

Integrating Palolai Local Wisdom Through Culturally Responsive Teaching in Baubau Elementary Schools

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Received: March 20th, 2025. Accepted: October 20th, 2025. Published: October 31st, 2025.

Abstract

This study examines the integration of Palolai local wisdom through the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach at elementary schools in Baubau City, Southeast Sulawesi. Using a qualitative ethnographic design, data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation studies, and focus group discussions. Triangulation of sources and methods guaranteed data validity, while data analysis utilized reduction, display, and conclusion techniques. The findings reveal three key outcomes: (1) teachers effectively developed strategies to integrate Palolai wisdom into the independent curriculum via CRT; (2) CRT implementation significantly enhanced student participation in IPAS subjects; and (3) the approach successfully strengthened students' cultural identity within the Baubau community. In conclusion, the CRT approach serves as an effective pedagogical bridge, connecting formal education with local cultural values. The integration of Palolai wisdom not only enriches the curriculum but also fosters both active student engagement and robust cultural identity preservation. This study emphasizes the need to use culturally grounded approaches in education to maintain local heritage while achieving contemporary learning objectives.

Keywords: *culturally responsive teaching, palolai local wisdom, teacher's role.*

Abstrak

Studi ini mengkaji integrasi kearifan lokal Palolai melalui pendekatan Pengajaran Responsif Budaya (PKB) di sekolah dasar di Kota Baubau, Sulawesi Tenggara. Dengan menggunakan desain etnografi kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, studi dokumentasi, dan diskusi kelompok terfokus. Triangulasi sumber dan metode menjamin validitas data, sementara analisis data menggunakan teknik reduksi, penyajian, dan kesimpulan. Temuan ini mengungkapkan tiga hasil utama: (1) Guru secara efektif mengembangkan strategi untuk mengintegrasikan kearifan Palolai ke dalam kurikulum independen melalui PKB; (2) Implementasi PKB secara signifikan meningkatkan partisipasi siswa dalam mata pelajaran IPAS; dan (3) pendekatan ini berhasil memperkuat identitas budaya siswa dalam komunitas Baubau. Kesimpulannya, pendekatan PKB berfungsi sebagai jembatan pedagogis yang efektif, menghubungkan pendidikan formal dengan nilai-nilai budaya lokal. Integrasi kearifan Palolai tidak hanya memperkaya kurikulum tetapi juga mendorong keterlibatan aktif siswa dan pelestarian identitas budaya yang kuat. Studi ini menekankan perlunya menggunakan pendekatan yang berlandaskan budaya dalam pendidikan untuk melestarikan warisan lokal sekaligus mencapai tujuan pembelajaran kontemporer.

Kata kunci: *pengajaran responsif budaya, kearifan lokal palolai, peran guru.*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid modernization, education in Indonesia faces the significant challenge of remaining relevant and meaningful for students. A critical response to this challenge is the integration of local wisdom into the educational curriculum. Local wisdom encompasses the values, knowledge, and practices inherited from ancestors, reflecting a community's cultural identity. Its integration into education not only preserves cultural heritage but also enriches students' learning experiences with contexts familiar to their daily lives (Nababan, Surya Ayman et al., 2025).

The Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach is deemed highly relevant for the Indonesian context, as it connects learning with students' socio-cultural dimensions (Faridah, Reni et al., 2024). CRT is a pedagogical strategy that recognizes the importance of students' cultural backgrounds and incorporates them into teaching to make learning more relevant and effective (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2018). However, its successful implementation requires teachers to possess cultural competence, necessitating spaces for them to develop these skills (Favour & Tanimu, 2025). The Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach was specifically selected for this research due to its unique alignment with the study's core objective: to bridge the formal education curriculum with the specific local wisdom of the Palolai philosophy. Unlike generic active learning models, CRT provides a structured pedagogical framework that explicitly values and utilizes students' cultural backgrounds as assets for learning. This makes it an ideal conduit for not only increasing student engagement but, more importantly, for consciously reinforcing cultural identity and ensuring the meaningful integration of local values into the learning process, thereby addressing the critical research gap identified in the literature.

The teaching of integrated science and social studies (IPAS) in elementary schools globally and in Indonesia is increasingly moving beyond rote memorization towards fostering scientific literacy and socio-scientific reasoning (Abd-El-Khalick et al., 2021). Internationally,

there is a growing body of research advocating for context-based learning. For instance, studies have shown that connecting science to local phenomena significantly enhances student engagement and conceptual understanding (King, 2017). Similarly, in the social studies domain, incorporating local history and cultural practices has been proven to develop a stronger sense of identity and civic competence (Barton & Levstik, 2021).

