

The Long-Term Influences of Graduate Studies Abroad: Learning from the Experiences of Overseas-Educated Indonesians Engaged in Non-Academic Careers

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Abstract This paper adopted the perspectives of international students opting for non-academic careers to examine the long-term influences of graduate education on such individuals. The author is engaged in conducting follow-up ethnographic research on Indonesian students who had studied in Japan. However, the present examination involved four Indonesian employees of a government agency who had accomplished graduate studies in Japan and one other country. It assessed how these returnees educated internationally at more than one location reflected on, compared, and analyzed their experiences. The present study also evaluated how the four individuals interpreted and utilized their overseas learning in their work. They compared and appraised aspects such as research practices and relationships between Japan and other countries. Additionally, their international graduate education influenced their values and work-related practices as well as their interpersonal relations in their workplaces. Their past experiences and the learning acquired through them, including their graduate studies at different places, were continually utilized in the course of tasks accomplished with colleagues from discrete backgrounds and experiences. These findings of this study will help to bridge the gaps in the existing studies on international students educated at a single overseas location. The study results will also fill the lacunae observed in the

extant studies on graduate education. Most scholarly discussions on graduate education entail the majority of students in a local context. However, the examination of the experiences of international graduate students from a different perspective can clarify certain problems related to graduate education. More research adopting a long-term perspective must crucially be conducted to examine how international students apply their past experiences of graduate studies abroad in their subsequent careers.

Keywords International Students, Indonesia, Japan, a Long-Term Influence, Career, Non-Academic, Graduate Education, Doctoral Degrees, Multiple Places of Study, Higher Education

1. Introduction

This paper reports the long-term career-related influences of international graduate education experiences on Indonesian students who accomplished graduate studies in more than one overseas destination. First, it outlines the recent research conducted on international students. Next, it delineates certain global issues related to graduate education. Subsequently, it describes the experiences of

Indonesians employed at a government agency who accomplished graduate education in Japan, and one other country. In so doing, the paper details how such alumni contemplate their graduate studies experiences in discrete countries and how they explain the influences exerted by such experiences on their professional positions. This paper presents the above analyses and discusses the long-term influences of overseas graduate studies on Indonesians who have chosen non-academic careers. This paper also elucidates the importance of jointly evaluating relevant aspects pertaining to international students and graduate education. In so doing, it overcomes certain limitations of existing domain-related research.

2. Studies on International Students and Higher Education

Numerous studies have been conducted on international students, exhibiting discrete focuses and tracking diverse issues. For instance, international students have been discussed in the context of the globalization of higher education. Rumbely, et. al. [1] overviewed global trends in higher education and indicated the pivotal issues noted over the past decades. They included the aspect of international student mobility as one of the many problems of the globalization of higher educational institutions (p. 4), noting that higher education was “affected by the wave of nationalism and populism” in political life in many countries, and that the COVID-19 pandemic seemed “only to have exacerbated the trend” (p.19). Rumbely, et. al. [1] further asserted that more attention must be devoted in such circumstances to “strategies around internationalization at home” (p.19) that were “already gaining currency as new challenges appeared” (p.19).

The issue of international students has indeed been tackled by some research on higher education, especially studies on the globalization and internationalization of higher education (e.g., Altbach and Knight [2], Knight [3], Knight [4], Knight [5], Knight [6]). However, the macro-level policies and programs of internationalization of higher education appear as the principal interests of such investigations, rather than international students.

Among the investigations conducted on the topic of international students, Choudaha and van Mol [7] described three waves of trends and concerns related to degree-seeking international students: 2001--2008, 2008--2016, and 2016 onwards. Their outline indicated the number of international students leading destinations, and the number of students who traveled to such destinations from the leading sending countries at different times. Choudaha and van Mol [7] also discussed the impact of COVID-19 on international student mobility, global political and economic circumstances, and the immigration policies of the relevant countries. They stated the importance of “sustainable and inclusive model of

enrolling and integrating international students with local students and campus communities” (p. 393). They explained that for the actualization of such integrations, “investments must be made in resources to foster the development of capacity building and skills of campus staff to effectively understand and support a diverse international student body” (p.393).

Krasmanovic [8] conducted a literature review of research on international students in the US in the decade between 2010 and 2019, evaluating overly studied topics as well as areas that have been insufficiently explored. Krasmanovic elucidated based on this review that the research conducted in the last decade has attended to “students’ acculturation processes and acculturative stress, overall academic experiences, and physical and mental well-being.” (p.19). She pinpointed a problem pertaining to “examining international undergraduate and graduate students as one single homogeneous group” (pp.14--15). She explained that some critical sociocultural adjustment issues and challenges confronted by international graduate students differ from the difficulties faced by younger international students attending undergraduate programs.

