualitas produk Kurikulum yang dihasilnya tergolong sangat baik, 3) 75% guru sudah bisa menghasilkan produk berupa TP, ATP, dan modul ajar, dan 4) tim penanggung jawab P5 sudah bisa menghasilkan modul P5 dengan kategori sangat baik. Dari hasil evaluasi dapat dikatakan bahwa madrasah ini bisa menjadi contoh dalam implementasi kurikulum merdeka.*

***Kata Kunci****: Kompetensi Guru; Kurikulum Merdeka; Pendampingan Intensif; Implementasi Pendidikan; Madrasah*

## Abstract

The purpose of this community service activity is to provide training to teachers at Madrasah under the auspices of the Yayasan Pendidikan Ridlol Walidain (YPRW) Nahdlatul Wathan Diniah Islamiyah (NWDI) Batu Bangka in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The methods of implementing the mentoring that will be carried out are as follows: 1) a Workshop on compiling the madrasah unit curriculum, 2) a Workshop on compiling learning objectives, learning objective flows, and teaching modules, and 3) a Workshop on compiling projects to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students. In addition to the workshop, a mentoring program for the implementation of the three workshops was also carried out. The evaluation results of this community service activity are as follows: 1) 90% of teachers stated that this activity was very satisfied with this community service pattern, 2) the quality of the curriculum products produced was classified as very good, 3) 75% of teachers were able to produce products in the form of TP, ATP, and teaching modules, and 4) the P5 team was able to produce P5 modules with a

very good category. From the evaluation results, it can be said that this madrasa could be an example of implementing the Merdeka curriculum.

**Keywords:** Teacher Competence; Merdeka Curriculum; Intensive Mentoring; Implementation of Education; Madrasah

## INTRODUCTION

In the UU No. 20, (2003), Curriculum is a plan and arrangement that includes objectives, content, subject matter, and methods used as guidelines in implementing learning activities to achieve certain educational goals. The curriculum is a collection of plans and arrangements that include objectives, content, and learning materials that serve as a guide in the learning process to achieve certain educational goals (Ananda et al., 2015; Sanjaya, 2011). The curriculum is expected to provide freedom for schools to be able to adjust learning objectives to the needs around where students study (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018).

However, based on a study by Puskurbuk (2019), it was found that in general, teachers in Indonesia are still concentrated on preparing administrative documents (BSKAP, 2022). A qualitative study at one school in Magelang found that most teachers were not motivated to make lesson plans, because for them actions in the classroom were more important than making complicated and complex sheets of manuscripts (Aeini, 2019). According to Ornstein and Hunkins, one of the reasons why teachers feel uncomfortable in implementing changes in approaches, methodologies, and ways of evaluating students is because teachers do not feel that they have the curriculum (Poedjiastutie et al., 2018). The 2013 curriculum limits teachers' flexibility in developing creativity and innovation. This is due to the demands of preparing the administration of teaching equipment which is very complicated. Likewise for vocational school teachers, the use of a centralized syllabus limits their freedom to choose more creative, relevant, and contextual learning approaches (Pratikto & Setiawan, 2019).

Based on some of the findings above and juxtaposed by looking at the results of PISA from 2003 to 2021, it is natural to change the 2013 curriculum to an independent curriculum. This change aims to adjust the curriculum to the needs of the times, technological developments, social dynamics, and competency demands in the 21st-century era (Santika et al., 2022). In its implementation, the curriculum has quite complex problems, this is seen by the head of a community service when serving as a Driving School Facilitator where for almost a year he has been accompanying 4 high schools in Dompu, one of which is the independent culture in making teaching modules from scratch. From this experience, we are of the view that the Merdeka curriculum is fairly good because it is a continuation of the previous curriculum improvement, even from competency-based (KBK). However, it is realized that there are many obstacles in the field, the main obstacle is the lack of preparation of teachers in making learning designs because in the

previous curriculum, there was more acceptance from the ministry, especially in determining basic competencies and indicators.