In the Indonesian context, the new "Merdeka" curriculum provides a strategic opening for such integrations. Recent national studies have begun to explore CRT's potential. For example, research by Nurzanah et al. (2022) and Sari et al. (2023) demonstrates that CRT can increase student activity and motivation in primary education. However, the state of the art reveals a predominant focus on CRT as a generic tool to boost classroom engagement, often without delving deeply into its capacity for specific cultural and epistemological integration within distinct subjects like IPAS.

A critical gap exists between the general application of CRT and its targeted use to preserve and strengthen specific, localized cultural systems through the school curriculum. Previous studies, including those by Lusida et al. (2024), Nuraini et al. (2025), and Fitriani et al. (2024), have successfully demonstrated that CRT can increase student activity. Nonetheless, their focus remains primarily on pedagogical *process* rather than cultural *substance*. This research addresses this gap by moving a step further. It does not merely utilize CRT to make learning more "active"; it employs CRT as a vehicle to systematically integrate the philosophical principles of *Palolai*—a specific local wisdom of the Baubau community—into the IPAS curriculum. *Palolai* is a foundational philosophy of the Baubau community, embodying teachings on customary values, responsibility, honesty, fairness, and cooperation. Integrating *Palolai* into education can foster character building and help preserve local culture and traditions for future generations (Hindaryatiningsih, 2014).

The novelty of this study lies in its explicit aim to explore how CRT can be used not just for engagement, but for cultural identity reinforcement and the preservation of a distinct local philosophy within a formal national education framework. Therefore, this study asks, how can teachers implement CRT to integrate *Palolai* wisdom into IPAS, and what is its impact on student participation and cultural identity?

Public Elementary School (SDN) Ba'diah Baubau, located in the culturally rich city of Baubau, Southeast Sulawesi, serves as the ideal site for this study. This research focuses on how the values of *Palolai* wisdom can be integrated into the school curriculum through the CRT approach and its subsequent impact on the learning process at this school. Thus, this study aims to (1) explore teacher strategies in implementing CRT to integrate *Palolai* local wisdom, (2) describe the application of CRT in IPAS subjects to develop student participation, and (3) analyze its role in strengthening the cultural identity of the Baubau community. The findings are expected to provide new insights into the application of CRT in elementary schools and serve as a reference for developing educational policies that are more responsive to local culture, making a distinct contribution to the literature on culturally grounded education.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative methodology with an ethnographic design, utilizing data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, FGDs, and document analysis.

Ethnographic design is an empirical and theoretical approach that aims to obtain an in-depth description and analysis of culture based on intensive field research. The purpose of ethnographic research is to provide a holistic picture of the research subject, emphasizing the everyday experiences of individuals through observations and interviews with them and other relevant people. Ethnography is a method that explains, describes, and identifies various human characteristics, ranging from general to specific (Reeves, Scoutt et al., 2013).

The data sources of this study include teacher activities in teaching and student activities in learning. This research mainly examines various aspects related to children who are learning using CRTs and integrating Palolai philosophy. To obtain comprehensive and extensive information, the researcher not only collected data from participants through interviews but also made observations of individuals around the research subjects. This research activity involved natural, holistic, and in-depth documentation of the subject's activities or environmental traces through documentary studies.

This study involved various subjects who were selected purposively to obtain in-depth information relevant to the research objectives. The research subjects consisted of three main groups: first, educators, including one principal and five teachers of grades 3, 4, and 5 who actively applied the Culturally Responsive Teaching approach in IPAS subjects. Second, students, involving 25 students from the three classes who were observed during the learning process, with 8 of them selected for in-depth interviews based on their diverse characteristics of participation and learning. Third, 4 parents and community members who have a deep understanding of Palolai's local wisdom to provide cultural context and validate the authenticity of the integrated cultural content. The entire data collection process was carried out from March to June 2024 through repeated in-depth interviews with all categories of participants, classroom observations focusing on teacher strategies and student participation patterns documented in activity diary tables, and document analysis of lesson plans, student portfolios, and relevant school activity records.

