

WORKING IN JAPAN AS A TRAINEE: THE REALITY OF INDONESIAN TRAINEES UNDER JAPAN'S INDUSTRIAL TRAINING AND TECHNICAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

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Abstract

Attracted by Japan's prosperity and motivated by desire for gaining higher income, many Indonesians have been migrating to Japan in increasing numbers since the mid-1990s. Different from other destination countries, most of Indonesian workers who came to Japan is under the program called "Industrial Training and Technical Internship Program" with the main objective to get the use of actual work to obtain new knowledge and technical skills. This paper aims to shows the reality of Indonesian trainees and the issues related to implementation of the training program in Japan. The bulk of empirical data in this paper is drawn from a field study on Indonesian trainees in some big cities in Japan. Primarily, the study includes a questionnaire survey to 120 Indonesian trainees who are working in some factories in Mie Prefecture as well as extended interviews with key informants, field observation and related literature study. This study found that many of the young Indonesians questioned showed that in the reality, the training program is just a way to fulfill Japan's labor shortage and hired as a cheap labor source for small and medium companies in Japan. Further, many of them had discovered that they have to take unproductive jobs where no new skills or technology techniques transfer really take place. Most of them were involved in marginal jobs or assigned to a small part of the operation. However, it is considered that, in spite of many problems in the implementation of the current training program of Japan, as long as the significant difference remains in employment opportunity and earning between Japan and Indonesia, the efforts of dispatching more Indonesians to Japan is still an important policy for both countries.

Key words: International Migration, Industrial Training and Technical Internship Program, and Indonesian Trainees in Japan.

Sejak pertengahan tahun 1990-an kemajuan ekonomi Jepang telah menarik minat banyak orang Indonesia untuk bekerja di Jepang, terutama untuk memperoleh pendapatan yang lebih tinggi. Berbeda dengan negara tempatan lainnya, sebagian besar pekerja Indonesia bekerja di Jepang melalui program pemagangan yang disebut "Industrial Training and Technical Internship Program". Program ini bertujuan utama memberikan pelatihan, pengetahuan, keterampilan dan pemanfaatan teknologi yang dapat diaplikasikan jika mereka kembali ke Indonesia. Tulisan ini merupakan bagian dari hasil kajian tentang dinamika sosial pekerja Indonesia di Jepang. Tulisan ini bermaksud membahas realitas yang terjadi serta isu yang muncul seputar pelaksanaan

program pemagangan tersebut. Sumber data dalam tulisan ini berasal dari survei terhadap 120 orang pekerja magang asal Indonesia yang berdomisili di Provinsi Mie, serta wawancara mendalam dengan beberapa narasumber yang dianggap memahami inti kajian di beberapa kota besar di wilayah Tokai dan Kansai Jepang. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa hampir sebagian besar dari pekerja magang Indonesia diperkerjakan sebagai “manual labor” untuk mengisi kebutuhan industri kecil dan sedang di Jepang sebagai sumber tenaga kerja murah. Kondisi ini berdampak terhadap tingginya tingkat ketidakpuasan bagi hampir sebagian besar pekerja magang Indonesia karena tidak ada keterampilan baru yang mereka dapatkan. Namun demikian, terlepas dari permasalahan yang ada, pengiriman tenaga kerja magang Indonesia ke Jepang merupakan peluang yang harus tetap diambil, mengingat hingga saat ini Indonesia masih dihadapkan pada berbagai permasalahan, seperti tingginya tingkat pengangguran dan kemiskinan. Hal yang diperlukan adalah adanya upaya perbaikan terhadap pelaksanaan program pemagangan di Jepang, terutama upaya untuk meminimalisasi pelanggaran hak dasar di tempat kerja. Selain itu, program pemagangan di Jepang perlu ditindaklanjuti melalui sebuah sistem yang dapat mengakomodasi dan mendayagunakan para pekerja magang yang telah kembali ke Indonesia, terutama melalui program yang dapat menciptakan kesempatan kerja.

Kata Kunci: *Migrasi Internasional, Pekerja Magang Indonesia di Jepang, dan Program Pemagangan*

INTRODUCTION

International migration is a significant socio-cultural change in Indonesia. The success story of Indonesians who are working in abroad by gaining higher income and the benefits that had accrued to his or her family have influenced many Indonesians to migrate to other countries. International migration have also given many positive contributions to social and economic development in Indonesia. Apart from become a problem solving on high unemployment, underemployment, and low wages problem, it is also contribute to economic development by gaining foreign exchange earning, reducing the number of the poor as well as improving the standard of living of the community and nation.

According to Ananta (2004) there has been a rapid development of international migration across Indonesia in the half of centuries. This rapidly rising population mobility is one of a prove of economic transformation and it has been a cause and a consequences of extraordinary changes in social, cultural and political life in Indonesia. Meanwhile, Hugo (2000) stated that the revolution of global transportation and development of communication in mass media are included some of the factors that contributes to the rising international migration in recent decade, not only in Indonesia, but also many countries all over the world. Further, the unbalance development of demographic condition across countries in the world then resulted in differences in the number and growth of

the population and workforce of the countries. This phenomenon then creates an unavoidable condition between labor surplus (developing countries) and labor deficit countries (developed countries) and make international migration as one of solution options.

Japan is one of the destination countries for Indonesian in search of employment. Although the number is quite small compared to other destination countries, it can be predicted that the number of Indonesians migrating to Japan will continue to grow in the future. At any events, because of the significant different in earning and employment opportunity between two countries will remain for the foreseeable future for Indonesia as a sending country. Moreover, increasingly internationalized Japanese companies are also raises new opportunities and inflow of workers from Indonesia to work in Japan. It is because Japan is also one of the important leading economic partners of Indonesia. In the future, it is widely believed that the contour of between Indonesia and Japan economic relations will be increasingly influenced by the flows of people between the two countries.