Some extant studies have focused on graduate-level international students. For example, Vakkai et. al. [9] reviewed the literature on international graduate students in the US and found that the existing research addressed sociocultural factors influencing the health status, quality of life, and academic achievement of international graduate students. They specifically considered older graduate students with family members, spouses and children. Family support represents a significant influence on the adjustment experiences of such graduate students. Vakkai et. al. [9] also offered suggestions for institutional systems to extend more support to international students.

Numerous research literatures have scrutinized international students as a single group ignoring the diversity of their backgrounds. However, studies have also attended to specific groups of international students. Krsmanovic’s [8] literature review found that 43% of the relevant studies addressed geographical groups such as Asia, Korea, China, and Saudi Arabia (pp.16--17). For example, Mukminin [10] examined the acculturative experiences of Indonesian graduate students in two Dutch higher educational institutions. He conducted interviews with 24 Indonesian graduate students and found common issues and stressors experienced by Indonesian Master’s level students, especially in their first term. He noted how they coped with those stressors as they continued living in their host universities. Such Indonesian graduate students were supported by their families in Indonesia. Their associations with other Indonesian students studying at the same Dutch University also helped them overcome loneliness and other stresses. The students attempted to control the adverse pressures on their own in their first term, but began to avail themselves of the support of their families back home and enter into relationships with other

Indonesian students, from their second semester onward.

The above-stated and other studies on international students have tended to concentrate on the individual-level sociocultural adjustment issues of international students. Various scholars have focused on international students in relation to their life after study (e.g., Alberts and Hazen [11], Arthur and Flynn [12], and Chew [13]). For example, Netierman et. al [14] examined the decision-making process of international students regarding staying in Canada or returning home after their education. However, the authors explored these issues prior to the completion of studies. As such, research that highlights the life and career of individuals with international education remained scarce.

Furthermore, studies that examine the context of higher education and its influence on the experiences of international students are lacking. Discrete countries offer different graduate programs and systems of higher educational institutions. International students encounter education systems that vary widely from their familiar educational frameworks.

Much more research must be conducted in this context to bridge the gaps in the existing literature on international students. The next section of this paper will overview from a global perspective the extant research on graduate education and will report recent changes.

3. Studies on Graduate Education from Global Perspectives

Many countries offer graduate education programs in higher educational institutions. Yudkevich et al. [15] adopted a global perspective to study the trends and issues in doctoral education, researching specific countries in various regions. Studies have also elucidated certain issues challenging doctoral education programs in many countries: for instance, the purpose of a doctoral degree, labor market conditions, quality, and other disparities such as assessment, funding, and candidate status (Woldegiyorgis et al. [16], p. 6--19). Nerad [17] examined the worldwide changes in doctoral education over three decades and discussed the similarities and differences in the circumstances of doctoral education in different countries.

Graduate education programs encounter diverse concerns and challenges. Studies have probed doctoral education in the United States (e.g., Austin & Miller [18]; Cassuto & Weisbuch [19]). Austin and Miller [18] reflected on the strengths, difficulties, and opportunities in doctoral education in the US, clarifying the employment situation after completion of doctoral programs and asserting that “doctoral graduates enter a wide variety of careers, with academic work being just one option” (p. 197). They also mentioned a shift, stating that “academic careers are becoming less attractive to many doctoral students, as

they observe that permanent faculty positions are difficult to obtain” (p.197). Austin and Miller [13] thus recommended that universities should make “programmatically changes to prepare doctoral students for multiple career options” (p.201), and create “more ‘student-centered’ learning environments” (p.202).

