

RESEARCH SUMMARY

*THE APPLICATION OF TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE OF EX-  
JAPAN TRAINEES FROM INDONESIA:*

*Alternative Solution for Rural Development in South Sulawesi and East  
Java*

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**Abstract**

International migration has changed the lives of many people and households in the villages by the value of remittance sent home by migrant workers. Japan is one of many destination countries for Indonesian migrant workers. Since 1993, Indonesian migrant workers have come to Japan on two available schemes, namely the Technical Internship Program (TIP) and the Industrial Training Program (ITP). The remittance in this study does not refer to money but more to knowledge, either in the form of ideas of social cultural values, work ethics, or business ideas obtained by *trainees* while working in Japan. Trainees not only receive economic but also social remittance whilst working in Japan. These trainees are expected to return with benefits to their social neighborhoods. Hence several subjects are posed in this study which identify the forms and structures of knowledge transferred from Japan to the trainees, the applicability of the knowledge received from the host country to their home country and the challenges and obstacles in managing their economic remittances.

**Keyword:** Social Remittance, Trainee, Transfer Knowledge, Japan

**Abstrak**

*Migrasi internasional telah mengubah kehidupan banyak orang dan rumah tangga di desa melalui nilai pengiriman uang yang dikirim oleh para pekerja migran. Jepang adalah salah satu negara tujuan bagi para pekerja migran Indonesia. Sejak tahun 1993, para pekerja migran Indonesia datang ke Jepang dengan dua skema yang tersedia, yaitu Technical Internship Program atau Program Magang Teknis (TIP) dan Industrial Training Program atau Program Pelatihan Industri (ITP). Remitansi dalam penelitian ini tidak mengacu pada finansial semata tapi lebih kepada pengetahuan, baik dalam bentuk gagasan, nilai budaya sosial, etika kerja, atau ide bisnis yang diperoleh peserta pelatihan saat bekerja di Jepang. Datang tidak hanya dengan ekonomi tapi juga pengiriman uang dari Jepang, para alumni pemagangan ini diharapkan dapat memberi manfaat bagi lingkungan sosial mereka. Oleh karena itu, beberapa subjek yang diajukan dalam penelitian ini adalah mengidentifikasi bentuk dan struktur pengetahuan yang dialihkan dari Jepang ke alumni peserta pelatihan, penerapan pengetahuan yang diterima dari negara Jepang ke negara asal mereka, dan tantangan serta hambatan dalam mengelola remitansi ekonomi mereka, dalam hal ini pada aspek finansial.*

**Kata Kunci:** Remitansi Sosial, Pemagangan, Transformasi Pengetahuan, Jepang.

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International migration has changed the lives of many people and households in the villages through the value of remittance sent home by migrant workers. Japan is one of many destination countries for Indonesian migrant workers. In 2013, 512,168 Indonesian worked in Japan, 285,297 were employed in the formal sector, and 226,817 of them worked in informal sector (ITPC Osaka, October 2013). Indonesian workers in Japan are not called workers, but are known as *kensushei*, which means *time to practice while working* or trainee. From 2007 to 2010 the *kensushei* in Japan generally worked in sectors such as agriculture; fisheries; construction; food processing industry; textiles industry; metal and machinery industry; and others such as furniture, printing, packaging, and painting (interview with Nita Dwiapriliani, October 2013).

Remittance in this study is not referring to money but more to the knowledge, either in the form of the idea of social and cultural values, work ethics, or business ideas obtained by the *trainee*. The number of Indonesian trainee workers in Japan is increasing from year to year. They come to Japan on two available schemes, namely the Technical Internship Program (TIP) and the Industrial Training Program (ITP). The TIP allows interns to work in Japan for three years, while the ITP limits its interns to one year (ITPC, 2014). From 1993 to 2010, Indonesia sent in total 30,652 trainees, with 25,432 finishing the program and 5,220 still in their program. Data from the Ministry of Manpower states that between 2009 to 2011, the number of trainees sent to Japan was a total 4927 people, with the annual details as follows: 2009 up to 1748 people, 2010 reach to 1748 people, and by the end of 2011 in total 1431 people ([www.bnp2tki.go.id](http://www.bnp2tki.go.id); [http://www.jurnas.com/news/17266/Jepang\\_Minati\\_Peserta\\_Magang\\_Kerja\\_16/Sosial\\_Budaya](http://www.jurnas.com/news/17266/Jepang_Minati_Peserta_Magang_Kerja_16/Sosial_Budaya)).