Some of the results of the service show that the obstacles felt by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include the lack of government socialization about the Merdeka curriculum, the lack of preparation for teachers to switch to the Merdeka curriculum, and learning resources are still fixated on textbooks and guidebooks only (Nurcahyono & Putra, 2022; Wantiana & Mellisa, 2023). They further revealed that in their research, it was found that teachers lack understanding of how to reduce or translate CP into learning objectives; In addition, teachers feel that there is a lack of reference examples in the implementation of the independent curriculum. Further strengthened by Zulaiha et al., (2023) found that teachers have difficulty in choosing learning methods and strategies and determining the form of assessment, especially in project-based learning (Zulaiha et al., 2023).

The same thing is also felt by madrasas under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, to better understand field problems, especially the Ridlol Walidain Batu Bangka Islamic Boarding School. From the results of observations at the Islamic boarding school, several problems were found as follows: 1). Many teachers are not ready or have received adequate training to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, 2) The process of adjusting the existing curriculum with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum can be a big challenge, 3) The availability of books and teaching materials by the Merdeka Curriculum may still be limited, making it difficult for teachers to deliver material effectively, and 4) The assessment system in the Merdeka Curriculum may be different from what has been implemented previously. Based on this description, Madrasah needs intense assistance from the government and campuses so that curriculum changes can provide significant changes in the world of education, especially in madrasas, so that curriculum changes that cost a considerable amount of money are only well conceptualized while the implementation is not good.

Merdeka Curriculum assistance to teachers has been carried out in each previous year. However, service (Camellia, et al., 2022) is still general and theoretical around the socialization of the Merdeka Curriculum. (Lestari et al., 2023) began to touch on the practical aspects of curriculum implementation. Meanwhile, this service (Habibah, 2024) specifically offers a systematic and structured intensive mentoring model. The significant difference lies in the more in-depth approach method, where this service is not just a transfer of knowledge, but the empowerment of teachers through a process of continuous guidance and periodic evaluation in implementing the Merdeka Curriculumin the Madrasah environment.

The novelty of this service lies in a comprehensive intensive mentoring approach in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculumin Madrasas, which is

different from the previous service. The purpose of this service activity is to provide training to teachers in Madrasah under the auspices of the Ridlol Walidain Education Foundation (YPRW) Nahdlatul Wathan Diniah Islamiyah (NWDI) Batu Bangka in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This service partner is the Ridlol Walidain Education Foundation (YPRW) Nahdlatul Wathan Diniah Islamiyah (NWDI) which is in the middle of the Batu Bangka community settlement, Jenggik Village, Terara District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara which is in figure 1.



Figure 1. Ridlol Walidain Boarding School

This foundation has formal education including Ridlol Walidain Nahdlatul Wathan Islamic Kindergarten, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) and Madrasah Aliyah (MA) Ridlol Walidain Nahdlatul Wathan. The target of this service is 3 madrasah heads and 15 teachers from the madrasah who are selected based on their level of motivation. This service will be carried out from July to December 2024 with the implementation method explained in table 1.

Table 1. Stages of Service Activities

| No | Activities | Month | | | | | |
|----|-----------|-------|---|---|----|----|----|
|    |           | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 1 | Preparation and planning | v | | | | | |
| 2 | Implementation of training and mentoring | | v | v | v | v | |
| 3 | Monitoring and evaluation | | | | | v | v |

The explanation of each stage of community service implementation is described as follows.

**Preparation and Design Stages**

The stages of this preparation carried out by the Community Service Team include: (1) Carrying out a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the team and developing a concept of service in the form of mentoring which will take a long time and is sustainable.  (2) Carry out Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with partners and convey several alternative solutions to the problems experienced by

partners. (3) Agree on a pattern and partnership contract during the mentoring so that the program targets can be achieved.

