

Aligning Japanese Language Training with Labor Market Demands: An Evaluation of Vocational Education Programs

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Abstract

This study evaluates the effectiveness of Japanese language training programs in Indonesia's vocational education system, focusing on their alignment with labor market demands. As Japan faces workforce shortages, Indonesia has developed vocational language training to prepare candidates for employment abroad. Despite these initiatives, many programs still emphasize grammar-based instruction over communicative and cultural competence. A descriptive quantitative approach using Likert-scale questionnaires was supported by semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Results indicate that while institutional management and resources are adequate, curriculum relevance, practical communication skills, and collaboration with industry partners remain limited. The findings highlight the importance of revising curricula, improving teacher capacity, and strengthening partnerships with Japanese employers to enhance employability outcomes. These implications extend to the broader development of Indonesia's vocational education system, emphasizing the need for responsive, industry-oriented training.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global labor market has undergone significant transformation, particularly in countries like Japan that are facing aging populations and declining birth rates. These demographic shifts have created an increasing demand for skilled foreign workers. Through bilateral cooperation such as the Indonesia-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA), Indonesia has sought to seize this opportunity by preparing its workforce to meet the linguistic and cultural expectations of Japanese industries (Avivi & Siagian, 2020). Within this framework, vocational training institutions, or Lembaga Pelatihan Kerja (LPK), have become pivotal in providing intensive Japanese language training. These programs aim to equip trainees with both communication competence and professional discipline necessary for successful employment in Japan.

Despite these efforts, concerns remain regarding the extent to which such training programs align with real labor market expectations. Many institutions still emphasize written grammar and vocabulary memorization, while giving insufficient attention to oral communication, listening comprehension, and contextual use of language (Hafidz, 2023). In addition, instructional approaches often rely on outdated textbooks and teacher-centered methods, limiting interactive and practical learning experiences (Anggraeni & Shofwan, 2023). Although participants may achieve certifications such as JLPT N4 or N3, Japanese employers often report that graduates struggle with communication, adaptation to workplace culture, and problem-solving skills. These gaps indicate broader structural issues in curriculum design, teaching quality, and program implementation that require systematic evaluation.

Existing literature on vocational education in Indonesia highlights the importance of curri-

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culum relevance, competency-based learning, and collaboration with industry partners in improving employability outcomes (Akpur et al., 2016; Bhakti, 2017; Istiyani & Utsman, 2019). However, research focusing specifically on language based vocational training particularly those preparing workers for international employment remains limited. Most prior studies concentrate on general skill training or domestic employment readiness, overlooking the unique demands of language-integrated vocational programs designed for overseas placement.

Addressing this gap, the present study evaluates an intensive Japanese language training program conducted by a vocational training institution in Central Java. The evaluation examines how the program's context, resources, and implementation influence participants' employability and readiness for the Japanese labor market. A mixed-method design combining quantitative Likert-scale questionnaires with semi-structured interviews and document analysis is employed to capture both measurable indicators and qualitative insights.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to improving the effectiveness and responsiveness of vocational language training in Indonesia. The study aims to offer empirical evidence and practical recommendations for strengthening curriculum design, resource management, and instructional delivery in alignment with international labor standards. By doing so, it supports Indonesia's broader agenda of developing a skilled, adaptable, and globally competitive workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of transnational employment

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vocational education plays a central role in developing a skilled and adaptive workforce capable of meeting the evolving needs of global industries. Scholars emphasize that the success of vocational programs depends not only on technical competence but also on soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and cross-cultural awareness (Han & Park, 2021; Marginson, 2019). In many Asian contexts, vocational education has become a strategic policy instrument for bridging the gap between education and employment, particularly in sectors requiring international collaboration (ILO, 2022).

Recent studies have explored how vocational institutions can align their curricula with labor market needs by adopting competency based and industry-responsive approaches (Sudira, 2018; Yuliani et al., 2020). Effective vocational systems are characterized by strong partnerships between training providers, employers, and government bodies that ensure curriculum relevance and employment linkage (Li & Pilz, 2023). However, achieving this alignment remains challenging in many developing countries, where limited resources, traditional pedagogies, and insufficient industry engagement often constrain program outcomes (Kemenkeu, 2022).