In 2011, South Sulawesi was one of the Provinces which provided manpower for international migrant worker programs. The favorite destination of workers from South Sulawesi was East Asia, including Japan. The records show that almost one quarter of the workers

headed to Japan where 10 of them have sent remittance with a total of Rp. 2,016,000,000 in July 2012. Additionally, East Java is also a source of manpower that is destined for Japan. In 2012, there were 67 ex-trainees from East Java who already had success with their businesses and attended a meeting with the government in Surabaya. The existence of these businessmen in the meeting became a source of energy for other participants that ex-migrants can achieve success after migration work (Disnakertrans, 2012). Although there is no clear data showing the exact number of trainee workers sent to Japan or the number of ex-Japan trainees from these two regions, the information reveals that many of them are becoming a successful in their home regions. Since the data shows the success stories of ex-Japan Trainee in these two regions, this study focus on ex-trainees from East Java and South Sulawesi.

Trainees receive not only economic remittance but also social remittance in the form of skills and knowledge. These trainees then return with this knowledge to their social neighborhood. Several subjects are posed in this study including identifying the forms and structures of knowledge transferred from Japan to their ex-trainees, the applicability of this knowledge from the host country to their home country and the challenges and obstacles in managing economic remittances. Furthermore, the local government's responses to accommodate the implementation of the knowledge gained in Japan by ex-trainees in their local community is also examined.

The difference of this study to other studies that have been done by many migration experts is its focus on social remittance in the form of values, knowledge or ideas. Osaki (2003) in his study stressed that the impact of international migration in the form of remittances, one of which is often calculated in money. The study of Osaki (2003: 1-2) "*Migrant Remittances in Thailand: Economic Necessity or Social Norm?*" gives an idea that migrant remittances to their families are a routine activity, mainly family oriented. Family remittances can be used to help the family's economy and other ceremonial events. Additionally, studies

conducted by Carling (2004: 10) “*Policy Options for Increasing the Benefits of Remittances analyze policy foundations associated with remittances to form a simple model of the relationship remittances and economic development*” shows an association between remittances and development. Former migrant workers, at least have the knowledge and experience of work in Japan. For example, if he works in the fisheries sector, there may be a knowledge that is useful and applicable in their village. Through the transmission of knowledge he obtained, it is possible to create interest in a small-scale fishing industry in his hometown. If the knowledge is applicable then this will drive economic growth at the local level.

Departing from the simple argument above, this in-depth research is focused on remittances in the form of transmission of knowledge for social and economic implications. It is important to look at the changes and the development of the households of ex-trainees. Not only to break down the function and socio-economic impacts of remittances themselves, but also to provide evidence of the practical benefits of remittances to the institutions in charge of issues relating to migrant workers in Indonesia and the study of Indonesian migrant workers on a wider scale.

## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

International migrants account for only two per cent of the world’s population, however, a fundamental shift in careers and working lives, have enhanced their flexibility in knowledge creation and transfer. However, the significance of international migration in knowledge transfer and learning extends beyond mobile individuals, but also to non-migrants in areas of origin and destination. Whether through migration and return, or transnational migrant practices, the impact of knowledge creation and transfers– can be both positive and negative. For example, the knowledge creation and transfers effected by migrants can impact on the productivity of particular firms and on the competitiveness of their respective labor forces (Williams, 2005).