Huang [20] described the problems pertaining to doctoral education in Japan. First, he introduced the history of Japanese higher education, highlighting the influence of the system followed by German research universities in the late 19th century and the later impact of US models after World War II. Subsequently, he overviewed the changes in doctoral education in Japan, particularly after the 1980s, given the effects of varied reforms implemented through government initiatives. This transformation resulted in “the quantitative expansion until the end of 1990s to a focus on qualitative improvement starting in the 2000s” (Huang [20] p. 317). Huang also discussed the problems in the labor market and the economic issues confronting doctoral students (Huang [20] pp.330--333). He stated that government and universities must make significant efforts to attract “‘the best and brightest’ students to go into doctoral programs; to better adapt doctoral programs to the expectations of society, industry and business; and to provide more financial support for doctoral students.” (p.337)

The concept of “doctoral students” is not universal and does not apply to doctoral education in all nations. For example, Kehm [21] elucidated doctoral education in Germany, clarifying that “doctoral candidates are not students in Germany” (Kehm [21] p.82). Many are “employed by their universities as research and teaching assistants, and thus regarded as junior academic staff” (ibid, p.82). Kehm [21] mooted that “A special report by the Federal Office of Statistics [22] showed that in 2015, of a total of 604,000 doctoral degree holders, about 15 per cent were employed in higher education institutions, 12 per cent in other public services and 73 per cent in the private sector.” (p.98). Kehm stated that “The overproduction of PhDs was a common topic of discussion in Germany during the 1970s and 1980s, but is no longer an issue” (p.98), remarking that “the effort in recent years to help doctoral degree holders get the skills they need to transition into non-academic labor markets is paying off” (p.99).

Kehm [21] also commented on international doctoral candidates, saying that German universities do not charge tuition fees and a variety of scholarships and that they employ English as their language of instruction (p.99).

The questions and problems pertaining to graduate education, especially at the doctoral level, are linked to the prevailing sociocultural, political, and economic situations encompassing higher education in a country. They also connected with the global trends and concerns related to higher education.

4. Studies on International Students and Graduate Education in Different Disciplines

The existing studies on international students and higher education, specifically graduate studies as the subject of the present investigation, have been conducted separately and independently for different disciplines. Many studies on international students have centered on sociocultural difficulties international students encounter at the individual level. The concerns of international students may be discussed vis-à-vis the globalization and internationalization of higher education. However, most existing studies on international students focus solely on international students and their experiences of the education systems of their hosting higher educational institutions.

Conversely, some recent studies and discussions on graduate education have incorporated the context of problems of higher education and have considered the wider ambit of societies. Some discussions have been initiated on graduate reforms apropos the difficulties encountered by international students, for example, in using English (e.g. Kehm [21] p.99). However, “race, ethnicity, gender, age, class background and/or disability are seldom discussed in the problem of graduate education” (Nerad [17] p.45). The diversity-related challenge for graduate education is to “attract, welcome, support highly able students, including women, domestic students from underrepresented groups and international students.” (Austin & Miller [18] p.206). International students are alluded to as one type in discussions of diversity. Woldegiyorgis et al. [16] referenced Ryan [23], stating, “although international doctoral candidates bring with them different academic cultures and intellectual traditions, a lot still need to be done in terms of recognizing the values that they contribute” (Woldegiyorgis et. al, [16] p.24).

The examination presented in this section evidences the limitations of previously conducted research on graduate and higher education with respect to the concerns of international students and diversity. These discussions on diversity align with Krasmanovic’s [8] indication that prospective research on international students must crucially encompass culturally and linguistically diverse students. Such inclusivity will help advance “the existing knowledge in the domain of higher education diversity, inclusion, and internationalization for the benefits of all parties involved--institutions, faculty, staff, and primarily, their diverse students.” (Krasmanovic, [8] p.20).

It is important to incorporate some knowledge from other relevant domains. For example, the consideration of certain perspectives on the topics and problems of graduate education would help clarify some difficulties encountered by international graduate students. Similarly, the inclusion of some viewpoints involving issues experienced by international students would help illuminate certain

difficulties with graduate studies.

The next section will introduce some aspects relating to doctoral degrees and education and will illustrate the conceptual divergences between international students and higher educational institutions in their perception and valuation of graduate degrees.

5. Disparities in the Conception and Valuation of Doctoral Degrees and Education in Different Contexts

Diverse concepts and values may be ascribed to doctoral degrees in different systems and contexts. For example, Nerad [17] described distinct situations involving doctoral degree holders in a context “where universities until recently hired instructors without PhDs, and now are requiring all academic staff to have a doctoral degree in order to remain in their positions” (p.43). If higher educational institutions did not previously require doctoral degrees for a faculty position but now mandate that all faculty members must have doctoral degrees, the faculty members without the requisite degrees must enter graduate programs and obtain their degrees. If many graduate programs are available in the home countries of such faculty members, they could advance to graduate programs in their resident nations. Otherwise, some faculty members could seek overseas graduate programs and some could look for scholarships.

