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Quo Vadis Grandes Ecoles: Ecole Nationale D'administration (ENA)

Kristian Widya Wicaksono¹

Parahyangan Catholic University, Indonesia and Tunghai University, Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

In France, to reach a promising career as a government officials' high-rank, people must join the Ecole National d'Administration (ENA). This situation put the ENA graduates (enarques) in the strategic position as the administrative elite. However, this particular aspect gives the term "equality" an awkward sound in higher education. This paper wants to know the impact of Enarques on the merit system recruitments of high-rank civil servants. The method used in this paper writing is a systematic literature review. This study shows that it is not compulsory to dissolve ENA, but we should treat ENA as an ordinary school for Public Administrator. It is then essential to create another university with the same concentration and access as ENA to procreate a fair competition. Finally, we must invite diverse graduates to join the high-rank position to encourage innovation and competitive nuance in the public organization.

Keyword:

Enarques, Professionalism,
Merit System Recruitment

INTRODUCTION

In this world, many people dream of owning a promising career in their lives since it will bring them to enjoy a fancy life, high self-confidence, and respect by the people surrounding them. There is a way to reach a promising career as a government official's high rank in France by joining the most prestigious French grandes écoles named Ecole National d'Administration (ENA). As mentioned by Vernardakis that the only method of entry into the grand corps and lesser corps of the France state is through ENA (Vernardakis, 2013).

ENA is an institution that produced a well-trained employee equipped with proper skill and knowledge, which makes them a professional administrator. Many of the ENA graduates called as enarques, partly due to the training they received at the School and especially the socializing influences of their career corps, are drafted to serve on detail in the positions of ministers, assistant ministers, directors of public enterprise, members of ministerial cabinets, and other, for as long as they are needed (Vernardakis, 2013). This situation put the enarques in the administrative

¹ kristian.widya@unpar.ac.id

elite's strategic position due to their capacity and competence as public administrators.

have the unique privilege that given the word egalité within higher education a hollow sound, making Oxbridge look like a

Table 1. Pro and Cons of the Existence of ENA

Pro	Cons
<p><i>Produce a well prepared (skill & knowledge) civil servants candidate to enter a high position in the public organization</i></p> <p><i>Raffarin: Ena is an excellent school for diplomacy and administration but not necessarily for politics. What is not acceptable is that all men and women politic come out of the same School</i></p>	<p>Limiting the opportunity for an ordinary citizen to become the part of high-rank civil servants, so it against the value of democracy such as fairness and equality</p> <p>Zimmern: ENA is a school created for a different era, "an era that needed a strong state at a time when it was necessary to create a state administration that united the country's elite."</p> <p>Lecaussin: ENA reforms proposed by the Government are merely simple measures: "The ENA has to shut down entirely; it does not make any sense today. It is costly and plays a harmful role in society; It has created an administrative elite, a class of mandarins. No other Western society has a school like this. It is the kind of thing you find in Japan. But even in Japan, schools are not as elitist as the ENA; the énarques are automatically granted influential posts in government ministries and large institutions without having specialist knowledge of economics and business administration</p> <p>Le Maire: we are entering a new world: that of entrepreneurs, of creativity, of innovation". As a result, "the higher administration must return to its proper place."</p>

Source: Combined from Various Sources, 2018

Furthermore, according to Galbraith and Bourdieu that the enarques have benefited from two main privileges: a monopoly of the top administrative positions within the civil service and entry into politics and industry without risk (World Universities, 2007). This condition stimulates a debate regarding the existence of ENA. In 2003, a committee set up by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin presented a series of proposals to the French cabinet, suggesting removing the guarantee of influential civil service posts for ENA graduates (Otzen, 2003). Many French politicians think that enarques

rather slack polytechnic in comparison (Otzen, 2003). To make this debate clearer, we can show the pro and cons in the table 1.

These pros and cons indicate a problem that the existence of enarques creates an unequal opportunity for a French citizen to enter a high-rank position in a public organization. Some of the cons even said that ENA has to shut down entirely. It means that some people believe that ENA has to dissolve. Therefore, we need to elaborate more on this situation by using an academic approach to gain a

proportional understanding of ENA's skepticism.

Based on the description of the debate on ENA, then we can formulate a research question as follows: "How is the impact of the presence of the graduates of ENA (Ernarques) on the merit system recruitments of high-rank civil servants (the grand corps) in French Public Organization?"

Furthermore, this paper wants to test two hypotheses that state: "there is a negative association between the presence of ENA and the merit system recruitment of the grand corps position of civil servants in French." Therefore we can divide this association into two kinds of hypothesis: 1) If the ENA dissolved, it would restore the merit system recruitment of high-rank civil servants position in the French Public Organization ; and 2) If ENA is maintained, then Ernarques will dominate the recruitment of high-rank civil servants position in French Public Organization.

To answer the research question and test the hypothesis, we need to develop a conceptual framework. Based on the hypothesis that developed in the previous part of this paper, we can identify two conceptual variables, the first is Professionalism and the second is merit system recruitment. Therefore, according to the two variables mentioned before, the conceptual framework section will be divided into two parts. However, in the last part of the conceptual framework, this paper will provide the conceptual model as an abstraction idea related to our discussion in the conceptual framework.

The terminology of Professionalism is discussed in the famous Wilson work, the science of administration. In his journals, Wilson said that the public administration's principal tasks to execute the policy and service provision by the neutral and professional public administrator. They are under the supervision of elected political leaders and demand to be responsible to the elected

political leader (Wilson, 1887). Accordingly, Wilson believes that policy implementation's success depends on the public administrator's competency, which means that they are neutral in terms of political partisanship on one side and, on the other side, professional in the intent of their capability or skills to do their job.

