
Educating and Training Japanese Government Officials: Current Trends and Policy Study Aspects

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Abstract: We explain the recruiting and promoting system for high-level Japanese government officials showing the trend of numbers of applicants for the recruitment examination, those who passed the examination, and also those who were employed by some ministries in the last 17 years. We describe the major characteristics of the promotion system for Japanese government officials.

Educating and training Japanese government officials in the area of policy studies have been conducted in both university schools, governmental training centers, governmental schools and colleges. An education and training system for government officials needs to be developed so that each government official is equipped with a certain specialty and expertise. A formal system for evaluating individuals and programs has not been common in Japan, especially for evaluating individual work and contribution. We need to “invent” an evaluation system that will make the government officials’ decision-making system work more efficiently. Public and private universities, in particular, have been very active in creating many policy-related schools and departments in the last 20 years. Policy studies, which have been conducted in various schools in the university and government research institutes, are described in detail with their objectives, curriculums, and requirements.

The Japanese bureaucrat system was established in the early Meiji period (1868-1912). Tokyo Imperial College (currently the University of Tokyo) was founded in 1886 based on the Imperial College Law for the purpose of cultivating civil servants for the national ministries. One year later, an employment examination for government officials was introduced. In 2002 the total number of civil servants amounts to 4.36 million consisting of 1.114 million (25%) national and 3.247 million (75%) local government officials.

Currently, civil servants in Japan are facing a very tough situation as the past decade has witnessed erosion in public trust. People no longer appreciate government officials due to the exposure of various ethics problems. According to a survey conducted by civil servants monitors in 2001, Japanese government officials were considered “elite” because they were judged to be “capable” (54.8%), “hard-working” (35.8%) or possessing a responsible attitude and a sense of public vocation (28.5%)[6]. On the other hand, almost 80% of the people surveyed consider Japanese government officials as part of a privileged class that is not on the side of the average person. This reflects the fact that bureaucrats have been losing people’s trust after a series of bad decisions made by high government officials concerning chemical poisoning, AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), and so on.

In the 1960s most western developed countries enjoyed their highly stable economic growth

while in the 1970s growth slowed in most countries as the first and the second “oil shocks” impacted almost the entire world. In the 1980s and 1990s most countries’ tax revenues have stopped increasing while expenditures have continued to rise. The resulting “financial crisis” has raised awareness that “governability” is an important and necessary function for a government to possess. At the same time, criticisms of the low efficiency of government and insufficient and unsatisfactory results of policy implementation are frequently voiced. The expression “government failure” often appears and it is clear that trust in the government has been degraded.

The term “New Public Management” (NPM) has been heard quite frequently in various types of mass media as well as in academic and governmental organizations. NPM may be identified with two main properties.

1. Reducing control by the government, and preferably, utilizing the market mechanism as much as possible to solve various kinds of societal and public sector problems by implementing appropriate policies.
2. Placing value on results rather than plans and processes; managing inputs and outputs carefully, quantitatively and accurately so as to “manage for results”.

The first property is based on the observation that the public sector generally comes out poorly when

compared with the private sector which is considered more sensitive and responsive to costs, benefits and efficiency. Recent moves to define and promote “evaluation measure” in the governmental and public sectors (e.g. by policy evaluation and program evaluation) is representative of the second NPM property [1,2,3,5,14,15, 16,19,20,21]).

Under “globalization” the situation facing the nation has been changing; namely, the development of transportation, communication and traffic has increased the mutual interdependency between nations in such areas as economics, society and politics. Thus, each country has been forced to introduce foreign capital investments in order to attain a certain level of economic growth by deregulation in many areas. It is necessary to evaluate quantitatively the economic and political impacts of “globalization” for each country [13]. First, with respect to the domestic situation, we can say that governance has shifted from vertical relation (from government to average citizens) to horizontal relation (from the public sector only to more widely spread areas including the private sector). Second, in reference to the international situation, governance has moved from a horizontal and independent type in which each country has its own governing system to a vertical network type in which international organizations such as World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO) regulate various countries. Under globalization, many countries are connected with each other in the form of a network.