To cite another example, the follow-up studies conducted by the author on the present paper on Indonesian students found certain systems favoring doctoral degree holders (Arikawa [24]): for instance, promotion systems that bestowed certain advantages to faculty members with doctoral degrees or instances in which only doctoral degree holders were eligible to become principal investigators or apply for research projects. Further, the returned Indonesian alumni of overseas graduate programs illuminated that people with doctoral degrees were socially respected as individuals who had accrued special knowledge and expertise.

Another problematic disparity relates to the value of doctoral degrees for non-academic careers. As Huang [20] explained that in Japan, doctoral holders find it difficult to look for commercial engagements when business sectors do not value doctoral degrees because they believe that doctoral students are trained for academic careers with a narrow focus on research. The situation is dire for doctoral students, especially given the decreasing number of permanent academic positions (Huang [20] pp.330--332).

On the other hand, Kehm [21] elucidated that many doctoral degree holders pursued career paths in the business sector in Germany in addition to being employed in the academic and public sectors (Kehm [21] p. 98). Kehm [21] also detailed the changes occurring in the 1970s and 1980s. Efforts were made to inculcate transferable

skills in doctoral students, which could have made it easier for doctoral degree holders to find employment in business enterprises (Kehm [21] pp.98--99). These cases illustrate that the changes occurring in doctoral degree programs and graduate education are intimately related to graduate students, higher education systems, businesses, governments, and societies.

It is vital to understand diversity in the context of the graduate education system as well as the backgrounds and careers of international students. The sole scrutiny of international students or tertiary and graduate education cannot facilitate the holistic apprehension of the long-term perspective of the effects of graduate education experiences on international students.

Some previously conducted longitudinal studies on international students have examined their subsequent careers. For example, the author of this paper assessed the influence of graduate studies experience on the later careers of students as university professors in Indonesia (Arikawa [25], [26]). However, scant studies have scrutinized international students who have opted for non-academic career paths or students who have attended graduate programs in more than one international destination. What could transpire if an international student attends graduate programs at more than one overseas destination? How would they utilize, or not use, such discrete experiences in their professional lives? The next section of this paper investigates these issues based on the author's research on Indonesians who have undertaken graduate studies in more than one country and are employed at a government agency.

6. Research Methodology

The author of this paper is an educational anthropologist, who is engaged in researching international students. More specifically, the author conducted ethnographic research on Indonesian students at University A¹ in Japan in the early 1990s and accomplished follow-up studies after the same Indonesian students completed their graduate education and returned home around or after 2000. These students obtained scholarships from the Japanese or Indonesian government and held positions in Indonesia at a government agency or at a university as faculty.

This paper is based on the follow-up research² conducted at a government agency by the author in 2012. One of the author's informants from her study in Japan introduced the author to his colleagues who had studied in Japan and made appointments for interviews with the respondents at each of their offices. The author then interviewed 18 returned Indonesians who had studied in Japan, of whom five studied in Japan and one other country. This paper focuses on Indonesian alumni who studied in Japan as well as in another country.

Each interview lasted between 30 minutes to an hour and was audio-recorded after attaining due permission. The author also took notes during the interviews. The author

conducted the interviews in Indonesian in the cases recorded in this paper.

Some questions for the conducted interviews were prepared in advance and the scope of the conversations expanded when the respondents replied. Chart 1 presents the points of the interview questions. The author queried about the period of study abroad, such as the time spent on research, and asked about the relationships of the respondents with their supervising professors and other students. In addition, the respondents were questioned about their career trajectories after they returned from their overseas graduate studies, for instance, their current employment, work styles, relationships, and the influences of their study abroad experiences. The respondents were also asked questions about their families.

Chart 1. Points of interview questions

Study abroad
Place of international study Time (period) Place (country and university) Program (Undergraduate, Master's, Doctoral) Major (department)
Experiences Research practice and laboratory Relationships with supervising professors Relationships with other students Other
Comparison of places of international education Similarities Differences
Relationships after study abroad Supervising professors Other students
Career before and after study abroad
Time (period) Place Work
Current work
Position Work Relationships with colleagues
Influence of study abroad experiences
Work style Work value Colleagues with study abroad experiences
Family
Family members at the time of study abroad Children and their education

The author reexamined the interview data several times after conducting the follow-up investigation. More than one respondent shared certain issues pertaining to graduate studies and career paths.

