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10 November 2008

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/11491/>

MPRA Paper No. 11491, posted 11 Nov 2008 03:45 UTC

Indonesian Trainees in Japanese SMEs, Capital Accumulation and Micro-Small Business Development in Indonesia: A Preliminary Study

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Keywords: *Indonesian trainees, Japanese SMEs, PWEF, capital accumulation, key performance indicator, compliance meter*

Abstract

Indonesia is one of the world important suppliers of young trainees in Japan. We present a preliminary study's result on Indonesian trainees in Japanese SMEs and their potential to develop micro-small business in Indonesia. This paper utilizes three step approaches. First, an online survey of potency of Indonesian trainees in Japan has been conducting since October 2007 followed up by a Japan-wide Entrepreneurship and Banking Trainings (PWEF). Second, web-based business start-ups consultation forums for Indonesian trainees have been conducted since January 2008 followed up by networking creation with Bank of Indonesia. Third, a key performance indicator of business proposed and money invested was developed. We report three main findings: first, over 70% of Indonesian trainees were working at manufacturing-based Japanese SMEs and might acquire a necessary human capital in developing micro-small manufacturing-based business start-ups. In addition, more than 60% of them could save their income at least 25-40% of their total monthly income, suggested that capital foundation required for business creation might then be compromised. Second, the structural constraint of unmonitored Indonesian trainees might cause problems in which—after having cultural distress while working in Japan and less conducive condition in managing their capital after returning to Indonesia—the potential to become an law-breaking overstay workers is considerably high and might cause a more sophisticated problem in the future. Third, the importance of directing step for Indonesian trainees who are interested in creating businesses and key performance indicators for measuring its achievement are acknowledged.

1. Introduction: Facts and Problems

The first step toward improving Indonesia's industrial competitiveness is for the country to foster supporting industries and local small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) (Watanabe, 2005).

Indonesia is one of the world important suppliers of young trainees in Japan. We present a preliminary study's result on Indonesian trainees in Japanese SMEs and their potential to develop micro-small business in Indonesia. This paper utilizes three step approaches. First, an online survey of potency of Indonesian trainees in Japan has been conducting since October 2007 followed up by a Japan-wide Entrepreneurship and Banking Trainings (PWEPT). Second, web-based business start-ups consultation forums for Indonesian trainees have been conducted since January 2008 followed up by networking creation with Bank of Indonesia, Tokyo Representative Office (BI Tokyo). Third, a key performance indicator of business proposed and money invested was developed.

To the best of our knowledge, the studies on macro and micro level of Indonesian trainees in Japan were not well established in academic literatures. In this sense, we utilize the study of Indonesian migrant workers in Japan focusing on its typology and human rights which is impressively conducted by Romdiati (2003). Actually, we also come up with some similar results to that of this study. Several other studies on macro level includes the characteristics related to the numbers of foreign workers in Japan (Oishi, 1995), and estimation of illegal foreign workers in Japan (Hurights Osaka, 1996). Our study departs from these studies by incorporating: *first*, we conduct a micro level study of specifically Indonesian trainees in Japan by acquiring Japan-wide information on trainees. In this sense, our study has similar pattern to that of Romdiati (2003), but at different focus, in which we aim to investigate the skills and potency of trainees in order to develop a micro-small business enterprises in Indonesia, while the typology and human rights are the main theme of the earlier. *Second*, we present up-to-date information by conducting a communication forum and PWEPT for trainees in order to acquire the real situation of this TITP program. Unfortunately, we also realize that some notable reports from many governmental agencies as a comparison related to this matter are basically confidential.

As pointed out by Romdiati (2003), the worker training program the Japanese government established in 1954 to promote international cooperation and extend assistance to developing societies. This government channel was then supported by a private channel developed by large corporations in response to the rapid postwar expansion of the Japanese economy and accompanying labor shortages. Thousands of workers from Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia went to Japan under this program in the 1950s and 1960s (Oishi 1995). During Japan's economic boom of the 1980s, the number of trainees increased rapidly, as did the number of illegal workers. By the mid 1990s, it was estimated that illegal migrant workers numbered almost 300,000 (Hurights Osaka, 1996). Together with labor from other sending countries, therefore, both legal and illegal Indonesian migrants have for decades been filling Japanese labor market niches where they do not compete with domestic workers.