Within the domain of language based vocational training, researchers have highlighted the growing demand for programs that integrate linguistic proficiency with occupational competence. Studies in Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia demonstrate that language training for employment purposes must go beyond grammar instruction to include communicative practice, cultural immersion, and workplace simulation (Tsuda, 2020; Honna, 2018). These elements enhance learners' readiness for transnational work environments and reduce cultural adjustment barriers once employed abroad (Sato & Takahashi, 2021).

In Indonesia, language oriented vocational training particularly for Japanese employment has expanded rapidly under bilateral agreements such as IJEPa. Nevertheless, institutional evaluations reveal persistent issues, including curriculum imbalance between academic and practical components, uneven instructor qualifications, and minimal exposure to authentic communicative contexts (Anggraeni & Shofwan, 2023; Hafidz, 2023). Despite certification achievements, graduates often face challenges in workplace communication, teamwork, and adaptability, which are essential for success in Japanese industries.

Synthesizing these findings, the literature underscores the need for a more comprehensive

understanding of how vocational language training operates within Indonesia's labor mobility framework. Previous research has primarily addressed general vocational programs or domestic employability; limited attention has been given to language-integrated training aimed at international workforce preparation. This study therefore builds upon existing vocational education literature by examining how training context, resource adequacy, and instructional practice shape learners' employability within Japan related vocational pathways.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach supported by qualitative data to comprehensively evaluate the implementation of a Japanese language training program within Indonesia's vocational education context. The evaluation followed the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) framework proposed by Stufflebeam and Zhang (2017), which systematically examines program relevance, available resources, implementation processes, and resulting outcomes.

The research was conducted at a private vocational institution in Central Java that prepares trainees for employment in Japan. The total population comprised 140 individuals, including students, instructors, administrative staff, coordinators, and liaison officers. Through purposive sampling, 47 participants were selected to ensure representativeness and data diversity.

Quantitative data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 40 items distributed across the four CIPP components. The instrument underwent expert validation and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$). Complementary qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and document analysis to enrich the interpretation of quantitative findings.

Based on the research framework, the following theoretical hypotheses (H_t) were formulated:

- H_{t5} : There is a relationship between curriculum relevance (context) and the effectiveness of program implementation (process).
- H_{t6} : There is a relationship between instructor competence and training facilities (input) and the effectiveness of program implementation (process).
- H_{t7} : There is a relationship between program implementation effectiveness (process) and training outcomes in participants' skill improvement (product).

Data were analyzed using descriptive and correlational statistics, including means, percentages, and Pearson correlation analysis to test the hypotheses. Qualitative data were thematically coded following the four CIPP dimensions to strengthen interpretation and triangulation.

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional research ethics board. All participants provided informed consent and were assured anonymity and voluntary participation. To maintain confidentiality, the institution's name and individual identifiers were anonymized. The main limitations of this study include its reliance on self-reported data and the absence of long-term outcome assessment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study and their interpretations in accordance with the research method and research questions. As the study used a quantitative approach with supporting qualitative data, the structure of this section is based on the seven formulated research questions. Each subsection elaborates on the findings relevant to one research question, supported by data from questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis. The CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation model is used as the analytical framework.

All data tables are formatted following academic writing standards, with table titles placed above each table and figure captions below each figure. The quality of the tables and illustrations has been optimized to ensure clarity and readability. Each quantitative finding is presented alongside its corresponding mean, standard deviation, percentage, and categorical interpretation. These are then followed by qualitative insights and theoretical reflections to strengthen the discussion and provide a deeper understanding of the findings.