As previously mentioned, the present study focused on returnees who had attended graduate education programs in Japan and another country and who were subsequently employed at a government agency in Indonesia. Thus, this paper reports the reflections of the interviewed returnees about their graduate experiences, especially those related to supervision and research practices and describes how they compared their experiences in Japan and another country. This paper also details how the respondents explained their current work lives and relationships in relation to their study abroad experiences.

7. The Experiences of Indonesians who Studied at Different Overseas Graduate Programs

The sections that follow the introduction of four cases of Indonesians who majored in science disciplines, studied in graduate programs at more than one overseas location, and subsequently held positions at a government agency. *Pak*³ A completed his undergraduate education in Indonesia, attended a master's degree program in the UK, and accomplished doctoral studies in Japan. *Pak* B completed his undergraduate education in Indonesia, master's degree in France, and doctoral program in Japan. The other two respondents achieved higher education qualifications from two countries. *Pak* C attained undergraduate and master's degrees in the Netherlands and earned his doctoral degree in Japan. *Pak* D attended undergraduate and master programs in the US and obtained his doctoral degree in Japan.

7.1. *Pak* A

Pak A passed an undergraduate program in Indonesia and became employed at a government agency. He later studied for his master's degree at a university in the UK from 1989 to 1991. He resumed his work at the agency in Indonesia after his return from the UK. He subsequently enrolled in a doctoral program at the University Y in Japan from 1997 to 2001. *Pak* A held a high position at the Indonesian agency at the time of his interview with the author in 2012, managing and overseeing nine sections of the agency along with their respective directors and staff members.

Pak A explained differences in the supervisor-student relationships in the UK and Japan. In his experience, it was the student's responsibility in the UK to make an appointment to meet the supervising professor. Several of *Pak* A's friends could not graduate in time, because of this onus and because they were not proactive. Conversely, supervisors in Japan monitored the research progress of

their students every week. Professors would take the initiative to look for their students they had not met for two weeks. In one instance, *Pak* A did not attend his laboratory because his experiments did not succeed. His supervisor sought him out and asked him to report the results even when experiments failed so that the professor could offer advice. *Pak* A explained that the seriousness and efforts of students were deemed paramount in Japanese graduate programs.

Pak A also elucidated the takeaways from the UK and Japan that he applied in his current work: discipline from both nations and the ability he imbibed in Japan to work hard and persevere until he had completed the task. He compared this attitude with the mindsets of others who tended to leave the office premises at the end of office hours, regardless of the progress of their work. According to *Pak* A, he inspected the work progress of his staff until they had accomplished the set tasks. He evaluated the staff's work in the long range, observing their work methods instead of judging them by single result obtained at a singular time.

According to *Pak* A, those who graduated from Japan were most successful, followed by graduates from the UK. He noted that US graduates were the least successful: they thought they were the best and they could speak in English but their colleagues did not like their attitudes.

7.2. *Pak* B

Pak B worked at the agency in Indonesia from 1987 after completing his undergraduate program locally. He was then supported by the Indonesian government between 1990 and 1992 to attain a master's degree from France. He resumed work at the agency between 1992 and 1998 after returning from France. Subsequently, he enrolled in a doctoral program in Japan, also with the support of the Indonesian government. After studying Japanese for six months in Indonesia, *Pak* B undertook doctoral studies at University Z in Japan between 1998 and 2004.

Pak B explained that he could not speak English, Japanese was difficult, and he was forced to choose France for his master's program. He wanted to go to the US for his doctoral education but was not accepted. *Pak* B wrote a letter to his would-be professor in Japan, saying that he wanted to study in Japan but could not speak Japanese. The Japanese professor replied to *Pak* B, asking him not to worry and come to Japan.

Pak B spent a year as a research student before enrolling in the doctoral program at University Z in Japan. He worked in an international laboratory with students from many countries. They used English as their lingua franca. He enjoyed a cordial relationship with his professor, who was internationally oriented, creative, communicated in English.

Pak B compared the relationship between supervisors and students in France and Japan, asserting that their statuses were more egalitarian in France. The student-

supervisor associations tended to continue as necessary and were then relinquished. In Japan, however, the relationship was more filial, creating strong emotional bonds. In *Pak B*'s opinion, Indonesian culture evinced similarities with the Japanese model and therefore exhibited a preference for Japan. *Pak B* also asserted that Indonesian graduates of Japanese programs displayed strong feelings of togetherness.

In terms of work styles, *Pak B* stated that there were differences among colleagues with study abroad experiences. Graduates from Japan worked from start to finish and did not tend to stop until completion, like the Japanese. Conversely, graduates from Europe were noisy (*ribut*) from the beginning to the end of their work.

