

ARTICLE

Alternatives for Equal Education of Ministry of Education

Study on the Repatriation of Children of Migrant Workers in Blitar City

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Abstract: Equal access to education is part of fulfilling the rights of citizens, both within the country and abroad. The government, through the Ministry of Education, repatriates the children of migrant workers to obtain the right to study in Indonesia through partner schools of the Ministry of Education and Culture. This study analyzes repatriation as an educational alternative for the children of Indonesian migrant workers. Lack of documentation is a problem for them regarding administrative requirements, especially in education. Data was collected through observation and interviews with repatriates. Data collection was considered easy because the researcher was directly involved in the daily activities of the repatriates. Field findings indicate that their current course of study helps with their education and living expenses. Despite language difficulties, they feel comfortable because a representative educational environment supports them. Their adaptation is also fast because there are several similarities between Blitar and their origins while abroad. The purpose of repatriation in the field of education is none other than educational equality. Collaborative support from the government (Ministry of Education) and the person responsible for repatriation in Blitar makes repatriates feel at ease pursuing education in Indonesia. The learning environment influences the latent pattern of nationalist character formation for repatriates. Many factors shape the social resilience of repatriates.

Keywords: Repatriation; Alternative Education; Social Resilience.

1. Introduction

Repatriation has become a special focus for the Indonesian government. Studies supporting repatriation emphasize the perspectives of human rights and international law (Widagdo et al., 2021). It began with the mobilization of Indonesians from far-flung regions around the world. Repatriation is common and widely practiced (Rimayanti, 2019). The underlying motives vary, including business, tourism, and work. It is not uncommon for citizens abroad to settle in the countries they visit. Low survival rates pose risks to their careers and children. The role and function of parents in migrant worker families often fail to fulfill their duties (Anggraini et al., 2021). Repatriation presents a new problem for the regions where repatriates return. This situation leads to neglect of their descendants. Migrant worker issues are not well-monitored, particularly those involving pregnant and childbearing workers (Arub et al., 2016). The majority of repatriates are undocumented, leaving their status unclear. This uncertainty impacts their education. Children of migrant workers who are not in school create two social problems: underage labor and early marriage. This negatively impacts the country, increasing the number of uneducated Indonesian citizens. This is especially true for Indonesian citizens in southern Malaysia (Sabah-Kinabalu). They work in the palm oil plantation sector. This situation is of particular concern to the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education. Children of Indonesian migrant workers working on palm oil plantations in Sabah, Malaysia, deserve the right to education (Damayanti et al., 2023). Education is key to breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality. Providing a proper education for the children of migrant workers serves as an investment for a better future. It empowers future generations to create a financially independent, fairer, and more prosperous society. The Secondary Education Affirmation Program is an educational program for special children. In the last three years, this program has targeted the children of Indonesian migrant workers so they can receive an education in Indonesia. The secondary education affirmation program, also known as the Adem program, is not only applicable to children from Papua and West Papua Provinces but also to Indonesian children who live in Malaysia and whose parents work in Malaysia (Widayanti & Jumintono, 2021).

Those targeted by this program enjoy free education and living expenses covered by the government. During their three-year study period, they are placed in partner schools of the Ministry of Education, which provide education for the repatriation of children of Indonesian migrant workers. This program targets school-age children between the ages of 15 and 18, which is currently the age for children to pursue high school education. Adaptation is defined as an individual's capacity to cope with their environment. Social adaptation can be seen in adjustments to and withdrawal from unsupportive environments (Chandra & Budi Yuwono, 2021). Obtaining a proper education can help mobilize repatriates' personal resources. This effort is part of Indonesia's human development for future generations. Human development is an effort to balance economic development with advancement in human resources. The basic dimensions of human development consist of a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent livelihood (Arkum & Amar, 2022).

The differences in conditions between the countries of origin and Indonesia today certainly create significant differences. Society in general is inextricably linked to the social conditions that occur in their lives (Ningsih & Andalas, 2021). They are required to adapt quickly and easily adjust to the new environment. The social environment is a complex system of interactions between individuals, groups, and institutions that shape norms, values, and social structures. The impact of this environment on an individual's mental health, behavior, and well-being is often more

significant than genetic or physical factors. The patterns that develop inevitably cause various discomforts within them. These conditions require them to survive during their study period in Indonesia. Of course, they must be able to adapt to the environment, climate, food, language, and customs of the community where they live during their study period.