1. The Relevance of the Training Program to the Japanese Labor Market and National Employment Policies (Context Evaluation)

Based This subsection discusses the contextual evaluation of the Japanese language training program at LPK. The evaluation aims to determine the extent to which the program's curriculum is aligned with the demands of the Japanese labor market and conforms to the national employment policy framework. In the CIPP evaluation model, the context component is essential in assessing the relevance, feasibility, and necessity of the program within its broader policy and market setting (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017). Two primary indicators were assessed: the alignment of the curriculum with Japanese labor market needs and the curriculum's consistency with national manpower policies.

Based on the data obtained from questionnaires administered to students, the results showed a mean score of 4.20 for the indicator assessing alignment with Japanese labor market needs and 4.30 for alignment with national labor policies. These results fall into the "Good" category, with an overall average of 4.25 (85%), which qualifies as "Very Good" according to the interpretation criteria. The standard deviation of the two indicators was relatively low (mean SD = 0.628), indicating a consistent response pattern among participants.

Table 1 Context evaluation Result: Relevence of Training Program

No	Indicator	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage (%)	Category
1.	The curriculum meets Japanese labor market needs	0.648	4.20	84%	Good
2.	The curriculum aligns with national labor policies	0.608	4.30	86%	Good
Σ		0.628	4.25	85%	Very Good

Qualitative data obtained from interviews with instructors and staff provided further confirmation of the program's contextual relevance. Several informants stated that the curriculum was revised based on feedback from Japanese partner companies to include more practical content, such as business Japanese, formal speech (keigo), and workplace manners. A curriculum document review showed that modules were adapted not only to match JLPT levels but also to reflect typical workplace scenarios encountered in the caregiving, manufacturing, and hospitality sectors in Japan.

From a theoretical standpoint, the results support the perspective of Arikunto and Jabar (2010), who emphasized that training programs built upon real labor market needs are more likely to produce competent and employable graduates. By embedding international labor demands and policy priorities into its curriculum design, the program ensures that its graduates are not only linguistically prepared but also culturally and professionally equipped to thrive in Japan.

Overall, the training program at LPK demonstrates a strong contextual foundation. The findings confirm that the program is not only well-targeted and demand-driven but also contributes to national strategies for enhancing the competitiveness of Indonesian human resources abroad. This relevance strengthens the program's legitimacy and enhances its effectiveness in preparing future workers for successful employment in Japan.

2. The Quality and Availability of Training Resources (Input Evaluation)

Input evaluation focuses on the quality and adequacy of essential resources that support the implementation of the program, including curriculum quality, teacher competence, and the availability of learning facilities. As emphasized by Stufflebeam and Zhang (2017), input evaluation serves to assess the strategic planning, personnel, and material resources required for the success of an educational program.

Based on the results of the questionnaire distributed to 40 student respondents, the average score for curriculum quality was 4.65, placing it in the "Very Good" category. The competence of teaching staff received an average score of 4.55, categorized as "Good," while the availability of learning facilities scored 4.20, also rated as "Good." The overall average across the three indicators was 4.46, equivalent to 89.2%, which falls within the "Good" category. The consistency of responses was moderately stable, indicated by an average standard deviation of 0.721.

Tabel 2 Input Evaluation Result: Training Resources

No	Indicator	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage (%)	Category
1.	Curriculum quality	0.700	4.65	93%	Very Good
2.	Instructor competence	0.552	4.55	91%	Good
3.	Availability of learning facilities	0.911	4.20	84.6%	Good
Σ		0.721	4.46	89.2%	Good

From interviews support the quantitative results. The instructors stated that the curriculum used at LPK has undergone several revisions to enhance its relevance, including practical content and communicative task-based learning strategies. Teachers are generally certified with JLPT N2 or higher and receive periodic training to align with the pedagogical standards required by Japanese partner institutions. However, several respondents noted that classroom space and audiovisual equipment could be improved to better facilitate interactive and immersive language learning activities.

The findings are consistent with the theory of Arikunto and Jabar (2010), who emphasized that input factors such as qualified instructors and well-developed learning materials are directly correlated with learner engagement and achievement. The relatively high scores in curriculum quality and teacher competence reflect LPK's commitment to maintaining instructional standards. Meanwhile, the slightly lower score on facilities suggests an area for further development, particularly in accommodating a growing number of students and implementing technology-supported learning.