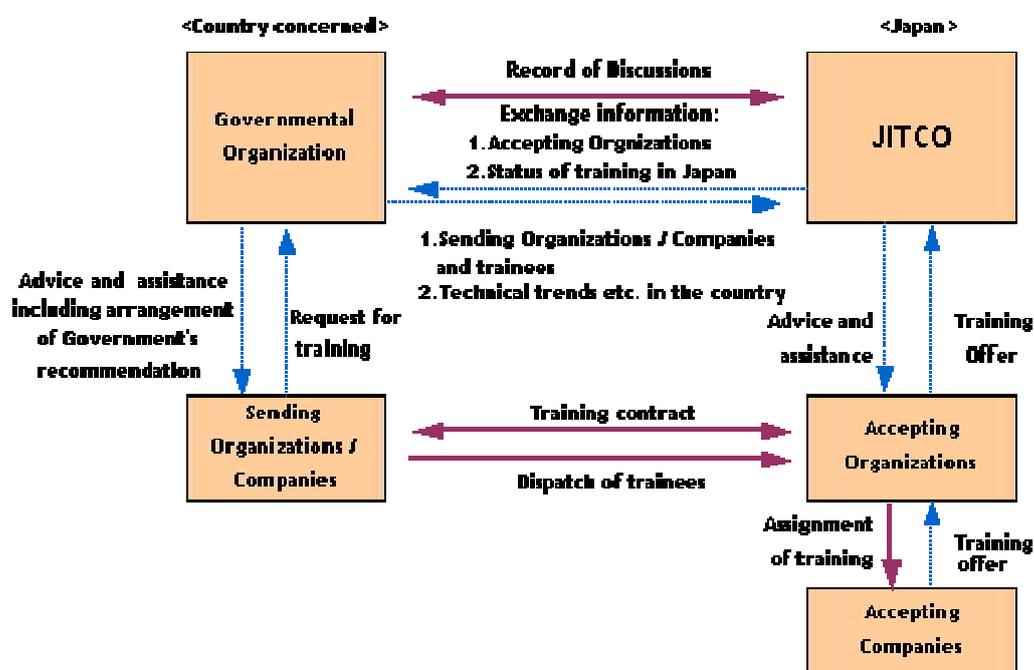
Lately and being formally regulated, it was under the "Technical Intern Training Program (TITP)" instituted by the Government of Japan, that many foreign trainees selected and sent to Japan by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia since 1993, and its number has reached a considerable amount for recent years. The trainees who are selected and trained for four months by the Indonesian Government have a high reputation as being well-disciplined, enthusiastic, and energetic youths in their 20s and 30s ages. The organizing institution of this program such as: Association for International Manpower Development of Medium and Small Enterprises Japan (IMM Japan), JITCO (Japan International Training Cooperation Organization), JAAC, Vuteq, among others, have been successfully managed these program at least since 15 years ago and continue to promote more advanced and more

developed training program such as by extending the duration of the program, expanding the industrial base for training, and so on. The largest trainees sending organization is IMM Japan who contributes around 1,600 trainees a year (Goto, 2008). Based on these preliminary figures, our estimation of the numbers of Indonesian trainees in Japan might reach 5,000 trainees (Kompas, June 3, 2008).

As far as the beginning figure is concerned, Romdiati (2003) reported that the number of Indonesian workers deployed has been modest but increasing – from 1,438 trainees in 1995 to 5,972 in 1998. By the beginning of 2000, the total number of Indonesian trainees deployed by IMM Japan had reached 12,396, including the 4,968 who had 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 2001). The figure enrolled in 2001 remained roughly steady at 5,817 (JITCO 2002), comprising 9.8 percent of trainees nationally. This was only one-fifth of the Chinese figure, but higher than those of Thailand (3,184), the Philippines (3,768), and Malaysia (1,163). Unfortunately, the recent figure of Indonesian trainees in Japan could not be presented due to many obstacles in terms of ‘Personal Information Disclosure Act’ promulgated by Japanese government several years ago which limited the access of any information related to personal information including the numbers and condition of trainees. On the other hand, the most competent Indonesian agency: Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (IMM&T) might not produce the report on this matter publicly.