Social change is a grand theory, encompassing social structures and constructions. If a social order proceeds peacefully and orderly, the social structure can be said to be functioning well. Conversely, if chaos or irregularity occurs, this constitutes a structural conflict perspective. Talcott Parsons views structural-functional theory as empirical, positivist, and idealistic. Social systems must be interconnected with other systems to survive, and structures are constantly evolving (Hidayah, 2021). This means this condition is based on the drive of will, while heeding agreed-upon ideas, values, and norms. Parsons explains the functioning of a system using the Adaptation, Goal, Integration, and Latency (AGIL) scheme. This scheme is relevant to the experiences of repatriated migrant worker children in Indonesia.

Research by Novia (2023), implements the concepts of national interest and multi-track diplomacy. The findings of this study show that the Indonesian government engaged in a relatively lengthy diplomatic engagement with the Malaysian government to establish a Community-Based Center (CLC) in Sarawak, Malaysia, demonstrating the Indonesian government's commitment to providing education for the children of Indonesian migrant workers, the majority of whom are undocumented, wherever they are.

This contrasts with research conducted by Rimayanti (2019), which showed that repatriates face numerous challenges that are not easily resolved. These challenges are driven by factors related to employment and social factors.

This article is structured in two parts. First is the governance of the repatriation of migrant worker children in Blitar; second is the AGIL social resilience scheme, which provides social and educational resilience for repatriates. Based on these two previous studies, this study focuses on the social resilience of repatriated Indonesian migrant worker children in surviving in Indonesia. The subjects studied are also different, so the results obtained in this study reflect the latest conditions and reflect the reality on the ground.

2. Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative research is a type of research that aims to describe, interpret, and explain a phenomenon or social situation in its natural context. The focus is on understanding the 'what,' 'how,' and 'why' of human experiences, behaviors, and perceptions, without manipulating variables (Mohajan, 2018). Descriptive qualitative research methods are often used to explore a problem or topic that has not been widely researched, so they can provide a comprehensive initial description (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data sources in this study were obtained through observation and interview methods. The main data sources in the study were interviews with repatriates and those responsible for repatriation in Blitar. An interview is communication between two or more parties that can be conducted face-to-face, where one party acts as the interviewer and the other party acts as the interviewee for a specific purpose, for example, to obtain information or collect data (Fadhallah, 2021). Interviews were conducted with informants from secondary education repatriates in Blitar. To gain insight into education for repatriates, interviews were conducted with twelve

repatriates in Blitar. In addition to the repatriates, key informants were responsible for repatriating secondary education in Blitar. In-depth interviews are interactions/conversations that occur between one interviewer and one informant (Manzilati, 2017). The research location refers to the place or setting where research data is collected (Emzir, 2010). The research location was easily accessible because the researcher's workplace was directly adjacent to the repatriates, allowing for interaction with the repatriates. Data obtained from the interviews with the repatriates were carefully analyzed to identify their educational lives after arriving in Indonesia.

Participant observation is a method in which researchers engage with the community or group being studied to observe behavior, interactions, and events from an insider's perspective (Berg & Lune, 2009). Observations are conducted as interviews and data collection techniques to observe the behavior and activities of repatriates while in the environment. Repatriates often interact and participate in learning processes at school. Participatory observation and interviews with repatriates facilitated the researcher's acquisition of research data on education for repatriates. The data obtained were analyzed using triangulation techniques. The technique used triangulation of data sources based on interviews with each repatriate. Triangulation of data sources is cross-checking data by comparing facts from one source with those from another (Flick, 2024).

3. Results and Discussion

It is clear that the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Education (Kemendikbud), is committed to providing alternative educational solutions for the children of Indonesian migrant workers. They are provided with convenient domestic educational facilities. Below is a list of repatriates studying in Blitar City.

Table 1. Identification of Repatriates in Blitar City

No.	Name (Initial)	Origin	Patriation
1	NNA	JOHOR	Blitar
2	YYKOP	KINABALU	Adonara
3	RA	SABAH	Toraja
4	RP	SABAH	North Toraja
5	INA	JOHOR	Ngawi
6	ABK	SABAH	Kupang
7	KNR	SABAH	Flores
8	MMP	SABAH	Nunukan
9	SP	SABAH	Lembata Island
10	ATW	KINABALU	East Flores
11	MM	SABAH	Toraja
12	RPL	SABAH	Nunukan

The target of educational repatriates in Blitar City comes from Malaysia, totaling 12 children with the following distribution percentages.

