

DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND ITS SOCIO- POLITICAL BACKGROUND IN JAPAN

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Modernization of Japan

- In 1868, a political revolution known as the Meiji Restoration took place in Japan, marked by the collapse of the political power of the Tokugawa shogunate, and the birth of a new system of political authority with the Emperor at its head.
- The new government under Emperor Meiji attempted to overcome the political crisis by abolishing the feudal regime and turning Japan into a unified, modern nation-state. Adopting as its main slogans, “Civilization and Enlightenment”(文明開化), “Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Military”(富国強兵), the new government introduced modern social and economic systems to Japan.
- Educational reforms were also included within this modernization package.

Fundamental Code of Education (Gakusei) in 1872

“Proclamation of Education for All”

In 1871, the Department of Education was established and in 1872, the first systematic education regulation was promulgated in the form of the Fundamental Code of Education (*Gakusei*).

In its “preface” the government declared;

“The Department of Education will soon establish an educational system and will revise the regulations relating education thereto from time to time; wherefore there shall, in the future, be no community with an illiterate family, nor a family with an illiterate person. Every guardians shall bring up his children with tender care, never failing to have them attend school. A guardian who fails to send a young child, whether a boy or girl, to elementary schools shall be deemed negligent of his duty.”

「自今以後一般の人民、華士族農工商及婦女子、必ず邑(むら)に不学の戸なく、家に不学の人なからしめん事を期す」

Planning in Gakusei

- The school system followed the American model of the time, which consisted of three levels, elementary school, middle school and university. The administrative system followed the French, with strong central control by Ministry of Education and the system of school districts.
- Entire country was divided into eight university districts, each of these was divided into 32 middle school districts, and each of these was further divided into 210 elementary school districts. In principle, all children were required to attend to elementary school, regardless of sex, parental occupation, or social status.
- They planned an ambitious and huge school system that was composed of 8 universities, 256 middle schools and more than 50,000 elementary schools.

The 50th anniversary of Gakusei (1922, T.11)

“I am very proud that in spite of difficulties and twists and turns we have faced since the promulgation of Gakusei in 1872, Japanese education has steadily developed and amounted to the today’s prosperity.We are very pleased at recognizing the great progress of education carried out during these fifty years”.

“Foreword” by Minister of Education at that time

「(学制頒布以来)幾多の苦節もあり曲折もあり、起伏もあつたにも拘らず、さいはひ何等の故障もなく順調に進んで、今日の隆盛を見るに至ったのは国家のためひとへに慶賀に堪へない次第である」(文相巻頭言)

文部省『学制五十年史』大正11年

“We believe that as far as school education system is concerned, Japan has caught up with the advanced nations of the west.”

「我が国現今の(教育)制度は外国のものに比して、大いなる遜色を有しないと信ずるが、なほ時勢の推移に応じて、断えず修補改訂を加える必要のあることは論を俟たぬ」 428頁

Original plan and performance in fifty years later

	1873 (planning)	As of 1920 (existing)
Higher	University 8 Professional College some	University 16 Higher School 15 Professional College 101
Middle	Secondary School 256	Middle School for boys 368 Girls' High School 336 Vocational School 279
Elementary	Elementary School 53,760 (Enrollment rate in 1873) boys 39.9% girls 15.1% total 28.1%	Elementary School 25,562 (Enrollment rate in 1920) boys 99.2% girls 98.8% total 99.0%
Teacher Training	Normal School 8	Normal School 94

Initial Conditions (Socio-political Background) for the Modernization of Japanese Education

- What made it possible for modern education to develop so rapidly?
The following conditions favored such a development:
 - (1) Cultural and Educational Legacy of the Edo era
 - (2) Non-religious character of education and linguistic uniformity in education
 - (3) Recognition of nation-building and national unity through education
 - (4) Early emergence of the credential (meritocracy) society
 - (5) No experience of any colonial system of education and the possibility of choosing from a wide diversity of foreign models

(1) Cultural and Educational Legacy of the Edo (Tokugawa) era

- In the Tokugawa era (1603-1868), Japan enjoyed long peace and social stability. Under these conditions, there was a wide diffusion of educational institutions. For the samurai class, there were public education institutions (*Hankô* o fief schools) to learn the literatures of the Chinese classics (Confucian Studies). On the other hand, private academies (*Shijuku*), equivalent to secondary school, developed and they were open to all regardless of class. And there was a large number of popular learning houses called *Terakoya*, which concentrated on teaching of 3Rs to the commoners. The literacy rate among ordinary people was high by world standards at this time.
- New Meiji government promoted educational reform by establishing new schools while making use of exiting institutions.