**Implementation Stages**

The implementation stages carried out by the community service Team include: (1) Conducting a workshop on the preparation of the Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM) and materials on the new paradigm curriculum from concept to implementation in schools on Pari Island offline. (2) Monitoring and assisting the progress of the preparation of KOM from each madrasah. (3) Conducting a workshop on the preparation of Educational Objectives (TP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and differentiated Teaching Modules. (4) Monitoring and assisting the progress of the preparation of Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and differentiated Teaching Modules for each teacher as well as monitoring their learning practices. (5) Conducting a workshop on the preparation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). (6) Monitoring the preparation and implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5).

**Monitoring and Evaluation Stages**

The monitoring stage is carried out thoroughly to find out the advantages and disadvantages of each stage of the implementation of community partnership service, so that improvements can be made at the next stage, while the evaluation is carried out at each stage with an instructor with indicators, namely the preparation of the Madarasah Operational Curriculum (KOM) and each teacher who participates in the training can make learning products in the form of Learning Objectives Flow (ATP) and teaching modules.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Preparation and Design Stages**

In the preparation stage for service, the community service Team carried out a series of comprehensive strategic activities to ensure the success of the mentoring program. The process began with the implementation of an internal Focus Group Discussion (FGD) within the team, which aimed to develop a concept of deep and sustainable service. In this FGD, the team conducted an in-depth analysis related to the mentoring design, considering the complexity and duration of the program that requires careful planning. Furthermore, the team held an FGD with partners to identify problems in a participatory manner. This stage is crucial to produce alternative solutions that are right on target and in accordance with the specific needs of partners. Through interactive dialogue, the team succeeded in exploring substantive problems faced by partners in the context of program implementation.

As a follow-up, the team and partners jointly agreed on a clear partnership pattern and contract. This agreement includes cooperation parameters,

achievement targets, mentoring mechanisms, and joint commitments to realize the goals of the service program. This negotiation process and agreement ensures clarity of roles, responsibilities, and expectations of both parties documented in figure 2. This stage shows that this stage of preparation is not just procedural, but is a strategic foundation that determines the success of the entire service program. The participatory and systematic approach carried out by the team ensures the relevance, acceptability, and sustainability potential of the mentoring program.



Figure 2. Stages of Preparation and Planning

This activity was carried out on Saturday, July 13, 2024 at the office of the Ridlol Walidain Education Foundation (YPRW) Nahdlatul Wathan Diniah Islamiyah (NWDI). At this stage, the foundation directly expressed its gratitude for the invitation or assistance from the campus to improve the quality of the learning process at the managed Islamic boarding school, he hoped that with this activity the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum would be even better where it was realized that because this boarding school is under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion so that the socialization and training of the Merdeka Curriculum is relatively less than that of schools under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture. After conducting a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), it was agreed that several patterns and materials would be carried out during the service, namely 1) the preparation of the Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM), 2) the preparation of the Learning Objectives (TP), the Flow of Learning Objectives (ATP), and differentiated Teaching Modules and 3) the preparation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5).

**Implementation Stages**

The implementation stages carried out by the community service Team include: the first activity, conducting a workshop on the preparation of the Madrasah Operational Curriculum (KOM) and material on the new paradigm curriculum from concept to implementation in schools on Pari Island offline which is documented in figure 3.

Figure 3. Whorkshop Prepares KOM

This stage is a continuation of the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) activities that have been carried out previously, this activity was carried out on Monday, July 15, 2024 in the same place. Because this activity is in the form of a workhsop, participants are asked to work more to produce products, while the presenters focus on mentoring. The obstacle experienced by teachers is how to adjust the curriculum content where 20% to 25% of the time in one semester is used for the Pancasila student profile strengthening project (P5). Socialization, training, and mentoring must be carried out to get the desired results, this is also what is done by (Hasibuan et al., 2023; Rijanto & Rahayuningsih, 2023).