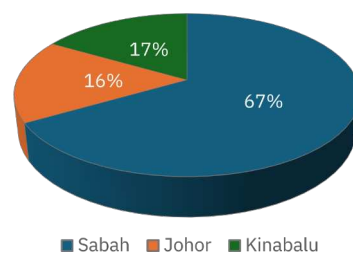
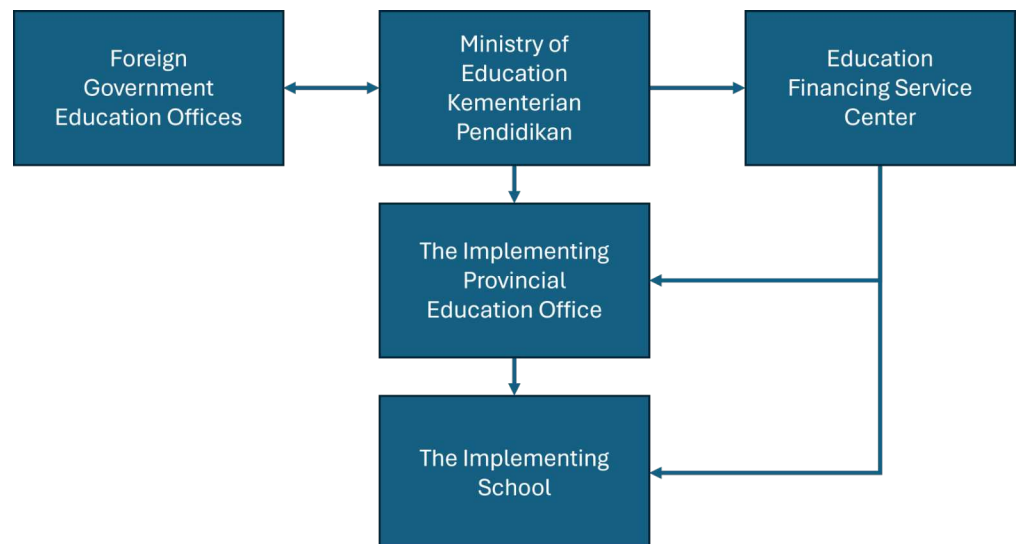


Figure 1. Percentage of Repatriates in Blitar City Based on City of Origin in Malaysia

Compared to when repatriates lived abroad, education is normatively positioned as a key pillar of social mobility, enabling individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds to improve their quality of life and achieve higher social status (Hutabarat & Pangaribuan, 2025). This situation must be utilized optimally for social mobility through education. The quality of education offered to them certainly varies. Quality education in national development (including development at the district/city level) is a necessity. Through quality education, high-quality and competitive human resources (HR) can be produced as one of the inputs to the development process (Aziz, 2021). If these repatriated children of migrant workers can participate in the educational process and absorb knowledge well, it is not impossible that they can continue their education at a higher level.

3.1. Content of Policy

Service is key to the successful implementation of bureaucratic and administrative systems. Essentially, the repatriation program is a category of educational affirmation programs. This program integrates multiple government agencies. The repatriation program for the children of Indonesian migrant workers involves the following agencies:



The diagram above involves several agencies. The roles, duties, and authorities of each agency are explained as follows:

A. Ministry of Education:

As the primary policymaker, the individual designs, implements, and oversees the program.

B. Education Financing Service Center:

- a. Conducts outreach on the repatriation program;
 - b. Conducts verification and validation, and determines implementing schools;
 - c. Conducts verification and validation and determines scholarship recipients;
 - d. Distributes educational assistance funds;
 - e. Coordinates implementation with government education offices as representatives of the Republic of Indonesia abroad and other stakeholders.
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- C. Foreign Government Education Offices:
 - a. Conduct outreach;
 - b. Conduct student selection;
 - c. Propose prospective students to the Education Center;
 - d. Coordinate implementation, such as the pick-up and drop-off process;
 - e. Monitor and evaluate implementation;
 - f. Funding for the implementation of duties and authorities.
- D. The Implementing Provincial Education Office:
 - a. Recommend implementing schools in the region;
 - b. Conduct regional coordination. Student allocation, pick-up, drop-off, and admission;
 - c. Monitor and evaluate implementation at the provincial level.;
 - d. Funding and implementation of duties and authorities.
- E. The Implementing School:
 - a. Accept repatriated students;
 - b. Manage aid funds according to regulations;
 - c. Foster, accompany, and guide students;
 - d. Monitor and evaluate implementation.

