



# TRANSLATIVE ADAPTATION OF FOREIGN SKILLS FORMATION MODELS: CASES OF JAPANESE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

RESEARCH PROJECT -  
JAPANESE EXPERIENCES OF INDUSTRIAL  
DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION:  
ANALYSIS OF TRANSLATIVE ADAPTATION PROCESSES [VOL. 3]

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# **Promoting Quality and Productivity Improvement/*Kaizen* in Africa**

Research Project - Japanese Experiences of  
Industrial Development  
and Development Cooperation:  
Analysis of Translative Adaptation Processes  
[Volume 2]

Edited by  
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## FOREWORD

Industrial development is a key driver of structural transformation in developing countries. It generates sustained incomes, creates productive and decent jobs, and promotes knowledge spillover and technological innovation. As the twenty-first century advances, the landscape of industrial development has become more complex. The recent decades have seen the expansion of global production networks, alongside the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) and the digital revolution. There is a drive toward realizing inclusive and sustainable industrial development as embraced in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The COVID-19 crisis also confirms the important role that industry plays in enhancing economic and social resilience and “building back better” the post-pandemic era.

While these megatrends may broaden opportunities for industrial catch-up, developing countries today face significant challenges because more sophisticated capabilities for learning foreign knowledge and technologies are required in an interconnected world. Now, more than ever, we need to pay attention to the practical aspects of industrial development. Nevertheless, there are few studies that analyze the process of learning, and selectively adopting and adapting foreign technologies and knowledge, tailored to country-specific situations while taking account of the current global environment. More concrete analyses are needed on such aspects of industrial development to serve as useful references for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in developing countries.

In this regard, Japan is positioned to make useful intellectual contributions. Japanese catch-up experiences since the Meiji modernization and during post-war economic development were characterized by learning and internalizing Western technologies and knowledge, which entailed efforts to adapt them into Japan’s own culture and system. We call this process “translative adaptation.” Moreover, the Japanese approach to industrial development has a unique feature of placing a focus on components of the real sector such as human resources, technologies, and firms. These experiences and perspectives have been reflected in Japanese industrial development cooperation, which has been extended to various regions including Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

Against this background, the Japan International Cooperation Agency

(JICA) Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development (JICA Ogata Research Institute) has launched a research project entitled “Japanese Experiences of Industrial Development and Development Cooperation: Analysis of Translative Adaptation Processes”. It aims at identifying the characteristics of Japanese experiences of industrial development and development cooperation, while drawing implications for facilitating translative adaptation in developing countries. The research project focuses on three key areas: (i) industrial policy, (ii) quality and productivity improvement (QPI), and (iii) skill development. These are the areas where Japan has an accumulation of expertise through its own experiences in industrialization and development cooperation. Three thematic books are produced as interim results of this research project.

Among the three thematic books, this volume focuses on QPI, *Kaizen* in particular. *Kaizen* is the Japanese approach to the continuous improvement of quality and productivity, based on a participatory process involving the entire workforce from the top management to middle managers and workers. JICA has been implementing various *Kaizen* projects in Africa since 2006. More recently, it is promoting the Africa Kaizen Initiative (AKI) in collaboration with the African Union Development Agency - the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (AUDA-NEPAD) and the Pan-African Productivity Association (PAPA). Therefore, this volume attempts to address how *Kaizen* promotion through development cooperation can effectively support a process of translative adaptation by partner countries and contribute to technology transfer for QPI/*Kaizen* in Africa.

As this research project continues to evolve, we fully recognize that there remains room for further deepening its analysis. Nevertheless, we hope that the analyses of this volume will serve as useful references for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in developing countries as well as the international community.

Tokyo, Japan

Akio Takahara  
Executive Director,  
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