(2) Secular character and linguistic uniformity in education

- Education had a strongly secular character, and the traditional religions such as Buddhism and Shinto did not have their own distinctive educational institutions. We could avoid the conflict between religion and education.
- Thanks to comparatively homogeneous cultural and linguistic traditions, there was no problem about using Japanese as the sole medium of instruction from the start. We did not need any bilingual and bicultural education.

(3) Awareness of national unity through education

- For a long time, as a result of the feudal system and the system of social classes, the formation of a common national consciousness had been held back. However, amidst the atmosphere of crisis in the face of external pressure at the end of the Edo era, there was a growing awareness that to keep the country independent, national unity and common national consciousness would be strongly needed.
- There was a growing consensus among political leaders of Meiji restoration on the importance of forming national unity through education. They conceived a new plan abolishing the traditional education based on the class system and offering equal educational opportunity to all people .

(4) Early emergence of the credential (meritocracy) society

In the face of national crisis at the end of the Edo era, in place of the traditional hereditary system, a system of social selection and social mobility mainly on the basis of individual academic attainment and ability was introduced.

In this way, in the early period of the nation-building, the initial conditions had been laid for the advent of the “academic-credential society” in which employment and social status were decided on the basis of a person’s educational attainment.

(5) No experience of any colonial system of education and the possibility of choosing models

Japan maintained its independence and did not have the experience of being made into a colony. It did not have the educational legacy introduced by former rulers, as was the case in many developing countries. Consequently, at the time of introducing a modern educational system, Japan had the policy option of choosing appropriate models from different developed countries.

Japan could employ many foreign consultants and specialist from different countries and also could dispatch student overseas to many countries at its own will.

Stages of Development of Modern Education (1)

I . Introduction of a modern education system and the stage of “borrowing” and “trial and error”: 1868-1885

1872 Fundamental Code of Education (学制)

1879 Education Order (教育令)

1880 Revised Education Order (改正教育令)

Imperial Wish on Principle of education (教学聖旨)

II . Stage of establishing a nationalistic education policy and the fundamental framework of education system : 1886-1890s

1886 Imperial University Order (帝国大学令), Elementary School Order (小学校令), Middle School Order (中学校令), Normal School Order (師範学校令)

1889 Imperial Constitution (大日本帝国憲法)

1890 Imperial Rescript on Education (教育勅語)

Second Elementary School Order (第二次小学校令)

1894 Higher School Order (高等学校令)

1897 Normal Education Order (師範教育令)

Stages of Development of Modern Education (2)

III. Stage of accomplishing universal primary education and development of secondary education: 1899-1910s

1899 Revised Middle School Order (改正中学校令), Girls' High School Order (高等女学校令), Vocational School Order (実業学校令), Private School Order (私立学校令)