Brief History of Sending Government Officials Abroad

In the Edo period (1603-1867) the Tokugawa Shogunate sent young government officials abroad for the first time in 1862. Since then a great many government officials have been sent to foreign countries such as the United States, European countries, and others. Mr. Griffith commented that young Japanese government officials at that time were all “polite, sincere, hard-working, earnest and capable” people with the potential to lead the future Japanese society, and he himself respected their strong will to study and work for themselves and for their own country. Dr. Heinrich Schliemann, who gained fame for discovering the Ruins of Troia, visited Japan in 1885 and wrote in his book [4] that he was surprised to see young Japanese government officials’ sincerity and politeness. By way of example, he praised the officials in the Customs Office who strongly refused to accept “tips” from entering passengers at the baggage claims [17].

This behavior of old Japanese government officials in the Meiji period is thought to be closely related to our old “BUSHIDO spirit.” There is a book entitled *BUSHIDO : The Soul of Japan* published in 1899 in the US and written by a famous Meiji era Japanese scholar and author Dr. and Professor Inazo Nitobe. This book is written about the philosophy of

Bushido. It explains the mental, spiritual, and philosophical standards that Bushi (traditional Japanese Samurai) must follow in their daily lives as professional Samurai. Dr. Nitobe characterized the moral standards of Samurai as consisting of such properties as sacrifice, faithfulness, purity, thrift or plainness, honor, affection, and so on. In old times in Japan, Samurai were considered and treated as elite with great privilege and great responsibility. That is why they had to train themselves very strictly and observe very strict moralistic rules. Thus, their lifestyle had to be very simple and humble. This is the traditional Japanese version of “noblesse oblige.” Bushido consisted of the discipline and the rules to restrict Samurais’ daily life. Dr. Nitobe argued that samurai should be a respectful model for average people. A true samurai must support justice, should not be interested in just himself, should keep his word, and must be ready to die, if necessary, to prevent injustice or to defend his honor. In this way, Bushido provides the rules for “noblesse oblige” or the spirit of fair play for samurai.

The Bushido spirit described by Dr. Nitobe may not apply to the present world in the same way as 400 years ago. However, I believe this idea, principle, way of thinking, or moral standards can hold even in this information technology (IT) era. Politicians and government officials are also required and expected to be a model for the average people. In this sense I believe that the Bushido spirit is especially important and necessary for high-level government officials. If Japanese politicians and high government officials had read Dr. Nitobe’s book, *Bushido*, and if they had been more familiar with the Bushido spirit, there would never have been a “bubble period,” and recent scandals by high government officials would never have occurred. Moreover, Japanese people would not have been called “economic animals” in the 1970-80s.

Recruiting and Promoting High-level Government Officials

The National Personnel Authority (NPA) is in charge of the recruitment of government officials. There are three types of recruitment examinations in Japan, in which types I and II are for university and college graduates while type III is for high school graduates. Those who pass the type I examination and are employed by a ministry are referred to as “career officials” while others are called “non-career officials.” Figure 1 shows the trend in the number of applicants for the recruitment examination of each type in the last 17 years. We find that the number of applicants reached a peak in 1995 and has been gradually decreasing every year since. Also we see that in the last three years the total number of applicants is decreasing slightly by a few percentage points for types I and II and also decreasing more sharply for type III. Figure 2 shows the trend of shares during the same period as above (i.e. 1985 to 2001). We find that type I applicant’s share is rather stable at around 15% to 20%, the type II share has been

increasing from 22% to 35%, and the type III share has been decreasing from 60% to 45%. Additionally, looking at the academic background for type I applicants in the last 10 years or so, literature and law school graduates have stayed in the majority, slightly

increasing their share from 54% to 60%. Science and engineering school graduates have slightly decreased from 32% to 30% and agriculture school graduates have decreased from 14% to 10%.

Figure 1 Number of Applicants by Types for Recruitment Examinations (Type I, II, III)