In conclusion, the training program demonstrates a solid input foundation, with strengths in its curriculum and teaching staff. While learning infrastructure is generally adequate, improvements in physical and technological resources would further enhance the quality and effectiveness of the program delivery.

3. The Effectiveness of Training Program Implementation (Process Evaluation)

The process evaluation focuses on how effectively the program is carried out, particularly regarding the teaching methods used, participant engagement, and time management during the training sessions. In the CIPP model, process evaluation ensures that the activities are being implemented as planned and meet quality standards throughout the execution phase (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017).

The results of the quantitative analysis revealed that all three indicators in this component received high ratings. The use of appropriate teaching methods received a mean score of

4.15 (83%), categorized as "Very Good." The level of participant engagement achieved a score of 4.25 (85%), also rated as "Very Good." The highest score was found in the effectiveness of time management, which reached 4.48 (89.5%), again in the "Very Good" category. The overall mean score across these indicators was 4.29, with a standard deviation of 0.717, indicating consistent perceptions among respondents.

Tabel 3 Process Evaluation Result: Implementation Effectiveness

No	Indicator	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage (%)	Category
1.	Teaching methods used	0.770	4.15	83%	Very Good
2.	Participant engagement	0.742	4.25	85%	Very Good
3.	Time management effectiveness	0.640	4.48	89.5%	Very Good
Σ		0.717	4.29	85.8%	Very Good

These results were corroborated by qualitative insights gathered from interviews with teachers and program coordinators. Teachers reported using a variety of methods including interactive dialogue, group-based conversation, roleplaying in workplace scenarios, and JLPT style drills. These approaches were positively received by students, which explains the high engagement levels observed. Several participants noted that the schedule was structured efficiently, with intensive yet manageable class hours that allowed for both language comprehension and practice.

The findings align with Arikunto and Jabar (2010), who noted that effective learning occurs when the instructional process is delivered systematically and involves active learner participation. In this context, the training program's ability to maintain time discipline, foster interactive teaching, and sustain student engagement reflects a high degree of instructional quality.

Overall, the implementation process of the Japanese language training at LPK is considered highly effective. The teaching methods, active participation of learners, and disciplined time management together ensure that the learning environment is dynamic and conducive to skill acquisition. These process related strengths support the program's broader goals of preparing participants for the demands of Japanese work environments.

4. The Quality and Availability of Training Resources

According to the CIPP evaluation model, product evaluation aims to assess the extent to which the objectives of the program have been met, especially regarding the improvements in participants' skills, competitiveness, and satisfaction (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017).

Tabel 4 Product Evaluation Result: Training Outcomes

No	Indicator	Standard Deviation	Mean	Percentage (%)	Category
1.	Improvement in Japanese language skills	0.71	4.425	88.5%	Very Good
2.	Competitiveness in the job market	0.698	4.225	84.5%	Very Good
3.	Participant satisfaction with the program	0.829	4.325	86.5%	Very Good
Σ		0.769	4.325	86.5%	Very Good

The findings indicate that the program has achieved a high level of success across all three measured indicators. The improvement in participants' Japanese language skills obtained an average score of 4.425 (88.5%), categorized as "Very Good." The competitiveness of participants in the job market received a mean of 4.225 (84.5%), while participant satisfaction with the training

program was rated at 4.325 (86.5%). These results reflect an overall average score of 4.325, with a percentage of 86.5% and a standard deviation of 0.769, indicating stable responses and a high level of agreement among participants.

Interviews with instructors and students reinforced these findings. Many students expressed that their Japanese communication skills had improved significantly, particularly in listening and speaking, as a result of structured practice, keigo application, and JLPT preparation. Program alumni also reported higher levels of confidence and readiness when applying for job placements with Japanese companies. Furthermore, participants appreciated the overall learning atmosphere, teacher support, and program structure, all of which contributed to their satisfaction.