1900 Third Elementary School Order (第三次小学校令)

1903 Professional School Order (専門学校令)

IV. Stage of development of higher education: 1918-1920s

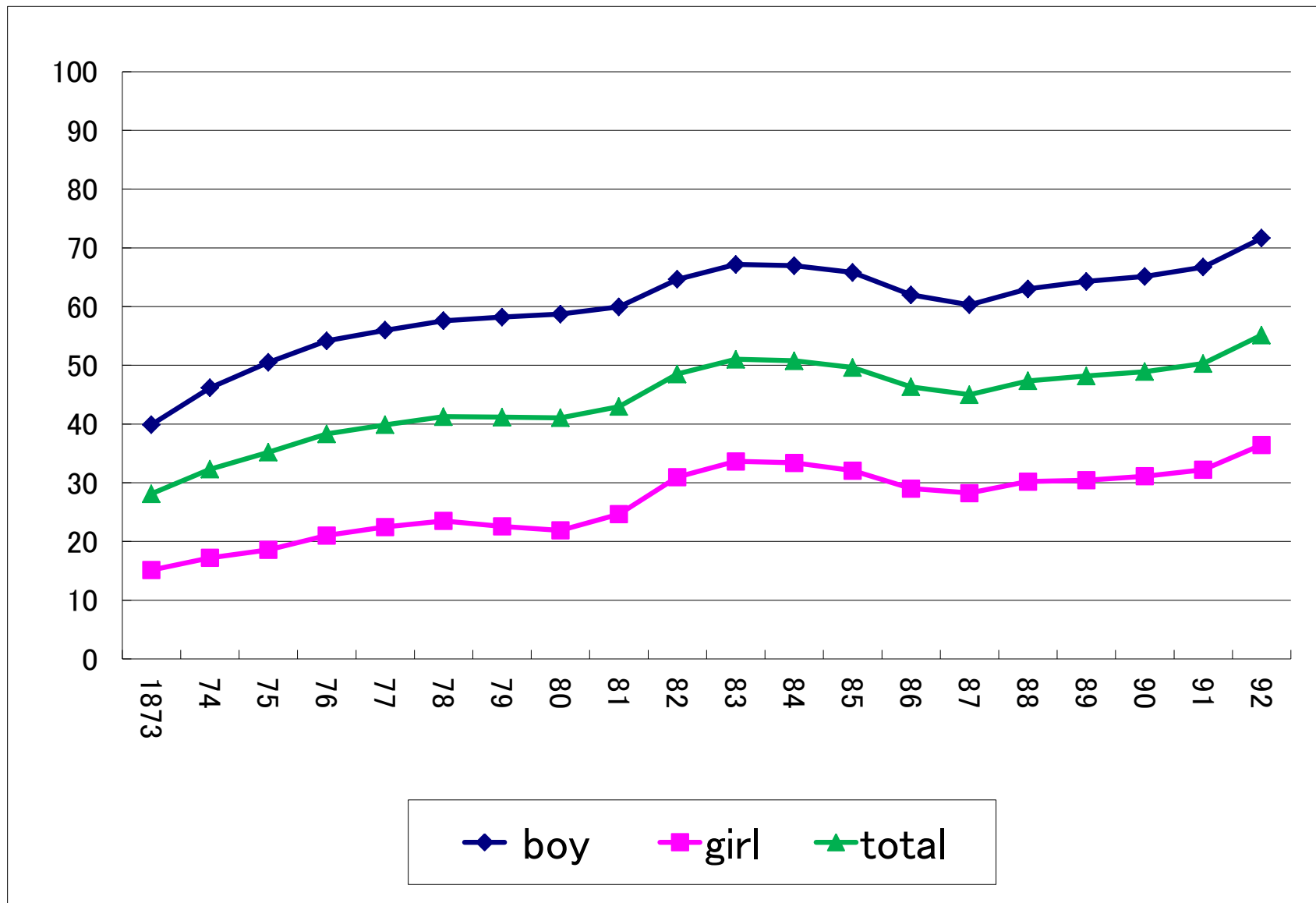
1918 University Order (大学令), Higher School Order (改正高等学校令)

V. Stage of education in militarism and ultra-nationalism: 1930-1945

Struggle and stagnation in the early stage

- From 1868 to 1885, Japanese education faced the many difficulties and twists and turns.
- The content of elementary school was modeled on that of American schools, and the textbooks used were also either translations or copies of Western textbooks. This kind of education made parents feel uncomfortable and aroused feelings of resistance.
- Department of Education appropriated large funds for employing foreign professors and sending many students to study overseas, so for the establishment and running of elementary schools, the government had to be dependent on local community funds, taxes on the residents of school districts, and tuition fees for students.
- There were many small-scale farmers at this time who depended on family labor, and the loss of child labor through schooling was a considerable burden for them.

Enrollment Rate in Elementary School : 1873-92



Renewal of the governing system and nation-building based on education

- In 1885, governing structure of the central government was renewed and a cabinet system was introduced. *Itô Hirobumi* was appointed as the first Prime Minister.
- *Itô* took a initiative in drafting the Imperial Constitution of 1889 and opening the Imperial Diet in 1890. He promoted the modernization of politics and a system of constitutional monarchy stipulating supremacy of the Emperor. Along with this, government administrative structures, both central and local, were strengthened
- In keeping with this, reorganization of education was demanded. Prime Minister entrusted the matter to *Mori Arinori*, the first Minister of Education of his cabinet. *Mori* was an enlightened statesman with diplomatic experiences in USA and UK and had a strong belief on the importance of education for nation-building .

Mori Arinori, the first Minister of Education



A thorough revision of the education system by Mori

- Mori reorganized and created the basic framework of an education system. In 1886, he issued four separate school orders for different parts of the educational system and arranged schools within a single structure.
- The elementary schools were identified as the training centers responsible for bringing up children to become loyal subjects of the Emperor. Attendance for the 3 or 4 years' of ordinary elementary course was imposed as a duty.
- Normal schools were identified as key institutions to inculcate all future teachers with a nationalist ideology.
- The Imperial University was identified as an institution with the purpose of training the leaders and technocrats who were to be equipped with the advanced Western knowledge and skills. The Imperial University received both privileges and a considerable amount of academic freedom.

Imperial Rescript on Education

- Moral education was the subject of a controversy that persisted through the 1870s and 1880s. On one side were conservative bureaucracy in the Imperial Court, who insisted that moral education should be based on the Japanese classics and Confucianism. Opposing them was a group of practical bureaucrats who aimed at the modernization of Japan through Western learning.
- The controversy was resolved by the Imperial Rescript on Education (教育勅語), which was issued in 1890. As it formed the basis of a national morality, the Rescript exerted a great influence on society and school until the end of the Second World War.