Knowledge is transmittable in formal and systematic ways (such as manuals). This

has been extended by a number of writers, but most notably by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), who identified four types of knowledge transfer, involving different combinations of tacit and explicit knowledge, namely socialization (from tacit to tacit); externalization (tacit to explicit); internalization (explicit to tacit) and combination (explicit to explicit). The key issue for this paper, however, is the transferability of particular types of knowledge via (international) migration. Encoded is, of course, the most transferrable of all these knowledge forms. In contrast, the transfer of tacit knowledge is inherently problematic because it cannot be fully articulated through written forms (i.e. codified) or possibly even through verbal forms but is learned through experience (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Moreover, tacit knowledge both defines and is defined by social context (Gertler, 2003). It can only be shared effectively by two or more people who share a common social context (Williams, 2005).

As Williams (2005: 28) argues, ‘the translation of ideas and practices, as opposed to their transmission, are likely to involve people moving to and through “local” contexts, to which they bring their own blend of tacit and codified knowledge, ways of doing and ways of judging things’. Knowledge can be transferred across space via many different channels, but migration involves a particular combination of embrained, embodied, encultured, and embedded knowledge. This is then translated through social interactions with others in the destination organization and territory. At the same time, translation is also a process of learning for migrants. There are two points to emphasize here. Firstly, knowledge transfer or translation, conceptualized in this way, does not privilege any particular group of migrants, but is a process that all migrants engage in. Secondly, the notion of translation takes us beyond simplistic ideas about transfer, and leads to a consideration of knowledge creation.

The results of this study are interesting because people often forget that knowledge in the form of experience or formal knowledge received during their working period in a host country has an influence on the lives of migrant

workers after returning to their home country, it is often referred to as the transformation of knowledge. Knowledge is literally agreed to be the value that is considered true and useful to solve problems in everyday life. While science is generally assumed as the scientific knowledge that is characterized as something objective, having propositions that are rationally related, the truth that is recognized by the community, obtained by a systematic method, and can be tested theoretically. Therefore, knowledge is regarded as something abstract and may often be difficult in its application, but knowledge leads one to creativity. Something abstract is also difficult to measure, however using descriptive analysis, behavioral observation, participatory methods and in-depth understanding of the subject will help reveal how the knowledge gained can be useful for former workers and their families, and for the development of their hometown.

From a cultural point of view, the issues of migration focus more on the migrant's cultural studies, which includes a study of the interaction between beliefs and behaviors of related groups and social relations. The emphasis of the migration studies lies is on adaptation and social change, both in the form of social organization characterized by the migration process and the immigrant community, as well as on the question of the identity and ethnicity of migrant communities (Brettel 2000: 98). Referring to this concept, when viewed from the migrants' point of view as individuals and groups, there are three important issues for the sustainability of a migration process, *first* is the problem of sustainability in facing various challenges and getting job opportunities at the destination; *second* is the process of adjustment in a new social environment; and the *third* is the possibility of continuation or disconnection of socio-cultural and economic relations with the original region and the possibility of surviving or merging to a new cultural identity into a new bond (Pelly, 1994)

Social remittance comprises of ideas, behaviors, identities and social capital that flow from the host country to the labor-sending community. The important roles of social re-

mittance include in increasing entrepreneurial passions both to the migrant themselves and to the community and surrounding environment. Levitt explains that there are three main forms of social remittance, namely normative structure, systems of practices, and social capital. Examples of the normative structure are mainly ideas, values, and beliefs, which include norms for interpersonal behavior, community participation, and aspirations for social mobility. System of practices are practices which formed through normative structures, such as the decision to take action, religious practice, participation in the neighborhood, involvement in politics and others. This is represented by the interns who built a Japanese style house in their hometown, planted a typical Japanese plants, and became active in politics in their region after their apprenticeship period. Meanwhile, social capital is the capital gained during interaction with locals in Japan, such as the experience the socio-cultural life of Japan. All these social transformation processes generally occurred when they returned to their home country, visited their home territories, or communicated by letters, videos, and telephones. Furthermore, this social remittance transformation will easily follow to those with social closeness, such as family and communities (Levitt, 1998).