In a more competitive global environment, the mutual understanding the issue and the prospect of foreign migrant workers are very important for reaping optimal benefits. Indonesia, as the country that has sent a large number of international migrant workers, should pay substantial attention to this issue. Therefore, study on Indonesian migrant workers in Japan is of great interest and importance. This is especially true considering lack of dedicated study on this issue. This paper aims to analyze issues and the reality of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan. In this paper, Indonesian migrant worker is refer to Indonesian trainees (*kenshusei*) who are working in Japan under program called “Japan Industrial Training and Technical Interenship Program”. The bulk of empirical data in this paper is drawn from a field study on Indonesian trainees in Mie Prefecture and some other cities such as in Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe, and Tokyo. Primarily, the study includes a questionnaire survey to 120 Indonesian trainees who are working in some factories in Mie Prefecture as well as extended interviews with key informants, field observation and related literature study.

GROWING NUMBER OF INDONESIAN WORKERS IN JAPAN

Indonesian migrant workers in Japan can be said to be the “new comers” of the “late comers” as they arrived relatively late in the new comer trends of international migration in Japan, and being still small in number in comparison with the other dominant national groups. Nevertheless, the number of Indonesian

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workers in Japan is expected to rise in the future as Indonesian workers are in general preferred by Japanese employers because of their docility, eagerness, and patience in carrying out hard work. Additionally, it costs less to recruit Southeast Asian workers than to hire other nationals, and Indonesian workers are willing to accept jobs whose condition may be unacceptable to other foreign workers like the South American (Okushima, 2005:23).

Historically, the first stage of migration of Indonesian workers to Japan came about when the Japanese government started to accept foreigner as trainees (*kenshusei*) in 1982, in proportion to promote international cooperation and extend assistance to developing countries and in response to the rapid postwar expansion of the Japanese economy and accompanying labor shortages (Romdiati, 2005, Okushima, 2005). Tirtosudarmo (2005) and Pudjiastuti (2005) in their separated research reports stated that since 1980s, many Indonesians who are mostly irregular workers from Minahasa, North Sulawesi reported had been resided and worked in the local seafood processing companies in Japanese port town of Oarai in Ibarakai Prefecture. Later, those irregular Minahasan people with their highly dense and homogeneous community in a single location (Oarai town) become a well known group as early Indonesians who were began arriving in Japan in 1980s.

In 1990, after the revision of the so-called Maruship System (allowed foreign seafarers to be able to work in Japanese deep sea vassal), number of Indonesian seafarers had also reported begun to be hired by some Japanese deep-sea vassals as fishery trainees (Okushima, 2005). Further, at the end of the 1990s, a number of Indonesians who had Japanese descended relationship also reported had begun to enter Japan in response to the implementation of Japan's new Immigration and Refugee Control Act 1990. This act allowed foreigner who had Japanese blood, used to called as *nikkeijin* to enter Japan under a special category (*teijusha*) and made them and their spouses the only group of foreigners who were permitted to reside and engage in work (including unskilled work) without any restrictions.

In 1993, after the Japanese government established new training system, the number of Indonesian entered Japan has been increased year by year. Before 1993, most of Indonesians who entered Japan were dominated by those who were came for professional purpose such as officials, engineers, and college students. After 1993, when the training period was extended to a maximum of 3 years, the number of Indonesians with the visa status of trainees and designated activity (technical interns) rapidly increased and since then becoming the majority of Indonesian groups in Japan.

Based on data from Japan's Ministry of Justice in 2007, the number of registered Indonesian in Japan was 25,620 people, placed at the rank 9th

accounting for about 1.2 percent of the total number of foreigners in Japan. As shown in Table 1 below, at the end of 2007, the number registered foreigners in Japan was about 2.15 million people. This number of registered foreigners is about 50 percent higher than a decade ago and constitutes 1.99 percent of Japan's dwindling population today.

Table 1. Number of Foreigner in Japan by Country of Origin, 1980-2009

Country	Year						
	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007
China	52,896	74,924	150,339	222,991	335,575	519,561	606,889
Korea	664,536	683,313	687,940	666,376	635,269	598,687	593,489
Brazil	1,492	1,955	56,429	176,440	254,394	302,080	316,967
Philippines	5,547	12,261	49,092	74,297	144,871	187,261	202,592
Peru	348	480	10,279	36,269	46,171	57,728	59,696
USA	22,401	29,044	38,364	43,198	44,856	49,390	51,851
Thailand	1,276	2,642	6,724	16,035	29,289	37,703	41,384
Vietnam	2,742	4,126	6,233	9,099	16,908	28,932	36,860
Indonesia	1,448	1,704	3,623	6,956	19,346	25,097	25,620
Others	30,224	40,163	66,294	110,710	159,765	205,116	217,625
Total	782,910	850,612	1,075,317	1,362,371	1,686,444	2,011,555	2,152,973

Source: Japan's Ministry of Justice, 2008

Looking first at the number of foreigners by country of origin, Chinese composed the largest group, accounting for about 28.2 percent, replacing for the first time the number of Koreans. They were followed by Brazilians (14.7 percent), Filipinos (9.4 percent), Peruvians (2.8 percent), American (2.4 percent) and others totaling 32,489 (14.9 percent). From Table 1 we can see that there was also a remarkable and significant increase in the number of registered foreigners from Southeast Asian countries, such as from Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. In addition, well over 90 percent of resident foreigners in Japan came from either Asia (74 percent) or South America (18 percent) and in fact, the numbers are growing year by year.

In term of resident status, the dominant visas statuses of Indonesian in Japan are trainees, which account for 11,459 individuals. This number is the third highest number among the total foreign trainees in Japan (10.8%) in 2007. Moreover, Table 2 shows that, since 2000 the number of Indonesians in Japan with status of resident as "spouse or child of Japanese national" has also been increasing significantly, from 1.877 individuals in 2000, increased became 3.129 individuals in 2007. The status of "spouse or child of Japanese national" is granted to foreigners who are married to Japanese or whose parents are Japanese.