There are at least two steps of this TITP program after a discussion among the sending companies and IMM&T. The first step is related to the preparation training in the country concerned. This training might take several months. The second step is the on-the-job training program in Japan, before trainees are dispatched in Japanese companies. This program might take 1 (one) year duration. We borrow this mechanism from JITCO as figured below:

Figure 1. The TITP Mechanism

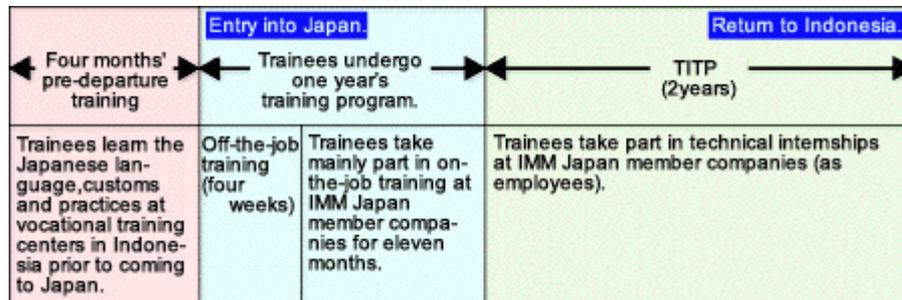


Source: JITCO's official website, www.jitco.or.jp

Moreover, pertaining to the domestic training held by IMM&T, at least 4 (four) months of a departure-training has to be completed by trainees who are selected to be dispatched to Japanese companies.

Then, out of 3 (three) years program, it is definitely only 2 (two) years of the real TITP program since on the first year, trainees are considered only as an on-the-job training in Japanese companies, as depicted in the following figure.

Figure 2. The Time-Frame of TITP Program



Source: adopted figure from IMM Japan's official website, www.imm.or.jp

Our preliminary study presented in this paper is intended to answer 2 (two) basic problems:

- a. what are the prominent potency of Indonesian trainees which could be enhanced so as to develop a technology-based micro-small and medium enterprises in Indonesia;
- b. why are there still exist a structural problems on this TITP program pertaining to the overstay workers, informal money remittance, and even a 'free rider' problem shadowing this TITP program.

As for the first question, we present our study results along with some inter-related agencies activities concerned on this matter. For the second question, we describe the problems, its characteristics and causes by utilizing direct questionnaires to the trainees. Unless it is specifically explained, the word 'trainees' means the Indonesian trainees in Japan.

2. Methodology

2.1. The 'Tokyo Commitment'

It was the joint commitment launched at November 5-6 in Tokyo by some Indonesian institutions and its overseas counterparts: Indonesian Embassy in Tokyo (KBRI Tokyo), Indonesian Consulate General in Osaka (KJRI Osaka), BI Tokyo, Bank of Negara Indonesia in Tokyo (BNI Tokyo), IMM Japan and other similar agencies, Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (Depnakertrans, Ditjen Pembinaan, Pelatihan dan Produktivitas), State Ministry of Cooperation and Small Medium Enterprises (Kementrian Koperasi dan UKM, Deputy Bidang Pengembangan SDM), Ministry of Industry (Departemen Perindustrian, Ditjen IKM), Ministry of Trade (Departemen Perdagangan, Ditjen Perdagangan Dalam Negeri), and Working Group for Technology Transfer (WGTT), considered as a stepping stone for more organized activities in order to promote the development of entrepreneurs through the trainee program in Japan, in which its main objective are to provide 3 (three) basic assistances program for the trainees, namely: training, counseling and directing.

The first 2 (two) programs are being held in Japan through entrepreneurship and banking training (we called it PWEP as previously mentioned), establishing the small core group of interested trainees to be trained in making business proposal, and web-based and/or other media counseling program. The subjects of the PWEP delivered to participants are included, but not limited to: financial planning, business management, business feasibility study, small and medium business case studies, banking credit and procedures, accounting for small and medium enterprises, and other related subjects such

as: regulation for trainees, judicial assistant from KBRI Tokyo, and even international money remittance.

The last program is to be conducted in Indonesia by establishing the financial institutions to assist the trainees when they have returned to their hometown. This joint commitment—among the signed parties—is used to be called ‘Tokyo Commitment’. On this Commitment, we propose the PWEP program which will be later on become the Japan-wide program for 2008 as the following section might explain.

