

Trend Issues on Indonesian Labor Migration in the Netherlands

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Abstrak

Tulisan ini dalah tentang migrasi internasional yang dilakukan oleh orang Indonesia ke Belanda. Sejarah dari migrasi warga Indonesia itu sendiri sudah terjadi sejak puluhan tahun yang lalu. Catatan sejarah menunjukkan bahwa di era tahun 1950-an ada arus migrasi orang Maluku ke Belanda. Pada tahun 1958 terjadi migrasi para ekspatriat Belanda karena adanya peristiwa nasionalisasi perusahaan milik kolonial Belanda dan bersama kepulauan warga Belanda itu mereka membawa serta istri-istrinya yang sebagian adalah warga negara Indonesia. Untuk kasus ini disebut juga migrasi karena adanya perkawinan. Pada masa sekarang, dimulai sejak akhir tahun 1990-an, arus masuk orang Indonesia untuk berbagai macam motif makin banyak terlihat. Migrasi karena mendapatkan sekolah lalu memutuskan bekerja dan menetap di Belanda. Mereka dalam kategori ini bekerja sebagai tenaga kerja terampil dan terdidik (*skilled workers*). Migrasi yang lain adalah dalam bentuk kunjungan keluarga dan akhirnya orang tersebut memutuskan tinggal di Belanda. Pada kasus ini, hampir sebagian besar dari mereka bekerja di sektor pekerjaan informal atau *unskilled workers*. Mereka yang bekerja sebagai tenaga kerja *unskilled workers* jarang memiliki dokumen lengkap atau dilekatkan pada mereka istilah *undocumented migrant*. Dari beberapa tipe migrasi yang tampak, tulisan ini menceritakan bagaimana proses migrasi itu berlangsung dan seperti apa pola-pola migrasi yang muncul dari aktifitas migrasi orang Indonesia di Belanda. Dengan adanya orang Indonesia yang menjadi *undocumented migrant* di Belanda, perlu juga diinformasikan bagaimana mereka bertahan tinggal di Belanda dengan status tidak resminya itu. Data dari tulisan ini diperoleh dari hasil penelitian melalui hasil wawancara dengan beberapa orang Indonesia yang bekerja di Belanda. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, pengumpulan data lapangan dilakukan di Amsterdam, Leiden and Utrecht, Belanda pada tahun 2010 dan 2011.

Kata kunci: migrasi, pekerja migran, pekerja terampil, pekerja tidak terampil, pekerja tak terdokumentasi.

Introduction

Globalization becomes the password of the world economy in the last decade. Migration has been an important part of the transition process in Europe,

including the Netherlands, one of homes for the migrants. The growth of industry in some European countries in 1950s including the Netherlands, invited migrants to come to the Netherlands and get a better job. Basically, the push pull factor theory is the most famous theory to analyse on migration. Unbalance and unstable political, security and economic condition in one place or country are the main reason of people to migrate in a better place or country, including to the Netherlands.

The Netherlands is a small country with many migrants. Since the beginning of 1960s, the Netherlands has changed from emigration country to immigration country (Zorlu & Hartog 2002, 119). Since then, except in 1967, Netherlands has actually been a country for immigrants; but the Dutch never admits it (Vermuelen & Penninx 2000, 5). The prosperity which increased significantly and a decreased concomitant with the emigration invited immigrations at the same time. The migrants after the World War II can be divided into three main categories: *first*, immigrants from colonial countries; *second*, those who were recruited for jobs that did not require expertise (known as visiting-workers); and the last, refugees and political asylum seekers. For the recent years, developed countries have applied immigration policy and facilitate unskilled immigrants to skilled immigrants (PSDR, 2012: 2)

The immigrants are commonly from ex-Dutch colonies like Suriname and Indonesia. In 1970s, there were two big migration waves from Suriname to the Netherlands occupying big cities such as Rotterdam and The Hague. Their occupations were mostly illegal working as contract-based laborers and after the contract was finished, they returned to their native country. Moreover, after Suriname got its independence in the middle 1970s, the Dutch government gave freedom to Surinamese people to choose their citizenship, and then the second migration wave happened. Their status were legal and they were provided housing by the Dutch government (Gusnelly, 2005).