Pak B recalled an experience in Japan when he was told to begin with manual procedures. *Pak B* protested, saying that he was a researcher but was told that he could understand the problem appropriately if he mastered the manual processes. According to *Pak B*, graduates from the United States work on theories and leave analysis to the laboratories. Thus, the technicians accomplish the actual work. In contrast, individual researchers would be expected to wash and clean cylinders and accomplish everything on their own in Japan. After working on everything by oneself and learning on one's own, a person can precisely pinpoint problems when they occur.

Pak B explained that his current work was related to policymaking. *Pak B* would travel to local areas in the event of problems and return with reports to the agency. He said that he worked closely with colleagues in other government agencies and academics in relevant fields at universities. Some friends from his undergraduate days in Indonesia also worked for some advancement programs.

7.3. *Pak C*

Pak C attended undergraduate and master's programs in the Netherlands from 1986 to 1993. He then returned to Indonesia and worked at an office in an Indonesian agency. Soon after his return, *Pak C* joined a new project in the agency and became very busy. He later enrolled in a doctoral program at University U in Japan between 1997 and 2001. The Indonesian government supported all his studies abroad.

Pak C explained that there was more supervision in Japan. Professors met their students every week. However, he was left undisturbed in the Netherlands, where he opined that time would pass and people could rarely finish programs in three years if they were not proactive. Thus, a very small number of individuals could finish their study programs.

Pak C was surprised when he went to Japan because there was supervision similar to Indonesia. In the Netherlands, education was individual and he was compelled to work alone. In Japan, people believed in teamwork and everyone in a team worked for the same goal and accomplished the work faster.

According to *Pak C*, his current job was related to his graduate studies and he could thus use his education in the decisions he took in his current work. *Pak C* also described the differences between people who only earned master's degrees and those who held doctoral degrees. Individuals with master's degrees worked through trial and error, which could take much more time, and they lacked the courage to make decisions. On the other hand, individuals with doctoral degrees understood the methodologies and philosophies and could make decisions.

7.4. *Pak D*

Pak D went to the US between 1989 and 1993 for his undergraduate program and attended a master's program between 1994 and 1996 at another university in the US. The Indonesian government supported both his overseas study programs. He returned to Indonesia and worked from 1996 to 2004 before going to University V in Japan between 2004-2011 for a doctoral program in an English course.

Pak D first met his would-be supervising professor for his doctoral study in Japan in 2003, when the professor was conducting research in Indonesia. The professor was looking for a graduate student majoring in *Pak D*'s field and *Pak D* was invited to study at the professor's lab. *Pak D* applied and was accepted at V University in Japan.⁴

Pak D stated that he faced no problems in his lab at V University. No one in his lab communicated in Japanese and *Pak D* taught English to his professor and the students. *Pak D* also explained that if one failed in an experiment in his discipline, one would have to repeat it. It could take one year to accomplish an experiment, and the analysis could take a further two years.

In *Pak D*'s view, one should review the supervising professor's history and check whether students could finish in time. The same rules applied to Japanese and international students.

Regarding working in Indonesia, *Pak D* found differences among the overseas-educated alumni employed at the agency: alumni from Japan were less proud than graduates from Germany and the US. *Pak D* elucidated this hypothesis, saying that most alumni from programs in Japan were employees, whereas alumni from Europe, the US, and the UK were leaders, some holding high positions in the government. The graduates from Japan followed the others. *Pak D* had experienced both Western and Japanese education systems and understood both the viewpoints of the leaders and followers.

Pak D noted another difference between the two educational systems: graduate studies were specialized in America and technicians were tasked with the laboratory work. Conversely, researchers were expected to know everything in Japan, even if it took time. Status relationships between graduate students and their professors were equal in the US, unlike in Japan, where the supervising professor wielded more authority over students. *Pak D* was surprised by this role inequality when he went

to Japan, but he liked it.

He also discovered the similarities in the cultures and practices that prevailed in Japan and Indonesia after he went to Japan and realized the *senpai* (senior) and *kohai* (junior) relationship in Japan. Like the *senpai-kohai* feelings, *Pak D* discovered numerous correspondences in the ways of thinking in Indonesia and Japan.

The discussion presented in the next section is based on the four alumni cases outlined in this segment.