Data validity is done through source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation is a technique to test the credibility of data obtained from several sources, such as mothers, grandmothers, and secondary data in the form of relevant articles. The data were then described, grouped, and analyzed to draw conclusions from the research. Technical triangulation is used to check the credibility of data by cross-verifying data from the same source but with different data collection techniques, namely through interviews and observations.

The qualitative data analysis model used is the Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014) model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage involved homogenizing and sorting data from interviews, observations, and documentation, which were then transcribed in written form. Observation results were formatted according to the method used by the researcher. All transcripts were converted or displayed in matrix form and categorized according to themes that were grouped and simplified with specific coding for aspects, sub-aspects, themes, and sub-themes. The coding process was kept simple to aid analysis and verification. The conclusion-drawing stage involved a breakdown of all categories and subcategories of themes listed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified several key findings regarding the integration of local wisdom values through the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach at SDN Ba'diah Baubau:

CRT Learning Strategy Based on Palolai Local Wisdom

Palolai local wisdom in the Baubau community is an educational philosophy that emphasizes character education of children since the womb. This is in line with the concept of 'Tabula Rasa' by John Locke, which states that children are born like 'blank paper' that requires adult guidance to fill and color it. The role of teachers in providing character education is very important for the development of students' character at school through the right curriculum and learning.

Teachers at SDN Ba'diah Baubau have adopted various teaching strategies that integrate local wisdom values. For example, in social studies subjects, teachers use Buton folklore and local traditions as contexts to explain social and cultural concepts. This approach not only makes lessons more interesting but also helps students understand the material in their cultural context.

Table 1. Interview results on the implementation of the CRT strategy

No.	Interview Description	Aspect	Informant
1.	Palolai is likened to the placenta of a baby, lifted from the word lolai which means placenta. This means that students are the result of the teacher's upbringing so that the knowledge gained or possessed by the teacher is passed on to students through learning at school, both academic and character, which is strengthened in P5 learning in the independent curriculum. Teachers and students should not be separated in building the foundation of knowledge and character of students. That is the meaning of Palolai, where a teacher shapes the character of students well.	Meaning and philosophy of palolai Palolai-based learning	KS
2.	CRT is a learning approach that we often use when teaching IPAS subjects. CRT is our way of responding to the prevailing culture in our area. For example, we apply the learning process to IPAS subjects and integrate socio-cultural phenomena with the context of the subject being taught.	CRT Learning Process	GKP
3.	CRT is a teaching approach that combines teaching materials with subthemes to make learning more appropriate.	Integrating Learning with Palolai Local Wisdom	GKP
4.	When teaching the material "stories about my region," I asked students to tell me about their knowledge of Baubau's surviving culture and traditions. Finally, many asked about Palolai, which is often discussed at school.	Integrating Learning with Palolai Local Wisdom	Gr

5.	Students are directed to learn the subject matter and examine it according to the prevailing cultural context. This can improve their understanding of the material studied.	Integrating Learning with Palolai Local Wisdom	Gr
6.	We encourage students to utilize any prior knowledge or cultural capital they have. 'Cultural capital' is a term used to describe the skills, knowledge and experiences that students bring to the classroom.	CRT Teaching Strategies that Preserve Cultural Values	Gr
7.	Teachers provide learning that is able to relate elements of the subject matter to the socio-cultural dimensions around the school.	CRT Learning Palolai	Sw
8.	The teacher taught us about good deeds and their benefits to fellow human beings, which is sometimes always included in the material taught during IPAS subjects.	Integration in Learning	Sw

KS: Principal GKP: Learning Committee Teacher Gr: Teacher Sw: Student

Increased student participation and involvement in learning has a positive impact on improving learning outcomes. Observation data showed that students' participation and engagement during learning increased. Students became more active in class discussions and showed greater interest in the material being taught. Interviews with students revealed that they felt more connected to the subject matter when the material was related to their culture and traditions.

The following is a description of the results of interviews with teachers and students regarding the implementation of CRT learning and its impact on increasing student participation. The forms of increased student participation and engagement are described in Table 2.