Table 2. Number of Indonesian in Japan by Status of Resident, 2000–2007

Resident Status	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007
A. General Status					
Entertainer					
Temporary visitor	953	1,148	1,740	787	430
College student	1,385	1,806	1,943	1,281	963
Trainee	1,448	1,607	1,651	1,710	1,869
Designated Activities	4,506	3,813	4,189	4,407	5,099
Dependent	5,518	6,426	6,211	6,639	6,390
Dependent of Permanent Resident	1,039	1,384	1,337	1,509	1,590
Japanese Spouse	462	792	1,404	2,034	2,436
Permanent Resident	1,877	2,335	2,592	3,009	3,129
Others	973	1,183	1,310	1,588	1,691
Sub Total	920	1,177	1,513	1,894	2,053
B. Seafarers	19,346	21,671	23,890	24,858	25,620
Seamen	2,724	2,730	2,872	3,146	3,062
C. Overstay	317	347	473	547	661
Total	4,947	6,393	7,246	6,926	6,354
	27,334	31,141	34,481	35,477	35,717

Source: Japan's Ministry of Justice, 2009

Indonesian migrant workers in Japan are also known as one of major irregular foreign residents. The numbers are not as many as from Thailand and the Philippines, but still rank within the ten highest numbers among overstayers by nationalities in Japan. Basically it is very difficult to estimate the exact number of irregular foreign migrant workers involved. However, normally researchers relay on press reports and data related to the number of overstayers (Wickramaekera, 2002:6). According to Ministry of Justice Japan 2008, the number of Indonesians classified as overstay estimated 5,096 people (rank sixth). If we look at previous data, since May 1, 1999, the number of Indonesians classified as overstayers had steadily increased but has been on the decrease since 2005. Furthermore, looking at the number of foreign nationals against whom deportation procedures were carried out for cases of violation of the Immigration Control Act in 2008, the largest number of such foreign nationals was from China (10,963), followed by the Philippines (7,847), Korea (4,993) and Indonesia (2,284). This top fourth country made up over 60 percent of the total. Among those number of Indonesians, 260 people were because of illegal entry, 11 people were because of illegal landing, 1,978 were because of overstay, and 29 people were because of violated activity status permitted by the status of resident previously granted.

COMING TO JAPAN AS A TRAINEE

Indonesia began to send their workers officially into Japan in early 1993 under the new program called “The Industrial Training and Technical Internship Program”, after cooperation agreement was signed by Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development Department, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration of Indonesia and Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO). Through this program, after finishing up to 3 years training program in small and middle size industries in Japan, the trainees are expected to be able to use their technology, skills, and knowledge that they obtained in their host country. Moreover, most of Indonesian trainees in Japan are sponsored through an organization (dispatched company) called IMM Japan (Association for International Manpower Development of Medium and Small Enterprises, Japan).

The Japan’s Industrial Training and Technical Internship program was launched in April 1993, after a government organization called Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) was established in 1991 and later coordinate and conduct unified supervision of training program in Japan. At the same period in 1990, the 1982 revision of the Immigration Law was also taken place, introducing the new regulation of Japan training program that allows middle-skilled foreign workers to enter Japan as trainees and technical interns.

Industrial Training and Technical Internship program basically is not the first time with the ideas of accepting middle-skilled foreign workers to Japan under the trainee status. In the period of labor shortage between the late 1960’s and the early 1970 and also when economic boom in mid 1980’s, there were also some similar training programs, as well as calls for using it to promote labor import. The programs were lead by some organizations or agencies such as JICA, Asian Productivity Organization, Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS), The ILO association of Japan, Japan Vocational Competency Ability Development Association (JAVADA), etc. At that time, the hiring of so-called middle-skilled foreign labor as “trainees” was not only in small and medium-sized firms, but also was conducted in major big companies in the shipbuilding, automotive, electrical appliance and food stuff industries (Komai, 1993:34).

Since a revision of the trainee program has been released in 1993, the number of Indonesian workers in Japan, classified as trainee, has been modest but increasing from 1,438 people in 1995 to 5,972 people in 1998. By the beginning of 2000, the total number of Indonesian deployed to Japan by that program had reached 12,396, including the 4,968 who have completed the program, the 6,163 who were currently enrolled, and the 1,265 who had returned to Indonesia

without completing the program for various reasons (JANNI, 1999; Romdiati, 2005). According to JITCO Report 2008, the number of Indonesian trainees supported by JITCO in 2007 compare to previous year was shown trend of decreasing – 6,6 percent at level 3.397, comprising 4.7 percent of nationally. This was only one-fifty of the Chinese figure, but higher than Vietnamese (2.795), The Philippines (3.083) and Thailand (1.658).

KEYWORDS ON JAPAN’S INDUSTRIAL TRANING AND TECHNICAL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

According to JITCO (2007), “Industrial Training Program” is designed to secure the transfer of technology, skills, and knowledge of Japan’s Industry as a mean of contributing to the development of the human and industrial resources of others countries, particularly developing countries. In order to ensure these objectives are fulfilled, corporate plans for the accepting trainees must meet the following conditions:

1. The technology, skills, and/or knowledge that the trainee is to obtain in Japan must not be of the type that could be obtained mostly through the repetition of simple work.
2. The trainee is expected to engage in a job requiring the technology, skills, and/or knowledge obtained in Japan after returning to his or her country of nationality or habitual residence.
3. The trainee must be at least 18 years of age.
4. It must be impossible or difficult for the trainee to obtain the desired technology, skills, and/or knowledge in their home countries.

Meanwhile, “Technical Internship Program” is designed as a training system of broader cooperation with transfer of more practical technology, skills and knowledge to developing countries and with the cultivation of human resource to lead their economic advancement. This program concerns practical of the same category of skills and at the same time as in the regular training.