The second activity is to monitor and assist the progress of the preparation of KOM from each madrasah. Monitoring is carried out online, and communication is built through the group's WhatsApp, in addition to that, video calls are also carried out with each school principal or vice curriculum secretary to monitor the obstacles experienced during the preparation of the KOM. Training alone is not enough, so assistance is needed to produce a curriculum that is following the needs of students and also adjusted to the situation and conditions of the school (Najwa & Suciptaningsih, 2023).

The next activity is to conduct a workshop on the preparation of Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and differentiated Teaching Modules as depicted in figure 4.



Figure 4. Whorkshop prepares ATP and Teaching modules

This activity was carried out on Tuesday, September 24, 2024, this activity began with the experience of teachers in designing ATP and teaching modules because there were several teachers who had participated in training from the Ministry of Religion, after listening to the explanation of the teachers, then the presenter gave additional explanations, especially on things that were not yet clear or there may be several opinions in understanding the concept of ATP and teaching modules. The most dominant obstacle experienced is the lack of experience of teachers in compiling learning objectives, this is because since KBK, KTSP and K13 teachers only take from the syllabus provided by the government. The solution we provide is to dissect the bloom taxonomy and its use in compiling basic competencies and achievement indicators, in addition to giving examples that they often give in the 2013 curriculum.

In the process of training and mentoring, various obstacles were found, one of which was how to design differentiated learning, where this learning became one of the icons of the Merdeka Curriculum itself. Differentiated learning planning is very important for the success of learning implementation in order to achieve a learning goal (Kusumaningpuri, 2024). In addition, the characteristics or characteristics of educational units or foundations need to be strengthened or maximized both in the KOSP and in the learning process, as said by Najwa in her research, it is stated that the characteristics of the school need to be highlighted first so that the projects and content to be made have values that are in accordance with the characteristics of the school (Najwa & Suciptaningsih, 2023).

In addition to carrying out assistance in the preparation of KOM, TP and ATP, the next mentoring activity also carried out a workshop on the preparation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) which is documented in figure 5.



Figure 5. Workshop Preparation of P5 Module

This activity was carried out on Tuesday, September 25, 2024, this activity began by reflecting on the implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) which has been carried out so far, and asking one of the persons in charge of P5 for the presentation of the modules that have been used so

far. After that, the presenter provided input and implemented the correct concept in the preparation of the P5 module. The next step is to improve the P5 module and the presenter assists one group to another.

The Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project, as one of the ways to achieve the Pancasila student profile, provides an opportunity for students to "experience knowledge" firsthand. This aims to strengthen their character while providing opportunities to learn from the surrounding environment. (Maruti et al., 2023). The most basic thing must also be realized by teachers that P5 is character education where character education is part of the educational process that focuses on introducing character values to students. This includes components of knowledge, consciousness or will, as well as actions to realize these values in life (Sulistiyaningrum & Fathurrahman, 2023).

In the process of mentoring, teachers show high enthusiasm for the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This is because teachers have more freedom in managing learning according to school conditions. in the Independent Curriculum, students not only learn learning materials every day but are also given time to carry out the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project which is adapted to school conditions (Yuliastuti et al., 2022).

**Monitoring and Evaluation Stages**

Furthermore, monitoring and assisting the progress of the preparation of Learning Objectives (TP), Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), and differentiated Teaching Modules for each teacher as well as monitoring their learning practices. Monitoring is carried out online, and communication is built through the WhatsApp group, in addition to that, video calls are also made with each principal or vice curriculum secretary to monitor the obstacles experienced during the preparation of ATP and teaching modules. In addition, each teacher must upload the ATP and teaching modules that have been compiled on google drive which can be accessed by all according to the documentation depicted in figures 6, 7 and 8. Of the 15 teachers who were accompanied, there were 6 teachers who experienced difficulties in training, in addition to the factor of not lacking in operating computers also because indeed since becoming a teacher they have never made learning programs independently. In the training, teachers have not been able to understand the CP well, have not been able to lower the TP from the existing CP, have not been able to compile the ATP from the TP that has been prepared. This was also experienced in Rindayati's research (Apriyanti, 2023; Rindayati et al., 2022).