Nonaka in *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation* (1995) explains that "... *knowledge is characterized as 'not a self-contained substance waiting to be discovered and collected.'* Knowledge is created by people in their interactions with each other and the environment." (Nonaka, 1995: 7). In his study, Nonaka also introduced the concept of the Socialization, Externalization, Combination, and Internalization Model (SECI model). Nonaka argues that to make knowledge transformable, it must be transformed into information, which is easy to transform. Knowledge itself is divided into *tacit* and *explicit* knowledge. *Tacit* is experience based knowledge that cannot be expressed in words, numbers, and formulas, such as trust, intuition, feeling, art and culture. *Explicit* is objective and rational knowledge that can be expressed through words, numbers, and formulas, such



as including the theoretical approach, problem solving, databases and manuals. The SECI model briefly illustrates the process of continuous change of subjective tacit knowledge and objective explicit knowledge (Nonaka; 18). Thus, Nonaka clearly explains that knowledge is created through the process of interaction between humans. Just as Indonesian interns in Japan, due to their intensive interactions for one to three years with Japanese society, values, and culture, ultimately create a new knowledge that can be internalized.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Indonesian government realizes its incapability to provide sufficient job opportunities for its workforce. Therefore, the government through several ministries has opened up cooperation with Japanese authorities to conduct training programs for Indonesian youth in order to upgrade their skills and to create economic independence. The research shows us that at least three Ministries that have established apprenticeship programs sending Indonesian youth to Japan, namely the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (MoMT), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries. Basically these are work apprenticeship programs that are expected to increase the number of young entrepreneurs and to reduce the unemployment rate in Indonesia. Due to the limitation of data and time, we focus only on the apprenticeship programs conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Man Power.

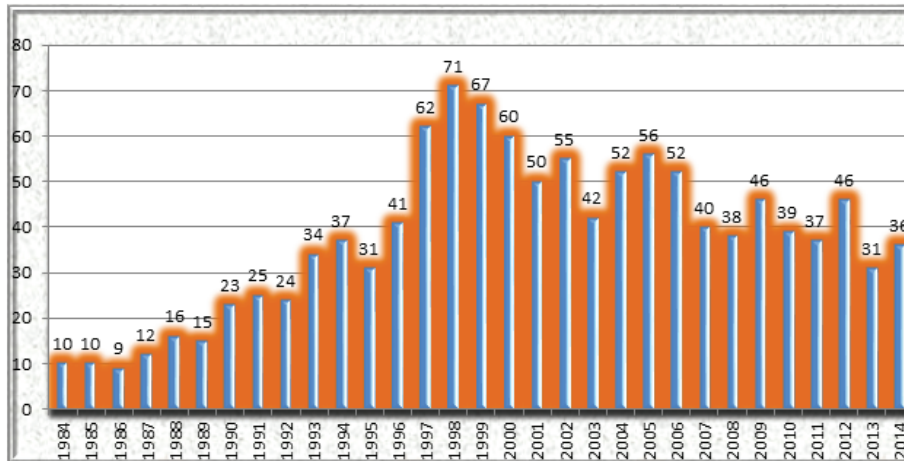
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has conducted the apprenticeship program—called the Indonesian Young Farm Leader Training Program—since 1994 in cooperation with the Japan Agriculture Exchange Council (JAEC). Currently the Ministry has renewed its MoU with Japan in 2013 and cooperated with the municipal council namely the Niigata Agriculture Exchange Council (NAEC), the Kumamoto International Agriculture (KIA), and the International Agriculture Exchange Association Gunma (IAEA). As per April 2013 the Ministry of Agriculture recorded that at least 1167 young

farmers from 34 provinces in Indonesia have joined the program. This program ranges from 8 months to 1 year, but currently can be extended to two years depending on performance during the training. By sending young farmers to live among and to learn from successful Japanese farmers, the program aims to expand the knowledge of young Indonesian farmers on Japanese farming practices ranging from farming technology to product sales management (Interview with Ir. Rosana Suzi, 2013-2014; Interview with Iwan Kurnia, April 2015).<sup>3</sup>

Under the Ministry of Manpower, the interns of the Indonesian Young Farm Leader Training Program stay in the house of foster parents or *oto san*. This method creates a closeness between the interns and the local farmers and their family. Several interviews revealed that the interns were even considered as elder brothers by the children of the Japanese farmers (Interview with Nanang from Depok who returned to Indonesia in 2001, Agus from Malang that returned to Indonesia in 2009, and Idris from Maros in 1998, 2013).<sup>4</sup> Additionally, they received a monthly stipend which was smaller than stipends for other programs. This was due to the fact that all their basic need were provided by the farmers. They only received JPY 40,000 per month, while others interns received up to JPY 80,000 per month.