Since the beginning 1950s, most Indonesian who came to Netherlands was dominated by Mollucans. In 1958 many Indonesians came to Netherlands, because they rejected the nationalization process in Indonesia. The last one, in 1965 more Indonesians migrated to the Netherlands because of Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) revolution flared in 30 September 1965 and the event was called G30S/PKI in Indonesia. They were students who sent to the Netherlands and to other countries by Soekarno but they did not allowed to come back to Indonesia, because they were suspected to involve in the prohibited Indonesian Party in Indonesia.¹ Until now, they still live there and set up organizations that care for Indonesia (Gusnelly, 2005: 82; Amersvoort, 1982). After European Union unification, countries' borders become affiliated, border areas become more crowded and illegal migrants flood to receiver

1 Interview with Mr. Mintardjo 30 May 2005, Leiden, The Netherlands.

countries. The Dutch actually requires immigrants as an effort to solve the problems of the declining population growth. After that, globalization has opened up opportunities for people across the world to migrate, including Indonesian people. They take advantage of this opportunity to improve their quality of life. This opportunity applies not only for skilled workers but also unskilled workers in the Netherlands. In the long run, migration of skilled labor could be a solution to the economic problem for their family in Indonesia.

The article will be specified on Indonesian migrant workers in the Netherlands. The article also explored the opportunity for Indonesian labors in the Netherlands. The objective of this article is to explore the Indonesian skilled and unskilled labors, particularly on their characteristics and its' competitiveness in the Netherlands. This article emphasizes Indonesian immigrant conditions in the Netherlands which is comprised of many ethnics; local ethnics as the local people and the newcomers as the new groups in the society.

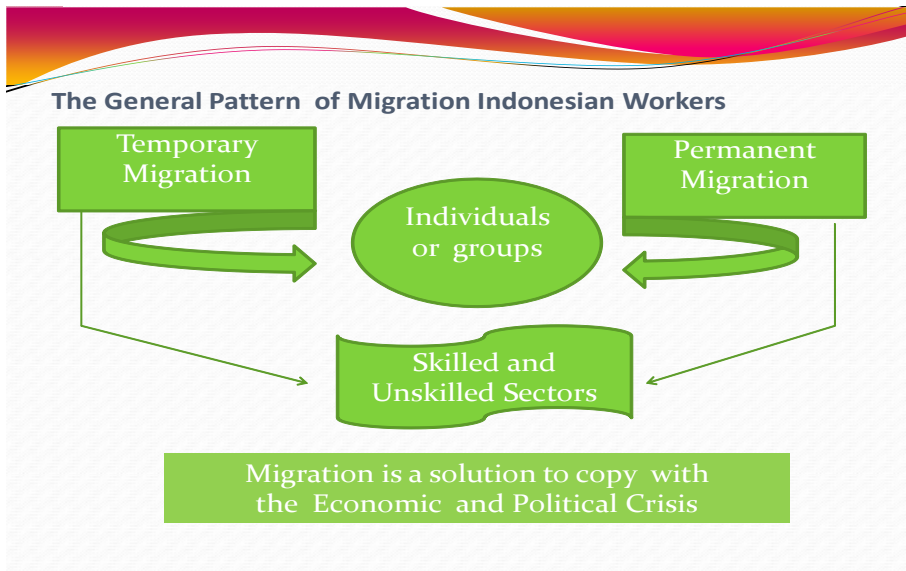
The methodology conducted in this research is qualitative approach and we analyze with descriptive analytic method. Data were collected from two sources: literatures and the field work. The later is used to get secondary data and the studies that have been carried on migration in the Netherlands. Field research is conducted by doing in-depth-interview to the expert on International migration, the Dutch government, and the Indonesian migrants. This research is going to be held in the Netherlands, located in Leiden, Amsterdam, Utrecht and The Hague.

