Hometutoring as an Inclusive Approach to Teaching Islamic Education for Expatriate Converts: A Case Study of Muslim Smart

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif untuk mengeksplorasi pendekatan hometutoring dalam pengajaran agama Islam bagi ekspatriat mualaf, dengan fokus pada lembaga Muslim Smart. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara mendalam dengan empat guru yang mengajar mualaf ekspatriat dan pihak terkait di lembaga Muslim Smart, serta observasi implementasi pembelajaran. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan teknik analisis tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kriteria khusus diperlukan dalam memilih tutor, seperti kemampuan bahasa Inggris yang baik, latar belakang keislaman yang kuat, pandangan moderat, dan pemahaman filosofis yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan intelektual mualaf. Tutor menerapkan pendekatan interaktif dan dialogis untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung, memungkinkan para mualaf berdiskusi secara bebas, sehingga mereka merasa didengar dan dihargai. Selain berperan sebagai pengajar, tutor juga menjadi teman dan pendukung dalam perjalanan spiritual mualaf, membantu mereka menginternalisasi ajaran Islam secara mendalam dan tulus. Tantangan yang dihadapi meliputi perbedaan tingkat motivasi dan pemahaman awal Islam di antara murid, yang memerlukan penyesuaian metode pengajaran yang lebih fleksibel dan relevan dengan kehidupan sehari-hari murid. Secara keseluruhan, pendekatan hometutoring yang diterapkan oleh Muslim Smart terbukti efektif dalam menyediakan pendidikan agama yang relevan, inklusif, dan mendukung proses spiritual mualaf ekspatriat di Jakarta.

ABSTRACT

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to explore the hometutoring approach in teaching Islamic education to expatriate converts, focusing on the Muslim Smart institution. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with four tutors who teach expatriate converts and stakeholders at Muslim Smart, as well as observations of learning implementation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The findings reveal that specific criteria are essential in selecting tutors, such as strong English proficiency, a solid Islamic background, moderate views, and philosophical knowledge tailored to the intellectual needs of converts. Tutors adopt interactive and dialogical approaches to create a supportive learning environment, enabling converts to discuss freely and feel heard and valued. Beyond being educators, tutors also serve as companions and supporters in the converts' spiritual journey, helping them internalize Islamic teachings deeply and sincerely. Challenges include varying levels of motivation and initial understanding of Islam among students, necessitating more flexible and relevant teaching methods suited to their daily lives. Overall, the hometutoring approach implemented by Muslim Smart proves effective in providing relevant, inclusive, and spiritually supportive Islamic education for expatriate converts in Jakarta.

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A. Introduction

International mobility and globalization have contributed to the growth of expatriate communities in major cities worldwide, including Jakarta. As Indonesia's economic and political hub, Jakarta attracts expatriates from diverse countries and backgrounds. Life within this multicultural environment fosters interactions among various religions and beliefs, with Islam being the predominant faith in Indonesia. Alongside these intercultural exchanges, there has been a notable rise in the number of expatriates embracing Islam.[1] These new adherents, often referred to as *mualaf* (converts to Islam), encounter a distinctive transition process as they adopt their new faith. This journey is frequently accompanied by challenges related to language, culture, and understanding the religion itself.[2]

Expatriate converts to Islam face unique challenges in learning and practicing their new faith. One of the primary obstacles is cultural adaptation in daily practices. Converts from different cultural backgrounds may struggle to grasp the social and cultural contexts of Islamic traditions, which often differ significantly from their own. Another significant challenge is the language barrier. Beyond understanding the sacred texts of Islam written in Arabic, expatriates often find themselves limited even in articulating Arabic phonology, particularly during rituals such as prayer (*shalat*). This linguistic barrier can hinder their ability to fully learn and internalize Islamic teachings. Additionally, these individuals must navigate social and professional relationships, where they may encounter stigma or misunderstanding stemming from their decision to convert.[3]

Islamic education plays a significant role in facilitating the transition process for *mualaf* (new converts to Islam). Through strategic and structured educational efforts, converts can develop a better understanding of Islamic teachings, worship practices, and the values central to living as a Muslim.[4] However, Islamic education for *mualaf*, particularly for expatriates, requires a different approach compared to the education provided to those who have been Muslim since birth. A more personalized and individualized approach is necessary to provide optimal support, helping converts to comprehend and embrace their new faith in a way that aligns with their unique experiences and needs.

Religious conversion is a complex phenomenon encompassing spiritual, psychological, and social dimensions.[5] For individuals who embrace a new religion, especially expatriates living in culturally unfamiliar environments, the process often involves challenges in constructing a religious identity that

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[1] Carla Jones, "Mualaf Chic: Conversion and Mediation in Indonesian Pious Sociality," *CyberOrient* 15, no. 1 (2021): 172–205.

[2] Naved Iqbal et al., "An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of a Religious Conversion," *Journal of Religion and Health* 58 (2019): 426–43.

[3] Beata Abdallah-Krzepkowska et al., *Managing Spoiled Identity: The Case of Polish Female Converts to Islam*, vol. 41 (Brill, 2022).