Through industrial training and technical internship program, Japan has accepted many foreign trainees, particularly from Asian countries and it is widely believed that their presence has been playing important role in Japan’s economic. The trainees, who are highly selected in host country and sent to Japan, are characterized with well-disciplined, enthusiastic and energetic youths. Most of them are in their 20s, and have graduated from high school or equivalent institution. In order to be able to come to Japan, they have to passed some screening tests whit high competition. The tests are including an ability test (a paper exam which is tests candidate’s basic intelligence, independence and attitude for training), physical test (candidates must complete a three-kilometer

run within 15 minutes, do not less than 35 push-ups and 25 sit-ups), interview test, and medical test.

Table 3. General Outline of Industrial Training and Technical Internship Program: The Indonesian Case

Pre-departure Training (4 months)	Entering into Japan Trainees undergo 1 year's training program		Technical Internship 2 years
Learning Japanese language, customs and practices at vocational training centers in Indonesia prior to coming to Japan	Intensive Japanese language Training (4 weeks)	Trainees take mainly part in on-the-job training at small and medium enterprises for 11 months	Trainees take part in technical internships at small and medium enterprises as employees and return to Indonesia after 2 years

Source: Association for International Manpower Development of Medium and Small Enterprises, Japan, 2008

ITS REALITY AND ISSUES

Since it was launched in 1993, Japan's Industrial Training and Technical Internship Program have been shaken by many critics, especially in mass media in Japan. The main critic is concerned about the reality faced by the foreign trainees and technical interns. In general, the bulk of criticisms can be concluded that the training programs are merely to justify small and medium companies in Japan bringing cheap manual labor rather than to give a chance to foreign trainees to learn Japanese technologies and techniques that they can later put to use back in their home country.

There is also a growing concern in recent year, which was initiated by some labor migrant NGOs in Japan focused exclusively on the issue of campaigns for human rights violations, to raise public awareness and to advocate by giving information to foreign trainees related to their rights under Japanese labor law. For example, Network on Foreign Trainees Organization (*Gaikokujin Kenshusei Daintai Network*) and Japan NGO Network on Indonesia (JANNI), are the two notable of NGOs, which have been actively giving advocacy, conducting research and campaign relating to foreign trainees and technical interns in Japan.

According to recent report published by Network on Foreign Trainees Organization (2009), it was stated that although the training program for foreigners has been instituted under the slogan of making international contributions and helping developing nations develop human resources, however, in reality the so-called trainees and technical interns are being exploited to make up for the

labor shortage. In addition they are then paid with low wages and are forced to take unproductive jobs, which are unconnected to their training. In some cases, interns are forced to receive “training” outside work hours and over the holidays. As a result, a considerable number of interns refuse to tolerate such conditions and have disappeared from their workplaces (Komai, 1998:56).

Working Place Condition

As mentioned before, since it has been introduced 16 years ago, many criticisms related to the implementation of foreign trainees in Japan have been spread out, not only inside Japan, but also in abroad. In general, those criticism are mostly related to the miserable working conditions of the foreign trainees as most of them are forced to work at dangerous, dirty, and difficult (3D) type of jobs. Others are also concerned about the inability to practice their own religion activities, the low wages for overtime works and the lack of living facilities (Gaijin Network, 2000:14).

This study has interviewed some Indonesian trainees and technical interns who are working at four different factories. These factories are a metal factory (iron working and metal pressing), a manufacture of plastic products factory (floor plastic pressing), a marine food processing products factory (packaging and can sealing for canned food), and a machinery factory (electronic apparatus assembling). The following part describes major situations of the working place conditions based on selected factories in the Mie prefecture, where many Indonesian trainees and technical interns used to work in under the training program in Japan.

Case I: Metal Factory in Iga and Kawage City

Respondents interviewed at the metal factory stated that their working places have the most miserable conditions compared to others. They have to spend their time every day inside the factory as most of metal factories provided accommodations for foreign trainees inside the factories. It means that all of their activities are only possible to be practiced together inside the factory. This is one of the the reason why they like to spend their activities outside the factories every weekend. In addition, the same condition is also found in Osaka, where some of the Indonesian trainees and technical interns who are working at the metal factories are forced to stay in the warehouse or garret inside the factories with a lack of appropriate accommodation facilities.

The main duty of trainees working at a metal factory is usually related to jobs such as cutting, splitting, shafting and lifting the steels. Therefore, handling very heavy steels and a noisy environment are become the common conditions for most of them. Further, in order not get burnt, they also have to get used to

and pay extra attention to flying steel splinters. During working time, they have to wear ears, eyes, and head protectors. Also, a special uniform and shoes, which are usually only appropriate for fieldwork use.

As the factories are not all sealed buildings, they have to get used to working in hot temperature during the summer season. On the contrary, in the winter they have to get used to working in windy and cold weather conditions during the winter season. Therefore, the trainees stated that to be able to work and survive working in a metal factory, trainees must be strong and capable to work in such hard conditions. In the interviews, they stated that nowadays only few young Japanese are willing to work in a metal factory, for the working places are too harsh enough for many of them. Therefore, small and medium metal factories in Japan are really depend on the existence of foreign trainees to maintain their production process and labor source supply.

Case II: Plastic Products Factory in Iga City

Those who are working in a plastic factory stated that their working place is not too different compared to those who are working in the metal industry. Hot temperature is a common condition and they must also be conscious of the danger of splinters. In order to avoid accidents at work, they also have to wear a safety uniform, which makes the hot temperature even more unbearable. They have to get used to working in hot temperature both from outside (factory) and inside (uniform).