8. Discussion

8.1. The Influence of Overseas Graduate Study Destination on the Career Trajectories of the Respondents

The alumni displayed both similarities and differences in the types of overseas graduate studies experiences. Their interpretations were also based on their experiences and interactions with their colleagues after they had returned to Indonesia.

Pak A enjoyed a relatively long career at the agency and held a senior position and discussed his personal work style as well as how he evaluated the work of his staff members. *Pak A*'s experiences in UK and Japan influenced his ideas, his valuation of discipline, and his belief in the manner in which work should be accomplished. *Pak A* positively evaluated those who, like him, worked until completion; he was less impressed by those who did not. This point will be discussed again in the next section.

Pak B was aware of the differences in research styles that prevailed in France and Japan. Graduate education was more specialized in the US and France, where researchers worked with theories and ideas and technicians applied their ideas in the actual laboratory work. Conversely, researchers, including doctoral students, had to achieve all their work on their own in Japan. *Pak B*'s assertion that he had to work to wash a cylinder reveals an important aspect of the different ideas about a researcher's role in an experiment and the different roles enacted by researchers and technicians. *Pak D* also stated this point.

Pak C compared his experiences with supervisors in the Netherlands and Japan; students were required to make appointments to meet their supervisors, but *Pak C* met with his professor in Japan every week. His experience was akin to *Pak A*'s description of the supervising professor who took the initiative to inquire why *Pak A* had not attended the lab.

Pak D compared his experiences in Japan and the US. He evaluated Japanese graduate education differently from the other respondents, comparatively noting the career growth of graduates from the US and other countries against the professional achievements of graduates from Japan. The fact that senior graduates from the US occupied high positions seemed to have influenced his evaluation of graduates from Japan as lower in pride. *Pak D* stated that

he understood the positioning of both leaders and followers. He also remarked on the relational similarities between Japan and Indonesia. Additionally, both *Pak B* and *Pak C* mentioned the cultural similarities between Indonesia and Japan.

8.2. The Long-Term Impact of International Graduate Study

It is important to be aware of the long-term effects of studying abroad on the career paths of individuals who accomplished overseas graduate studies. The four described cases of such returnees employed at a government agency evince the impact of overseas graduate studies on their work. The previous section also outlined their respective interpretations of their takeaways and influences from their experiences abroad. The impact of studies abroad is evident in *Pak A*'s positive evaluation of the style of working long hours. However, in *Pak D*'s opinion, working long hours may be assessed as the style of a worker, an employee, and or a follower.

The described cases elucidate the significance of being aware of the work behaviors of returnees that could be influenced by their study abroad experiences. They also highlight the importance of the knowledge of staff members of those who evaluate the work. Employees must understand the differences that could emanate from the study abroad experiences of their supervisors.

Interestingly, some returnees also confessed that they had originally planned to pursue graduate studies in a different country and not Japan. Studying abroad on leave from work, especially on a scholarship, introduces diverse factors to the subject of international studies. The funding authorities decide the country of study or establish possible study destinations, which could differ from the countries in which students want to study.

However, regardless of their original plan, those who were offered scholarships went to the assigned country and attended universities that accepted their candidature. They then undertook the requirements of the graduate education programs at their destinations. They returned to Indonesia after obtaining their planned advanced degrees and continued their careers at the agency. The impact of their experiences at their places of study on their professional life was evident as they recalled their encounters.

8.3. Graduate Education and Career Paths: The Relevance of Research Disciplines for Career Choices

The relevance of graduate education and research for career choices is an important question for researchers in graduate education. International students could apply their learned knowledge in their teaching and research if they opt for academic careers after their doctoral degrees and if the tertiary and graduate education systems align with their learning in their graduate programs abroad. Notably, however, the higher education system and teaching and

research practices and conditions could diverge from their graduate learning in programs abroad even if they do take on academic positions.

The issue of the relevance of graduate education in professional life could become serious for those who opt for non-academic careers. Disparate work descriptions and conditions may be noted in non-academic contexts. For example, *Pak C*'s work was related to his graduate studies discipline and he could use his domain knowledge in making decisions in his current work role. *Pak C* also elaborated on the differences between individuals with master's and doctoral degrees; doctoral degree holders were more confident and comfortable with decision-making because they understood methodologies and philosophies.

To cite another example, the work of government agencies could entail government policies or other macro-level programs, as was evident from *Pak B*'s role. *Pak B*'s work was closely related to the regional practices involving government policies and programs. *Pak B* utilized his past research and expertise attained during his graduate work in France and Japan as well as his undergraduate experience in Indonesia to identify and investigate solutions or improvements to the situation.

