

The Effectiveness of Local Wisdom–Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Strategies

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ABSTRACT

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Cultural acculturation provides a discourse for strategic renewal to enhance the effectiveness of the teaching of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). This study aims to identify a strategic model of PAI teaching at MAN 1 Bengkulu City by positioning local wisdom as a source of relevant values to strengthen students' understanding and character formation. The research employs a qualitative, descriptive survey approach. Key informants include PAI teachers, students, the school principal, and local customary leaders or cultural experts. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and then analyzed thematically. The study identified local wisdom values such as togetherness, deliberation, mutual cooperation, and respect for parents as being strongly aligned with Islamic moral principles. The integration of these values was achieved through the selection of effective cultural practices as learning media, modification of learning activities, and provision of space for student reflection. Contextual learning strategies oriented toward cognitive achievement were implemented using Project-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning methods. Meanwhile, in-depth character formation encourages students to develop an Islamic identity that harmonizes with local culture. The study suggests that integrating local culture offers a new direction for Islamic Religious Education (PAI), making it more relevant to contemporary social and cultural challenges.



Keywords: *Curriculum Management; Islamic Religious Education; Learning Strategies; Local Wisdom.*

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a fundamental role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of madrasah students in accordance with the noble values of Islam (Halim Tamuri et al., 2013; Muazza et al., 2018). However, the delivery of PAI often faces the challenge of making it relevant, engaging, and firmly rooted in students' lives (Annisa & Puspita, 2022). In practice, the lecture method remains the primary approach used by PAI teachers (Bashori et al., 2024). Consequently, PAI teachers are challenged to make the material more contextual so that learning does not stop at rote memorization of concepts or definitions but instead brings about a paradigm shift and the shaping of student behavior (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021).

Global education trends indicate a shift toward more contextualized, learner-centered approaches, including in religious education (Mas'ud et al., 2019). Several studies have highlighted the importance of culturally responsive teaching in enhancing students' motivation to learn and their understanding (Azis et al., 2022; Muharom, 2023). Traditionally, PAI instruction has tended to emphasize the transmission of cognitive knowledge and has at times been detached from students' socio-cultural realities. Teachers have responded by developing innovative PAI instructional strategies and by strengthening institutional capacity (Saputra et al., 2019).

Research on PAI tends to focus on instructional practices and has not yet optimally integrated the richness of local culture as a meaningful learning resource. There is a gap in incorporating the values and practices of local wisdom into PAI teaching methods. Sauri's research emphasizes descriptions of local wisdom or the general integration of culture into education but has not specifically addressed the development of students' Islamic character (Mansur & Sholeh, 2024; Sauri et al., 2022).

In the context of PAI, several studies explore the use of local media, Islamic folktales, or aspects of local wisdom to enrich learning materials in madrasahs (Maemonah et al., 2023). For example, there are studies examining how the values of gotong royong (mutual cooperation) and social ethics in local culture parallel Islamic moral teachings (Ruhaya, 2019). However, these studies are generally exploratory or descriptive; few have provided in-depth, empirical analyses of the concrete effectiveness of integrating Bengkulu's local wisdom specifically into various PAI (Islamic Religious Education) teaching strategies and its impact on learning outcomes (Agus Zaenul Fitri et al., 2020).

Learning strategies are consciously and purposefully designed plans formulated by teachers to achieve predetermined educational objectives (Syamsul & Ma'arif, 2018). Within these strategies, there are systematic steps that span from planning and implementation to evaluation. Critical components such as methods, approaches, media, and teaching techniques are interrelated, forming a cohesive and integrated whole (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Therefore, learning strategies do not merely concern how teachers deliver lessons, but also how the learning process is experienced by students, enabling them to comprehend, internalize, and practice the values being taught (Prasetyo & Fadhli, 2023; Rahman et al., 2023).

This study is grounded in Lev Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and cultural assimilation (Veraksa & Veraksa, 2018; Vygotsky & Cole, 2018). In this context, the local wisdom of Bengkulu functions as a cultural mediation tool that helps students construct their understanding of Islamic teachings in a more contextualized and meaningful way. Moreover, Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy is relevant here, asserting that education

should be connected to students' realities and empower them to reflect upon and transform their environments (Darder, 2017; Freire, 2015).