One of the solutions obtained from the training and mentoring process is to provide step-by-step worksheet activities starting from searching and understanding the CP for one Phase and each Element of the ministerial regulation as shown in the following figure:

**LEMBAR KERJA I**
IDENTIFIKASI CAPAIAN PEMBELAJARAN (CP)

Nama Sekolah   :
Nama Guru       :
Mata Pelajaran  :
Tahun Pelajaran:
Kelas               :
Fase                :

Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) fase D:
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................

| No | Elemen | Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) |
|----|--------|---------------------------|
|    |        |                           |
|    |        |                           |
|    |        |                           |
|    |        |                           |
|    |        |                           |

Figure 6. Worksheet 1

The next stage of worksheet 2 is to derive the Learning Objectives (TP) of the CP for each element.

**LEMBAR KERJA II**
MERUMUSKAN TUJUAN PEMBELAJARAN (TP)

Nama Sekolah   :
Nama Guru       :
Mata Pelajaran  :
Tahun Pelajaran:
Kelas               :
Fase                :

Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) fase....:
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................

| No | Elemen | Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) | Kompetensi | Konten/Materi | Tujuan Pembelajaran (TP) |
|----|--------|---------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|
|    |        |                           |            |               |                          |
|    |        |                           |            |               |                          |
|    |        |                           |            |               |                          |
|    |        |                           |            |               |                          |
|    |        |                           |            |               |                          |

Figure 7. Worksheet 2

The next stage is to sequence TP into Learning Objectives Flow (ATP) in one phase.

**LEMBAR KERJA III**
MENYUSUN ALUR TUJUAN PEMBELAJARAN (ATP)

Nama Sekolah   :
Nama Guru       :
Mata Pelajaran  :
Tahun Pelajaran:
Kelas               :
Fase                :

Capaian Pembelajaran Fase .....:
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................................................

| No | Elemen | Capaian Pembelajaran (CP) | Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP) | Indikator Ketercapaian Tujuan Pembelajaran (IKTP) | Kelas/ Semester | Waktu |
|----|--------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------|
|    |        |                           |                               |                                                   |                 |       |
|    |        |                           |                               |                                                   |                 |       |
|    |        |                           |                               |                                                   |                 |       |
|    |        |                           |                               |                                                   |                 |       |
|    |        |                           |                               |                                                   |                 |       |

Figure 8. Worksheet 3

Monitoring the preparation of the P5 module is also carried out online, communication is built through the WhatsApp group, in addition to video calls are also made with the person in charge of P5, and occasionally the P5 module file is sent via email then we check and we give suggestions for improvement. In the preparation of the P5 module, most teachers experience obstacles in formulating a form of continuous activities because usually teachers only make activities for one

or two meetings and finish immediately. One of the efforts that can be made is to utilize the Merdeka Mengajar platform as an independent training medium that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. The use of this platform is expected to be able to improve teachers' perception of P5 as a co-curricular program in the Merdeka Curriculum(Damayanti & Al Ghozali, 2023).