This was reflected by the informant (person in charge of the repatriation), who stated:

“To date, we have a total of 12 repatriates under our responsibility. We ensure that these children receive their full right to education at the high school level. We distribute all living and educational needs in accordance with applicable procedures.”

The government, specifically the Ministry of Education, has general requirements for Indonesian children abroad to be repatriated. First, they must be a Community Learning Center (CLC) or a State Indonesian School (SILN) graduate. This facilitates the selection process, as most students from these institutions are Indonesian citizens. Children eligible for repatriation must be under 22 years of age. Parents also play a crucial role in obtaining permission and approval for their child's repatriation to Indonesia. Finally, they must be willing to continue their education in Indonesia at the high school/vocational school level.

3.2. AGIL Scheme as a Social Education Resilience System for Repatriates

Generally, people feel comfortable living where they are accustomed to their activities. However, this is a different situation for the repatriated children of migrant workers in Blitar. They have lived abroad for almost 15 years. It was only at this age that they returned to their homeland to receive an education. This is certainly not easy; they must adapt to things they are not used to. Adaptation involves changing oneself to suit environmental conditions and the environment to suit circumstances (one's desires) (Alfiani & Purnomo, 2016). From an AGIL perspective, this scheme analyzes and understands the basic functions a social system must fulfill to survive

effectively (Holmwood, 2014). Therefore, the functional structure of social resilience of repatriates upon their arrival in Indonesia until today will be analyzed below.

3.2.1. Adaptation

The adaptation phase requires repatriates to adapt to their environment and to meet their needs to survive. Adaptation is a system's ability to cope with hazardous external conditions. The system must adapt to its environment and needs. Adaptation, conceptually, involves adapting to an idea or design. For someone to survive, they must adapt. Repatriation forces them to adapt to the new environment in Indonesia. The way they adapt to the current environment will certainly differ for each repatriate. Adapting to a small-town environment is different from adapting to a plantation environment. After living in Malaysia for decades, moving to Indonesia requires an adaptation process. As YYOK explained:

"I live in a plantation area far from all access. Here, everywhere is close. I have many friends, and if I have schoolwork, I can work with friends or take public transportation."

The social networks that have been established must adapt to the new conditions in Indonesia. Indonesia and Malaysia are related countries. Viewed from various perspectives, there are many differences between the two. Therefore, people with low mobility will experience difficulties when they have to move. Social mobility is the movement or displacement of an individual from one social status or class to another (Setyawan et al., 2020). The forms of these differences can be described as follows:

(1) *Geographical Location*

These two countries share similarities: they are located on the Asian continent, specifically in Southeast Asia. Although both are in Southeast Asia, they have distinct topography. These repatriates lived in plantation areas in Malaysia. For example, areas in lowlands with tropical climates tend to have different lifestyles than mountainous areas or areas with extreme climates (Putra, 2019). The conditions in plantation areas are certainly different. Access to public facilities is also different from those in Indonesia. In Indonesia, these repatriates live in Blitar City. Interviews revealed that the temperature in Blitar feels cooler than when they lived in the hot Sabah/Kinabalu region.

(2) *Language*

As social beings, humans constantly communicate with each other. Communication can be achieved through a common language, enabling two-way communication. Two-way communication is necessary to facilitate the delivery and reception of messages. With a language with a unique linguistic structure, we can understand what the universe truly desires, both material and metaphysical. Through language, we can interact and communicate with other people in the world, thus maintaining balance and harmony in the world (de Saussure, 1988). Malaysia has three major ethnic groups: the indigenous Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians. Malaysia, on the other hand, has many more ethnic groups. Consequently, their everyday languages are also diverse.

(3) *Food*

Biologically, food is a primary human need. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), food is a basic human need at all times and in all places, and it requires proper management to ensure that the food consumed is beneficial to the body (Zulkarnaen & Sutopo, 2013). The main characteristic of traditional Malay cuisine is the extensive use of spices. Furthermore, coconut milk is essential in imparting a rich flavor to Malay dishes. Another essential ingredient is belacan (shrimp paste), which is used as the base for sambal, a rich sauce made from shrimp paste, chilies, shallots, and garlic (Soh et al., 2021). Malaysian cuisine is predominantly savory and spicy, with rice being the staple. Therefore, the use of spices as seasonings resembles typical Indonesian cuisine. Food for repatriates is prepared by a small catering vendor (home industry). Each day, repatriates can request a menu tailored to their preferences, making it easier for them to adapt to the food.