[4] Wiwik Setiyani and Muktafi Muktafi, "The Resilience of Muslim Converts in Understanding Islam: The Role of Al-Akbar Mosque for Post-Conversion Accompaniment," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 10, no. 2 (2020): 302–24.

[5] Roy Wallis, *The Elementary Forms of the New Religious Life* (Routledge, 2019).

integrates with their original cultural identity. Religious identity extends beyond spiritual expression; it is a continuous process of internalizing new values, deriving meaning from life, and managing social interactions within diverse communities.

Previous research indicates that religious identity formation is shaped by the intricate interaction between personal values, social expectations, and lived experiences.[6] Mikhail Bakhtin describes this process as *chronotopic identities*.[7] reflecting how time, space, and individual experiences converge in identity development. Thus, understanding the formation of religious identity becomes an essential aspect of studying religious conversion, particularly in the case of expatriate *mualaf*, who must navigate these layered and dynamic transitions.

In the case of adult converts, learning about Islam often requires a more specific approach tailored to their needs. According to adult learning theory, adults tend to learn in a contextual and reflective manner, with their prior life experiences playing a crucial role in the learning process.[8] Therefore, flexible and dialogue-based teaching methods, which facilitate questions and discussions, are generally more effective than approaches that are strictly instructional or dogmatic.[9] This adaptability allows for a more engaging and meaningful learning experience, aligning with the individual's existing framework of understanding. Additionally, viewing this learning process through the lens of multicultural education is highly relevant, as expatriate *mualaf* face not only differences in religious teachings but also significant cultural contrasts. Research on educational adaptation in multicultural contexts emphasizes the importance of cultural awareness and the facilitator's ability to navigate cross-cultural dynamics. These factors are critical in fostering an inclusive learning environment that accommodates the diverse backgrounds and experiences of adult learners.[10]

In this context, the hometutoring approach emerges as a potential solution to address the challenges faced by expatriate *mualaf*. Hometutoring provides a more personalized and flexible learning method, allowing tutors to tailor the lesson materials to the needs, abilities, and backgrounds of their students.[11] This approach creates a more comfortable and private learning environment, where *mualaf* can study without fear of embarrassment or judgment. Moreover, hometutoring enables a one-on-one interaction between tutor and student, fostering a closer and more meaningful relationship. This

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[6] YingFei Héliot et al., "Religious Identity in the Workplace: A Systematic Review, Research Agenda, and Practical Implications," *Human Resource Management* 59, no. 2 (2020): 153–73., 4; Pamela Ebstyne King, "Religion and Identity: The Role of Ideological, Social, and Spiritual Contexts," in *Beyond the Self* (Routledge, 2019), 197–204.

[7] Jan Blommaert et al., "Chronotopic Identities," *On the Timespace Organization of Who We Are. InDe Fina, A., Ikizoglu, D. and Wegner, J.(Eds.)*, 2017, 1–15.; Tara Fenwick and Mark Tennant, "Understanding Adult Learners," in *Dimensions of Adult Learning* (Routledge, 2020), 55–73.

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[9] Ben Kilby, "Dialogic Pedagogies: Defining and Analyzing Four Types of Dialogue in Education," *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis* 41, no. 2 (2021): 106–21.

[10] Sunil Kumar Agrahari, "Fostering Cultural Competence through Transformative Education: Strategies for Inclusive Futures," *Educating for Societal Transitions*, 2024, 99.

[11] Wei Zhang and Mark Bray, "A Changing Environment of Urban Education: Historical and Spatial Analysis of Private Supplementary Tutoring in China," *Environment and Urbanization* 33, no. 1 (2021): 43–62.

personalized attention allows tutors to focus specifically on the unique needs of each student, ensuring a more effective and supportive learning experience. Through this method, *mualaf* can navigate their journey of religious education with greater confidence and understanding.[12]

Muslim Smart Jakarta is one of the institutions offering hometutoring services for expatriate *mualaf* in Jakarta. This study aims to explore how the hometutoring approach can support the learning process of Islamic teachings for expatriate *mualaf* in the city. While several studies have highlighted the challenges faced by converts in learning about their new religion, both in Indonesia and Malaysia[13], research specifically focusing on the use of hometutoring as a method for teaching Islam to expatriate *mualaf* remains scarce. This study seeks to fill that gap by providing deeper insights into the effectiveness of hometutoring in supporting expatriate *mualaf* in Jakarta. It examines the methods and strategies employed by tutors, the challenges they encounter, and how teaching approaches are adapted to meet the individual needs of their students. By addressing these aspects, the study contributes to a better understanding of how personalized education can facilitate the transition and learning experience for expatriate *mualaf*.