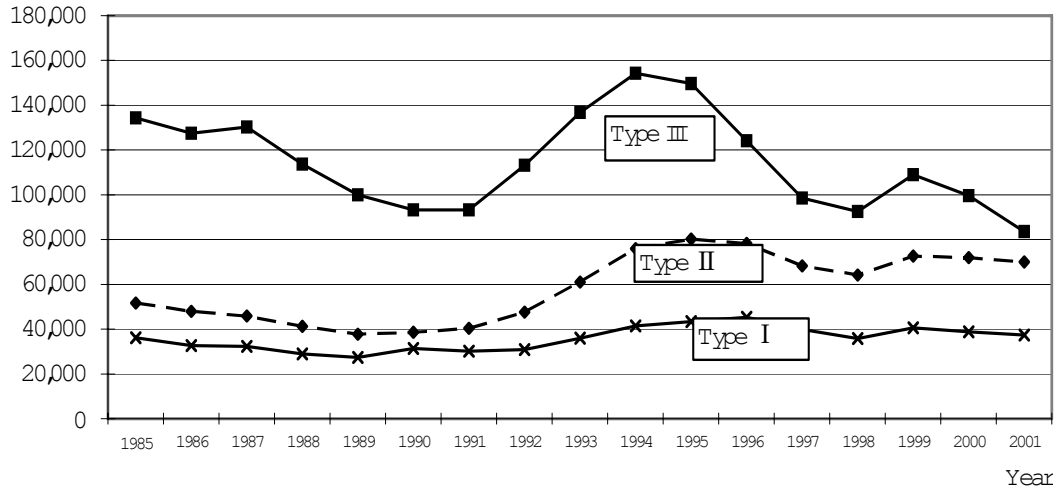


Figure 2 Shares of Applicants by Type (I, II, III)

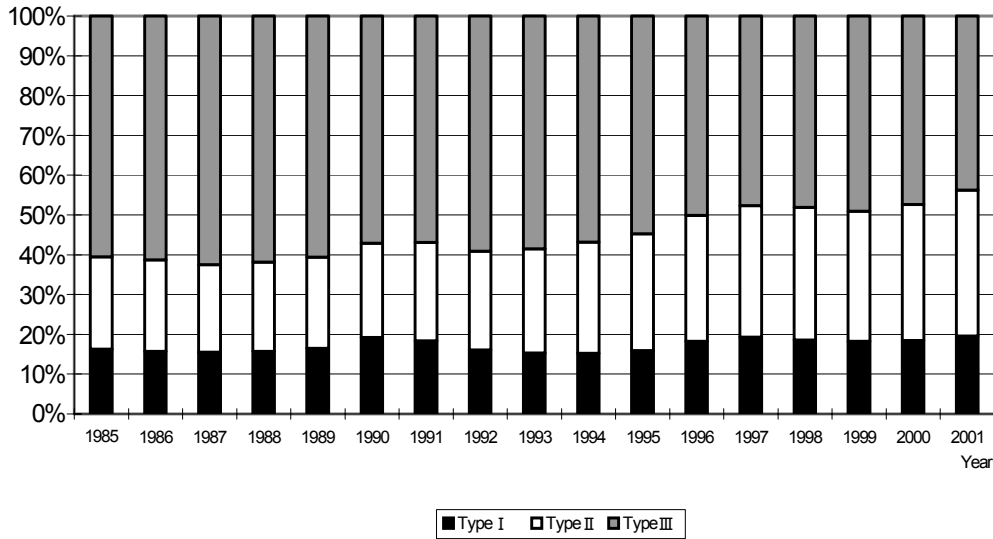


Table 1 shows the numbers who passed the recruitment examination over the period from 1996 to 2003, the ministry that employed them, and the type of school (university) they attended. From Table 1 we find that shares of those who passed the examination from

public schools (mostly national universities including city and prefectural local governmental universities) have been consistently decreasing in the last seven years from 82% to 76% while those from private schools have been increasing from 17% to 23%.

Table 1. Numbers of the passed and the employed for type I examination

University Type	Year	1996	1997	1998	1999
National	Passed	1300(82.1)	1032(79.6)	994(80.2)	1013(80.9)
	Employed	555(82.3)	435(79.8)	464(82.1)	486(82.9)
Private	Passed	280(17.7)	264(20.4)	239(19.3)	236(18.8)
	Employed	118(17.5)	110(20.2)	100(17.7)	99(16.9)
Total	Passed	1583(100.0)	1297(100.0)	1239(100.0)	1252(100.0)
	Employed	674(100.0)	545(100.0)	565(100.0)	586(100.0)
University Type	Year	2000	2001	2002	
National	Passed	981(79.9)	1015(77.6)	1227(76.0)	
	Employed	466(81.9)	490(81.3)	523(83.9)	
Private	Passed	242(19.7)	291(22.2)	377(23.3)	
	Employed	100(17.6)	113(18.7)	97(15.6)	
Total	Passed	1228(100.0)	1308(100.0)	1615(100.0)	
	Employed	569(100.0)	603(100.0)	623(100.0)	

() : % to the total

On the other hand, shares of the employed from public universities are rather stable around 82% while those from private universities have decreased from 18% to 15%. We also find from Table 1 that the percentages of the employed to the employed for public university graduates have been stable around 42% in the last seven years while those for private university graduates have decreased from 42% to 25%. The stated aim of government policy is to diversify those who pass the recruitment examination and are employed by a ministry so that private school applicants shouldn't be at a disadvantage with national university graduates. We find that this government policy has been effective only for those who passed the examination, but it cannot be extended to those who are employed by some ministries.