The Motivation and General Pattern of Migration

In migration theory, a migrant is a free individual who has autonomy in making their own decision and is also a rational creature who makes a decision based on profit and loss and what is best for oneself; thus, a decision for migration is always said to be a rational choice (Darwin Muhajir, Anna Marie Wattie, 2005: 248). For migrant workers, the current global situation can be very profitable, especially for skilled labors. They can win the chance to work anywhere, no longer bound by territorial borders of nation-states, the important promises a good career with high wages. The impact of the migration decision is that the money sent back to family in the home country becomes foreign exchange for the origin country. Migrant will keep money for the future saving as much as possible in the destination country. If they return to their country they will open small businesses.

The migration and employment-seeking abroad phenomena have happened since 1990s decades, including for individuals from Indonesia. Many people have interested in seeking work abroad and have been exposed.

Cross-borders migration must be seen as a demographic phenomenon. It is because a migration is a movement of an individual to settle (temporarily or permanently) across a country border. The movement is happening because there are negative and positive factors; when those factors are considered, then, a decision for migration is taken. Usually, the negative factor is related to unfavorable economic problems in the origin country and to see a great advantage in other places. Several factors have considered to be the push factors (origin countries) such as, *first*; limited for job opportunity and inability of government to accommodate workers that have pushed people to find their solution, *second*; a low education background, workers work in informal sectors to overseas, *third*; network relation with relatives in destination country and *fourth*; big opportunity to get better jobs and education in destination countries especially in developed countries.



Migration activity can be done by individuals or groups, and permanent or contemporary migration (temporary). The pattern of permanent migration is often done by those who already have kinship, family and couples in the country of destination. For the mix-marriage descendants (Indo children's) will be easier to come to the Netherlands. The migration motivation or the type of their migration is *family reunification*. The people movements from one to another country stay there permanently. The momentum of family reunion and the decision of these migrants to stay permanently become more obvious. After that, they began to invite the other members of family or friends to join them and they offer opportunities to get job with the social welfare service that they will get.

A study done by Ritchey (1976 cited from De Jong and Gardner (1981) mentioned that the relate kinship and friendship affiliation to migration would be possible to push human mobility or migration. The presence of relatives and friends in an individual's community of residence tends to constraint migration. Kinship and affiliation can help individual to adapt and be potential for adjustment through the availability of aid in relocation at an alternative place of residence. After that, the information about destination countries from family and friends encourages migrants, particularly job opportunities at the destination countries. The transnational networks has significantly helped the workers to find jobs overseas (Kotarumalos; 2012).

Highly-skilled migration is the type of migration currently most popular with receiving country governments. Highly-skilled migration is the type of temporary migration. Since the 1980s, Western European and some East Asian countries have set up privileged entry systems to attract entrepreneurs, executives, scientists, professionals and technical specialists (Findlay, 1995). Historically, temporary work elsewhere was a way to acquire a capital stake. Temporary work abroad can also be a means of knowledge's technology transfer to drive development in the housing countries (Kuznetsov, 2006; 28 - 29). However, for the next period, especially at the end of 1990s, the demand and recruitment of migrant laborers were done selectively in a line with migration wave to European area. In fact, migration flow could not be stopped despite the changes in various policies issued by the government.

Particularly for Indonesian, the increasing wealth is one of factors that some people take the opportunity to continue their studies abroad by using their own money. The more students studying abroad, the more likely they will be skilled migrants at a later stage. They also may act as the channels for colleagues and friends at home country to get jobs. After 3 years working in Netherlands with work permit, then, one usually can acquire permanent residency permit automatically. The foreign worker will also be free to get any jobs and does not need any work permit which is sponsored by the company. But, most of them still have a willingness to return to Indonesia and to work in their own country. The decision to stay for a long time for most Indonesians working in the Netherlands is usually related to get successful and complete their career also build up capital. For the skilled workers and students, who received some education abroad, they also get a job to build up a capital stake in order to make a new career when they return home. They return home and starting a small business, such as a shop, café, or small boarding house in Indonesia. The characteristic Indonesian skilled worker in the Netherlands, see in table 1. The table illustrates the main characteristics of young professional workers in the Netherlands. Young males generally have the courage to decide to work and stay for a long time abroad. The difficulty is that only a select few of Indonesians are admitted to Dutch institutes or

other leading universities in the world. Thus, only the middle class can enter the European labor market, especially for the work group of *skilled labor*.