(4) *Ethnic Groups*

Upon arrival in Indonesia, these repatriates settled in the Blitar region. The Javanese are friendly and open to outsiders, allowing them to integrate easily into the community. However, the repatriates must learn much about communicating with the local community to facilitate communication. “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika,” meaning “diverse but one,” is the national logo of the Republic of Indonesia. This logo represents Indonesia’s diverse yet unified society and is a guiding principle for Indonesian life (Farhaeni & Martini, 2023).

Based on these differences, they must adapt. Upon arrival in Indonesia (Blitar), the repatriates were required to adapt to Blitar’s conditions. Fortunately, the adaptation process was not too extreme. For example, Blitar’s temperature, which ranges from 28–34°C, was easily tolerated. The language used in everyday life became easier; Indonesian was used at school. While in the community, the repatriates used Javanese. The ideal of all this was “halus” (good, polite). The opposite of politeness is rudeness. Polite language creates a good rapport in communication (Leech, 2014). Most repatriates can understand what is being said, but struggle to respond in Javanese.

The most important adaptation to the repatriation goal is the learning climate in Indonesia. Repatriates learn in Indonesia with the applicable curriculum structure. There are three concepts of curriculum: curriculum as substance, as a system, and as a field of study.

- Curriculum as substance is a document containing formulations of objectives, teaching materials, teaching and learning activities, schedules, and evaluations.
- Curriculum as a system includes the personnel structure and work procedures for developing, implementing, evaluating, and refining a curriculum.
- Curriculum as a field of study is the field of curriculum study.

The purpose of the curriculum as a field of study is to develop curriculum science and systems. A competency-based curriculum emphasizes demonstrable outcomes, not just content mastery. This paradigm shift requires re-evaluating assessment methods, shifting from traditional exams to authentic, performance-based assignments. The effectiveness of this approach is particularly evident in vocational and higher education, where a

direct link between learning activities and industry requirements is crucial for graduates' employability. Currently, the independent curriculum emphasizes more than just learning outcomes. It is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, learning materials, and methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve specific goals. The independent curriculum design develops student potential through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5). P5 activities include learning themes.

Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5)		
No.	Theme	Description
1.	Build His Soul and Body	Every Friday morning, the repatriates do morning exercise together with the surrounding community.
2.	Local wisdom	The repatriates' residential areas are closely linked to local culture, particularly material arts. They are close to centers producing drums, handicrafts for local tourists.
3.	Entrepreneurship	Residence in Blitar City are provided with entrepreneurial training for repatriates, utilizing e-commerce platforms as a medium for sales.
4.	Engineering Technology	One of the repatriates (YYOK) has competence in mixing music, with the output being YouTube platform content that can be commercialized in the technology sector.
5.	Voice of Democracy	The return of repatriates will receive citizenship rights in the form of an ID card which can be used as a population identity and as a requirement for management in various fields.
6.	Sustainable lifestyle	The repatriates' living expenses are fully supported by the state during their studies. Some utilize recycled materials for everyday needs, such as air fresheners made from plants (clitch pea) as an ingredient.
7.	Bhinneka Tunggal Ika	Almost all the repatriates are Catholic, they live in areas dominated by Muslims.

The themes above provide a strong foundation for student cognitive development. With activities designed around each theme, repatriates can enhance their nationalist values. This value is important because repatriate students live with different ideological values while in their home countries. On the other hand, student learning motivation increases with the solidarity values developed in P5 activities. Curriculum development should not only focus on changing the content of the subject matter, but also on adapting learning and evaluation methods to be relevant to students' needs to develop 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, which are essential in facing global challenges (Haryanti et al., 2025).

3.2.2. Goal Attainment

This stage drives the system toward the primary goal of education for repatriates. The implementation of a repatriation program that focuses on education is not without purpose. To equalize education, repatriation provides a solution for those still of school age abroad. Attainment is one of the four requirements for a social system to survive (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2017). Equitable education is a priority for the government, without exception. Government measures can help ensure the educational attainment of children of migrant workers abroad. There are several main objectives of education, namely:

- Education aims to improve human spirituality;
- Education aims to improve human intelligence and thinking skills;
- Education aims to improve society;
- Mastery of professional skills per current demands (link and match);
- Obtaining employment opportunities that can be used to earn a living (Ilham, 2020).