According to trainees interviewed in this study, there are some production divisions in the factory. However, all trainees and technical interns, as well as most of *nikkeijin* workers (from Brazil and Peru), are engaged in raw material manufacturing and the production division. They stated that this division is the hardest among other divisions. In addition, they also have to adapt to work night shift, usually one week a month. Staying awake is the hardest challenge for them when working night shifts, which causes many accidents to occur during this shift. Further, they stated that the company really depends on foreign trainees and technical interns, as well as foreign workers, due to the fact that only few young Japanese are willing to work in this kind of hard-working condition.

Case III: Marine Food Products Factory in Takachaya City

Respondent who are working at a marine food factory stated that working in this type of industry means that they have to get used to working in cold, smelly, and water-logged working place conditions. The duty task is not too difficult, but the hard part is that they have to get familiar with many kind of sea products, such as fish, shrimp, octopus, jelly fish, algae, and so on, which is often too smelly. There are no fatal work accidents that can occur, but most

of them stated that they often get skin irritation; especially for those who are working in the cold storage division. An informant interviewed in this study stated that he often felt paint at around his fingers since he has been transferred to the cold storage division.

Another informant stated that when he was doing this job for the first time, he lost his appetite for about two weeks. He had never imagined before that he had been sent to Japan to do work collecting jelly fish and cutting octopus every day, which is very smelly and quite unpleasant for him. A trainee who had just started the training program for four months stated that his job is dealing with lifting and carrying material boxes from warehouse to a temporary place inside the factory. There are no Japanese workers in his division and most of them are trainees or *nikkeijin* workers. He felt that his two arms were becoming quite bigger than before as his daily duty is only lifting many heavy boxes every day.

Case IV: Machinery and Electronics Factory in Taki and Kushida City

Among many Indonesian trainees and technical interns interviewed on this study, only those who are engaged in machinery factory (electronic and electric apparatus assembling) stated that they felt satisfied with their working place condition. This is because the company is a bigger company, which is produced IT products such as mobile phone, wireless phone, and monitor screens.

The company is really concerned with work safety and its working condition as it already holds international standard. Moreover, they also stated that they were happy with their acceptances. In the factory they work with many trainees from Thailand and workers not only Japanese, but also *nikkeijin* from the Philippines and Brazilians. In some occasions, the leader of the training program of the factory also offers social activities such as sport and food festival. Further, trainees stated that the owner of the company ever has had lunch on the same table with them. These good working atmospheres then make them feel lucky if they compare to other friends who are working at the other industries.

A respondent working in an LCD factory in Taki, Matsusaka City, stated that he had learnt new technical skills and quite sure that it will be useful when he returns to Indonesia. His job deals with product control for screen products. His is positioned in a special room inside the factory and is facilitated with air conditioning. The room is really dark and the light only comes out from the products. As a result, he got minus 0,3 on his eyes.

Transfer of Technology, Skill and Technique

As already explained previously, the main objective of the training program in Japan is to give a chance to young people from mainly Asian developing countries to learn Japan's technology and technique that are useful and can be used when they return to their home country. However, looking at the reality it can be said that the objectives are far from the facts. This study found that Indonesian trainees and technical interns had obtained useful techniques or skills; however, most of them complained that they were not gaining any new technical skills. This fact was collected especially from those who are currently engaged in metal, plastic, and food industries, which are mainly menial labor types of work, such as digging, filling, cutting, carrying, lifting, packaging and sorting raw material products. Only few of who are engaged in electrical machinery stated that their jobs were challenging and offers new skill and technique.

When respondents were asked questions related to the goals of the training program, only 18 percent of the respondent felt that they have learned useful new techniques, knowledge and skills. While, the remaining 79 percent felt quite the opposite. Most of the former stated that their jobs were new for them and challenging, while most of this later respondents stated that it was either because their work duties were too simple or doesn't require having to learn any new skills. This study also asked respondents questions related to their working condition after becoming technical interns (2nd and 3rd year). The results shows that majority of the technical interns stated that they were still assigned with the same work duties as when they first started, usually in marginal works or assigned to a small part of the operation. While, others stated that they have been transferred to other divisions with different type of job but mostly still related to menial work. Only 16 percent of the respondents stated that their work duties were better than in the 1st year of their training program.

In terms of preference of the training area, about 76 percent of those questioned stated that the training area they were assigned in were not similiar to their preferences. Only 15 percent answered that they had acquired an assigned area that agreed to give them a broad category to work in rather than a specific area. The former respondents stated that although they had been asked about their working preferences before coming to Japan, however they stated that it seemed to be only for formality not something taken seriously. The majority of respondents prefer receiving training in the field of automotive engineering, electronics and electricity. Therefore, many of the trainees and technical interns interviewed who are working in food manufacturing factories felt no interest in finding such work when they return to Indonesia. Moreover, most of them who had studied engineering in vocational school in Indonesia felt disappointed. To some extent, the trainees and technical interns' preferences were in most

cases ignored and their assignment area were determined without taking into consideration their background and were solely based on Japan's industrial demands, which are mostly for manual labor resources. Furthermore, many Indonesian trainees stated that those who were assigned to areas similar to their working preferences are considered as lucky trainees and probably would be easily be working in Japanese company in Indonesia after completing the training program.

From the interviews it was also discovered that the evaluation exam for the training achievements was also just for formality sake. It is organized by JITCO and the trainee must pass in order to continue the program (technical intern). Some of the technical interns stated that the contents were different from what they did at work and the questions were too easy to answer. Another opinion stated that the exam was actually to facilitate company for selecting trainees based on the company's needs, and those who have problems with the company usually will be denied extension for the training program and they will be sent back to Indonesia without completing the training program for 3 years.

Looking at the reality, it is unfortunate that many respondents felt disappointed regarding to the fact that there were no new skills or techniques acquired during the training program. However, most of them stated that working in Japan is a better alternative than the condition in their home countries because of the limited access in labor market. This means, apart from the apparent problems, the training program in Japan still gives promising hope and benefit to most participants. Since most of the trainees are young talented people, all of the experiences gained are believed will influence to broaden trainee's knowledge, self confidence and way of thinking.