<sup>3</sup> Ir. Rosana Suzi, MM. is Head of Internship Division (Puslatan BPPSDMP) Ministry of Agriculture and Iwan Kurnia is working at Balai Besar Pelatihan Pertanian (BBPP)-Kementerian Pertanian, Lembang. The authors also interview several alumni in Malang and Makassar during the period of 2013 to 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Nanang (from Depok) returned to Indonesia in 2001, Agus (from Malang) returned to Indonesia in 2009, and Idris (from Maros) returned to Indonesia in 1998.



**Picture 1.** Graphic of young farmers Interns to Japan under Ministry of Agriculture from 1984-2014. Source: Presentation in “*Sosialisasi Magang Jepang*” in BBPP, Lembang, Jawa Barat 16-18 December 2014

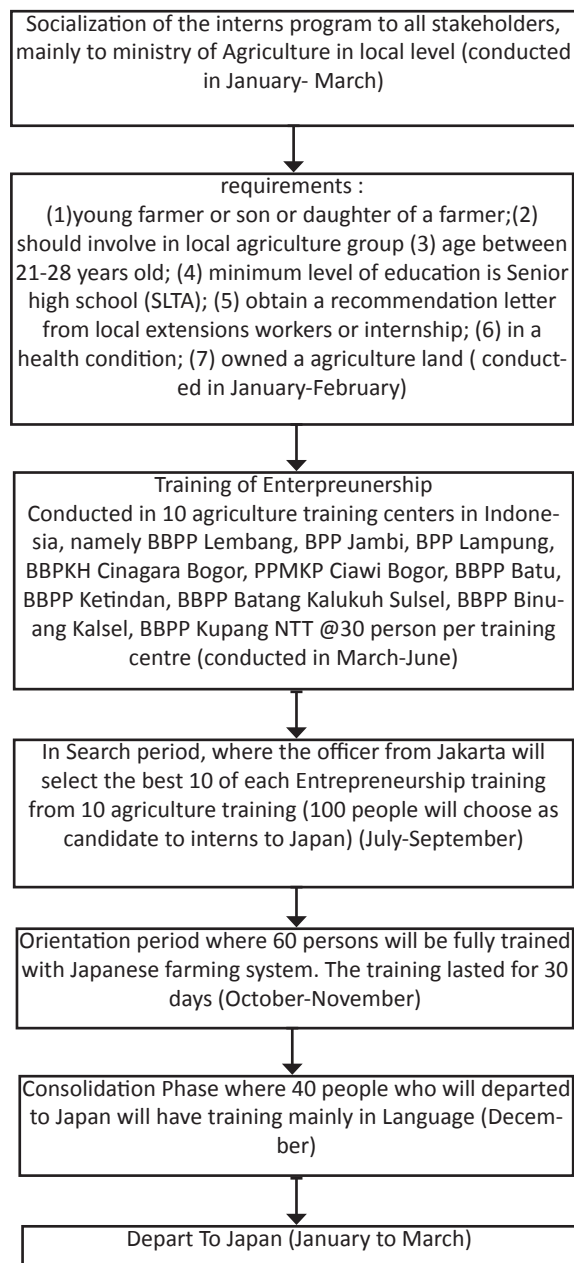