Development in the latter part of Meiji era

- The two wars in the middle period of Meiji era against China (1894-95) and Russia (1904-1905) raised Japan's international standing and accelerated the development of her industry. These wars helped the Japanese people to realize once again the importance of education in the development of a nation.
- After the victory in the Sino-Japanese War, a nationalistic emotion and fervor rose up among the Japanese people, and they willingly began to accept the nationalistic education promoted by the government.
- In these ways, Japan's education system was rapidly improved at all levels from primary through secondary to higher education.

Policy for accomplishing universal primary education at around the turn of the century

- By the Third Elementary School Order in 1900, the elementary school system was almost completed.
- Attendance at the 4 years' ordinary elementary course was formally imposed as a duty on all citizens.
- Tuition fees at the elementary school were abolished .
- Delay or exemption from schooling by reason of poverty or child labor was examined more strictly.
- Employing children who did not finish the compulsory education was banned.
- The system of automatic promotion through grades was adopted and repetition and dropout in elementary school were steadily decreased.
- In the curriculum, unification of school subjects and careful selection of education contents were promoted. In 1903, the national textbook system was introduced.
- In 1907, compulsory education was extended from 4 to 6 years

Diversification of the secondary education system

- Aiming at providing a structure at secondary education level, the government issued in 1899 the Vocational School Order and the Girls' High School Order.
- Through these Orders, secondary education was established as a tripartite system, consisting of middle schools for boys (中学校), girls' high schools (高等女学校), and practical vocational schools (実業学校).
- The Vocational School Order was applied to secondary schools for industry, agriculture, commerce, mercantile marine, and practical vocational skills.

Development of Higher Education system

- In 1903 the government issued Professional College Order. In the professional colleges (専門学校), graduates from a middle school or girls' high school took three years' specialized training in the disciplines such as law, medicine, engineering, commerce, pharmacology, and others. Some professional colleges for women were also established.
- In 1897, a second imperial university was established in Kyoto, and others followed, in 1907 in Sendai, in 1910 in Fukuoka.
- In 1918, the University Order was promulgated. Under this Order, approval was given for the establishment of single-subject public universities (medical, engineering, commercial etc.) and private universities.

Establishment of Japanese Education System in the Pre-War Period

- Japan had almost established a full-fledged national education system by the time of 1920 or in about fifty years from the introduction of modern education.
- After this time on, reproduction of new illiterate youths was virtually eradicated.
- In addition to the initial conditions mentioned at first, there would be other Socio-political factors that would support the rapid development in Japan.

(6) A firm belief and vision of the political leaders

- Some political leaders of Meiji era had a firm belief on the importance of education in the process of national development.
- Although there was a controversy among them concerning the orientation of education policy, for example, between the progressive-pragmatic line of *Kido Takayosi*, *Itô Hirobumi*, *Mori Arinori*, *Inoue Kowasi* and the conservative line of *Motoda Nagazane*, *Yamagata Aritomo*, they shared the belief in education and long-range vision on the development of education.

「教育立国論」＝「教育は国家百年の大計」

(7) Innovative attitude of education world

- Japanese teachers and educators were eager and always sensitive toward searching and introducing the new theories and teaching methods of foreign countries. They sometimes contrived to adapt them to Japanese environments. (※)

※ e.g. Pestalozzian pedagogy from US, Herbartian teaching method from Germany in Meiji era. John Dewey's "School and Society" was translated into Japanese in 1901(M34) and New Education movement was adopted from US and Europe in Taishô era.

(8) Cultural tradition of respecting teachers

- In general, the teaching profession was looked on with respect and gratitude by parents and the public at large. Almost all the teachers eagerly dedicated to their works and seemed to have a pride in their work and have high professional ethics.

(9) Establishment of efficient education administration system

- From the point of efficiency, Japan had already created a very efficient net-work of educational administration before the Second World War, essentially on the basis that the compulsory education was a municipal responsibility, secondary education was a prefectural responsibility, and higher education was a national responsibility. Japanese system combined the centralized decision-making and virtually decentralized implementation process.

(10) Mobilization of private sector for quantitative expansion

- While in compulsory education level, public schools virtually monopolized, private sector had substantial share for providing educational services in the fields of vocational and technical education, and higher education.

Final Comments

- It would be impossible to make Japanese education as a model for the developing countries by reason of the difference in initial conditions.
- However, it would be possible to give some suggestion, lesson and message to them for their practical use.
- Neither to be arrogant nor self-critical, but I have a pride inwardly in Japanese educational experience.

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