Most of the trainees interviewed stated that they had learned and practiced many good values related to Japanese attitudes, work ethics, and way of life, as well as the Japanese culture and customs during their stay in Japan. According to the interviews, there has been many changes that influenced many Indonesian trainees since they arrived in Japan. For example, they must be punctual of the internship time. They also got used to separating the garbage, keep every place clean, queue when buying ticket as well as entering the train, obey the traffic signal when crossing the road, help and respect each other without looking at social status, be able to live independently and so on. Indeed, these kinds of good values are still difficult to be practiced in the current Indonesian society.

Furthermore, many Indonesian trainees also stated that they became familiar with operating a computer. Some of the respondents in this study even expressed that they will never have the chance how to operate a computer and access the internet if they did not come to Japan. In addition, some trainees stated that they have just learned how to operate computer for the first time only in

Japan. Furthermore, majority of the trainees stated that they have never been to abroad before as well as living in an international communities. These kinds of experiences gradually have influenced their way of thinking about how big the world is. Here, it can be said as another difference is apparent compare to other Indonesian migrant workers in other country destinations.

Another fact is that Indonesian trainees in Japan have more opportunity to improve their abilities of the Japanese language. They have great opportunity to practice it directly while working and living in the Japanese society. They felt fortunate as Japanese societies are very friendly and welcome. Especially to foreigners who want to study Japanese language. In addition, according to IMM Japan staff, understanding the Japanese language is an important aspect for Indonesian trainees, not only for communication but also from the perspective of avoiding accidents or injuries at work, also directly connected to advancement in their career, as well as in order to be able to pass the test that the trainees have to take to become technical interns as the test is given only in Japanese language.

Every year there would be Indonesian technical interns which is their Japanese proficiency have been rated high. Although it seems quite difficult to manage the time, particularly between working and studying Japanese, in fact many of them could pass *sankyu* (level 3) and *nikyu* (level 2) of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). According to IMM Japan staff, a trainee who is able to hold a certificate of *sankyu* or *nikyu* has more opportunities to work with a Japanese company. This condition is often considered as one of the important requirements if they intended to work for a Japanese enterprises in Indonesia after completing the training program.

Monthly Wage

Wage received by Indonesian workers in abroad are different depending and mostly in which countries and the kind of job. Research conducted by Firdausy (2005) explained that the wage rate received by Indonesian workers in Malaysia working as a domestic worker is four times higher than the wage rate received by domestic helpers in Jakarta. Manning (1998) in his study reported that for the same of job, the wage rate in Singapore, for instance, is 20 times higher than in Indonesia, while in Malaysia and Korea, the wage rate is 10 times higher than in Indonesia.

Furthermore, study conducted by Meguro (2005) reported that Indonesian workers who are working at fish processing factory in Oarai Ibaraki Prefecture received an average monthly wage of about Rp19 million (192,000 Yen) for male and Rp15 million (156,000 Yen) for female workers. While a study conducted by JANNI (2001) noted that Indonesian trainees in some cities

in Japan received a monthly from Rp8 million (80,000 yen) to Rp20 million (200,000 Yen). These amounts are roughly about 15 to 19 times higher than the same jobs in Indonesia.

Under Japan's industrial training and technical internship program, trainees are allowed to stay in Japan under a "training" visa for one year and when they entered the 2nd and 3rd year program as technical interns, the visa status changes to be "designated activities". Furthermore, when the trainees hold "designated activities visa" their wage and allowances are handled by the company in which they work for, and therefore become subjected to the relevance of Japanese labor law standard. It means the trainees are no longer a "trainee" and have the same rights as common workers regulated by the Japan's Labor law standard. In addition, according to JITCO (2008), foreign trainees receive training stipend in Japan is for their living expenses, such as food, daily commodities, and cloths during their stay in Japan. Also, accepting organizations are normally pay the cost of the round-trip transit to and from Japan, the housing expenses, utilities expenses, health and accident insurance.

Based on survey of this study, found that most Indonesians who come to Japan as trainees in their first year received a monthly wage about Rp8 million (80.000 Yen). This amount of wage is based on a fixed standard regulated by IMM Japan for the accepting organization of the Indonesian trainees. In addition, this amount of wage received by Indonesian trainees was actually higher than the amount received by trainees from China normally receive a monthly wage of 60,000 Yen to 70,000 Yen (Gaijin Network, 2008:4). In addition, according to interviews on how much monthly wage they will receive during the first year program was informed to all Indonesian trainees during their preliminary training session in Indonesia.

After becoming technical interns, the amount of monthly wages received varies and mostly higher than wages received in the first year. Those who work overtime receive wages and allowance higher than those who are working in company that doesn't offer overtime works. The survey shows that 50 percent of Indonesian technical interns (2nd and 3rd year program) questioned in this study received monthly wages ranging between Rp11 million (110,000 Yen) to Rp12 million (120,000 Yen) and 6 percent answered that they received ranging between Rp13 million (130,000 Yen) to Rp14 million (140,000 Yen). Based on this fact, it can be said that the more they work overtime, the higher wage they would receive.

Furthermore, the fact that the income gap between Japan and Indonesia is still remains wide and it is expected that the number of Indonesian working in Japan will increase in the future. The magnitude is so great that even Indonesians with university degrees are willing to come to Japan and work for menial jobs

that enable them to send remittances at level not achievable working in their home country. In this context, it can be predicted that the improvement of Japan's economy, after the global financial crisis, would accelerate the migration of many Indonesians to come work in Japan.

