

The Domination of Tōkyō University Alumni In Top Bureaucracy Japan*

Yoga Prayoga¹, I Ketut Surajaya²

¹Under graduate student of Japanese Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

²Professor of History, Japanese Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

**This articles was rewritten and modification from Undergraduate thesis, by Yoga Prayoga under supervision of Prof. Dr. I Ketut Surajaya, M.A., Japanese Studies Program Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia. The article also presented at International Young Scholar Symposium on Humanities and Art (INUSHART), Faculty of Humanities Universitas Indonesia, 2016. The original titled of this artice was University of Tokyo Graduates in Japan's Bureucracy 1926-1989*

Abstract: University of Tōkyō, established in 1877, has many bright graduates who ruled in government offices for years. All graduates from this university are known as 'gakubatsu' (school clique of) University of Tōkyō. This research described the formation of 'gakubatsu' University of Tōkyō and also 'gakubatsu' network, which supported other University of Tōkyō, graduates in the government offices. Based on the research, the success of University of Tōkyō graduates in government offices were actually caused by supports of senior graduates who already had important title in government offices, and all related to the university 'gakubatsu'. The research is conducted through literature review and historical approaches.

Keywords: Gakubatsu, Education, University of Tōkyō, Japan, Bureaucracy

1. Introduction

In 2012, UN/DESA¹, a social-economic department under United Nation issued a list of developed countries.² Among them are United States of America, Australia, Netherland, Denmark, Finland, England, Japan, Germany, Canada and France.³ Based on the UN data, these developed countries have a good education system.

Education is a primary condition and main keys of development of a nation. In a Simple word, education means a change of behavior and attitude of a person or people to educate human through learning and training.⁴ Good education system also exists in Japan as an advanced country. Modernizing Japan, as a nation was not an instant process, it was a long-term process. History showed that education reform took place in Japan even before the Meiji Restoration (1868) and it became a foundation for nation development in the future. During the Edo Era, Japan had also implemented feudal education system known as *Terakoya*.⁵

During the Meiji era, in 1872 (4th year of Meiji), the Meiji government formed a *monbushō*⁶ and issued Law about *gakusei*.⁷ This was also the era where Japan had well known figures of educational modernization with bright ideas like Fukuzawa Yūkichi (1835—1901); he was a writer, reporter and teacher. His basic thought was the distance between wise and fool was caused by education gap. Therefore, Fukuzawa Yūkichi supported the *gakusei*, (*Western system*) where Meijigovernment should developed education in Japan, especially the higher learning education, like universities in Western countries. However, at the time, university was not an institution for people to continue their education after graduated from high school, because it took long time to go to university. So, Meiji government should have built new universities immediately.

By adopting the Western model of education system, Meiji Government, then prepared development of eight universities in 8 Japan's regions. These 8 universities became Japan's Imperial University. At the first stage, Meiji government planned to build universities in Tōkyō and Kyōto, representing eastern and western regions of Japan. However, University of Tōkyō came as first priority in 1877 while Kyōto University came second in 1897.

As the first university established in Japan, University of Tōkyō is considered as prestigious educational institution. It has given so many contribution for the development of Japan. Some of University of Tōkyō graduates have even received Nobel prize such as Kawabata Yasunari and Oe Kenzaburo in literary, Esaki Leo and Nambu Yoichiro in

¹UN/DESA stands for United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; an UN agency cooperates with all governments in the world to support a nation goal of economy, social and environment.

²High-income country is most people have high living standard. Sometimes also defined as countries with a large stock of physical capital, in which most people undertake highly specialized activities. See:

<http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/global/glossary.html#16>

³World Economic and Prospects 2012

⁴See: <http://kbbi.web.id/didik>

⁵*Terakoya* means house of *terako* (pupil) to study in Edo era. The main education is to read, write and count.

⁶*Monbushō* was National Education Department, established in 1872.

⁷*Gakusei* was western education system, dividing school level based on age, primary school, secondary school and higher education level.

physics, Satou Eisaku in peace, and Negashi Eiichi in chemistry.

University of Tōkyōgraduate is also known easy to get jobs. Good quality of graduates have encouraged high school graduates try their best to study in University of Tōkyō. Another factor considering University of Tōkyō's choice for high school graduates is the role of the graduates in government administration.