These two cases show that new tasks assigned to returnees could relate to their fields of specialization. However, the new tasks also differed from the domain expertise attained from overseas graduate study experiences in some cases in which the returnees were required to learn new contexts. Nevertheless, they could avail themselves of their past learning and research experiences in attempting to solve their unfamiliar work-related problems. They identified the problems and concerns, sought relevant information, and worked with their colleagues and other individuals in their respective positions and professions.

8.4. Graduate Education and International Students from the Long-Term Perspective

It is important to apprehend the notion of diversity in the context of graduate education in tandem with the aspect of international students and their careers. The sole scrutiny of graduate education or of international students during their graduate studies may not capture the holistic image of the graduate education experiences of international students over the long-term.

The described cases of four Indonesian returnees evinced their distinct learning contexts as they compared and evaluated their experiences in discrete destinations and the effects of those locational differences on their professional lives. After returning to Indonesia, all the respondents utilized their graduate studies experiences in the new work contexts through their jobs and their interactions with their colleagues. The four respondents evaluated their graduate studies abroad based on their respective experiences and applied this exposure to their

professional positions.

It is important to gauge the longitudinal impact of international graduate experiences on individual lives. The interviewed returnees continued to employ their overseas learning in the accomplishment of varied tasks in their current professional positions. The awareness that work context could be influenced by returnees is also crucial because such individuals could try to affect changes or try new professional methodologies based on their experiences abroad.

This study elucidated the long-term impact of international graduate education on individuals with non-academic careers. The study demonstrated the utilization of the respondents of their graduate experiences in their work in non-academic contexts. This study can help broaden the perspectives of graduates in non-academic careers.

In addition, this study explored the experiences of individuals with graduate education in various countries, whereas the majority of previous research focused on international students who study in one country. The current respondents compared their experiences of studying in Japan and one more country.

Furthermore, this study addressed the limitations of previous research, which focused on the lives of international students during their study abroad, by conducting a follow-up examination on their careers after study. I used in-depth interviews and a longitudinal study to elucidate the meaning and value of international graduate studies based on long-term perspectives.

9. Summary and Conclusions

This study adopted the long-term perspective to examine problems experienced by international students with respect to graduate education. Most discussions on graduate education address the majority of students in a local context; however, the examination of the experiences of international graduate students can help clarify from a different perspective the difficulties and issues confronting graduate education.

The present study entailed four Indonesians employed in non-academic positions at a government agency who had studied in graduate programs in Japan and one other country. It evaluated how those four individuals reflected on, compared, and analyzed their experiences as international students at different locations. The present investigation also probed how these individuals interpreted and utilized their overseas learning in their careers and work environments.

The studied returnees compared and appraised their educational experiences in discrete countries. They also referred to research- and employment-related differences between Japan and other countries. Their personal and interpersonal work-related values and practices were further influenced. The studied individuals also discovered similarities between Indonesia and Japan in numerous

relational and practical aspects.

The study findings can help bridge the gaps in the extant research on international students who have studied only at one overseas location. The greater the study locations, the more learning experiences for international students and the more comparisons can be generated. The results of this study can also fill the lacunae in the existing domain-specific research on graduate education. The present investigation elucidated the long-term influences of overseas graduate education on the non-academic careers of resident Indonesians. It also illuminated how the returned international students applied their past learning in their work contexts. Much more research must be conducted from the long-term perspective on how international students apply their graduate education experiences to their subsequent careers.

This study has limitations. First, it focused on graduate students who completed their studies in Japan and in one other country. Thus, future studies could examine graduate students in other countries to elucidate the impact of education in other countries. Moreover, examining the long-term influence of organizations with staff members with international graduate education in other countries could be interesting. Lastly, exploring how these students relate with one another and influence of their international education could help elucidate the long-term impact of international graduate education on local careers.

Notes

- 1 All individuals and university names have been changed to protect the privacy of the study's participants.
- 2 The follow-up research was supported by Type B Grants-in-aid for Scientific Research, JSPS, "20 nen go no "nihon ryugaku" no imi- Indonesia jin nihon ryugaku taikensha no kyaria kara kangaueru (The meaning of "study in Japan" after twenty years: Studying from the career of those who have experienced the study in Japan) (2011-2013).
- 3 "*Pak*" precedes a male individual's name in Indonesian as a mark of respect.
- 4 *Pak D*'s originally planned to study in Germany and had already learned German.

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