. Table 2: Observation Results during IPAS Learning

No.	Aspect Observed	Description of Observation Result
1.	Working on projects/assignments	Students were participative when working in groups and completing project assignments. They actively convey ideas and provide feedback during project discussions on the subtheme "My Indonesia is Rich in Culture".
2.	Expressing opinions and asking questions	Grade 4 students occasionally asked about aspects of the material that were not understood when the teacher explained. Observations were made during the material 'Stories about My Region'.
3.	Giving ideas and thoughts	Students are enthusiastic in expressing opinions, ideas, and ideas during the learning process, which are relevant and easy to understand.
4.	Paying attention to the teacher's explanation	Students pay close attention to the teacher's explanation when the essential material is explained
5.	Giving response and	Students are eager to give responses in the form of

	action answers	opinions, both in the form of agreement and refutation according to the topic discussed.
6.	Summarizing and reflecting	Students actively participate in the reflection of learning and in drawing conclusions.

Table 2 shows that students' engagement and participation increased significantly during the implementation of the CRT learning approach used by teachers in the IPAS course. Students showed high enthusiasm for the lesson themes delivered through the CRT strategy. This enthusiasm is characterized by the spirit of asking questions, high desire to learn, courage to convey ideas or ideas, and the ability to conclude the material. To be clearer about the technical implementation of the CRT strategy in activating and involving students in learning, it can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Interview Results on Student Participation and Involvement in Learning

No.	Informant	Aspect	Description of Interview Results
1.	GR KP	CRT engages students	While learning, we encourage students to activate their cultural capital. By drawing on students' knowledge and experiences, we create a culturally responsive learning environment. This way, students will feel more valued and engaged in the classroom.
2.	Gr 5 th grade	Students are more responsive	In my opinion, with CRT, students are invited to understand the subject matter in their own cultural context, thus increasing their understanding and engagement in the teaching and learning process. For example, during the lesson on "My Indonesia is Rich in Culture".
3.	Gr 4 th grade	Eagerness to learn IPAS subject	In my opinion, CRT makes social studies lessons more interesting and increases students' enthusiasm to learn.
4.	Gr 3 th grade	Increased student participation	We saw an increase in participation, which impacted on students' confidence, made students think critically, and opened a responsive mindset. For example, there are students who were initially timid and quiet finally dared to express their ideas and opinions.
5.	GR KP	Enthusiasm when learning with the CRT strategy	When reviewing material according to their cultural context, students engage enthusiastically because they feel more familiar with their own culture during the teaching and learning process. For example, grade 4 in semester 2 learned about "Building a Civilized Society". They interpreted the PALOLAI philosophy when the teacher implemented habituation (Thank you, Please & Sorry).
6.	Sw	Students feel	Students revealed that they felt more

		a positive impact	connected to the subject matter when it was related to their culture and traditions.
7.	Sw	Students are more active	Students are more active in class discussions and show greater interest in the material being taught.
8.	Sw	Students are more excited	I feel more energized in learning because I am involved and participate directly with the understanding and knowledge I gain.

Strengthening Cultural Identity

The integration of local wisdom in the curriculum also contributes to the strengthening of students' cultural identity. Students develop a sense of pride in their cultural heritage and appreciate traditional values more. Teachers and parents reported that students showed an increased understanding and appreciation of Buton culture. Despite the many benefits observed, there were some challenges faced in the implementation of CRT. Key challenges include the lack of appropriate resources and teaching materials, as well as the need for more in-depth teacher training in developing and implementing local wisdom-based teaching strategies. The following are interview excerpts on the relationship between strengthening cultural identity and CRT learning.

Table 4. Interview Results

No.	Informan	Aspect	Description of Interview Results
1.	Gr	Knowledge Enhancement	Teachers felt that students showed an increased understanding and appreciation of Buton culture.
2.	WM	Increased Understanding	I feel my child has an increased understanding and appreciation of Baubau Buton culture.
3.	Gr	Strengthening Regional Cultural Identity	I feel that CRT learning contributes to strengthening students' cultural identity. My student feels proud of cultural heritage.
4.	GKP	Character Strengthening	Ultimately, students developed a sense of pride in their cultural heritage and more appreciation of cultural values such as responsibility, tolerance and caring.
5.	GKP	Increased Cultural Appreciation	I feel that my students appreciate Baubau Buton's culture and local wisdom more. There is an increased understanding and appreciation by students of Baubau culture.
6.	Sw	Strengthening Cultural Identity	We feel proud of Baubau's culture. Baubau city which is rich in local wisdom should be preserved and its values should be applied in the social life of the community.
7.	Sw	Strengthening	I feel more excited to go to school.