This study is expected to make significant contributions in several areas. First, from an academic perspective, it will enrich the literature on Islamic religious education, particularly for expatriate mualaf, by exploring the effectiveness of the hometutoring approach. Second, it will provide practical insights for tutors and Islamic education institutions on how to develop more effective and responsive learning programs tailored to the needs of mualaf. Third, from a social perspective, the study aims to enhance public understanding of the challenges faced by expatriate mualaf and the importance of providing appropriate support to facilitate their integration into the Muslim community. This research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to portray the phenomena as they occur, capturing essential details from the participants' experiences.[14] Data will be collected through in-depth interviews with four tutors who teach expatriate mualaf and stakeholders at Muslim Smart Jakarta, who play a role in designing institutional strategies and policies. Observations of the implementation of the learning programs will also be conducted. The collected data from interviews and observations will be analyzed

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[12] Aram Ayalon, *Teachers as Mentors: Models for Promoting Achievement with Disadvantaged and Underrepresented Students by Creating Community* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

[13] Siti Nur Alfiana Wulandari et al., "Navigating the Path to Islam: Evaluating Persuasive Communication in Conversion Guidance Programs at the Indonesian Chinese Islamic Unity Institute (PITI) in Surabaya," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 35, no. 1 (2024): 109–26.; Hamzah Fansuri, "Transforming Faith: Mualaf and Hijrah in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *Entangled Religions* 15, no. 2 (2024).; Sharifah Hayaati Syed Ismail Al-Qudsy and Nurhidayah Mohamed Hamidi, "Mualaf Di Malaysia: Isu Dan Penyelesaian Pentadbiran Oleh Majlis Agama Islam Selangor," *Kajian Malaysia* 40, no. 1 (2022): 133–254.

[14] Sarah J Tracy, *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact* (John Wiley & Sons, 2024).

using thematic analysis techniques, providing a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and practices within this context.[15]

B. Challenge Faced by Expatriat Mualaf

Finding Competent Tutors

One of the key challenges identified through interviews with a stakeholder is the difficulty in finding tutors who meet specific criteria for teaching expatriate mualaf. These criteria emphasize the need for an inclusive, rational, and contextual teaching approach, which aligns with the intellectual background of many expatriate mualaf seeking guidance from Muslim Smart. The majority of these individuals possess at least a bachelor's degree, with some holding doctoral qualifications.

The desired tutors must possess strong English language skills. Fluency in English is essential to ensure effective communication and to facilitate a better understanding of the material.[16] In addition, tutors are expected to have a solid foundation in Islamic studies, typically demonstrated through a university-level education in Islamic disciplines. This combination of English proficiency and in-depth knowledge of Islam is crucial for tutors to deliver content that is both highly relevant and tailored to the specific needs of expatriate mualaf.[17]

A moderate or *wasatiyah* perspective is another crucial criterion in selecting tutors. This moderate and rational outlook is essential for creating a more inclusive learning environment while avoiding overly dogmatic approaches.[18] Additionally, a strong understanding of Islamic thought dynamics or Islamic philosophy is considered an added value. These qualifications are vital as they enable tutors to provide broader and more rational perspectives, aligning with the critical thinking characteristics commonly found among expatriate *mualaf*.

However, finding tutors who meet all these criteria is not an easy task. Some tutors possess a strong academic background in Islamic studies but lack proficiency in English communication. Conversely, there are tutors who are fluent in English but have a limited understanding of Islamic thought. This gap presents a significant challenge, as tutors are expected not only to teach daily rituals and worship practices but also to serve as discussion partners and reliable sources of guidance for

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[15] Prokopis A Christou, "How to Use Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Qualitative Research in Tourism* 3, no. 2 (2022): 79–95.

[16] Amiruddin Amiruddin, Nurdin Nurdin, and Moh Ali, "Islamic Education Teacher Communication Strategy in Increasing Students' Learning Interest," *International Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education* 3, no. 1 (2021): 41–61.

[17] Yaser Ellethy, "Converse or Convert?: Doing Islamic Theology in a Pluralised European Context," *Pluralisation of Theologies at European Universities*, 2020, 229.

[18] Najwan Saada and Haneen Magadlah, "The Meanings and Possible Implications of Critical Islamic Religious Education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 43, no. 2 (2021): 206–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2020.1785844.

mualaf. This dual role is crucial to enabling *mualaf* to gain a deeper understanding of Islam, extending beyond rituals to include the meanings and philosophies underlying Islamic teachings.[19]

There is also a strong preference among expatriate mualaf for teaching approaches that are less traditional and dogmatic. Some express discomfort with tutors who rely heavily on traditional methods, where teaching is delivered without adequately explaining the deeper, esoteric meanings behind daily rituals. Expatriate mualaf tend to seek a more profound and contextual understanding of Islam rather than merely normative explanations. These preferences are often communicated through their Indonesian spouses, who typically act as intermediaries between the mualaf and the program organizers. This highlights the importance of adopting teaching methods that address not only the practical aspects of Islamic practice but also the philosophical and contextual dimensions, ensuring a more meaningful learning experience for the mualaf.

Meanwhile, interviews with the tutors reveal that their motivation goes beyond simply teaching the principles of Islam. These tutors demonstrate a deep awareness of the importance of providing emotional and moral support to their students. They recognize that religious conversion is a significant life change that can bring various challenges, particularly for *mualaf* coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds. These challenges may include feelings of confusion, doubt, or isolation, as *mualaf* navigate the process of managing their new identity as Muslims.