However, if we looked at the reality in Japan's wage standard, the monthly wages received by foreign trainees are actually very low - even lower than wages received by those who are working part time jobs. The amount of salary received by foreign trainees actually barely reaches the Japan's legal minimum wages and can be said that this amount is not equivalent to an average Japanese workers. According to Japan Statistical Yearbook (2002), Japanese workers, age 20-29, in the manufacturing sector, approximately received a salary of 240,000-280,000 Yen for male and 190,000-210,000 Yen for female. It means, foreign trainee receives less than half of Japanese workers. In relation with unfair condition, up until now, Japan's government as well as IMM Japan and JITCO distort the fact that the training is not a means of obtaining overseas migrant workers, meaning that the trainees are not accepted as workers. On the contrary, most of companies in reality use foreign trainee as a (cheap) worker.

Monthly Saving and Remittance

It is also widely well known that many Indonesian workers working in abroad had given many positive contributions to the nation's economy. Apart from reducing the unemployment problem, it also contributes to the foreign exchange earnings (remittances). In the local economic context, remittances from Indonesian migrant workers have a very important role in local economic development. A major part is usually remitted to the origin-based family for its basic support and to invest in productive activities to improve the well being of their family member (Hugo, 2002). In practiced, money from remittance is used to build or renovates houses, to buy land or rice fields as capital to run family businesses, to pay for the children's education, and to fulfill the family's basic daily needs (Aswatini, 2002).

Although most of the Indonesian trainees in Japan received very low monthly wages compare to Japanese wages standard, surprisingly most of them were be able to save some amount of money every month. How they cover their living expenses is another interesting question as it is impossible for most of Japanese to live with such low amount of monthly wage. Results from this survey shows that 66 percent of respondents stated that they could save their monthly wage ranging from 50,000 Yen to 80,000 yen a month. Only a few respondents stated that they could save their income less than 20,000 per month.

It was found from the interviews that those who were in their 3rd year training program seemed to be able to save their salary more than those who were in

their 1st and 2nd year program. Those who were in their 3rd year training program work more overtime work (*zangjyo*) so that they could save more salary. They also stated that they didn't need to buy clothes, shoes, and electronic products (such as computer, phone, camera, game, etc). Most of them stated that they have already bought it and visited many places when they were in their 1st and 2nd year program. They also stated that after their second year, they were more able to manage their money; where to find cheap food store and how to live with a low cost of living. Further, since their 3rd year is the last period of their training programs, they stated that the only thing on their mind is to save money as much as possible so that they could bring enough money when they return to Indonesia.

In terms of capability to remit their income, this study found that most Indonesian trainees and technical interns in Japan were able to remit money to their family at home. The amount of money remitted varies depending on their ability to save their monthly wages. However, based on interviews to some respondents, on average they remit between three to five times during first year. The survey shows that 66 percent of the respondents stated that they were able to remit to their families at home ranging from Rp 8 million (80,000 Yen) to Rp 12 million (120,000 Yen) per one period of sending remittance. This remittance, mostly used for the purpose of working capital of establishing small businesses, paying educational fees for their family members, and paying daily family needs. This fact indicates that Indonesian workers in Japan were able to save some of their salary even though they received a monthly wage much lower than an average Japanese worker as instructed in the Ministry of Justice guidelines.

Planning after Completing the Training Program

According to JITCO, the trainees shall return home after the training program completed. By attending the three-year training program, they are supposed to be able to complete their mission of acquiring advanced Japanese skills, techniques and knowledge in specific field of industry, which will enable them to be of use back in their home countries by contributing to the development of their society, economy, and the advancement of industry when they return home. However, when we looked at the reality, it is therefore very unfortunate that no new skills or techniques were acquired by most Indonesian trainees during their training programs (as previously discussed). As a result, it was found that many Indonesian trainees appeared to not have a clear direction of what they should do after completing the programs.

The survey shows that majority of Indonesian trainees are planned to develop their own businesses after completing the training program in Japan. Those who planning to develop their own businesses constituted about 43 percent

from the total respondents. Although it is still not clear what kind of businesses that they will develop. This survey has shown that the type of businesses would mostly not be related to what they have learnt in Japan. Only 3.4 percent of respondents answered that they would continue to develop their own business related to what they have learnt in Japan.

Moreover, almost 29.2 percent of respondents planned to try to take the interview test at the end of the program even though most respondents were still unsure whether they would get the chance to work in a Japanese company or not. This fact is especially apparent for those who were doing manual jobs, especially in the food industries. Moreover, the remaining respondents planned to find new job in Indonesian (6.7 percent), new job in other countries (2.5 percent) and in small percentage wish to return again to Japan through different channel.

According to the interviews, in terms of business, many trainees are interested in developing businesses related to service industries that nowadays are quite promising in Indonesia, such as motorbike service (*bengkel*), internet cafe, mobile phone shop, restaurant, and rental business. Some of them also stated that they intend to try to open Japanese language courses and Japanese restaurants. Furthermore, to start the businesses, many trainees rely on their saving and bonus at the end of the program. According to IMM Japan staff, at the end of the training program, the trainee will receive “bonus” money around Rp50 – Rp60 million (600,000 Yen) when they arrive in Jakarta after departing from Japan. Although it was actually taken from the trainees’ salary every month, but to some extent, this kind of bonus system give a lot of benefit as many trainees depend on this money to start their own businesses after completing the program.

PROSPECT OF SENDING INDONESIAN WORKERS TO JAPAN

Despite the bursting of the “bubble economy” in 1991, the rapid economic development from the 1970’s to the 1980’s then lead to Japan become an economic superpower in the world. Japan has become one of industrialized nations with a high level of national income and play important role in word economic development. However, out being success of industrialized country, Japan is gradually facing serious problem on its labor market that will influence the future of this nation to a greater extent than people generally realize.

Since the end of 1990s, Japan is facing an aging population, long term decline in fertility and in its workforces. Although there are plenty of efforts of adapting to that changes in the structure of the workforces by developing labor-saving technology and moving toward a more efficient employment structure, it is still inevitable that the influx of foreign workers will continue over the long term, owing to the strong demand arising from labor shortage in some sectors,

and also to the continuing desire of foreign workers to come to Japan in search of job opportunities and higher earnings (Shimada, 1994:19).