2. Literature Survey

2.1 Education in Meiji Era

Not long after the Meiji Restoration, Meiji government (1868—1912) established *monbushō* in 1872 and implemented *gakusei* system. *Monbushō* issued reform policies in education especially on equal right for Japanese people to earn education. In previous feudal society of Edo Era, people were grouped into social structure known as *shi-nō-kō-shō*.⁸ Education system in Edo Era was discriminative as it was only for *samurai* and royal families. It was considered as obstacle in developing modern and egalitarian Japan's people.

Early years of *gakusei* was responded negatively by group of society who afraid of losing Japan's highly respected moral tradition when *gakusei* was implemented. Therefore, in 1879 the government issued *kyōikurei* or basic education to support *gakusei* system, focusing on moral education. The new policy also urged Meiji government to control school administration throughout Japan.⁹

In 1886, education system in Japan was reformed by first Minister of Education of Japan, Mori Arinori, by designing education in primary school as basic of Japan's national education system.¹⁰ Imperial Decree on Education was issued in 1890 to affirm education in Imperial Japan was harmonious and highly respected moral. It was in line with Meiji government purposes when new Imperial Constitution was issued in 1889, to make citizen as loyal subject to Imperial Japan.¹¹

Policies made by *monbushō* at the time, affected and accelerated modernization during Meiji era. It was one of success of Meiji government in education. It has enhanced progress in other subjects for Japan's modern development at the time.

2.2 University of Tōkyō

University of Tōkyō was established in 1877. It changes its name twice in order to meet the reform policy issued by *monbushō*. The first change was *Teikoku Daigaku* (Imperial

University) in 1886 and the second change was *Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku* (Tokyo Imperial University) in 1897. The second name, *Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku*, was used even Meiji era was ended in 1912¹² but finally changed after the end of World War II. This university used the name of University of Tōkyō again after education reform was issued in 1947.

At the beginning, University of Tōkyō had four faculties, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Literary and Faculty of Medical Science. Each faculty had some major departments. Faculty of Law had Department of Jurisprudence. Faculty of Science had Department of Chemistry, Math-Physics-Astronomy, Biology, Technic and Geology-Mineral. Faculty of Literary had Department of History-Philosophy-Politics and China-Japan Literary. Faculty of Medical Science had Department of Medical and Pharmacy. In 1882, University of Tōkyō had 116 lecturers and 1,862 students.¹³ Nowadays, University of Tōkyō had 10 Faculties and 15 Post Graduates Program until now.

2.3 The *Gakubatsu*

Gakubatsu is a school clique formed by graduates of the same school in order to support and help each other. The term of *gakubatsu* was used in 1897 as symbol that schools in the last 30 years of Meiji Era had succeeded in graduating students who played significant roles in Japan's modernization. Ever since, the term of *gakubatsu* has become part of graduates identity. Japanese people has become common and proud with the presence of *gakubatsu*.¹⁴

In early years of *gakubatsu*, this term referred only to graduates of University of Tōkyō. It was only because University of Tōkyō is the first University in Japan, which automatically formed the first group of university graduates. University of Tōkyō *Gakubatsu* was widely known as *akamonbatsu* 「赤門閥」¹⁵ or *tōdaibatsu* 「東大閥」.¹⁶ One prerequisite to be employees and bureaucrat in Japan's government was to pass legal exams. So, students of Law Faculty had an advantage. Based on the data, in this research *gakubatsu* as group of graduates of Law Faculty of University of Tōkyō.

Admission test to be civil government employees was implemented in 1880s and graduates of University of Tōkyō dominated most government offices in Japan. At first, graduates of Law Faculty of University of Tōkyō had privilege to be civil employee without a test. The privilege was then erased in 1893, although graduates of University of Tōkyō still dominated the bureaucracy. The dominant situation was actually caused by many advantage factors, one of them was the role of Professors of University of

¹² See <http://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/about/chronology.html>

¹³ Tokiomi Kiago. Op.cit., p. 97

¹⁴ Mizutani, Osamu, Mizue Sasaki and Hideo Hosokawa. *Nihon Jijō Handobukku*. (Tokyo: Taishukan Publishing Co. Ltd. 1995) p.312

¹⁵ *Akamonbatsu* was the name for graduates of University of Tōkyō. The word *akamon* 「赤門」 in *akamonbatsu* means red gate, created based on the actual red gate at University of Tōkyō

¹⁶ *Tōdaibatsu* was another name for graduates of University of Tōkyō. The word *tōdai* 「東大」 in *tōdaibatsu* means *Tōkyō Daigaku* (Tōkyō University).