In 2004, the number of those who passed the type I examination is said to be 1,756, an increase of six from the previous year. The number of women who passed the examination amounted to 304, the highest number in history. Women are now occupying a 17.3% share and their number is continuing to increase over the last six years. Also, we can say that the number of graduates having a master's degree from graduate school is increasing both among applicants and among those who passed the examination. The share of the graduates who passed in 2001 is 48.9% while it is only 25.0% in overall applicants. Academic backgrounds that are well represented among those who passed are science, engineering and agriculture. Those with a master's degree are in the majority: science and

engineering have a 79.3% share and agriculture has a 63.0% share. Moreover, masters-level applicants are expected to increase more significantly as we will soon have social science graduates from law school and other types of professional public policy schools.

In 2001, the cabinet decided on a reform plan for civil servants. The cabinet proposed making the ratio of those passing the examination to those employed equal to 4.0. The intent is to gain a more diversified bureaucracy with representation from various types of public and private universities. This plan was opposed by the NPA since it is feared it will eventually increase the unemployed and damage the selected personnel. As it stands, this ratio is agreed to be around 2.5 among ministries.

Table 2 shows the numbers of the applicants as well as those who passed the examination and were employed in 2001. The ratios (A/B) between number of applicants (A) and those who passed the recruitment examination (B) in 2001 are 28.6, 10.1, and 16.3 for types I, II and III, respectively. Those who have been employed are 46.4%, 52.5% and 88.7% for types I, II and III, respectively. Comparing those employed with total applicants, we find that the percentages are 1.63%, 5.21% and 5.43% for types I, II and III, respectively. Thus we can say that recruitment examinations for government officials in Japan are extremely competitive.

Table 2 Numbers of the applicants, the passed and the employed

Type	Applicants	Passed	Employed
I	37,346 (9,583)	1,308 (199)	607
II	69,985 (21,821)	6,939 (1,816)	3,646
III	83,632 (32,909)	5,119 (1,889)	4,543

() : number of women

The NPA has been trying to guarantee that people will be given an opportunity to be a public servant by providing neutrality and fairness with respect to the subjects, structures and criteria for the recruitment examination. The recruitment examinations have been made fully public since 2002, and scores on the examinations have been considered to be more open. Around 80 so-called Law Schools, which were established in order to reform our country's judicial system, started to recruit students last April. Also professional graduate schools majoring in public policy have been developed in many universities in order to train professionals to work for planning, implementing and evaluating policies. These graduate schools aim to educate "future key government officials" and to provide them with highly advanced and professional capabilities in policy planning, implementation and evaluation areas. In the future these graduate schools are expected to be the main sources of future government officials in our country.

The promotion system for Japanese government officials is characterized by two keywords: "slow" and "prize accumulation." The "slow" promotion system means that almost all officials employed in the same year are simultaneously promoted to the next higher position until a certain level is reached, then the system becomes very competitive. Roughly speaking, the point beyond which promotion becomes difficult is around section chiefs in the ministry headquarter offices with the age 40 or a little above. Generally, "career" officials become section deputy-chief at age 30 or so, then are promoted to section chief or its equivalent at around age 38. The "prize accumulation" promotion system means that the "prize" results from the appreciation of superiors and peers for one's steady and cautious accumulation of "no error" service to one's group rather than for some spectacular positive achievement in one's own position. Thus, the "prize accumulation" promotion system has served to keep officials at their offices for a long term as they are almost equally treated in both salary and position within the same batch group.

The typical Japanese promotion system characterized by "slow" and "prize accumulation" may be said to have contributed greatly to the motivation of both "career" and "non-career" government officials to work hard and demonstrate loyalty toward their own ministry. Once they reach the position of section chief at ministry headquarter offices, however, the actual "promotion race" starts : namely, every time someone is selected to the higher position, (e.g., deputy director, director general, councilor, vice minister and so on) other batch members are offered outside positions and must leave their offices.