In spite of problems in the implementation of current training program in Japan, it is considered that the effort of dispatching more Indonesians to Japan is still an important policy for both countries. Especially to due the significant difference in demographic condition, such as the number and growth of population, workforce and employment opportunity and earning between Japan and Indonesia. It is also considered that international migration is a way of problem solving on high unemployment, underemployment and poverty that are still become a big problem in Indonesia's economic development. In addition, the fact of the growing number of Indonesian entered Japan year by year, as well as increasing number of Japanese companies operated in Indonesia are become a promising sign that in the future the prospect of sending more Indonesian to Japan will be important policy for Indonesia and Japan.

Furthermore, the Japan and Indonesia, both countries have also established a close economic relationship in wide range of area. Japan is one of important trade partners in both export and import for Indonesia. Japan has always been one of the top investors for Indonesia. Nowadays, approximately 1,000 Japanese enterprises are operating in Indonesia and employed about 200,000 Indonesians (Japan Embassy Jakarta: 2009). Japan is also the largest provider of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Indonesia. In 2007, both countries were also signed Japan Indonesia Economic Partnership Agreement (JIEPA), which is one of the agreements is Japan expected to accept up to 400 nurses and up to 600 caregivers from Indonesia over two years starting from fiscal 2008. In addition, Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry of Japan has calculated that Japan will need an additional 400,000 to 600,000 caregivers and nurses in 2014, as this country had started experience on aging population. Therefore, taking this circumstances into consideration, it can be understood that bilateral relationship between Japan and Indonesia will be increased in the future, including movement of people (workers) between these two countries.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that sending Indonesian migrant workers to Japan is an important policy as Indonesian still faces a high unemployment rate, poverty, underemployment and low wages. Further, it is important for the Indonesian government to promote and support sending semi-skilled workers instead of unskilled workers for working in abroad and Japan is one of the destination countries that should be counted in. For many Indonesian workers in Japan (trainees and technical interns) it is very clear that working in Japan is a choice for better alternative to unemployment and better income in home country. At

an individual level, working in Japan is a strategic to improve the quality of life and broader knowledge and experiences, especially as most of the Indonesian workers in Japan are young talented person age around 25s.

Although working in Japan is also a great chance to obtain a higher income compared with other destination countries, unfortunately several problems are still apparent especially for Indonesian trainees and technical interns. Many of the young Indonesian questioned in this study found that in the reality, the program is just a way to fulfill Japan's labor shortage and hired as a cheap labor source for small and medium companies. Further, many of them had discovered that they have to take unproductive jobs under condition where no new skills or technology techniques transfer really takes place. Most of them were involved in marginal jobs or assigned to a small part of the operation, such as cutting, packaging, lifting, sorting, and painting. The same condition continues even after they become technical interns in their second to third year.

The reality mentioned above then caused an unpleasant condition to many Indonesian trainees and technical interns, where in many cases found that there were no transfer of useful skills and techniques that they can bring back to their home country. Further, some of them felt there will be no future for them if they returned to their home town. As a result, every year many Indonesian trainees have reportedly disappeared from their workplaces. The majority of them are believed to have stayed and worked in Japan without proper visa (illegally) for better pay, working and living condition.

Apart from the problems mentioned above, discoveries from this study and small survey findings, therefore, there is an urgent need for both governments to review and put serious attention to this program, to make a further concrete supervision for proper program implementation. On the Japanese side, there should be a comprehensive monitoring mechanism, particularly for monitoring the level of improvement of the accepting companies in areas such as the working treatment of the trainees, payment of allowances, wages and overtime job, and accommodation. The program should be clearly designed to ensure that the trainees and technical interns acquire appropriate technical skills effectively that will be used for both themselves and their countries. Further, the transfer of needed skills and techniques should be able to be applied in their home countries, where most of the trainees will be living and working throughout the rest of their lives after completing the program.

Furthermore, the Japanese government has to start re-evaluating its immigration policy to allow the entrance of unskilled foreign workers. The reality is that the industry needs it as well and all critics on current training program are also growing significantly. The acceptance of foreign workers in Japan should not be limited to people with special skills or knowledge, but

should also be available for middle-skilled foreign workers in a positive way, with certain conditions, limited occupations, localities and period of stay. The major reason given for this proposal is that Japan's current situation is facing some labor problems such as labor shortage, aging population, and a growing number of illegal foreign workers.

On the other hand, on Indonesia side, there is a need for the government to facilitate young Indonesian that are going to be sent to Japan with appropriate information, not only information related to the dynamics of Japanese society, culture, and custom but also their rights and duties regarding the training program. This includes the Japanese Ministry of Justice guidelines as well as labor laws dealing with wages, overtime job, working hours, holiday, and workers' compensation. In addition, the 4 months preliminary education in Indonesia should be practiced as a basic education by giving constructive instruction covering the fields of Japan's technology, instead of physical training. In particular, as a countermeasure against abscondence cases, a stricter on selection procedure before coming to Japan is also necessary, especially to the applicants who come from regions that have a large number of absconding trainees cases reportedly increased.

Furthermore, the Indonesian government has also to provide a follow-up program after the trainees completed the training program in Japan. Not only by providing them chances of working for Japanese enterprises in Indonesia but also to supports their ideas of becoming an entrepreneur. This study has discovered that many Indonesian trainees intend to start their own business when they return home country, but most of them felt that there is no clear guidance on it. If this opportunity can be followed-up by policy makers, it will create an opportunity by creating new young entrepreneurs as part of a contribution to solving the unemployment problem in Indonesia. Benefits can be optimized and finally only can be realized when there is serious concern and mutual understanding between both governments, Japan and Indonesia.

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