⁸ *Shi-nō-kō-shō* was a social division in feudal Japan's society based on occupation, which divided Japan's people into samurai, peasants, carpenters, and merchant

⁹ Tokiomi Kiago. *Japanese Education It's Past and Present*. (Tokyo, Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1965), p. 53

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 55

¹¹ Toshio Nakauchi, et al. (1986). *The Modernization of Japanese Education Vol.I*. Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information. P.15

Tōkyōwho also worked as examiner of admission test for civil government employee.¹⁷

2.4 *Gakubatsu* inside The Government

Bureaucracy was an administration run by government civil employee based on hierarchy and rank.¹⁸ Generally, in Japan's bureaucracy system between 1926 and 1989 there were *kanri* (officials) and *hikanri* (non officials). *Kanri* was divided into 4 levels, (1) *shinninkan*, (2) *chokuninkan*, (3) *soninkan*, and (4) *hanninkan*. High official in *shinnin* level worked as Minister in the Administration. High officials in *chokunin* level consisted of 2 grades, 1st grade was Deputy Minister and Senior Bureau Head while 2nd grade was Bureau Head and Senior Section Head.

Officials in *soninkan* level was divided into 7 grades, following grades of the *chokunin* level. The third grade was official working as Section Head. The 4th Grade was official who worked as Senior *jimukan* (Deputy of Section Head). The 5th grade worked as *jimukan* and the 6th grade worked as *jimukan* and also as Head of Tax Office. The 7th grade official worked as Head of Tax Office while the 8th grade official worked as Head of Police. The 9th grade official worked as Head of Security. The first three of 9 grades were called *kotokan* (high officials). Last, the 4th class was *hanninkan* worked as ordinary officials in Government Ministries.¹⁹

People considered as *hikanri* were those without law educational background and their work were usually related to budgetary resource. *Hikanri* was divided into 3 classes, (1) *koin*, (2) *yonin*, and (3) *shokutaku*. *Koin* was the clerk and many of them were then promoted as *hannin* after working for 5 years or more.²⁰ *Yonin* was routine affair worker and *shokutaku* was employees serving the Minister in the Cabinet. Many *Shokutaku* then retired and decided to work as researchers in government offices.²¹

There were two types of admission test, high official admission test and employees admission test. Candidates who passed the high official admission test will be in *soninas shiho* (*soninkan trainee*), and assigned with people who had passed education at university level. Candidate who passed the employee admission test will be in *hannin* and work as apprentice. The candidate were high school graduates.²²

3. Problem Definition

This research described and analyzed the role of '*gakubatsu*' (school clique of) University of Tōkyō graduates in Japan's bureaucracy system. The research timeline was between 1926 and 1989. This was the era when graduates of University of

Tōkyō dominated Government positions compare to graduates of other universities. The role described in this research was on strategic position achieved or top ranking of birocracy by the graduates when they worked in government agencies.

4. Approach

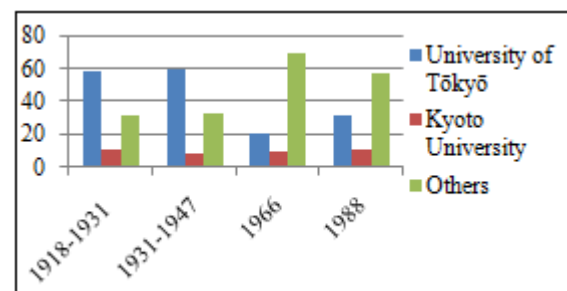
This research conducted through literature study by exploring data related to education in Japan, University of Tōkyō, *gakubatsu*, and historical approach on Japan's bureaucracy.

5. Discussion

5.1 High Officials Educational Background

Government bureaucracy in Japan between 1926 and 1989 had differences on some historical events. Before the World War II, central bureaucracy was designed to implement Emperor's policy, known as *Tenno no Kanri*. All program made by these high officials were single purposed to meet the Emperor's policy and acted on behalf of the Emperor. However, after Japan's defeat in World War II, *Tenno no Kanri* changed into *Kokumin no Koboku* (public service). The change was made during and after USA occupation in Japan between 1951 and 1971. So, after World War II, government officials did not need to make oath of allegiance to the Emperor.²³ These were moments that changed the bureaucracy in Japan between 1926 and 1989. University graduates like those from University of Tōkyō always dominate high or top officials as described in diagram as follow.