2.2. Online Survey and PWEP

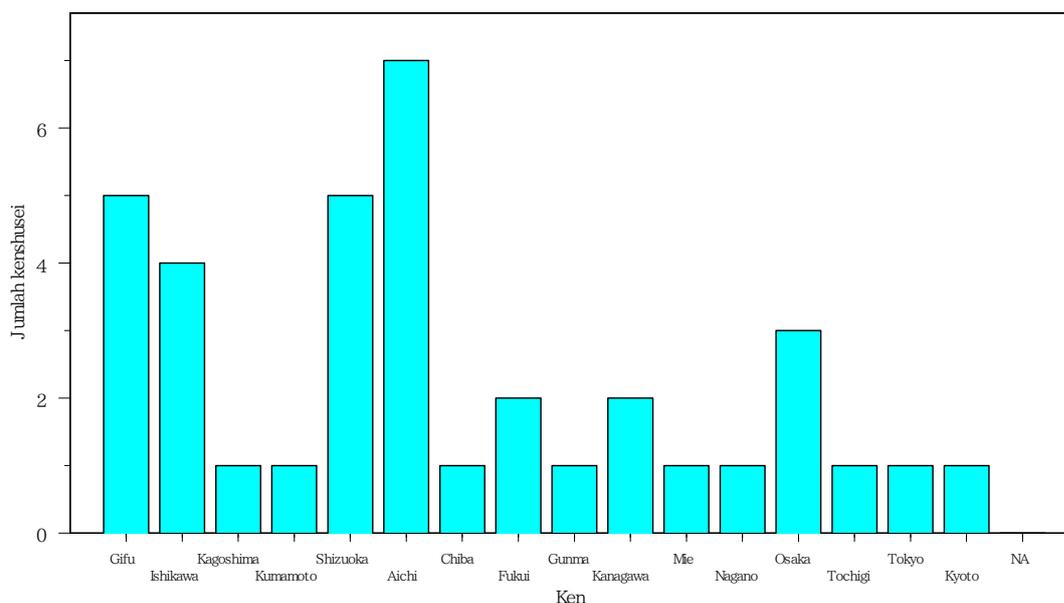
Map speaks louder than words, some scholars said. For the sake of balancing our geographical perspective, let us present a Japan map which will be much useful for the following discussion as well as to inform the readers where are the most important places all over Japan we consider in this study.

Picture 1. Japan’s map



We conduct an online survey on October 2-31, 2007, in which on this duration we got 130 visitors and 73 respondents. The completed survey was filled by 47 respondents while 35 of them joined our forum. The distribution of our respondents is depicted in this following figure 3.

Figure 3. Distribution of Online Survey



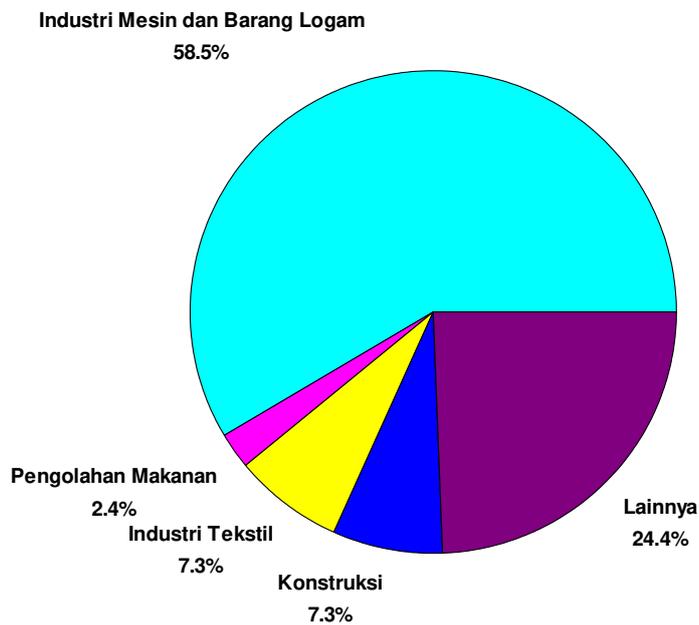
Source: WGTT (2007)