According to Self [18] the promotion system for civil servants is divided into two types: "closed career system" and "open career system." The Japanese and European promotion systems belong to the former while the American system belongs to the latter. The former system is characterized by employing capable and potential staff with a high degree of loyalty toward their ministry. Officials in the closed system tend to be "isolated" from the society and are considered "elite" government officials. In contrast, the open system tends to employ "political appointees" who do not have high loyalty toward their own ministry as they stay in the offices in the federal government only during the period while their boss (e.g. US President) holds his position.

Educating and Training Government Officials

Educating and training Japanese government officials in the area of policy studies have been conducted in both university schools, governmental training centers and governmental schools and colleges. Both central and local government offices send their staff to those schools for a certain period, such as a few weeks, a few months, or sometimes a few years.

Each Ministry including the NPA has been providing various types of training programs for different levels of government officials. In the year 2000 Japanese ministries provided 16,801 training courses and 186,838 government officials attended these courses. The NPA provided 168 courses and trained 5,915 officials in total. Most training programs are

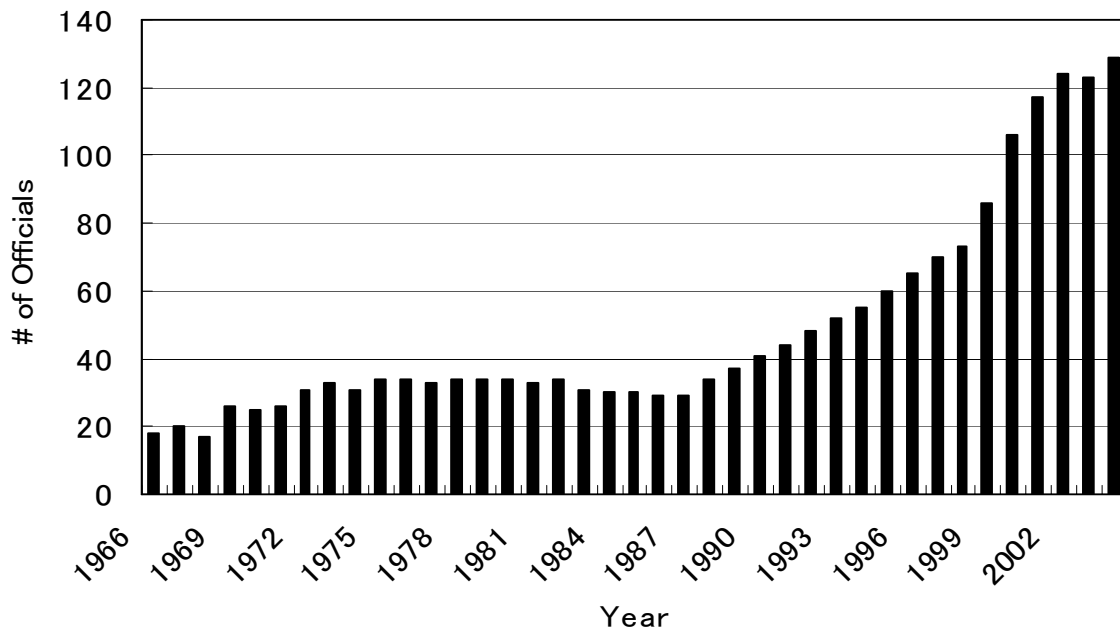
aimed at giving government officials necessary knowledge and techniques for them to carry out their duties and responsibilities both presently and in the future. Training programs, such as sending government officials to foreign and domestic graduate schools and governmental organizations, have been more popular and more common in both short term (six months to one year) and long term (mostly two years) programs. Short-term courses are generally for government officials who have been working for up to six years. By 2001, Japan has sent more than 1,500 officials to short-term courses in the US (1,100), Great Britain (222), France (116), Germany (50), Canada (34) and Australia (12). Figure 2 shows the trend in the total number of these officials from 1966 to 2002. The longer-term programs are mainly for the mid-career government officials who are sent to foreign governmental organizations and international organizations in order to work on some special research issues. From 1974 to 2001, this program sent 970 officials to the United States (481), Great Britain (193), Australia (61), Germany (48), France (47), Canada (46) and others (94).

Training programs that send government officials to Japanese graduate schools are aimed at

educating officials who have been working in the office from two to 16 years. To be accepted into these programs requires applicants to pass examinations by both the NPA and graduate school he or she is aiming for. In 2001, 19 officials are sent to five graduate schools and cumulatively to University of Tsukuba (101 since 1976), Yokohama National University (39 since 1990), University of Tokyo (55 since 1992), Kyoto University (16 since 1994), National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (11 since 2000) and Saitama University (97 during 1977 and 1999).