These results support the idea put forward by Arikunto and Jabar (2010) that well-designed and consistently implemented training programs tend to yield measurable improvements in learner performance and satisfaction. The success of the program in improving language competence and increasing job market readiness demonstrates its effectiveness in achieving its intended goals.

In summary, the product evaluation confirms that the training program at LPK in Semarang delivers substantial benefits to its participants. Through improved skills, enhanced employability, and positive learner experiences, the program has demonstrated its practical value and sustainability in supporting workforce development for the Japanese labor market.

5. The Relationship between Program Context and Implementation Process

Within the CIPP evaluation model, context refers to the relevance of the program to external demands such as the Japanese labor market and national employment policies, while process pertains to the quality of program execution, including teaching methods, time management, and participant engagement (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017).

A Spearman rank-order correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between these two variables. The results yielded a correlation coefficient (ρ) of 0.488 and a p-value of 0.001, indicating a moderate but statistically significant positive relationship between context and process.

Tabel 5 Correlation between Context and Process Variables (Spearman Test)

Variabel Pair	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Context - Process	0.488	0.001	Moderate, Significant

These findings suggest that improvements in the contextual alignment of the program such as the integration of industry relevant competencies and policy-aligned curriculum moderately influence the effectiveness of how the program is implemented. A well designed contextual basis provides clear direction for instructional planning, which then supports better execution in classroom activities and learner engagement.

Interviews confirmed this interpretation. Coordinators reported that the curriculum, which was aligned with Japanese labor standards, had a meaningful impact on how instructors structured their lessons. However, some teachers noted that, despite the curriculum's alignment with market demands, certain institutional limitations occasionally restricted full integration of contextual priorities into classroom practices.

According to Arikunto and Jabar (2010), contextual grounding is crucial in guiding the instructional process, but its influence also depends on the flexibility of implementation. Therefore, a moderate correlation in this study reflects a realistic dynamic where context provides necessary direction, yet implementation is also affected by logistical and operational factors.

In summary, the results indicate a meaningful relationship between the contextual relevance of the program and the quality of its implementation. Strengthening contextual planning

while also addressing on the ground constraints can enhance the overall effectiveness of vocational training delivery.

6. The Relationship between Program Input and Implementation Process

In the CIPP evaluation framework, input represents the available resources and strategies used to achieve program goals, such as curriculum quality, instructor competence, and learning facilities. Meanwhile, the process dimension refers to how those inputs are utilized in the execution of teaching and learning activities (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017).

To measure the strength and significance of the relationship between the two variables, a Spearman rank-order correlation test was performed. The result showed a correlation coefficient (ρ) of 0.716, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong and statistically significant relationship between input and process components.

Table 6 Correlation between Input and Process Variables (Spearman Test)

Variabel Pair	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Input - Process	0.716	0.000	Strong, Significant

This finding implies that improvements in the quality of inputs such as more competent instructors, a well-designed curriculum, and sufficient learning facilities are strongly associated with the effectiveness of the instructional process. This is consistent with the theory proposed by Arikunto and Jabar (2010), which emphasizes that a well-supported input system enhances the quality of implementation in training programs.

Interviews with participants revealed that the presence of skilled and responsive instructors made the learning sessions more engaging and productive. Likewise, a curriculum designed to meet both academic and occupational needs encouraged structured teaching methods and increased student participation. While some informants noted room for improvement in facilities, the overall availability of learning resources contributed positively to the delivery of the training.

In conclusion, the significant and strong correlation between input and process indicates that the success of program implementation is closely tied to the adequacy and quality of its foundational resources. This suggests that continuous investment in input components is critical to maintaining a high standard of instructional practice in vocational language training.

7. The Relationship between Program Implementation and Training Outcomes

In the CIPP model, the process component refers to how the training program is executed—including the teaching methods, participant engagement, and time management—while the product component captures the tangible outcomes of the program, such as skill acquisition, employability, and participant satisfaction (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2017).