Next, an evaluation was carried out as described in figure 9. The evaluation of the program was carried out after the last activity which was a workshop on the preparation of the P5 module, the results of the evaluation are as follows: 1) based on Figure 9, 87% of teachers are satisfied and very satisfied with the pattern or technique of implementing this activity, 2) the quality of the curriculum products that are produced is very good, 3) 75% of teachers have been able to produce products in the form of TP, ATP, and teaching modules,  and 4) the team in charge of P5 has been able to produce P5 modules with a very good category.
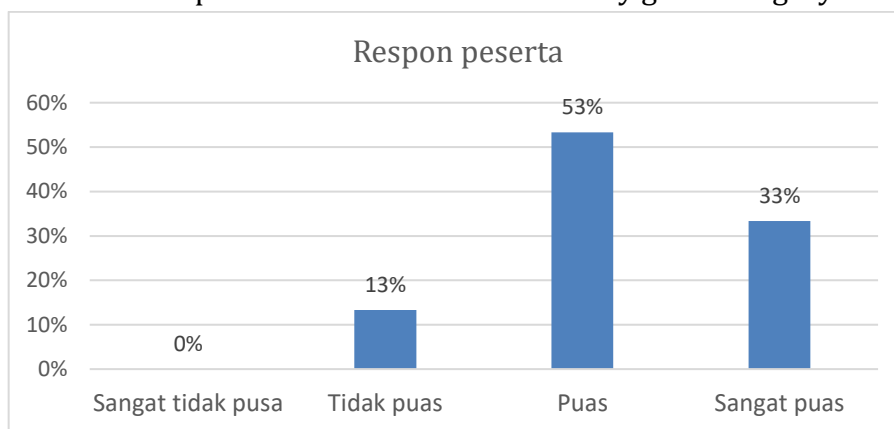


Figure 9. Participants Responses to All Stages of Activities

In addition, from the results of interviews with several participants who were randomly taken, it was found that several things were inhibiting activities, including 1) Lack of initial understanding of the concept of the Independent Curriculum, 2) Limited access to the Internet and technological devices to support workshop activities, especially in remote areas, 3) Dense schedules of teachers in teaching and carrying out administrative tasks, making it difficult to focus on participating in workshops,  and 4) There is rejection or skepticism from teachers who feel comfortable with the previous curriculum.

Meanwhile, the supporting factors so that this event can run smoothly are: 1) Full support from the government through funding, policies, and implementation guidelines, 2) The presence of experienced speakers who can provide examples of good practices, 3) High motivation from teachers to improve teaching competence and skills, and 4) Involvement of teachers, principals, and other stakeholders in the planning and evaluation of the workshop.

In the context of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum workshop, there are complex dynamics between supporting and inhibiting factors that affect the success of activities. Referring to (Budiawati, 2023) about educational change

management, the curriculum transformation process is a multidimensional challenge involving structural, cultural, and individual aspects.

The main supporting factor lies in the commitment of education stakeholders, especially madrasah heads and teachers who show high enthusiasm for pedagogical innovation (Rahmadayanti, 2024). According to research (Arrohman, 2023), openness to change and the adaptive capacity of educators are prerequisites for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Institutional support, such as the provision of training resources and ongoing mentoring, significantly strengthens the transformation process (Nisa', 2024).

On the other hand, the identified inhibiting factors include cultural resistance to change, limitations in digital competence, and the complexity of curriculum design that requires paradigmatic reorientation in teaching practice (Hattarina, 2022). Professional change teachers revealed that psychological barriers are often more substantial than technical barriers, where personal concerns and uncertainty are the main barriers. The success of the workshop depends on a comprehensive intervention strategy, including a responsive andragogy approach, ongoing support mechanisms, and the creation of a dialogical space that facilitates the transformation of pedagogical praxis (Hasmawati, 2023).

**CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires consistency in the long term such as the current pattern of service, thank God step by stage of service can be done. The results of this service activity are as follows: 1) 90% of teachers stated that this activity was very satisfied with this pattern of service, 2) the quality of the curriculum products produced was very good, 3) 75% of teachers were able to produce products in the form of TP, ATP, and teaching modules, and 4) the P5 team in charge was able to produce P5 modules with a very good category.

For further service related to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, it is recommended to narrow the focus of the research to specific aspects such as the preparation of ATP (Alur Tata Pamong), Teaching Modules, or P5 Modules. This approach allows the service process to be more directed, effective in implementation, and efficient in terms of financing. Changes can be made by improving the sentence structure to be more systematic, using more formal and academic language, explaining the abbreviation ATP, emphasizing the benefits of narrowing the focus of research, ensuring a logical and professional flow of thought.

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