Table 1. Characteristics of Indonesian Skilled Workers in the Netherlands

No	Job	Sex	Education	Age	Status	Parents' occupations
1	Nurse	Female	Nursing Diploma	35 years	Married	Civil Servant
2	Junior tax analyst (Finance)	Male	Hogeschools Amsterdam	25 years	Not married	Private
3	IT programming	Male	Undergraduate in Computing in Indonesia	26 years	Not married	Lecturer
4	Database System, Data Warehouse and Business Intelligence	Male	Graduate in Computer Science, Bina Nusantara University	37 years	Married	Junior High School teacher
5	Junior engineer (Civil engineer majoring in mechanical geology and geo-hydrology)	Male	Dutch Undergraduate (S1)	25 years	Not married	Civil Servant
6	Civil Engineer	Male	Indonesian Undergraduate (S1)	24 years	Not married	Businessman

Source: processed data

Temporary migration for skilled workers (professional workers) who entered to the Netherlands is nurses. Starting in 1970s, the demand to fill the nursing manpower shortage would have been undertaken by the Dutch Government. This situation continued until the late 1990s when some employment agencies took the initiative to recruit nurses from outside the Netherlands, such as from Indonesia and the Philippines. The profession of Indonesian nurses is very profitable because in reality Indonesian nurses are preferred by patients. Indonesian nurses are well-known for their friendliness, politeness and patience in taking care of patients. When the work visa or training period ends, many of them decide not to go back to Indonesia. A similar story with student, the Nurses are less willing to work in Indonesia due to the concern that the work facility and salary will not be as good as in Holland. Even when there is a willingness to return to Indonesia, they will be back after obtaining further education in the Netherlands or after retirement.

The Prospect of Indonesian Skilled Workers

Migrants in the Netherlands enjoyed a fast development and a better economic level. But it changes from time to time, meaning that sometimes their position is up but sometimes it is down. This reality is happening in the Netherlands nowadays. Economic crisis has the impact to the Dutch government because it is in a transition time. According to the Dutch Economic Affairs Ministry, approximately 26,000 foreign nationals currently work in the Netherlands under the highly-skilled migrant's scheme.² More than 100 foreign companies opened Amsterdam offices last year, and 18 of them were built for their new European headquarters. The new companies created 1,255 new jobs, and brought to more than 1,900, the total number of international companies in the city. International companies employ nearly 17 percent of Amsterdam's total workforce.³ It is no wonder as the Dutch government as well as the European Union prioritize their citizens first and after that they can recruit foreign workers. Although it seems difficult, the Dutch government has untightened their regulation to recruit foreign workers into more fast track admission process for the companies to hire foreign workers (Kotarumalos, 2012).

A study by Kotarumalos (2011) also mentioned about the quality of the migrant must be able to show their competency in their fields. Many of the informants, Indonesian migrants have a great potential to work in the Netherlands as told by these informants:

Talking about quality, Indonesian workers are competitive as well compared to other foreign workers. The sad thing is that Indonesians often feel insecure with themselves. So when they are right, they are afraid to talk or express their opinion. Whereas here, we are educated to express our ideas so our boss will know that we understand the issue and know how to solve it (interview with Ha).

The opportunities of Indonesian nurses to work in foreign countries are very big, and it can be seen by the offers of various countries to Indonesia. However, if Indonesia is not able to fulfill those demands, there will be replaced by nurses from other developing countries who have better capabilities as compared to the Indonesian nurses. These challenges particularly come from other developing countries of whom nurses are using English as their national language or as their second language. However, the profession of Indonesian nurses is very profitable in Holland because in reality Indonesian nurses are preferred by patients. Indonesian nurses are well-known for their friendliness, politeness and patience in taking care of patients.