It has been observed that young government officials tend to quit more frequently than in previous years. The quit ratio, defined to be the percentage of those who quit their government official's job relative to their intake batch, is increasing recently; i.e., for those who entered government offices in 1975 the quit ratio was 0.46% while five years later, those in the 1980 batch had a quit ratio of 0.55%, and this ratio continued increasing further up to almost 1% for the 1993 batch. The main reasons for their quitting in the early stage are said

Figure 3 Total number of government officials sent abroad



to be, firstly, that they wanted more challenging work and/or more attractive jobs with hopefully a brighter future, and secondly, that they were not satisfied with their work or the work process. It is said that those government officials who were given an opportunity to study abroad in graduate school tend to quit more frequently.

In order to solve the turnover problem we believe that clear lines of authority and responsibility must be established for each position and government official. This would be a major change since, historically, most decisions in Japan are not made by individuals, but by certain groups such as committees or negotiation meetings. This rule worked well as no

individual person was responsible for any errors or failures. On the other hand, it is very rare that an individual will be highly appreciated for his individual contribution. We believe we need to establish our own rule and customs to evaluate each individual's contribution to their work more clearly and explicitly under the condition that their authorized commission and responsibility for their job was expressed clearly. In order to attain this objective we need to be equipped with an appropriate evaluation system so that all government officials agree, accept, and follow the evaluation results. An education and training system for government officials needs to be developed so that each government official is equipped with a certain specialty and expertise. A formal system for evaluating individuals and programs has not been common in Japan, especially for evaluating individual work and contribution. But from now on we need to "invent" an evaluation system that will make the government officials' decision-making system work more efficiently. What is needed is a system that will provide the incentive for them to work hard and effectively based on their own initiative.

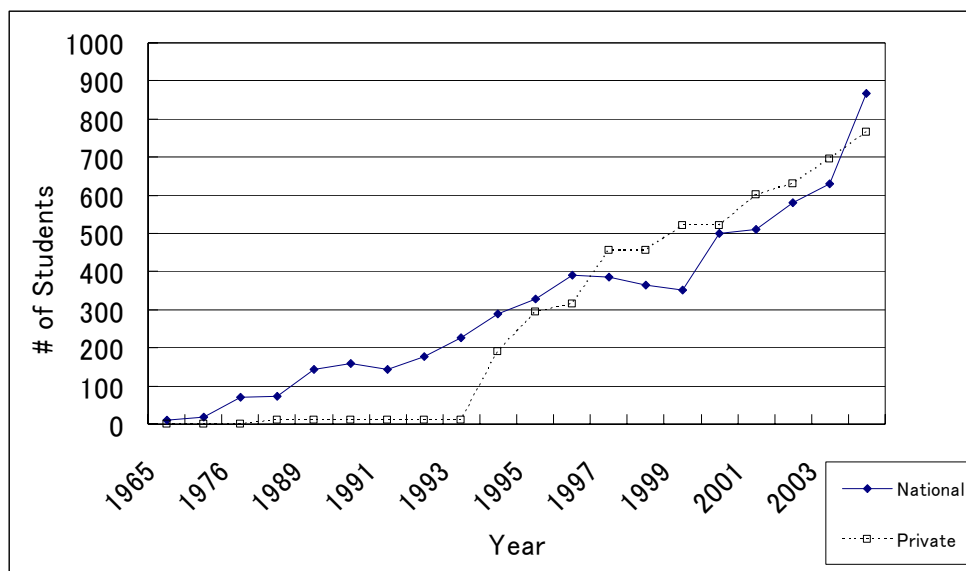
Undergraduate and Graduate Schools for Policy Studies

In Japan policy studies have been conducted in various schools in the university and government research

institutes. Public and private universities, in particular, have been very active in creating many policy-related schools and departments in the last 20 years. Figure 4 shows the increasing trend in the number of students majoring in policy-related areas. In 1997, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) was established. The forerunner of GRIPS was the Graduate School of Political Science (GSPS) that was part of Saitama University over the period 1977-2001. At this writing, more than 700 foreign government officials from a total of 60 different countries have been trained at GRIPS and GSPS. In total we have educated more than 1,400 master's students sent from Japanese and foreign governmental offices in the last 25 years with the number of Japanese and foreign graduates being roughly equal. Master's programs are offered in such areas as Policy Analysis, Public Policy, Public Administration, Development Study and so on. Presently in 2004 GRIPS accepts 230 master's students and 40 Ph.D. students.