As for the subsequent survey results, we figure it all as follows:

Table1. Trainees' characteristics and potency

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Ages: Age 26 – 30: 52% Age 25: 29% Age 24: 3 % Age 23: 12% Age 22: 4%</p> | <p>Education: SMK/STM: 37% Bachelor: 25% SMA/SMU: 17% Diploma 3: 17% Diploma 1: 4%</p> |
| <p>The sending companies: IMM Japan: 72% JIAEC: 4% JAVADA: 4% Others: 20%</p> | <p>Salary/month: Less than 100,000 yen: 28.6% 101,000-150,000 yen: 48.6% 151,000-200,000 yen: 22.9%</p> |
| <p>Int'l money remittance: Through friend: 50% BNI: 26.5% Post Office: 5.9% Others: 17.6%</p> | <p>Saving/month (as % of per month salary): 10-25%: 27.6% 25-40%: 27.6% More than 40% 44.8%:</p> |
| <p>Amount of money sent/month: 10,000-50,000 yen: 57.6% 51,000-100,000 yen: 39.4% 101,000-200,000 yen: 3.9%</p> | <p>Future plan after TITP: To continue study: 22.9% To work in Japanese company: 17.1% To become entrepreneur: 60%</p> |

Figure 4. The industry where trainees are working



Source: WGTT (2007)

Having preliminary figures on the characteristics of trainees, we then follow up these results by conducting a PWEP for the Japan-wide throughout 2008. Then 7 (seven) times PWEP program during 2008 is planned and being conducted. This includes:

1. PWEP Gifu, January 6, 2008 (participated by 80 trainees);
2. PWEP Kanazawa, February 10, 2008 (participated by 70 trainees);
3. PWEP Tokyo as first big event, March 23, 2008 (participated by 171 trainees);
4. PWEP Saga, May 18, 2008 (participated by 105 trainees);
5. PWEP Nagoya, June 1, 2008 (participated by 107 trainees);
6. PWEP Kansai (in Kobe), June 22, 2008 (participated by 149 trainees);
7. PWEP Kansai (in Kobe) as big event, scheduled October 2008

These PWEP events are organized with the cooperation with KBRI Tokyo, KJRI Osaka, BI Tokyo, and starts from PWEP Saga, the IMM Japan is getting together to become the main funding principals. WGTT always positions herself as the local arranger and administrator. In addition, as a response of a mounting needs on this PWEP event, there are 3 (three) off-planned PWEP scheduled in 2008: Toyota city (July 13), Nagano (August), and Kosai, Toyohashi (October). The expected participants of these events might reach 500 trainees. These last events are organized by WGTT together with local management in which in PWEP Toyota: the Vuteq corporation, PWEP Nagano: IMM Japan, and PWEP Kosai: Trainees Association in Kosai.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Further Study on Skill Potency and Business Interest

Having at least 5 (five) PWEP, we then utilize 2 (two) PWEP events in Saga and Nagoya to a conduct a further study on trainees skill potency and business interest. This study is intended to investigate the

basic understanding of trainees of their work and how far their preparations toward their future plan. With the number of respondents 211 trainees, this survey yields:

Table 2. Trainees' skill potency and business interest

| |
|--|
| <p>a. Saving accumulation and business interest: n = 154 Have a business interest and preparing capital, but no business information: 74.03% Have a business interest and but no capital and information: 22.08% Have no business interest at all: 1.30% Have a business interest, capital and sufficient information: 2.60%</p> |
| <p>b. Reason to become an entrepreneur: n = 150 <u>To implement the obtained skills in business: 77.33%</u> No choice: 15.33% Following friend: 6.67% No interest on entrepreneur: 0.67%</p> |
| <p>c. Industry where they are working at: n =146 <u>Food processing (including agriculture and fisheries): 24.69%</u> Electronics appliances (TV, Refrigerator, Audio, AC): 5.86% <u>Automotive (spare parts): 47.95%</u> Chemical industry (fertilizer, paint, and cement): 5.02% Textile: 2.93% Pharmacy and medicine: 2.51% Paper (carton box and paper for newspaper): 4.60% Metal: 4.18% Building material: 10.88% Beverages (soft and healthy drink): 1.67% Beauty and its tools: 1.67% Apparel and shoes: 5.86% Cosmetics and soap: 0.42% Detergent: 0.84%</p> |
| <p>d. Division where they are working at: n = 152 Engineering and maintenance: 7.24% R&D (Lab and product development): 1.97% <u>Production (preparation, processing, finishing/packaging): 58.55%</u> Quality control: 7.24% Warehousing, including the inventory management: 3.29% Others: 21.71%</p> |
| <p>e. Jobs characteristics: n = 151 <u>Machine operator: 36.75%</u> In an operating machine team but not operator: 18.54% <u>In an operating machine team and become a machine operator: 43.71%</u></p> |