To determine the strength and significance of the relationship between these two components, a Spearman rank-order correlation test was conducted. The result showed a correlation coefficient (ρ) of 0.485 with a p-value of 0.001, indicating a moderate but statistically significant positive correlation between the quality of program implementation and its outcomes.

Table 7 Correlation between Process and Product Variables (Spearman Test)

Variabel Pair	Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	Sig. (p-value)	Interpretation
Process - Product	0.485	0.001	Moderate, Significant

This result suggests that better implementation marked by effective instructional strategies and structured learning environments is moderately associated with improved outcomes, including participant language proficiency, job readiness, and overall satisfaction. Although the

strength of the correlation is not high, it is significant, indicating that consistent and high-quality program delivery can contribute meaningfully to the success of participants.

Interview findings further support this statistical result. Students who experienced engaging teaching methods and consistent schedules reported higher confidence in their Japanese language skills and perceived themselves as more prepared for employment in Japanese industries. Conversely, minor inconsistencies in instructional delivery or classroom dynamics were sometimes associated with lower student motivation or slower skill development.

These findings are consistent with the views of Arikunto and Jabar (2010), who assert that the success of educational programs is not only determined by input but also by the precision and quality of implementation. A well-executed process serves as a conduit through which well-designed inputs are transformed into measurable results.

In conclusion, the moderate and significant correlation between the process and product components demonstrates the importance of instructional quality and learner engagement in achieving successful training outcomes. For vocational training programs aiming to produce competitive graduates, ensuring consistency and excellence in instructional practices is essential.

The findings of this study hold meaningful consequences for the broader development of vocational training in Indonesia. The evaluation reveals that language-based vocational programs, such as Japanese language training, can serve as strategic models for enhancing national workforce competitiveness provided that they are systematically aligned with labor market demands. Strengthening curriculum relevance, improving instructor qualifications, and integrating authentic workplace practices are essential steps toward producing graduates who are not only linguistically competent but also culturally and professionally adaptable. These insights emphasize the need for greater collaboration among vocational institutions, government bodies, and international partners to ensure training programs remain responsive to global employment trends. More broadly, the study contributes to the ongoing reform of Indonesia's vocational education system by highlighting how comprehensive evaluation and evidence-based improvement can advance the country's capacity to prepare a skilled, credible, and globally competitive workforce.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that while Japanese language training programs in Indonesia's vocational institutions have successfully expanded access to skill development opportunities, their effectiveness in preparing workers for the Japanese labor market remains limited. Quantitative results demonstrate that well structured inputs and supportive institutional contexts positively influence learning outcomes. However, qualitative evidence reveals persistent deficiencies in curriculum relevance, instructional methods, and teacher capacity.

To address these gaps, several key recommendations are proposed:

1. Curriculum Reform and Content Alignment: Conduct systematic content analyses of teaching materials to ensure alignment with workplace realities, industry specific terminology, and cross-cultural competencies.
2. Pedagogical Innovation: Implement task-based and communicative teaching approaches, emphasizing real-life interaction, roleplay, and workplace simulation activities.
3. Capacity Building: Develop ongoing teacher training and certification programs focused on modern language pedagogy and intercultural communication.
4. Evaluation Enhancement: Use mixed-method evaluation frameworks combining quantitative and qualitative data to ensure continuous program improvement.
5. Industry Education Partnership: Strengthen collaboration between LPKs, government agencies, and Japanese employers to co design curricula and establish competency stan-

dards reflecting labor market realities.

The implications of this research extend to Indonesia's broader vocational education reform agenda. As Indonesia expands its international labor cooperation, especially with Japan, enhancing the quality of language-for-work programs becomes crucial. Embedding systematic evaluation, evidence-based curriculum design, and data-driven quality assurance can elevate the entire vocational training system, ensuring that Indonesia produces a workforce that is linguistically skilled, culturally literate, and globally competitive.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of bridging not only skills and opportunities, but also education and employability empowering Indonesian workers to thrive in the increasingly interconnected global labor market.

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