High Officials Educational Background



Source: Japan's Administrative Elite (1991: 20;87)²⁴

The diagram showed how dominant graduates from University of Tōkyō was. It was started from privilege given to graduates of this university, as it was entitled as imperial university, where they could work as high officials without admission test. Even though the privilege was erased in 1893, graduates of University of Tōkyō remained dominant in Japan's bureaucracy between 1926 and 1989. In the time between 1918 and 1931, there were 2,033 University of Tōkyō graduates out of 3,519 people who worked as high officials.

¹⁷ B.C. Koh. *Stability and Change in Japan's Higher Civil Service*. (New York: Comparative Politics, 1979) p. 286

¹⁸ See <http://kbbi.web.id/birokrasi>

¹⁹ B.C. Koh. *Japan 'an Administrative Elit*. (Oxford: University of California Press, 1991) p. 17

²⁰ B.C. Koh. Op.cit., p. 18

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Nihei Daisuke and Wahyu Kumorotomo. Lessons from Bureaucracy Reform in Japan 1945—1952. (Public Policy and Administration Journal 1998) p.52

²⁴ The diagram is based on data compilation described in Japan's Administrative Elite (1991) page 20 and 87.

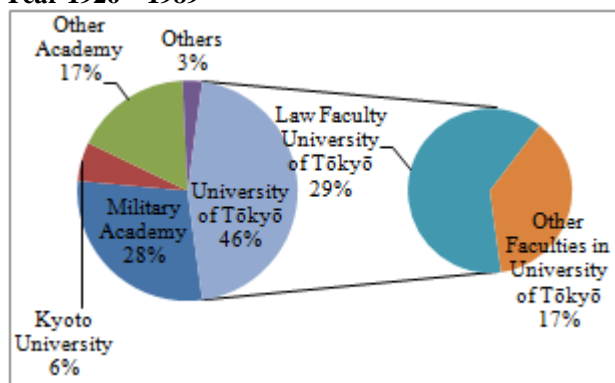
Similar situation also appeared between 1932 and 1947, where there were 2,370 University of Tōkyō graduates out of 3,994 high officials. By 1947, the number of University of Tōkyō graduates in Japan's bureaucracy was 6:10.²⁵

5.2 Educational Background of Japan's Prime Minister

Another factor supported the dominant role of University of Tōkyō graduates in Japan's bureaucracy was the examiner of high officials admission test, who were professors of University of Tōkyō. There were 44, 6% examiners who worked as professors of University of Tōkyō between 1918 and 1928, while there were 41, 2% examiners who worked as professors of University of Tōkyō between 1929 and 1941. This situation certainly gave advantage for graduates of University of Tōkyō because they were tutored directly by these professors in the university.²⁶ Subjects in admission tests are studied in University of Tōkyō. So, based on the diagram above, it was not strange if *gakubatsu* of University of Tōkyō supported and helped each other. They had power to keep the dominant tradition and to ensure that the next generation in Japan's bureaucracy was from the same university.

Graduates of University of Tōkyō still dominated the bureaucracy between 1966 and 1988, although the number was lower compare to years before. Based on the diagram above, there were only 2 – 4 graduates of University of Tōkyō in Japan's bureaucracy out of 10 high officials in the administration. At one side, there were significant increase of high officials who were graduated from other universities, not just one university. It was a normal situation, since there were increasing number of university and academy in Japan during the period. Another factor affecting the decreasing number of University of Tōkyō graduates in bureaucracy was the decreasing number of professors from University of Tōkyō who took part as examiner in high official admission test. Last but not least, there were also many University of Tōkyō graduates who decided to become businessman, worked in private companies, etc

Educational Background of Japan's Prime Minister Year 1926—1989



Source: japan.kantei.go.jp, ndl.go.jp

The diagram above was data on educational background of Japan's Prime Ministers, the highest title in bureaucracy,

who ruled between 1926 and 1989. The list of names of Japan's Prime Minister between 1926 and 1989 selected from japan.kantei.go.jp website. During 83 years, there were 52 changes of Prime Ministers with 35 people were ever elected as Prime Minister. There were 9 people who were elected more than once as Japan's Prime Minister. The educational background of Japan's Prime Minister who ruled Japan during the researched time through ndl.go.jp website, was on the diagram as above.