Japanese government officials who go abroad to study in foreign graduate schools have been increasing each year. They are now almost 20% of the total type I officials compared with just 6% 10 years ago. We consider studying abroad very useful and fruitful for government officials, since they can attain certain "expertise" and "specialty" in addition to becoming more "internationalized."

Figure 4 Number of students majored in policy-related areas



In the United States, the political appointment system is very common. For example, almost 3,000 staff are appointed as new government officials in each department every time a new president is elected. About one third of the total number of political appointees are in the top Executive Services (ES). They are appointed by the president and must be confirmed by the Congress as well. Around 650 staff are employed in the Senior Executive Services (SES) which is limited to 10% of the total SES staff. The remaining 1,200 or so are mostly employed by SES and are generally referred to as Schedule C appointees. They are employed in General Services where they support and assist their SES agency. Current policy planning, policy making, and decision making are becoming more and more interrelated and complicated. This requires more highly advanced knowledge of an academic specialty. Sooner or later, the political appointment system will surely be introduced in Japan. It will take time, however, to provide the permanently employed government officials with the proper expertise, specialization, and incentives to make them effective participants in the various stages of policy-making process in very competitive situations.

Summary and Conclusion

In Japan high-level government officials represented by the "type I career group" come from highly selective pool of candidates given that they passed the very competitive recruitment examination and gained employment by major ministries. Their promotion system, however, has been almost "fixed" in that they have been promoted simultaneously with other members of the same batch group until they reach the level of section chief or equivalent in some division of the headquarter office of each ministry. Thus the "real promotion race" starts only at this later stage of their career.

Educating and training government officials has a long history in Japan, and its style, system, goal and review process have undergone continual change up to the present day. For example, the system of the Meiji period was such that only a few selected people were given the chance to go abroad at frequent intervals. Currently, many officials are given opportunities to go abroad or to study in graduate schools in Japanese universities following systemized rules. Educating and training government officials will become more and more common. Moreover, the importance of such studies will never be reduced as this will be one of the few chances for officials to face the "outside world" and communicate freely with people other than their colleagues. The education and training system needs to be aimed at allowing each official to obtain certain specialty and expertise in various public policy and public administration functions so that he or she can show his or her capability at the highest level in such areas as policy planning, policy implementation, policy evaluation, and policy analysis.

To constructively reform the government bureaucracy, the following changes are recommended.

1. The mission and responsibility of each government official and each government post should be made clear.
2. Government officials need to have broader, international and global viewpoints and understandings.
3. Every government official has to be equipped with some specialty in his or her job area.
4. An evaluation and review system for checking each government official's work accomplishments needs to be introduced in the Japanese civil servant system with reflection in promotion and salary.

The civil servant system must be revised so that the above objectives can be attained substantially and practically. This includes necessary reforms in the education and training systems. It is also important to create a review process for evaluating existing programs and determining how to organize and modify the education and training of government officials.

Author

Tatsuo OYAMA's obtained Bachelor of Science and Master of Science from College of Engineering of the University of Tokyo in Japan in 1969 and 1971, respectively. He was given a degree of Ph.D. from School of Operations Research and Industrial Engineering (ORIE) in the College of Engineering of Cornell University in 1977. After finishing the Master's program at the Graduate School of the University of Tokyo he worked for the Economic Research Institute of the Central Research Institute of Electric Power Industry in Japan as a researcher from 1971 to 1980. Then he taught at the Department of Arts and Science of Saitama University as Assistant Professor in 1980-81, Associate Professor in 1981-1988 and Professor in 1988-1997 at the Graduate School of Policy Science. He has been working as a Professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) since 1997. He has been Dean since April 2000 and Vice President since 2003 at GRIPS.

His major research interests are in applying operations research theory to public sectors decision making, policy analysis and evaluation. He has published many papers in the areas such as mathematical programming model analyses for energy and environmental problems, spatial interaction model analyses for inter-regional commodity flow phenomena, optimal public facility location problems and mathematical modeling approaches, apportionment problem and political districting problem, city traffic management policy analyses, mathematical modeling approaches for policy evaluation, and so on.

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