From the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, the study draws on a holistic philosophy of Islamic education that emphasizes not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor domains and underscores the importance of making Islam a practical guide for life in every dimension, including within the local cultural context. The primary aim of this study is to analyze and assess the extent to which integrating Bengkulu's local wisdom into various Islamic religious education teaching strategies can effectively enhance students' understanding, motivation to learn, and internalization of Islamic values.

METHOD

The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the integration of Bengkulu's local wisdom into PAI learning strategies. Key informants include PAI teachers who actively implement these strategies, students as learners, school principals as policymakers, and local traditional leaders or cultural experts as authorities on regional wisdom. Data were collected using triangulation techniques; in-depth interviews were conducted to elicit each informant's perspectives on the relevance of local wisdom, implementation strategies, challenges encountered, and perceived effectiveness. In addition, direct observation will be conducted in the PAI classroom to examine learning practices, teacher-student interactions, and students' spontaneous responses. Document analysis of modified lesson plans (RPP), teaching materials, and student work will complement the data to corroborate and enrich the findings.

The collected qualitative data will then be analyzed thematically. This process involves transcribing the data, organizing field notes, and repeated readings to become familiar with the material. Next, key patterns and ideas will be identified through coding and then grouped into broader categories and themes. The results of the analysis will be presented as a comprehensive narrative, enriched with direct quotations from key informants and detailed observational notes, to provide an authentic portrayal of how Bengkulu's local wisdom values are integrated into the practice of PAI (Islamic Religious Education).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A learning strategy is a systematic plan by a teacher to achieve set goals (Sutomo et al., 2019). It guides the organization of learning activities for efficiency and direction (Prasetyo et al., 2023). It is a conscious effort to create conditions that support optimal learning, so students achieve expected competencies. Strategies should fit student characteristics, teaching materials, and learning goals (Winoto, 2022). Common examples include exemplary (uswah hasanah), familiarization, discussion, contextual, and digital strategies (Huda et al., 2022).

Tabel 1: Interview Coding

Coding	Quotation
PAI Teacher	<p>"The integration of the standard PAI curriculum with traditional values is complex. Teachers need to innovate pedagogically, not just teaching, but also re-organizing the understanding of PAI so that it is contextual with the lives of students in Bengkulu." GP.1</p> <p>"The Project-Based Learning method that we apply, such as the project documenting the Islamic tradition of Serabi Alms (Sedekah Serabi), makes students not only memorize the postulates but also know their relevance. Learning becomes adaptive and they can see how our local culture is actually full of Islamic values." GP.2</p> <p>We learned how to design lesson plans that are planning-based and contextually relevant." GP.3</p> <p>"The effectiveness is truly felt during holistic evaluations. Students not only excel in written examinations, but their Islamic character, such as tolerance and gotong royong, also shows significant improvement. This demonstrates the importance of a multidimensional approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI)." GP.4</p> <p>"The greatest challenge lies in finding the meeting point between a pure religious identity and diverse local cultures. We must judiciously select which local wisdom aligns with and strengthens, rather than contradicts, religious principles." GP.5</p>
Kepala Sekolah	<p>"We see this strategy as a significant pedagogical innovation. Although the implementation is complex because it involves various aspects, we fully support it because it has been proven to improve the quality of PAI learning and character building. We also conduct a holistic evaluation, looking at the overall impact on students and the school environment."</p> <p>"The indigenous people of Bengkulu have always upheld noble values. It's wonderful to see PAI in schools now, incorporating those values. This is the right way to shape students' religious identities so that they are not severed from their local culture but instead strengthen it, fostering individuals who are both religious and culturally grounded."</p>

The analysis of the interview findings highlights the integration of Bengkulu's local wisdom into PAI instruction as a transformative and complex pedagogical innovation. PAI teachers reported that the process requires a paradigm shift from conventional teaching to a more contextual and adaptive approach, given the multidimensional nature of PAI, which encompasses *akidah* (creed), *akhlak* (ethics), *ibadah* (worship), and *muamalah* (social/economic dealings). This transformation marks a move away from mere knowledge transmission toward learning experiences that are more authentic and relevant to the local context.