2 DutchNews.nl, see in the <http://www.nfia.com/nieuws.html?id=664> accessed 21/01/2011

3 The 2009 newcomer companies have home offices in North America, Asia or elsewhere in Europe. Most of the new companies are technology firms, but creative enterprises and business service units are also well-represented. Source Radio Netherlands Worldwide and Dutch News see in <http://www.nfia.com/nieuws.html?id=664>

The major shortage of health workers has been an issue in the Netherlands since the end of 1990s, particularly to nursing and caretaking personnel (see table 2; it is the largest professional group in the health sector). The table showed about the proportion employed in the health sector. Dutch Government need more professional workers in health sector like nurse to taking care older people in the country.

Table 2: Persons employed in the health sector per professional group

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Medical Professions	35,788	36,864	38,064	38,615	38,837
Paramedical Professions	36,912	38,128	38,862	39,334	39,746
Nursing and Caretaking Professions	387,824	399,498	414,179	423,428	426,695
Assisting Professions	41,418	44,315	46,701	48,915	51,662
Total	501,942	518,805	537,806	550,292	556,940

¹ Estimate based on trend.

Source: www.azwinfo.nl cited from European Migration Network, 2006: 11

Inputs for the Indonesian Government to the labour demand of nurses are, the activity or training for quality improvement and create sustainability of nurses as well as consistency to the development of international class of nursing schools (academy and health polytechnic for the nurses), sister school system and some additional courses for preparation of nurses for foreign countries. The development of global education markets is momentum for the more developed countries to offer training and programs for students from developing countries such as Indonesia.

The Phenomenon of Indonesian Undocumented Workers

Since the unification of UE, the trend of the international migration have been taken by immigrant workers from countries of the former Soviet Union or the CEECs (Central and Eastern European Countries) such as Andorra, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonian and Polish. In 1999, the Netherlands received 130.600 immigrants from the CEECs. EU immigration policy for the countries of the former Soviet Union is rather different from the immigration deal in the past. The European policy on free movement of people has caused an important distinction between two sorts of migrants though: citizens of the

European Union who settle in another Member State and people from non-Member States who want to enter a state that is a member of the European Union, the so-called 'third-country nationals' (TCN's) (Jansen, Milan, 2003; 102). Whereas entering to a Member State of the European Union by a third-country national depends on a large extent on national immigration law. The migration within the territory of the European Union by EU citizens is regulated by EU legislation and is only to a very small degree controlled by national states. The free movement only counts for Member State nationals and traditionally, TCN's are officially excluded from these rights and are still a matter of national immigration policy (John Salt, 2001). Migration for foreign workers or professional workers are expected to enter the professional field, due to meet the demands of the World Trade Organizations General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

European Government policy regarding to the freedom of people moving in European region, makes a problem for immigration contexts. The control of new borders will be omitted after a longer transition period. With this rule, the countries joined in European Union can still prepare many things that may be useful to handle problems appearing from the upcoming free migration, and people will be easy to cross borders without legal document because the closeness of one country's border to another.

For the Dutch government, the issue is not new illegally. Since the guest workers from Mediterranean countries come to fill labor gaps in the Netherlands in the 1960s, the phenomenon of illegal workers was already there. Current period, the phenomenon of illegal labor will continue. However, they are illegal or undocumented work but they are needed to fill jobs in the domestic sector. Commonly, they first come to the Netherlands legally with a tourist visa, aided by private agents or the individual departs.⁴

However, those who work as unskilled workers in the informal sector related to domestic services, such as gardener or servant in Dutch people house. It is difficult to track the statistics of how many workers, because they report to the embassy only to request for passport renewal and only a few mentions their occupation in the Netherlands. The Embassy reported that about 3 million Indonesian people exist in this sector. They don't have complete document (undocumented). The mechanism to enter to Holland is through agent, kinship (family or friends) and study or short training. Their visas are tourism's visa or member's of shipboard technicians. For those who got married to a Dutch citizen (mix-marriage) and stay for 5 years, they will get a permanent resident status. However, they will become undocumented status when they divorce before 5 years stay in Holland, except they return to home country.