Therefore, tutors perceive their role as more than just educators delivering religious knowledge. They see themselves as supporters in their students' spiritual journeys, providing both personal and emotional guidance. Tutors aim to ensure that their students not only comprehend Islamic teachings but also feel supported and valued as they navigate their transition into the Muslim community.[20]

As one tutor expressed, "I hope to be a source of support for them, helping them feel accepted and valued within the Muslim community." This statement reflects the tutors' commitment to creating a welcoming and inclusive learning environment where mualaf not only gain knowledge about rituals and Islamic teachings but also feel cared for and supported throughout their transition. This approach highlights the tutors' sensitivity to the individual needs of expatriate mualaf, who often require more than theoretical knowledge. The emotional and moral support provided by tutors is expected to help mualaf overcome challenges they may face during the conversion process, strengthen their faith, and build a more robust Muslim identity. This holistic method aims to assist mualaf not only in understanding Islamic teachings but also in leading a confident and fulfilling life as new members of the Muslim community.

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[19] M Aris Rofiqi and Mochamad Ziaul Haq, "Islamic Approaches in Multicultural and Interfaith Dialogue," *Integritas Terbuka: Peace and Interfaith Studies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 47–58.

[20] Rasyidah Abdullah et al., "Adaptation Strategies by Muslim Convert: A Study on 'Saudara Kita' in Sarawak Malaysia," *Islamic Guidance and Counseling Journal* 5, no. 2 (2022): 185–204.

Adjusting to the Needs of Mualaf

Expatriate mualaf tutors in Jakarta face various challenges that require careful adaptation and strategic adjustments. One of the primary challenges is the mismatch between the tutors' expectations and the students' interest in learning. Some students may begin studying Islam due to encouragement from their spouses, displaying limited enthusiasm for engaging in religious practices. In such cases, tutors find it challenging to motivate students to delve deeper into Islamic teachings. To address this, tutors adopt a flexible approach, focusing more on discussions about family values and muamalah (social interactions) rather than emphasizing ritual practices that may be less appealing to the students. This adaptable strategy allows tutors to build rapport with their students and gradually introduce them to the broader aspects of Islamic teachings in a manner that aligns with their interests and circumstances.

Another challenge lies in the varying levels of prior understanding of Islam among students. For instance, based on tutors' experiences, students who are alumni of Catholic seminary schools tend to grasp the concept of *tauhid* (the oneness of God) more easily than those from atheist or agnostic backgrounds. To address this variation, tutors must adapt by employing simple, rational, and contextually relevant communication methods. They also provide additional explanations of religious terms that may be unfamiliar to the students to ensure that everyone can follow the lessons effectively.

Adjusting to the religious background of the *mualaf*'s spouse is another significant challenge. Tutors need to understand the religious perspectives of the expatriate *mualaf*'s spouse to teach worship practices in a way that aligns with their traditions and avoids confusion. According to the findings, most spouses of *mualaf* belong to the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah organizations. Therefore, tutors must tailor their teaching methods to align with the specific worship practices followed by the spouses. This adjustment helps *mualaf* integrate Islamic teachings more harmoniously into their lives while minimizing potential conflicts or confusion arising from differences in religious practices.

C. Teaching Approaches and Techniques

Interactive and Dialogical Teaching Approach

Research findings indicate that tutors teaching expatriate mualaf in Jakarta predominantly employ an interactive and dialogical approach to foster a conducive learning environment. This method is rooted in the belief that effective learning occurs when students actively engage in the process, particularly mualaf who may have various questions and doubts about their new faith. By encouraging students to ask questions and engage in discussions during teaching sessions, tutors aim to create an atmosphere where mualaf feel comfortable expressing their thoughts openly. This approach aligns with

the theory that dialogical teaching supports the idea that individual speech and learning are shaped through continuous interaction between teachers and students.[21]

This interactive approach emphasizes the importance of two-way dialogue between tutors and students. In this context, tutors do not merely act as transmitters of information but also as facilitators who support and guide students[22] in understanding and internalizing Islamic teachings. Tutors provide space for *mualaf* to explore and express their doubts or questions freely. One tutor stated, "I want *mualaf* to feel comfortable discussing their doubts or questions so that we can find satisfying answers together." This statement reflects the tutors' commitment to fostering relationships based on trust and openness, where students feel heard and valued.

By adopting a more dialogical approach, tutors aim to move away from rigid and dogmatic teaching methods that may not allow students to think critically or express their doubts. Traditional, more authoritative, and one-way teaching methods often fail to provide opportunities for students to actively engage in the learning process[23], which can hinder *mualaf* in internalizing new teachings. In contrast, interactive methods enable tutors to tailor the instructional material to the personal needs and contexts of each *mualaf*. This adaptability makes the learning experience more relevant and meaningful, helping students connect with the teachings on a deeper level and fostering a greater sense of engagement and understanding in their spiritual journey.