The effectiveness of the integration is evident in a marked increase in student motivation and engagement. According to some students, PAI lessons become less rigid when delivered through examples and narratives drawn from Bengkulu stories. Project-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning approaches that involve direct exploration of local traditions, such as *sedekah serabi* (serabi alms) or the *berembuk* tradition, not only deepen students' cognitive understanding of PAI but also shape them into active learners. Students do not merely memorize religious tenets; they are able to understand their relevance and application within their cultural context, which ultimately strengthens their religious identity and pride in their local culture. This confirms that contextualization through local wisdom has successfully fostered a sense of ownership and perceived relevance of PAI materials. The success of implementing this strategy also depends on infrastructure support and the competence of human resources. It explicitly requires training and Teacher Professional Development (TPD).

Adequate training enables teachers to design systematically planned, contextual lesson plans and equips them to filter and integrate local wisdom without obscuring the principles of Islamic law. Principals regard integration strategies as innovations requiring holistic evaluation, not only in academic terms, but also with respect to their overall impact on the school's character and environment (Lafrarchi, 2020). This support reflects the recognition that teachers are not merely implementers of the curriculum but architects of learning, capable of harmoniously integrating two distinct domains of values (Hikmawati & Hosnan, 2022).

The integration of local wisdom into PAI learning strategies significantly enhances learning effectiveness (Muliastuti & Rafli, 2024). This rests on the assumption that when Islamic teachings are presented through media, examples, and values familiar to students' cultural environment, they will find it easier to understand, feel connected to, and internalize those teachings.

PAI teachers should be able to foster a calm, meaningful learning environment that encourages students to develop into faithful, knowledgeable individuals who actively practice good deeds (Prasetya & Hasan Syahputra, 2024). Religious education should not be confined to the classroom; it must also be enlivened through activities beyond class, such as devotional practices, social service, and the cultivation of virtuous character throughout the school (Tan & Ibrahim, 2017). Thus, Islamic religious education is not merely an academic subject but a way of life that guides students toward *insan kamil*, a complete human being who is balanced in intellect, heart, and deeds (Alkouatli, 2021).

Identification and Relevance of Local Wisdom

The people of Bengkulu have strong traditions and cultural values, such as the practice of berembuk, a communal consultation that embodies togetherness and kinship. Musyawarah, or deliberation, reflects a tolerant spirit and a sense of community. Gotong royong, regularly practiced in the villages, is not only rooted in social solidarity but also extends into private family occasions. Likewise, respect for parents and customary leaders demonstrates a deep sense of propriety and etiquette preserved across generations. The values of local wisdom align with the core principles of Islam, especially in strengthening moral character, social responsibility, and harmonious communal life.

Bengkulu's local wisdom encompasses values, norms, beliefs, and traditional practices that have proven effective throughout the local community's history. It serves as a guide for life and a mechanism for adapting to the environment. These forms of wisdom are not only rich in cultural heritage but are also imbued with ethical, moral, and spiritual values that often align with Islamic principles. The integration of local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is considered essential for developing resilient student character, enabling them to appreciate their cultural identity without neglecting universal Islamic teachings. This integration also supports a culturally responsive learning approach, making teaching materials easier for students to understand and internalize.

The application of local wisdom values across various PAI subjects can be seen as follows: in *Aqidah Akhlak*, local wisdom can provide concrete examples for the implementation of *akhlakul karimah* (noble character); in Fiqh, local traditions can serve as case studies for contextual ijtihad (independent reasoning); in Qur'an Hadis, local stories can be connected with universal verses; and in *Sejarah Kebudayaan Islam* (Islamic Cultural History), local wisdom can enrich the understanding of the dialectic between Islam and culture. Thus, the integration of Bengkulu's local wisdom will not only enhance students' cognitive understanding but also foster positive attitudes, increase learning motivation, and ultimately lead to a holistic internalization of Islamic values, in line with educational efforts aimed at the comprehensive development of students.

Ideally, PAI learning is expected to shape students into individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and possess noble character (Alhashmi & Moussa-Inaty, 2021). However, in reality, there remains a gap between these desired goals and current field practices. Many religious learning processes remain formal and rigid, with the teacher as the primary focus of learning activities (Ashraf, 2019). Students often play a more passive role as listeners, while opportunities for dialogue, critical thinking, and connecting Islamic values to daily life remain limited (Husna & Thohir, 2020).