4 See in the <http://internasional.kompas.com/read/2010/04/13/10473453/Derita.Pekerja.legal.Indonesia.di.Belanda>, diakses 18 Februari 2011

Those undocumented workers work in informal sectors, for example as a gardener. The salary for 3 hours work is around 40 Euro. The salary is the minimum standard salary in the Netherlands which ranges from €12-€15/hour and for a year work the minimum salary for manual labor is €29.000 per year or €1.560 per month after tax. Mostly, they work for 3-5 hours in a day and they are not bound to an official work contract and without tax. It seems that this factor is risky or harmful for their illegal status; still, their labor is needed in the Netherlands. They get orders from their friends or colleagues.⁵

Rotterdam, and Amsterdam are big and business city in the Netherlands. Those cities equipped with modern infrastructure and become a job seeker destination. These cities are the biggest port in the Netherlands, densely populated cities and many migrants. Undocumented workers stay for long time (2-4 years) in colleague's house, family, friends (not only Indonesian people but their friends are also from Suriname, Philippines and India) or Indonesian people in Holland. Even though they are illegal, the Dutch police do not feel bothered by Indonesians. If an Indonesian is caught, the person will be imprisoned from 2 weeks to 2 months; after that, the person will be released on condition that the person agrees not to commit crime in the Netherlands.⁶

A close regard to the issue of undocumented workers (migrants), the exercise of power over their people is not able to address its power in the Netherlands. Even the duty to perform control and protection for its citizens is not able to run. State simply understands it as a series of strategies, programs, engineering tools, documents and procedures embodied in the form of pseudo-power (Philpott, 2003). In fact, in this country the Embassy is not the authorities for citizens who were captured in the Netherlands. Role of the State in this case only if the illegal immigrant issues SPLP expired passport. The task of taking care of the return process is handed over to the International Organization of Migration (IOM). The return process is also spent many months and all expenses budget guaranteed by IOM.

Although the road to the entrance to the Holland is strict, it creates a new job for many job offers or unscrupulous agents to commit fraud, but every year, the number of illegal labor workers still grows a lot. At least the information from several respondents indicated that one always ask for a job to those who have already lived in the Netherlands. This is obvious that this will not be profitable to the political relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands. The Indonesian government can only create new cooperation agreements in employment, for instance the cooperation of health service demand in the 1990's back then. Emotional relations between Indonesia and

5 Interview with Sri Maryati and Nina on May, 13, 2011 in The Hague. Interview with Noor Hayati, on May, 16, 2011 in Rotterdam.

6 Interview with Syafei, on May 15, 2010 in Amsterdam Amstel, Netherlands

the Netherlands could be used as the power to ask for special favour from the Dutch government in a form of job opportunities that are less interested by the Dutch society. Some 4800 of them will be captured in the year of 2012. Even the minister of immigration facilitated the police to do it on the streets. Criterion of 'criminal involvement' becomes blurred. Will the government of Indonesia help those who were undocumented?

Closing Remarks

In the global situation, there are successful Indonesian migrant workers in foreign countries. In general, people come to foreign countries, especially to developed countries, to seek jobs and get a higher salary comparing to a smaller salary in their own countries. Labor migration needs to be integrated into the country's program for economic modernization and global competitiveness. They are skilled labors who successfully capture the globalization as a prospect for the development of their professional careers. However, their numbers are less than the biggest composition of Indonesian migrant workers which is categorized as unskilled labors. In addition, the Indonesian government can set up a cooperation with the Dutch government, particularly on the placement of Indonesian nurses in the Netherlands through International House Training Program (IHTP). If the cooperation between government is not possible, there is still other ways to enable sending the Indonesian nurses to the Netherlands. Particularly, the cooperation between the Dutch private companies and the Indonesian private companies is more possible. This role can be played by the Indonesian embassy in the Netherlands and looking for chances and opportunities to sending the Indonesian nurses, as this is another way to reduce unemployment skilled workers in Indonesia. ●

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