The interactive and dialogical approach employed by tutors in teaching Islam to expatriate *mualaf* in Jakarta demonstrates a profound respect for the individuality and unique needs of each student.[24] These tutors understand that every *mualaf* comes with distinct backgrounds, experiences, and questions, emphasizing the importance of creating a responsive and inclusive learning environment. By fostering active participation through questions and open discussions, the tutors aim to build relationships grounded in trust and openness. This approach ensures that students feel secure in expressing their doubts or concerns, thereby cultivating a supportive atmosphere where learning is tailored to their personal journey and experiences.

Through this approach, the conversion process becomes more than merely the passive acceptance of religious teachings; it transforms into a significant intellectual and emotional journey. Tutors act as spiritual companions, guiding *mualaf* through their path, helping them find meaning and relevance in the teachings of their newly embraced faith, and assisting in building a strong identity as part of the Muslim community.

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[21] Şeyma Yıldırım and Şebnem Uzun, "An Overview of Dialogic Teaching and Its Impact on Learning," *International Journal of Education, Technology and Science* 1, no. 2 (2021): 135–53.

[22] Colin Latchem, "Independent Study, Transactional Distance, Guided Conversation and Adult Learning," *Open and Distance Education Theory Revisited: Implications for the Digital Era*, 2019, 11–19.

[23] Eloise Symonds, "An 'Unavoidable' Dynamic? Understanding the 'Traditional' Learner–Teacher Power Relationship within a Higher Education Context," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 42, no. 7 (2021): 1070–85.

[24] Peter Teo, "Teaching for the 21st Century: A Case for Dialogic Pedagogy," *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* 21 (2019): 170–78.

This individualized approach also acknowledges that each *mualaf* learns at their own pace and in their own way. Tutors must therefore remain flexible in their teaching methods, tailoring materials and approaches to suit the specific needs of each individual.[25] This adaptability ensures that the learning experience is both effective and deeply meaningful for every *mualaf*.

Responsif dan Kontekstual

Teaching experiences with expatriate *mualaf* in Jakarta highlight the diversity in students' enthusiasm and engagement with learning about Islam. Some students exhibit a strong eagerness to delve into Islamic teachings, while others are more interested in discussing the history and politics of Islam rather than focusing on religious rituals. Tutors frequently encounter situations where the motivation and interests of their students vary widely, reflecting the individual backgrounds and experiences of each *mualaf*. For instance, one European student expressed a profound interest in contemporary issues and Islamic history, coupled with a critical perspective on certain aspects of Islamic teachings. To address such diversity, a responsive and contextual teaching approach is essential.[26]

The questions posed by *mualaf* often reflect both their confusion and curiosity about Islamic teachings. Common inquiries include the use of Arabic in prayer, perspectives on terrorism, the concept of polygamy, the fate of their non-Muslim family members in the afterlife, why some of their Muslim friends consume wine, and how Islamic teachings affect their relationships with non-Muslim family members. These questions reveal that *mualaf* are seeking a deeper and more contextually relevant understanding of Islam, one that resonates with their personal life experiences.

In this context, expatriate mualaf often face unique challenges. For instance, a woman from the Philippines preparing to marry an Indonesian man struggled to understand cultural differences, such as the concept of halal and haram food and the obligation to wear a hijab. She expressed concerns about how to explain these changes to her family, who are accustomed to non-halal food. She also asked whether it is true that Islam permits a husband to hit his wife and requires women to accept polygamy. Family-related issues in Islam are indeed sensitive topics that require careful and nuanced explanation, particularly regarding misconceptions that Islam tolerates domestic violence or devalues women through the practice of polygamy.[27]

Some expatriate *mualaf*, such as a European diplomat, initially show little interest in performing *shalat* (prayer), despite having already performed the *hajj*. He admitted feeling no spiritual connection

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[25] Hongchao Peng, Shanshan Ma, and Jonathan Michael Spector, "Personalized Adaptive Learning: An Emerging Pedagogical Approach Enabled by a Smart Learning Environment," *Smart Learning Environments* 6, no. 1 (2019): 1–14.

[26] Sarah Schneider Kavanagh et al., "Practicing Responsiveness: Using Approximations of Teaching to Develop Teachers' Responsiveness to Students' Ideas," *Journal of Teacher Education* 71, no. 1 (2020): 94–107.; Choi Chi Hyun et al., "Implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) to Improve the Concept and Practice of Love for Faith-Learning Integration," *International Journal of Control and Automation* 13, no. 1 (2020): 365–83.

[27] Nur Solikin and Eka Wulandari Larantika Mualim, "The Position Of Women In The Family Law According To Liberal Feminis," *Indonesian Journal of Law and Islamic Law (IJLIL)* 4, no. 1 (2022): 54–83.

during prayer and found Arabic to be particularly challenging. Nevertheless, he was willing to fast during Ramadan and avoid pork, though he struggled to give up wine. In class, he preferred discussions on Islamic history and politics over learning about rituals. In contrast, a European businessman married to an Indonesian woman demonstrated significant progress in his Islamic learning. He was even willing to lead prayers as an *imam*, despite needing improvement in his Arabic pronunciation.