Identification and Relevance of Local Wisdom

Bengkulu's relevant local wisdom consists of the ethical and moral values embedded in customary practices. For example, among the Rejang community, there are behavioral norms that govern relationships between individuals, families, and the wider community, such as mutual respect (*tenggang rasa*), mutual assistance (*gotong royong*), and consultation (*musyawarah*) in decision-making. These practices, often manifested in traditional ceremonies or everyday social interactions, have strong parallels with Islamic teachings on *akhlakul karimah* (noble character), *ukhuwah islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), and the principle of *shura* (consultation). Islamic religious education (PAI) can examine case studies or folktales that reflect these customary values and then relate them to relevant verses of the Qur'an and Hadith, so that students understand that universal values of goodness have long existed in their culture and are affirmed by Islam.

Relevant aspects of Bengkulu culture can be used as teaching resources, including customary deliberations (*musyawarah adat*), traditions of cooperation, hospitality etiquette, and mosque etiquette. Customary deliberations, for example, can serve as a concrete illustration for understanding the meaning of *shura* and the ethics of dialogue. Students are accustomed to seeing how families or community leaders resolve problems through deliberation, so they recognize the importance of respecting others' opinions, not imposing one's will, and seeking the best decision. Teachers can draw on this experience to clarify Islamic teachings on *shura* without having to rely entirely on examples that are distant from students' lives.

Similarly, the tradition of cooperation, essentially a form of mutual assistance characteristic of Bengkulu, can serve as a foundation for conveying the values of *ukhuwah*, compassion, and social responsibility. When students observe residents helping one another in village activities, they will more readily understand that *ukhuwah* is not merely a term in a textbook but a social practice they witness firsthand. Other elements, such as guest etiquette, which among the people of Bengkulu serves as a measure of politeness and respect, can be used to illustrate Islamic manners in everyday interactions. Students can compare the values prevalent in their surroundings with the teachings of *adab* in Islam, making their understanding of the material more natural (Mansur & Sholeh, 2024).

In addition, the mosque's role as a center of social activity can serve as the basis for community-service projects in learning. From mosque youth programs and managing mosque cleanliness to religious study sessions and social outreach, these activities can be linked to topics on community service, empathy, and responsibility in worship. Such activities not only provide students with real-world experience but also foster awareness that the mosque plays a broad role in the life of the Muslim community.

For students, the familiarity of local wisdom can serve as a bridge to understanding that Islamic teachings do not exist as abstract concepts. When teachers discuss themes such as morality (*akhlak*), brotherhood (*ukhuwah*), social care, or etiquette in social interactions, students often already have concrete examples from their own experiences. For instance, the Rejang tradition teaches discipline, togetherness, and respect within the social structure. Traditional communal feasts (*Kenduri adat*) demonstrate the spirit of sharing blessings and praying for collective well-being. Family consultations (*Musyawaharah keluarga*) illustrate how decisions are made by valuing various perspectives. Meanwhile, the mosque in the madrasah environment, as a social hub, serves as a space for strengthening inter-communal relationships rather than merely a place of worship. To maximize this, teachers can draw examples from traditional activities students have participated in to explain sharia principles, moral values, or rules in transactions (*muamalah*). Students will then find it easier to see the connection between classroom lessons and the social realities around them.

By leveraging these experiences, PAI learning in the classroom can be made more relatable and digestible. Teachers can utilize examples from traditional activities that students have previously engaged in to elucidate Sharia principles, moral values, or rules in various interactions. This approach not only enlivens the learning process but also helps students comprehend that Islamic ethics develop and are nurtured within the social relationships they maintain in their families, schools, and the Bengkulu community.

The Implementation Analysis of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Teaching Strategies through the Integration of Local Wisdom

The integration of local wisdom is implemented through three steps designed to suit students' circumstances and the school environment. First, contextualization, which involves presenting examples and situations that are genuinely familiar to students. Teachers can begin a lesson by eliciting students' experiences of participating in communal work at the local mosque, observing family deliberations when resolving problems, or taking part in customary activities such as a religious study session before a feast. This approach helps students see that the material under discussion is not distant from their everyday lives.

Second, modify learning activities so that students are not merely listening to the teacher's explanations but are actively engaged in the learning process. At MAN 1 Bengkulu, teachers can ask students to discuss case studies on the ethics of deliberation they frequently encounter in their neighborhood (RT) or village. Cultural observation can be carried out by having students record instances of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) or mosque youth activities in their local area. Interviews with local customary leaders, such as RT heads, mosque imams, or community elders, also

help students understand the meaning of traditions directly from the practitioners. Indeed, social projects can be integrated into activities the school already routinely carries out, such as volunteer work at orphanages, cleaning the mosque grounds near the school, or assisting with preparations for religious activities in the local community.