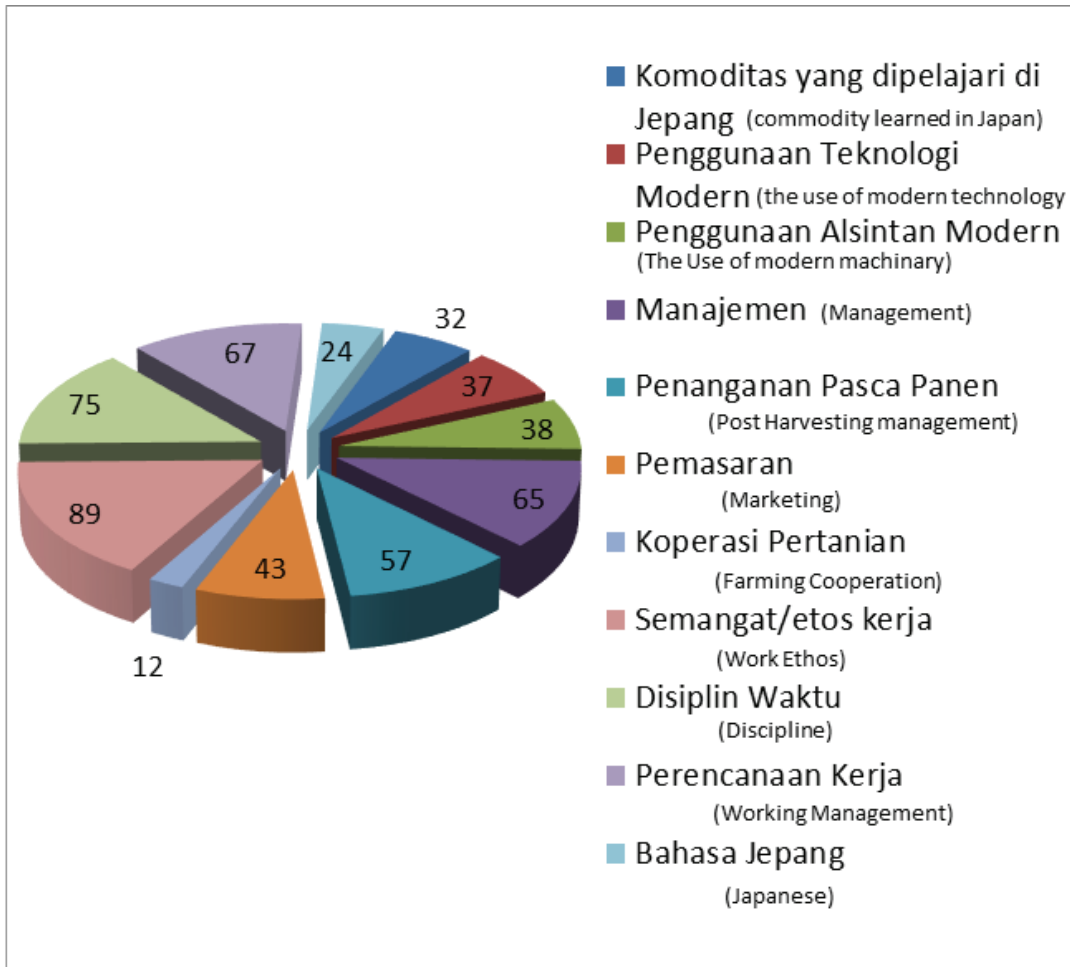


Table 1. The Flowchart of Selection process in Ministry of Agriculture

**Source:** data collection from interview during 2013-2014.

There are many results from the internship period, ranging from the accumulation of financial and material possessions, the accumulation of knowledge, networking, and the upgraded skills of post-apprenticeship in Japan. In addition, these alumni can apply their knowledge to the surrounding community, either through counseling by being an extension agent or as a motivator for young people to conduct farming activities in their village.