Some mualaf feel that Islamic teachings are overly complex, particularly those who initially believed that becoming a Muslim merely required reciting the shahada and avoiding pork. However, they soon realize that Islam encompasses many additional rules that need to be understood and practiced, such as the obligation to perform ablution (wudu) before prayer, the various types of shalat with differing procedures, and numerous other rituals and duties. This sense of confusion often arises from the gap between their initial expectations and the practical complexities of fully observing Islamic teachings. The post-conversion experience can indeed be life-altering, as it involves not only adopting a new faith but also navigating its multifaceted practices and integrating them into daily life.[28]

Handling critical questions from *mualaf*, both adults and children, is a challenging task. Tutors must address these questions with care and sensitivity to avoid misunderstandings that could negatively impact the learning process. One case highlights the importance of a cautious approach when explaining Islamic teachings to children of *mualaf*. A young girl, the daughter of an expatriate married to an Indonesian, once asked why she needed to pray before entering the bathroom. The tutor explained that bathrooms are places where *jinn* are present, so it is necessary to pray before entering. While this explanation is commonly accepted by many Muslim children in Indonesia and the Islamic world,[29] its impact on the expatriate child was different. She became fearful of entering the bathroom, leading her parents to eventually decide to discontinue religious lessons for their children.

This incident highlights the importance of considering cultural backgrounds and prior experiences when explaining religious concepts.[30] Muslim children raised in Islamic cultures may be familiar with ideas such as the presence of *jinn* and specific prayers, accepting them as a natural part of their faith. In contrast, expatriate children who are new to Islam may lack this context and may experience confusion or fear if such concepts are not explained in a way that aligns with their understanding. Tutors need to simplify religious concepts and convey them in ways that avoid creating fear or misunderstandings. For example, instead of emphasizing the presence of *jinn*, tutors could focus on the importance of cleanliness and maintaining personal purity as the rationale for praying before entering the bathroom.

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[28] Muhammad A Kolila, "American Converts to Islam, Post-Conversion Experiences" (University of Denver, 2019).

[29] Michael Marlow, "How Possessing, Lovesick and Avenging Jinns Are Exorcised in Contemporary Sweden," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 12, no. 2 (2022): 194–211.

[30] Pascal Boyer, *The Naturalness of Religious Ideas: A Cognitive Theory of Religion* (Univ of California Press, 2023).

To meet the needs of expatriate mualaf, tutors must adopt a teaching approach that is contextual and tailored to the background and personal concerns of their students.[31] This requires explanations of Islamic teachings that go beyond theoretical aspects, taking into account the mualaf's life experiences and specific questions. Adaptive and relevant explanations are essential in helping mualaf overcome doubts and confusion. Such an approach enables mualaf to see the relevance of Islamic teachings within the context of their own lives, strengthening their spiritual integration and addressing the challenges they may encounter during the conversion process. By providing context-sensitive explanations and responses, tutors play a crucial role in supporting mualaf to internalize Islamic teachings more effectively and practice them with greater confidence and understanding in their daily lives.[32]

Evaluation dan Monitoring

Tutors teaching expatriate *mualaf* employ various evaluation strategies to holistically and responsively monitor their students' progress. One of the primary methods used is through regular discussions and Q&A sessions. This approach enables tutors to directly assess the students' understanding of fundamental Islamic concepts. Through informal and dialogical interactions, tutors create a supportive environment where *mualaf* feel comfortable asking questions and expressing doubts without pressure. These discussions not only provide clear insights into how well students have grasped the material but also help tutors identify areas where students may be struggling or feeling uneasy.[33] As a result, these sessions serve as a dynamic evaluation tool, allowing tutors to offer more in-depth explanations and make adjustments tailored to the individual needs of each student.

Tutors also employ oral tests as a method to evaluate students' progress, particularly in memorizing short verses and understanding key Islamic concepts. These oral tests are used to assess academic achievements in terms of memorizing and comprehending verses from the Qur'an, as well as understanding the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings. Additionally, they provide insights into the students' spiritual growth, especially in applying the knowledge they have learned in more practical and contextual ways. This approach enables tutors to identify areas where students may need additional support and to provide constructive feedback to better facilitate their spiritual and academic development. The use of oral tests underscores the importance of holistic assessment in the learning

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[31] Dave Lochtie et al., *Effective Personal Tutoring in Higher Education* (Critical Publishing, 2018).

[32] Claire Alkouatli, "Muslim–Canadian Educator's Pedagogies: Tools for Teaching, Learning, and Transforming" (University of British Columbia, 2020).

[33] Kristina Doot Whatley, "Negotiation in Classroom Conversations: An Examination of Teacher and Student Engagement" (University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 2023).

process, addressing not only the theoretical aspects of religious education but also its practical applications.[34]

Beyond academic evaluation, tutors emphasize the importance of building social support networks and community connections for *mualaf*. They recognize that social integration is a crucial aspect of the conversion process, encompassing not only intellectual understanding but also social acceptance. To facilitate this, tutors propose organizing social activities such as regular gatherings, community events, and even recreational activities involving *mualaf* and the local Muslim community.