Appreciation for Culture	Going to SDN Ba'diyah next to the palace makes me want to learn more. I feel there is an increased understanding of the teaching material when the teacher explains it and an increased appreciation of the existing culture.
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The results of this study confirm the importance of integrating Palolai local wisdom with the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) learning approach in creating an inclusive and developmentally relevant learning environment. Research shows that teaching approaches that are responsive to local cultural wisdom can increase students' engagement in learning and their academic achievement (Gay & Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Teaching Strategy Based on Local Wisdom

In the teaching and learning process, teachers utilize the local wisdom of Palolai through the use of folktales from Baubau, Buton Islands, which contain elements of high character education. Local traditions and cultural aspects were made part of the teaching strategy, which proved effective in increasing student engagement. This method not only makes learning more interesting but also helps students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This is especially important in culturally rich areas like Baubau, where traditional values are still strong.

The Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) learning approach emphasizes the principles of culturally relevant learning. According to Gay and Pryke (2002), CRT has five elements of culturally sensitive education, namely: develop a knowledge base on cultural diversity; incorporate ethnic and cultural diversity content into the curriculum; demonstrate caring and build a learning community; communicate with ethnically diverse students; and addressing ethnic diversity in the delivery of learning materials.

The CRT learning approach is used to implement learning that is able to link education with the socio-cultural dimensions around the school. The dimensions of competence in culturally responsive teaching are positively and significantly correlated (Nurbatra & Masyhud, 2022). The results of this study reveal that CRT is more inclined to the way teachers design learning that emphasizes the cultural elements that apply in an area. Differences in ability, physical, and psychological development are seen as normal. With deep communication and continuous collaboration during the learning process, a sense of care and affection between friends can arise. Student collaboration in the application of CRT learning can give birth to a figure who has an awareness of cultural behavior (Ernawati, Rosana, & Atun, 2024). In the end, students develop a sense of pride in their cultural heritage and appreciate cultural values such as responsibility, tolerance, and mutual care.

The results of previous research show a positive effect of the integration of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) with comics and the Think-Talk-Write (TTW) model on student learning activities and achievement. The research highlighted the effectiveness of this approach in improving students' understanding and engagement, particularly in chemistry, and provided promising directions for future educational practices (Khoirunnisa et al., 2023).

Although practicing teachers demonstrate competence in developing attitudes and skills in culturally responsive teaching, challenges remain in building inclusion and enhancing the meaning of education (Nurbatra & Masyhud, 2022). CRT approaches, which are

responsive to students' cultures, should be integrated into the curriculum. Universities are also beginning to move towards a curriculum that maintains students' culture (Minsih, Fuadi, & Rohmah, 2023; Halim, 2020; Winarni, 2015). The application of CRT to second-grade students of public elementary schools in Semarang City was proven to improve learning outcomes in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, with an increase in pretest and posttest scores and student attitudes (Khasanah, Nuroso, & Pramasdyahsari, 2023).

This research reveals a gap between the reality on the ground and the existing education system, where culturally responsive curriculum should be further integrated. Local wisdom-based learning methods can help students experience sustainable learning experiences. Local wisdom-based education not only preserves local culture but also develops students' ability to compete at local and international levels (Nurasiah et al., 2022). The use of environmental recognition methods in local wisdom-based learning varies greatly, and sources of local wisdom can be obtained from regional literature and community life norms. The role of authors, educators, and curriculum developers is very important in strengthening national character through local wisdom (Yusuf, 2024). The introduction of local culture in elementary schools can be done by introducing dance, types of musical instruments, folk songs, and regional languages, and integrating local products that must be guarded and preserved (Handayani, 2023).

The development of local wisdom-based mathematics teaching materials for grade V students in elementary schools has proven effective. This teaching material is expected to help students learn and connect the material with the surrounding environment. In addition, the development of thematic teaching materials based on local wisdom is effective in improving student character, such as a sense of responsibility and compassion (Prabandari, Fuadi, Sumardi, Minsih, & Prastiwi, 2022; Meilana & Aslam, 2022). Preservation of local cultural values is an effort made by schools as educational institutions to make the values of art, language, and folk songs the basis for efforts to form the characteristics of love for the homeland. The challenges in the process of preserving local culture are the influence of globalization and the local government's lack of understanding of local culture in Wonogiri Regency (Handayani, 2023).