Third, guided reflection helps students reinterpret the experiences they have gained. Teachers can invite students to write brief journal entries or discuss what they learned from customary deliberations, collaborative work, or mosque activities. Such reflection is important so that students do not merely perform activities but understand that values such as responsibility, honesty, courtesy, and social concern are firmly grounded in Islamic teachings.

Dimensions of Effectiveness in PAI Learning

The cognitive dimension of PAI learning is strengthened through activities that require students to understand concepts and examine cases drawn from their daily lives. Teachers can present examples from the surrounding environment, such as class deliberations, mosque activities, or social issues that frequently arise among adolescents, so that students not only memorize concepts but also see how Islamic values operate in real situations. At the same time, the affective dimension is developed through experience and habituation. Simple activities such as school community work, visits to orphanages, assisting with preparations for religious events, or participating in mosque activities give students the opportunity to experience firsthand the meaning of social responsibility. In the process, Islamic character develops not through directives but through social experiences that foster empathy and a sense of belonging to their surroundings.

The internalization of character is also strengthened through reflection on the meaning of worship. Teachers can invite students to discuss their feelings after participating in social activities, or why particular manners need to be upheld in social interactions. This type of reflection helps students understand the connection between worship, ethics, and daily behavior.

Furthermore, students are encouraged to recognize that their Islamic identity does not conflict with their local Bengkulu identity. Through traditions such as *Rejang*, *gotong royong* (cooperation), or *adat be'rumpun* (communal traditions), they discover that the cultural values inherited since childhood are, in fact, in harmony with Islamic principles. This awareness fosters greater self-confidence in students and enables them to view local culture as a strength, rather than an obstacle.

Optimized learning occurs when teachers can directly connect PAI material to students' life experiences. When concepts of *akhlak* (morality), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), or *muamalah* (social transactions) are linked to the realities they face,

learning becomes more vivid and meaningful. This not only facilitates comprehension but also makes it easier for religious values to be internalized and applied in their daily lives.

From a pedagogical perspective, the effectiveness of this approach aligns with Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, which emphasizes that learning occurs most effectively through interaction with students' social and cultural environments (Ariansyah, 2023; Vestøl, 2024). Local wisdom provides a rich zone of proximal development (ZPD), enabling teachers to help students connect new knowledge (PAI) with existing knowledge schemas rooted in local wisdom (Court, 2010). To maximize this potential, several prerequisites are necessary: (a) competent, creative teachers capable of identifying and integrating local wisdom; (b) the development of relevant, authentic learning resources; and (c) support from communities and stakeholders to foster a conducive educational ecosystem. Evaluations must be holistic, not only measuring mastery of the material but also changes in students' behavior, attitudes, and their ability to apply Islamic values within their cultural context.

The integration of Bengkulu's local wisdom is not merely an addition of cultural ornamentation but an essential and effective pedagogical strategy. The process of empowering students involves not only academic mastery of PAI but also the deep internalization of Islamic values, the formation of strong character, and the development of a balanced identity that harmonizes faith and culture.

Effectiveness of PAI Instructional Strategies and Implementation Models

The integration of local wisdom into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) affects two primary domains. In the cognitive domain, students' understanding is strengthened because material is conveyed through their everyday social interactions. When teachers link the concept of *syura* (consultation) to family deliberations or explain *ukhuwah* through the tradition of communal work, students no longer regard Islamic teachings as abstract theory; instead, they see these values alive in their environment, making concept acquisition faster and the knowledge easier to retain.

In the affective domain, changes in attitude and the formation of character occur more naturally because students are directly engaged in meaningful experiences. *Gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) activities at nearby mosques, social service projects, or cultural observation assignments allow students to experience values of care, togetherness, and social responsibility firsthand. These empirical experiences create emotional bonds that cannot be achieved through classroom lectures alone.

Students not only understand the concepts but also internalize those values through concrete actions. Through this process, the internalization of Islamic values is deepened. Learning does not stop at rote memorization but progresses toward habituation, heightened awareness, and attitudinal maturity.