These initiatives aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment where *mualaf* feel welcomed, valued, and connected with fellow Muslims. By strengthening these social networks, *mualaf* can experience a more holistic integration—not only in terms of religious knowledge but also in feeling a genuine sense of belonging within the wider community. This strategy reflects the tutors' deep understanding of the role of social support in the spiritual journey of *mualaf*, addressing the emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of the conversion process.[35] At an institutional level, evaluation results are compiled into portfolios, which are reported to the organization, Muslim Smart. These are then shared with the *mualaf's* spouses, ensuring transparency and facilitating further support from their immediate social circles.

D. Policies and Implementation of Teaching Programs for Expatriate Mualaf at Muslim Smart

Teaching Islam to expatriate *mualaf* involves more than simply transferring knowledge about rituals and religious teachings; it also encompasses emotional, social, and cultural guidance. Drawing on John Dewey's theory of cross-cultural education.[36] this process can be understood as an effort to bridge the gap between Islam as a newly embraced faith and the *mualaf*'s original cultural traditions and values. In this context, tutors act not only as educators but also as facilitators, helping to integrate Islamic values into the lives of *mualaf* in a contextual and meaningful way.

The tutors' understanding and appreciation of their students' cultural backgrounds are crucial elements in creating an inclusive learning environment. This is reflected in the need for tutors who are fluent in English and adopt a moderate perspective. Emphasizing Islamic moral values over religious dogma aligns with the principles of inclusivity in cross-cultural education, ensuring that *mualaf* can engage with their new faith in a way that resonates with their unique contexts and experiences.

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[34] Fenni Yuniasari, Nur Laili Komairatul Fitria, and Afiful Ikhwan, "Learning Islamic Education in the Independent Curriculum:(A Case Study of Authentic Assessment at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Nurul Hidayah)," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 11, no. 2 (2023): 306–23.

[35] Ali Ayten et al., "Formation and Consequences of the Conversion Process: A Qualitative Study of Adult Converts," *Ilahiyat Studies* 10, no. 2 (2019): 141–81.

[36] John Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey* (DigiCat, 2022).; James Zhixiang Yang, *When Confucius" Encounters" John Dewey: A Cross-Cultural Inquiry Into Dewey's Visit to China* (IAP, 2024).

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In teaching expatriate *mualaf*, tutors recognize the importance of tailoring their approach to the cultural backgrounds and individual needs of their students. This method avoids overly dogmatic instruction and instead focuses on how Islamic teachings can be integrated into the daily lives of *mualaf*. For instance, when teaching acts of worship, tutors not only explain general ritual procedures but also consider differences in *mazhab* (Islamic schools of thought) and religious organizations, both in Indonesia and in the broader Islamic world. This consideration is crucial because variations in worship practices can lead to confusion or discomfort for *mualaf* who are unfamiliar with the diversity within Islamic teachings.[38] By adopting this approach, tutors can help *mualaf* understand and practice worship in a way that aligns with their backgrounds while respecting the diversity of religious practices.

Additionally, tutors conduct initial assessments to understand the needs, backgrounds, and levels of understanding of each *mualaf*. This process enables them to design lesson materials that are tailored to the individual's knowledge level and interests. By gaining insight into the *mualaf's* background, tutors can adapt their teaching methods and content, making the lessons more relevant and effective in meeting their specific needs.

The tutors reported using a flexible syllabus that can be adjusted to the unique requirements of each *mualaf*. This syllabus allows tutors to focus on specific aspects of Islamic teachings, such as *aqidah* (belief) or *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), based on the individual's needs and interests. This approach ensures that the material is not only aligned with the *mualaf's* level of understanding but also relevant to their life context. It facilitates a smoother internalization of Islamic teachings and supports the application of these teachings in their daily lives.

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[37] Anugamini Srivastava, Sucheta Agarwal, and Malini Ganapathy, "Inclusive Higher Education in Cross-Cultural Settings," *International Journal of Educational Management* 36, no. 4 (2022): 357–63.

[38] G M Speelman, "Learning Religion. How to 'Become'a Muslim: A Learning Environment for Converts," *Shifting Locations and Reshaping Methods: Methodological Challenges Arising from New Fields of Research in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies*, 2018, 233–47.

This tailored teaching approach reflects the tutors' commitment to providing a more personalized and effective learning experience for *mualaf*. By integrating cultural understanding, initial assessments, and a flexible syllabus, tutors are able to support *mualaf* in their conversion process in a deeper and more meaningful way.[39]

Building Relationships with Learners

To create a comfortable and supportive learning environment, tutors in the hometutoring program for expatriate *mualaf* emphasize the importance of establishing strong relationships with their learners. This approach aims to foster an open and safe atmosphere where *mualaf* feel at ease sharing their thoughts and questions without fear of judgment. Tutors demonstrate care beyond academic aspects, offering much-needed emotional support to the *mualaf*.

Research indicates that adopting a new religion is a challenging experience, often accompanied by anxiety and feelings of isolation.[40] To address this, tutors celebrate even the smallest achievements of their learners. While these milestones may appear modest, they provide significant motivation and boost the confidence of *mualaf* as they navigate their spiritual journey.