f. Understanding level of productivity and quality of products: n =150

Very well: 9.33%

Good: 54.67%

Fair: 34%

Don't know: 2%

g. What kind of machine is being operated: n = 129

Production machine: 71.32%

Utility machine: 13.18%

Lab related machine: 3.1%

Warehouse machine: 3.88%

QC machine: 8.53%

h. Understanding level of machine operating system: n = 135

Well understood in its electrical system: 7.41%

Well understood in its mechanical system: 43.7%

Well understood on both systems: 40.17%

Don't know all system: 8.15%

Source: WGTT (2008)

Note: n = the number of answered questionnaires

The survey's results highlighted in underlines describe the important factors which might influence the capability in developing a technology based business creation as we expect. Although these results are of a preliminary figures and need a further process on documenting this capability and business interest in more details, at this moment, we at least could figure out the main factors, in which based on these conjectures, we then develop a business proposal forum for those who are interested in.

To be more specific, our findings suggest that: first, over 70% of Indonesian trainees were working at manufacturing-based Japanese SMEs and might acquire a necessary human capital in developing micro-small manufacturing-based business start-ups. In addition, more than 60% of them could save their income at least 25-40% of their total monthly income, suggested that capital foundation required for business creation might then be compromised. Second, the structural constraint of unmonitored Indonesian trainees might cause problems in which—after having cultural distress while working in Japan and less conducive condition in managing their capital after returning to Indonesia—the potential to become an law-breaking overstay workers is considerably high and might cause a more sophisticated problem in the future. This finding is to be elaborated in the following section. Third, the importance of directing step for Indonesian trainees who are interested in creating businesses and key performance indicators for measuring its achievement are acknowledged. This last point will be highlighted in the concluding remarks.

3.2. What Next: Structural Problems

Indonesian migrant workers in Japan include the following groups: workers with legal/documented employment status engaged in full-time work, trainees, part-time working students, and illegal/undocumented foreign workers.

We will focus on the trainees' side for this section. There are considerable cases toward Indonesian trainees in Japan related to the 2 (two) main problems above: over-stay and illegal workers. A

1990 revision to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Law reinforced the Japanese government's stand to reject "unskilled workers" while opening the door wider to foreigners with technological skills and knowledge. These new rearrangements are aimed to clearly distinguish those who are permitted to work from those who are not. In order to work in Japan, a foreigner must obtain a residence status that permits employment and/or belong to the skilled category. Those classified as legal foreign workers are professionals and technical trainees. College students and pre-college students are also allowed to work part-time (up to 28 hours per week) if they obtain permission to do so.

According to this regulation, there are 4 (four) categories of foreign workers are deemed illegal:

- a. those who work beyond their authorized period of stay;
- b. those who work outside the scope of activity permitted for their status;
- c. those who work without a residence status that permits work or without permission;
- d. those who enter the country unlawfully for the purpose of engaging in income-generating activities or business.

The amended immigration law also replaced the old trainee system with the Technical Intern Training Program. This program is meant to allow Japan to share its technical skills with developing countries in the region. At the same time, its own small- and medium-size manufacturing firms, under great pressure from overseas competition, gain access to low-skilled, temporary labor (Kashiwazaki 2002).

However, there are many obvious facts that trainees are eventually treated differently from foreigners employed on regular basis when it comes to wages and employment benefits. They are paid only a training allowance, not a regular salary, an advantage for the hiring company. Under this program, trainees suffer for getting a low-income salary despite its very hard and dangerous working condition. With this TITP program, we might say that trainees do not have a good choice and they have no words. It is likely that this situation is far from their capability to speak out.