**Picture 2.** Several subject mostly learned and applied by the Indonesian farmers during the internship period.

**Source:** BPPSDMP Ministry of Agriculture, 2014

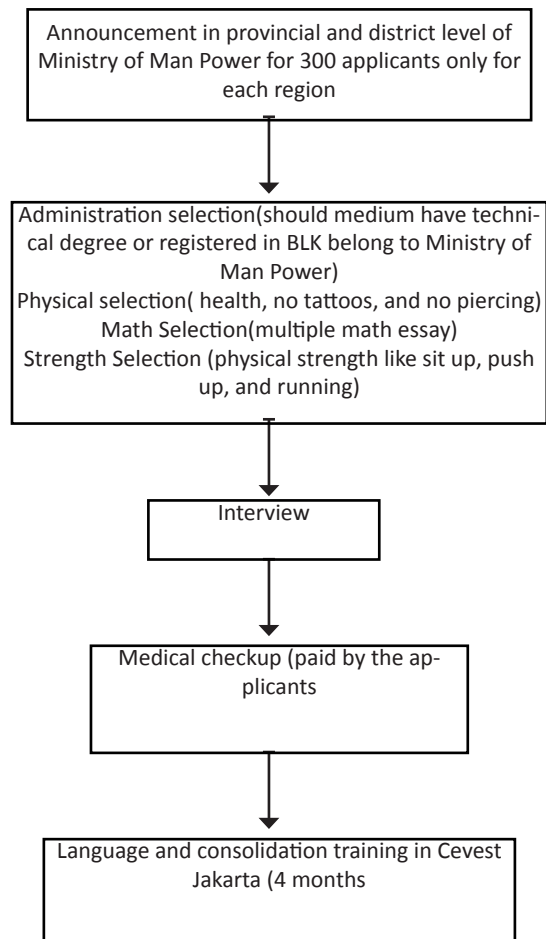
The Ministry of Manpower (MoM) initiated its apprenticeship program in 1993 based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Direktorat Jenderal Binalattas Depnakertrans RI with The Association International Manpower Development of Medium and Small Enterprises Japan (IM) on the 16 of September 1994. The MoU was renewed on 19 Mei 1999 and again on 22 February 2000. This program was conducted by Ministry of Man Power and focused its training on the industrial and manufacturing sectors. Indonesian youths who joined this program were trained in a medium or small scale factory for three years. The government hopes to create a generation who can apply their experience, knowledge, and training for their own economic autonomy and to create working opportunity for others (Nawawi, 2010).

Indonesian youth, through the ITP and the TIP under the ministry of Manpower entered Japan's workforce for a certain period. During the first period, the interns are called *Kenshusei* and received a monthly stipend of up to JPY 80,000 per month. The second and the third years, the interns are called *Jishusei*, where they undertake similar jobs to their fellow Japanese workers, obtain several rights, such as 10 days leave a year, and receive JPY 90,000-100,000 monthly salary (ITPC Osaka, 2014).

The research focused on several cities in East Java, namely Surabaya, Sidoarjo, Malang, Blitar, Mojokerto, Trenggalek and Tulungagung, as well as several cities in South Sulawesi, namely Makassar, Maros, Pinrang, Barru, and Sidrap. In collecting the data, we applied in-depth interviews and focus group discussions

with ex-trainees and officials associated with the internship program.

Various benefits were gained from the internship program, both financial remittance and social remittance in the form of values, knowledge, and ideas. Financially they earned at least 50 to 300 million Rupiah after the completion of internship program. In social capital, they earned knowledge, changes of behavior, and ideas to bring home and change their lives in Indonesia. They obtained agricultural knowledge such as cropping patterns, nursery management, agricultural mechanization, and marketing and management of agriculture businesses in Ministry of Agriculture program. Furthermore, the most knowledge gained was from those who joined Ministry of Man Power program mainly through the use of modern technology. Unfortunately, this knowledge is sometimes difficult to apply in Indonesia as Japan uses high technology with high costs, unaffordable to Indonesian farmers. The only way for them to apply their knowledge is be the part of the Japanese company in their region, such as Jakarta or Surabaya, with the status of new starter. This did not satisfy them since they would receive a small salary in comparison with their salary in Japan. Many of them preferred not to join as Japanese employees, since they started to think about opening their own businesses (Interview with Budi, Irwan, Suaib, Kaharuddin, Rachmad, Januartis, and Rauf, September 2013).