The systematic implementation of PAI learning strategies that integrate local wisdom is a complex, multidimensional pedagogical innovation. This process not

only demands a paradigm shift from conventional PAI instruction toward a more contextualized approach but also requires careful planning, adaptive implementation, and holistic evaluation.

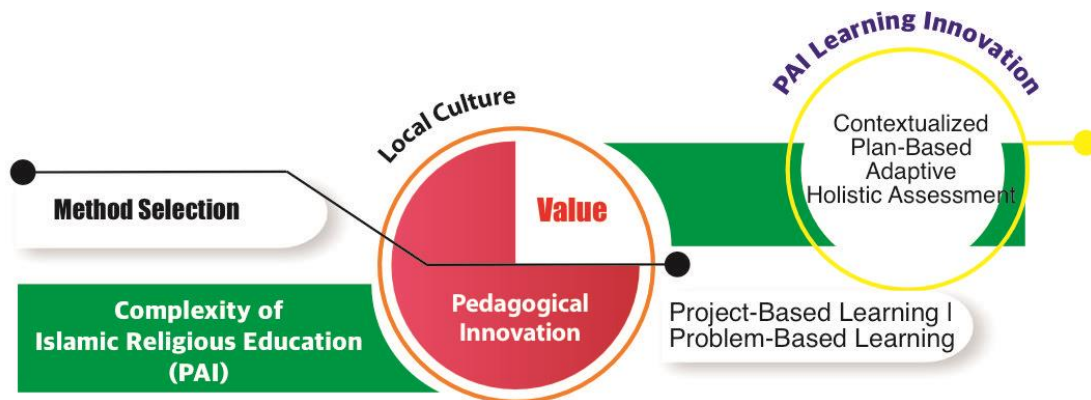


Figure 1: Pedagogical Innovation based on Local Wisdom

The framework integrates local culture and wisdom into teaching innovations and method choices, creating learning that is culturally relevant and meaningful. By grounding education in local values, teachers engage students deeply through methods like project-based and problem-based learning, which promote active involvement and critical thinking adapted to local contexts. Additionally, the framework highlights adaptive and holistic PAI learning that is contextualized and plan-driven, allowing flexible responses to students' cultural backgrounds and needs. This integration connects Islamic education closely with students' lived experiences, enhancing learning effectiveness and supporting improved outcomes at MAN 1 Bengkulu City. According to Demir's research, the dynamic blend of cultural values and learner-centered innovations positively impacts achieving educational goals (Demir, 2025).

The implementation of local wisdom faces obstacles, including a lack of teaching materials and specific references on Bengkulu's local wisdom in the context of PAI (Islamic Religious Education), limited time within an already crowded curriculum, and potential resistance from those who fear that integrating local culture could dilute the purity of Islamic teachings. To address these challenges, collaborative efforts are needed among teachers, customary communities, scholars, and local governments to develop resources, provide teacher training, and raise awareness of the concept among stakeholders. Sustained professional development to enhance the competence of PAI teachers in designing and implementing culturally responsive learning is also crucial to ensure that the integration of local wisdom proceeds harmoniously and productively.

The study's findings underscore the urgency of recruiting qualified teaching staff for effective curriculum implementation, emphasizing that teachers must possess academic competence and the ability to foster students' character. The digitization of

learning is also identified as an innovation that supports the strengthening of character and the revitalization of the curriculum, offering more interactive and engaging teaching methods that can significantly increase student engagement. The study implies a need to understand local wisdom values to achieve effective PAI learning. Moreover, PAI content that aligns with the characteristics of religious values is likewise a positive instrument for achieving effective learning.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of PAI learning strategies that integrate Bengkulu's local wisdom is a crucial pedagogical innovation that effectively addresses the complexities of contemporary PAI instruction by engaging multidimensional aspects. These strategies employ methods such as Project-Based Learning and Problem-Based Learning. The integration of Bengkulu's local wisdom provides madrasah students with experiential understanding. Local wisdom values consultation, mutual cooperation, social ethics, and the mosque's role as a center of student social activity, which are an inseparable part of the local culture. The effectiveness of the implementation is evident from students' involvement in community social activities. The actualization of values serves as reflective material, indicating that the integration of local wisdom extends beyond knowledge to the formation of positive attitudes and habits. This approach demonstrates that blending Islamic values with local traditions can strengthen character and make the learning process more meaningful and impactful.

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