As pointed out by Kashiwazaki (2002), trainees are not protected by labor standards and receive 'allowances' that are often significantly lower than the minimum wage. Although technical interns [those in the second and third year] are 'workers' in the legal sense, they too have found their wages cut back due to a series of deductions unilaterally imposed by employers. In the TITP managed by IMM Japan, at the first year, a trainee receives a monthly stipend of 80,000 yen with the status as a trainee (*kenshusei*). Next, firms employing interns pay a monthly take-home allowance of at least 90,000 yen in the second year and at least 100,000 yen in the third year to cover necessary living expenses. At these latter stages, the trainee's status is as an employee (*jisshusei*). However, there are many trainees with other sending organization are paid much less than such standard allowances as regulated by IMM. Some received lesser amounts – 60,000 yen per month in the first year, 70,000 to 100,000 yen in the second and third years. In this case, the per-hour salary of trainees only reaches 719 yen, far below the common part-time job's salary which might reach 800-1,000 yen/hour (and in case of overtime work, 1,200-1,300 yen/hour). According to our investigation and interview to some trainees, the allowance is lower than an illegal worker's average monthly wage of 200,000-300,000 yen. This wide gap in take-home pay may influence some trainees to run away from their training program to work illegally. All of these 'unfair' treatments on trainees might cause the number of illegal trainees (over-stay workers) in Japan increase by a considerable amount.

On the other side, the term 'illegal workers' also applies to the workers who matched to the points b-d above. These types of illegal workers are basically come from many sources of 'invitation'. They might come as a tourist, dependent to some relatives leaving in Japan, cultural meeting/festival invitation, and even as a student of Japanese Language College (*nihongo gakko*). The case of 'missing' staff of Indonesian's booth in Aichi Expo in 2005 was one of these 'tips of iceberg' cases. The trainees themselves are part of these problems. The worst case of this illegal worker is the fake passport used

by trainees who entering Japan for the second time without an appropriate permission; and the illegal money remittance case exposed by the Japanese media on last March 2008, which mentioned that one overstay trainee has sent around 200 millions Japanese yen to Indonesia (with sending fee 1,000 yen/time) and has gain for this 'business' a number of 2-3 billion rupiah for himself. This case has been put a one of the serious attention by the Japanese authorities.

4. Concluding Remarks

This study is basically not dealing with those additional unfair and illegal cases of trainees as previously mentioned. However, the previous explanation is intended to raise our awareness that the insufficient condition of Indonesian trainees in Japan should be revisit and become part of all interested parties' priority.

This section is trying to explain the preliminary 'fruitful' efforts we have made in order to assist the trainee to find a new future's perspectives. To become an overstay worker of course yields an interesting economic opportunity, despite its high risk and harmful condition to them and the governmental relationship between Indonesia and Japan. We have gained a little achievement by motivating a number of trainees to start to propose their business plan. And actually, by utilizing PWEF and Business Forum (Probiz), we have been had an intensive communication with the trainees who are interested in managing their own business. Some trainees informed us that they are now staring managing their own business, from the food and snacks, pharmacy, workshops, agribusiness, and so on. We provide them with any information they need and try to direct them what strategies they should develop in their business. This number is expected to increase by time to time.

Definitely, to become an entrepreneur is not a final destination in which we, WGTT and all parties in the 'Tokyo Commitment' are proposing. The inflow of foreign trainees from Indonesia will continue to grow given the increasing internationalization of Japanese companies. This opportunities might be widen by the possibility for Indonesians to work as nurses or caregivers in Japan as early as this year under a bilateral economic partnership agreement (EPA) signed last summer (Ogino, 2008). However, despite this 'skilled labor' opportunity, it seems that the unfavorable condition applies to Indonesian trainees in the form of "unfair treatment," may continue to occur, due to their limitation as trainee.

It is our final objective to assist trainees in developing a technology based business creation which might help the development of SMEs in Indonesia. However, there are many works remain.. Having the preliminary study proposed, we went into the development of key performance indicators. These include: the directing of trainees in documenting their working skills and proposing a business incubation center. These key issues are partly utilized in the second survey on skill potency and business interest. The details of these efforts will be reported in the subsequent papers.

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