**Table 2.** The Flow Chart of Recruitment procedure from Ministry of Man Power

**Source:** processed from Bureau of Foreign Internship, Ministry of Man Power, 2013.

Another form of social remittance is behavior and ideas. These are probably the most applicable form of knowledge transferred from Japan to the young Indonesian trainees. These youths realize that because of its working behavior, Japan become a developed country. Thus, many of these work ethos affected the trainees, such as working harder, time management, discipline, honesty, loyalty, eagerness to learn, not giving up easily in the face of failure and obedience. Many of these trainees are still applying the work ethos they saw in Japan. Some cases show us that the strength of these internship alumni, such as how they work hard to expand their business or agricultural enterprise and to never give up trying another business after failure. Some success stories that bring to light that the remedy of their success



are applying what their *oto-san* did and keeping in communication with them through email, mail, or telephone. Sometimes, discussions with their Japanese “parents” or supervisors during their apprenticeship program, gave them ideas on how to start and to manage successful ventures at home. Moreover, some of them even established businesses where their Japanese *oto-san* or supervisor became their business partner (Interview with Pandi and Jumadil, September 26, 2013).

Regrettably, many of them lose these values and behaviors when they return to Indonesia due to culture differences and feeling uncomfortable being different from their surroundings. Along with this, the study exposed that many of these trainees come to a sticky end where they were unsuccessful in establishing economic independence. They ran out of their remittance and failed to apply the knowledge transferred from Japan. This condition made them return to their daily activities and economic levels before they went to Japan. These failures occurred for various reasons, such as lack of financial and business planning hence they lost their way after the completion of the training period, a relation gap between internship alumni and local government officials associated with the program so that they missed further opportunities of both financial training and empowerment assistance, as well as various individual circumstances.

In accordance with local government, surprisingly some officials at the provincial level in Makassar were unfamiliar with the program. This shows us that relations between local officials and alumni were not harmoniously at this level. The reason is that local officials were not involved nor invited in the selection process because it was handled by the central level. For this reason as the alumni return to their village, their existence was unseen by local officials, despite the fact their knowledge would be beneficial for their village. The local officials should encourage the alumni to work together to develop either agricultural businesses or small enterprises, through both tutorial/empowerment and financial assistance. On the other hand, the alumni should actively establish

a relationship with their local officials not just with provincial and central authorities.

From the research we found some weaknesses in these programs, both in East Java and South Sulawesi, namely lack of publication and information to the wider public about these programs. As a consequence, not many people are aware of these programs. This has caused insufficient applicants and hence the recruitment of prospective trainees appears very sudden and imposed only to fulfill the quota of the program, neglecting the formal requirements. As a result some problems often occur during the training period. This was proved by several cases in Ministry of Agriculture program where some trainees from Makassar (South Sulawesi) were actually farmers but they had to live and work in farming environments. They did not cope with this situation and decided to run away from the program. Similarly, some trainees who could not bear the training period in a factory on Ministry of Man Power program also ran away. Uniquely, many of them also came from Makassar. Due to these problems, the Ministry of Man Power program suspended sending of trainees from Makassar in 2005 until 2013. The trainees from East Java generally were able to complete the period of internship.

Based on these conditions, we conclude that several strategies should be adopted. Firstly to increase of the number or the quota of interns to Japan; secondly reducing the level of agreement violations during the internship both from the officials in the recruitment period and the trainees during and after the completion of the internship period, and thirdly to develop an alumni assistance program in cooperation with local government after the internship period has finished.

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6. Agus from kepanjen Malang during September 2013 and February 2014
7. Idris from Maros South Sulawesi, October 2013
8. Budi from Surabaya during February 2014
9. Irwan from Malang during February 2014
10. Suaib in Surabaya during February 2014
11. Bapak Kaharuddin from Makassar during September 2013
12. Rachmad, Januartis from Makassar during September 2013
13. Bapak Rauf from Pare-Pare South Sulawesi during September 2013.
14. Pandi from Pinrang South Sulawesi on September 26, 2013
15. Jumadil from Pinrang South Sulawesi on September 26, 2013