Tutors acknowledge that most students greatly appreciate a learning environment that is personal and informal. This setting allows them to feel more at ease when asking questions and discussing topics they may find difficult to understand. The hometutoring approach facilitates a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings, as the friendly and familiar atmosphere of lessons held in their own homes or apartments helps students feel more emotionally connected to their tutors.[41]

For some *mualaf*, hometutoring sessions are not merely opportunities to learn about religion but also moments for personal reflection and discussions about their lives. In an intimate setting, *mualaf* feel freer to explore and contemplate the meaning of Islamic teachings within the context of their personal experiences. They can discuss how religious principles relate to the challenges and experiences they face in their daily lives. This process allows them to internalize Islamic teachings in a way that is more meaningful and relevant, transforming religion from merely a set of rituals into a source of inspiration and guidance in their lives. Thus, building strong relationships and creating a supportive environment in hometutoring sessions is a crucial element in helping *mualaf* understand and embrace Islamic teachings on a deeper, more personal level.

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[39] Speelman.

[40] Harold G Koenig, Faten Al-Zaben, and Tyler J VanderWeele, "Religion and Psychiatry: Recent Developments in Research," *BJPsych Advances* 26, no. 5 (2020): 262–72.

[41] Cheng-Hung Wang and Hao-Chiang Koong Lin, "Constructing an Affective Tutoring System for Designing Course Learning and Evaluation," *Journal of Educational Computing Research* 55, no. 8 (2018): 1111–28.

Tutor as a Support System for Mualaf

In the context of Islamic education for expatriate *mualaf*, the role of the tutor extends beyond merely delivering knowledge. Tutors act as a support system for the *mualaf*, serving as friends and companions in their spiritual journey. In this conducive learning environment, tutors can foster closer connections with their students, build trust, and become reliable sources of guidance to address their curiosity and concerns.

The personal experiences of tutors highlight the significance of their role as a support system. One tutor shared a particularly touching story about an expatriate student who, after undergoing the learning process, began performing *shalat* independently, without encouragement from others, including his wife. This not only signified a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings but also reflected the genuine and heartfelt internalization of faith by the *mualaf*. Such experiences provide tutors with a profound sense of fulfillment, as they witness the tangible positive impact they have had on their students' lives.[42]

Additionally, longer teaching engagements often serve as indicators of success for tutors. For instance, there was a case where a *mualaf* who had previously only managed to continue learning for one month with a tutor elsewhere was able to commit to a full year of study with a Muslim Smart tutor. This success was attributed to the personal connection and comfortable learning environment created by the tutor. This demonstrates that an approach prioritizing personal relationships and emotional support is highly effective in guiding *mualaf* through their conversion process. By adopting such a method, tutors not only help *mualaf* understand Islamic teachings intellectually but also enable them to internalize these teachings more deeply and integrate them meaningfully into their daily lives.

E. Conclusion

This study identified several key aspects of the hometutoring approach for teaching Islam to expatriate *mualaf* in Jakarta. First, the main criteria for selecting tutors include proficiency in English, a strong understanding of Islam, and a moderate perspective, as *mualaf* are generally highly educated. Second, tutors employ an interactive approach that encourages dialogue and discussion, fostering a safe environment where *mualaf* can ask questions without fear of judgment. Third, tutors act as spiritual supporters, building trust and helping *mualaf* internalize Islamic teachings with sincerity. Fourth, challenges include varying levels of motivation and understanding among students, requiring tutors to remain flexible and emphasize the relevance of Islamic values in daily life. Fifth, adapting teaching methods to the cultural backgrounds and individual needs of *mualaf* is crucial for the program's success, with a focus on applying Islamic teachings in the *mualaf's* real-life context.

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[42] Marhamah Marhamah et al., "Islamic Education Model for Muallaf (Converts) through a Participatory Approach," *Al-Ta Lim Journal* 29, no. 1 (2022): 51–61.

Overall, the hometutoring approach practiced by Muslim Smart Jakarta has proven effective in providing inclusive, relevant, and supportive Islamic education for expatriate *mualaf*. By combining dialogical, moderate, and individualized methods, tutors have successfully built relationships that support the spiritual and religious journeys of *mualaf*. These results offer not only new insights into effective teaching methods for *mualaf* but also contribute to the development of a more inclusive and adaptive approach to Islamic education in an increasingly complex global context.

To enhance the implementation of hometutoring programs for teaching Islam to expatriate *mualaf*, Islamic educational institutions and policymakers should develop a standardized yet flexible curriculum. This curriculum should include essential Islamic teachings tailored to the needs and backgrounds of *mualaf*. Additionally, providing training and certification for tutors is crucial to ensure the delivery of responsive and contextually relevant instruction. Moreover, facilitating community networks and social support through collaboration with mosques and religious organizations is vital for improving the social integration of *mualaf*. Further research, such as longitudinal studies, should be conducted to evaluate the long-term impact of hometutoring programs on *mualaf* retention and their integration into the Muslim community. By implementing these recommendations, hometutoring programs can significantly contribute to the spiritual journey and social integration of *mualaf*, ensuring a more meaningful and supportive conversion experience.

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