Given the background of parents working in the plantation sector, it is predictable that schools in the area are far from adequate educational facilities. Here, repatriates are pursuing high school education. The repatriation program helps repatriates grow and develop through education. If they can complete their high school education, they have the potential to continue their education at a higher level. An expatriate (RA) said:

“This is my final year of high school. I’ve been accepted into the Anthropology Department at Diponegoro University (Undip Semarang). I’m currently focusing on completing the remainder of my high school studies. I’m definitely staying in Indonesia while I await the possibility of being awarded a scholarship for higher education.”

3.2.3. Integration

As a social order, integration is a subsystem that does not operate independently but supports each other (Ritzer, 2012). All parties involved in this process must synergize and integrate. Teamwork is a form of group work that must be well-managed to achieve a goal or complete a task (Dewi, 2017). The government, namely the Ministry of Education and Culture, and partner schools collaborate to establish an integrated system that facilitates the education of migrant workers’ children in Indonesia. Achieving solid and harmonious cooperation among fellow organizational members or existing human resources is one of the goals of fostering working relationships within an organization or corporation (As’ad, 2012). This process involves social relationships between institutions, peers, and local communities. Peer groups are individuals of similar age and maturity (Santrock, 2020). One of the obligations mandated by law is adequate and equitable education. The Ministry of Education and Culture and schools maintain a strong and integrated collaboration. Both have central and distinct roles. Below is the role of the Ministry of Education and Culture in the development agenda in the education and culture sector.

No.	Development Agenda	Policy Direction
1	Improving quality and competitive human resources	Improving the distribution of quality education services
		Increase productivity and competitiveness
2	Mental revolution and cultural development	Mental revolution and development of Pancasila ideology to strengthen the nation’s cultural resilience, and form a national mentality that is advanced, modern and has character.
		Increasing the advancement and preservation of culture to strengthen character and national identity, improve people’s welfare, and influence the development of world civilization.
		Increasing literacy, innovation and creativity

The role of schools is important in education for repatriated children:

No.	Role of Schools	Description
1	School as teaching	The lessons taught at school are supported by the teachers’ communication skills, because the repatriates speak English and Malay.
2	School as a social system	The climate created for repatriates pursuing education in Blitar is very welcoming. They can socialize with their peers in a conducive learning environment.
3	Curriculum arrangement in learning	The organization of learning takes into account the approach aspects in learning, in the form of thematic subjects, integration, and blocks (Hasanah et al., 2024).

3.2.4. Latency

Social functions can persist, shaping social systems over time as a pattern (Ritzer, 2012). Repatriates must maintain prevailing values according to the norms of life in

Indonesia. Latent patterns must be maintained and influence the motivation and culture in the environment, creating motivation for repatriates. Latent patterns are related to prevailing social norms. Social norms are standards of behavior followed because individuals believe other group members also follow them or believe they should (Krupka & Weber, 2013). When repatriates arrive, they still bring customs from their home country. Psychological support and education that respects their background can help repatriates survive. The owner of the building where the female repatriates live said:

“When they first arrived here, everyone was quiet. Maybe because they were still adjusting. Gradually, they got used to chatting and greeting each other, even though they used the local language.”

This pattern must be maintained when these repatriates are in their environment and at school.

4. Conclusion

Social change in the field of education is fundamental. Its goal is the improvement, enhancement, and equality of education. The government's foresight, particularly the Ministry of Education, in recognizing the social realities of school-age children, is commendable. International monitoring shows that school-age children living abroad deserve a proper education. Focusing the repatriation of school-age children on education is a concrete step in demonstrating the government's concern for citizens' rights. Through the repatriation education program for children of migrant workers, equitable education can be realized as an alternative to the educational rights of citizens living abroad.

Living in plantation areas is certainly far from adequate educational facilities. The arrival of repatriated children of Indonesian migrant workers is not easy for them. Expatriates must adapt to the environment and adjust to Indonesia's living environment and education system. Repatriates must develop social resilience in their new environment. The purpose of repatriation and living in Indonesia is simply to grant the right to education by the Indonesian government, specifically the Ministry of Education. They must complete this learning process successfully. Integration between the Ministry of Education, partner schools, and repatriates must be maintained. This collaboration creates educational success for the repatriates. The established pattern must be maintained to maintain motivation to complete their education. This research was slightly hampered by the language used by the participants, who are accustomed to their native language.

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