5.3 Educational Background of Japan's High Officials in 1965

Gakubatsu of University of Tōkyō looked dominant inside Japan's bureaucracy system. There were 46% (16 out of 35) Japan's Prime Minister who ruled between 1926 and 1989 were graduates of University of Tōkyō. These 16 Japan Prime Ministers who were graduates of University of Tōkyō, 10 of them were graduates of Law Faculty. So, in general, during the researched periode of time, 10 out of 35 researched Japan's Prime Ministers (29%) were graduates of Law Faculty of University of Tōkyō.

Educational Background of Japan's High Officials in 1965

	Univ. of Tōkyō	Other Imperial Univ.	Other Univ.	Total
Deputy Minister	12	0	0	12
Bureau Head	72	11	6	89
Division Head	25	5	5	35
Section Head	244	112	103	459
Total	353	128	114	595

Source: Party In Power: The Japanese Liberal-Democrats and Policy-Making (1970:65)

The table above also described comparison of educational background of Japan's high officials in 1965 under Prime Minister Eisaku Sato. He graduated from Law Faculty of University of Tōkyō in 1924. Prime Minister Sato was a graduate of University of Tōkyō and at the time he started his career in government office, graduates of University of Tōkyō were dominant in the administration. In general, there was indication that *gakubatsu* of Tōkyō University supported and helped all graduates to develop their career up to the highest level. It was possible that other 15 Prime Ministers who were graduated from University of Tōkyō also had supports and helps as experienced by Eisaku Sato.

At the time a graduate reached the highest position/rank as Prime Minister, he also did the same by supporting and helping other University of Tōkyō graduates to dominate the bureaucracy in the future to come. Based on the table above, when Prime Minister Sato ruled in 1965, he recruited many graduates of University of Tōkyō in his administration. All of Deputy Minister in Sato administration were graduates from the same university as Sato. The same situation also occurred on most Bureau Heads, Division Heads, and Section Heads who were graduates from University of Tōkyō. Overall, there were 353 high officials who were graduated from University of Tōkyō out of 595 people during Sato Administration in 1965. In other words, Prime Minister Sato

²⁵ B.C. Koh., Op.cit., p. 21

²⁶ Ibid.

supported University of Tōkyō graduates by recruiting them and control 60% titles in the administration.

Japan's bureaucracy between 1926 and 1989 was dominated by academicians, especially those who graduated from Law Faculty. University of Tōkyō dominated the number of graduates who worked in the administration. The numbers also showed indication of 'gakubatsu network' as key to work in the administration than skill and professionalism.

6. Conclusion

Domination of University of Tōkyō in Japan's bureaucracy system was related to the presence of *gakubatsu*, started in 1897 as group of graduates of a university. The name directly pointed to the presence of University of Tōkyō, as it had graduated many bright peoples and worked in the administration.

Based on general data analyses, *gakubatsu* of this university was also known by several names such as *akamonbatsu* or *tōdaibatsu*, who supported each other in order to control important position in the bureaucracy. Their dominant role was indicated by the high number of high officials who were graduated from University of Tōkyō. The *gakubatsu* network played significant roles in supporting graduates from the same university, although no scientific research was made related to the issue. The presence of *gakubatsu* of University of Tōkyō became added value of bright graduates of University of Tōkyō who succeeded in the administration and made significant contribution to the university and Japan's people.

7. Future Scope

Since this research did not elaborate the dynamic influences of political environment, economic dimension in multi global competition and its impact to Japan bureaucracy in decision making, many aspect of Japanese bureaucracy still importance to be discussed or need deeper and comprehensive research. For examples, later in 2000th graduates of University of Tokyo (*Todai*) with high academic records go to graduate law schools and that particularly talented graduates land jobs in the private sector, especially companies run by foreign capital. Based on this situation, that the number of those seeking careers as civil servants has decreased.²⁷ Atsushi Atsuaki²⁸ point out that "the real defect within the present Japanese bureaucracy is not corruption or idleness but its incompetence in recommending appropriate public policies that maximize social welfare" I recommend that the above issue is very interesting as future scope of other research dimension concerning Japanese bureaucracy in the future.

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²⁷<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/03/23/commentary/japan-commentary/top-grads-shun-kasumigaseki/#.WoBf1kjtphw>

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