Increased Student Participation and Engagement

The increase in student participation and engagement reflects the success of the CRT approach in making learning more relevant to students. When students see the connection between the lesson and their daily lives, they tend to be more engaged and motivated to learn. This supports the theory that cultural relevance is key to student engagement (Nieto & Bode, 2007). According to Barokah & Mulyani (2021), indicators of student participation and involvement in the learning process include 1) giving opinions, 2) giving responses, 3) working on tasks, and 4) summarizing and reflecting. Increased participation can be seen when students demonstrate these behaviors consistently. When students are able to relate the lesson to their daily lives, they tend to be more active in learning activities. Students who were previously less motivated became more enthusiastic after the implementation of CRT learning.

The CRT approach engages students in developing critical thinking skills by making inferences, connecting ideas, understanding concepts, and making interpretations. The critical thinking skills test showed that 40% of students reached the satisfactory level. In addition,

students engage in cultural identity empowerment, meaningful learning experiences, and teamwork, which challenges them to develop critical thinking skills (Rahmawati et al., 2019). The Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey (CRTS) shows that this measurement tool is effective for analyzing culturally responsive teaching practices, and this research is useful for understanding how to introduce such practices in the classroom (Rhodes, 2017). It is important for educators to build strong relationships with students to be more responsive in learning so that they have high expectations of academic achievement and can compete with students from developed countries (Madiratta, 2024). CRT aims to meet the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students by valuing their cultural and linguistic resources and integrating them into learning (Patras, Yuyun Elizabeth et al., 2023).

Strengthening Cultural Identity

Strengthening cultural identity through education is one of the main objectives of the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach. By integrating local wisdom in the curriculum, schools can help students develop a sense of pride in their cultural heritage. This not only strengthens students' personal identity but also promotes cultural diversity in the classroom. Students become more appreciative of cultural values such as responsibility, tolerance, and mutual care. Real education is when students not only understand cultural values but also appreciate cultural diversity, tolerate and understand each other, and cooperate through a holistic learning approach (Minsih, 2025). If this occurs consistently, it will reflect the implementation of a positive culture in a school, which will undoubtedly impact the mental well-being of students (Latifa, 2025). Previous research supports this view, showing that a culturally responsive approach in higher education can help Indigenous students integrate well into higher education. This promotes their personal development, community growth, and the strengthening of their respective cultures (Pinto López et al., 2021).

Revitalizing local wisdom can also be a solution to social problems faced by society. Values such as gotong royong, shame culture, and good cultural norms should be applied in character education in schools. Local wisdom, which includes community customs, norms, and values, plays an important role in strengthening unity, togetherness, and harmony in social life. For example, in Southeast Sulawesi, there are examples of local wisdom such as Kolosora (harmonious system and conflict prevention), Samaturu (Tolaki language): unity, mutual cooperation, and mutual respect; and Depo Adha Adhati (Muna): mutual respect. These are all part of the cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and respected (Fajarini, 2014).

The cultural literacy was embedded in science learning through the contextualization of scientific concepts with local wisdom, such as using traditional tools in experiments, exploring environmental stewardship rooted in local customs, and incorporating indigenous knowledge into ecology topics. Activities like science-based cultural exhibitions, traditional games with scientific principles, and the use of regional languages in science discussions strengthened engagement and cultural identity (Minsih, 2025).

In the context of education, strengthening cultural identity through local wisdom is very relevant. Kaimudin (2019) stated that teachers must be at the forefront of strengthening students' cultural identity. Local wisdom-based learning methods that identify and utilize local cultural values can strengthen national character. Local wisdom, as a view of life and attitudes passed down through generations, plays an important role in this process (Muhammad &

Yosefin, 2021). By introducing local wisdom in schools, students are not only trained to preserve their cultural heritage but also to introduce their regional potential to the global level (Raharja, Selvia, & Hilman, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Conceptually, this study confirms that the integration of Palolai local wisdom through the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach serves as a transformative catalyst in basic education, effectively bridging cultural heritage with contemporary pedagogical goals. This approach not only enriches the learning ecosystem to be more inclusive and contextual but also empowers students' cultural identities, fostering a deep sense of ownership and pride in their ancestral heritage. As a result, this study highlights the need for an educational policy framework that systematically accommodates the integration of local wisdom while emphasizing the importance of developing teacher capacity and authentic teaching resources to ensure the sustainability and replication of this model in various other socio-cultural contexts in Indonesia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank PP Muhammadiyah through your Research 2024 (Risetmu 2024) program for providing funding for this research. We also thank the Head of LRI at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta and FKIP at Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton for their support and cooperation.

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