Moreover, Wilson also made the relationship between the concept of Professionalism the organization structure. He said that one factor that can improve the governance process is to scheme a hierarchical organization (Wilson, 1887). Based on this statement, we know that an organization needs to have real experience of Professionalism. What we mean by an organization is a social entity directed to achieve a goal or a set of goals and designed as an engineered structure and coordinated system of activity (Mintzberg, 1979). Thus, we know that coordination plays a vital role in an organization. Without coordination, an organization cannot accomplish its goal.

Meanwhile, coordination has proven to be a more complicated issue, requiring various means. Mintzberg said that there are five coordinating mechanisms to explain the fundamental ways organizations coordinate their work, and one of them is the standardization of worker skills (Mintzberg, 1979). Suppose we refer to the previous Wilson statement and relates it to the Mintzberg idea. In that case, we could understand that the development of Professionalism relies on the process of standardization of employees' skills. We must acknowledge that skills and knowledge are standardized when the training required to perform the work is specified. Thus, training is the design parameter by which the coordinating mechanism that we have called the standardization of skills is effected (Mintzberg, 1979).

The professional's work is preprogrammed in personnel training (or indoctrination, for that matter) before the

employee starts the job. Through this process, the employee can internalize the required behavior for doing his job. However, we should not forget that much of the training takes place outside the organization, professional schools, and the like, forcing the organization to surrender some power to these outside institutions (Mintzberg, 1979). The organization must arrange training following the internal organization's need to maintain the organization's power effectively.

Based on the elaboration of the professionalism concept, we can get a deep understanding that Professionalism develops from the standardization of worker skills and the standardization of skills formed under the designated training. However, the organization must coordinate preparation under the internal organization's needs to preserve the organization's influence successfully.

We cannot separate civil servant recruitment from their essence context in modern society. Since the third world wave of democratization, as Huntington mentioned, democracy becomes the main context where civil servants work to serve the public. According to Ban and Ricucci, that public personnel system, generally termed as civil service systems, was developed to support goals central to the concept of public administration in a democracy (Ban & Ricucci, 2002).

On the other hand, Morlino argues that some fundamental rights should be promoted in democracies. Political rights include the right to vote, the right for political leaders to compete for electoral support, and the right to be elected to public office or a passive electorate (Morlino, 2009). Morlino's opinions set out in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to participate in the Government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives (United Nations, 2015).

However, what do we mean by the merit system itself? According to McNamee and Miller, merit is a characteristic of the individual, and meritocracy is a characteristic of society. It grants individuals a direct proportion of the results of operations and the individual's capacity (McNamee & Miller, 2009). The other scholar, his name is Falon, as quoted by McCrudden, said that one of the merit system models is understood as a synonym of non-discrimination, non-cronyism, or no political favoritism (McCrudden, 1998).

Since we talk about the merit system in the recruitment process, we need to know some indicators related to the merit system. According to Sulardi, as quoted by Setyowati, there are seven indicators of the merit system associated with recruitment (Setyowati, 2016). Three among those indicators are: 1) Recruitment involves capable individuals and appropriate sources to get workers from all segments of society; 2) All applicants are treated fairly regardless of political background, race, color, religion, ethnic origin, sex, marital status, age, or disability, as well as getting the appropriate rewards to their privacy and constitutional rights; and 3) Selection is based on the ability, knowledge, and expertise through fair and open competition for all to have the same opportunity.

After elaborating on the concept of professionalism and merit system recruitment, then we come to the part where we will create a conceptual model. This model helps us provide a systematic explanation to understand the relationship between ENA and the recruitment of high-rank civil servants in France's Public Organization.

Based on the figure 1, we can see that the two main parts of Civil Servant Recruitment are Professionalism and Merit System. In Professionalism, we need to know that training and education are tools for the standardization of workers' skills and knowledge. Moreover, internal

training, which is also part of Professionalism, is the organization's ability to maintain its power effectively.

On the other hand, the merit system in this model comprises of two elements. First is non-discrimination, which means all of the public organization applicants should treat fairly and equally. The second is a proper selection that refers to the recruitment judgment focused on prospective employees' ability, knowledge, and expertise.

this study is secondary data gathered from various literature. Besides, the data is analyzed and evaluated qualitatively to address the research questions explicitly formulated in this paper (Snyder, 2019). The findings can be used as a guide to enhance the procedure and policy recommendations relevant to the future management of ENA and other similar campuses.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model



METHODS

The method used in this writing is the Literature Review. This method prioritizes researchers' efforts to conduct literature searches on previous writings relevant to the topics discussed and synthesize the literature to gain new knowledge (Snyder, 2019). In more detail, there are three approaches in the literature survey method: A systematic approach, a semi-systematic approach, and an integrative approach. This paper will use a systematic approach. Snyder explained that the systematic approach aims to perform synthesis and compare evidence (Snyder, 2019). This approach intends to help researchers clarify the effect of Ernaques' participation in the high-level recruitment process for public organizations in France. The data used in

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This section splits into two sections based on the previous section of this paper's conceptual model. However, before we come to the central part of the discussion, the writer will provide short information about ENA. Then, we will discuss Professionalism and the merit system in public personnel recruitment. These two parts derive into four different sections. In Professionalism, we will talk about training and education initiatives, then followed by preserving organization power. In the next section, we will concentrate on the merit system with a particular concern about non-discrimination and equal selection.

Brief Description of ENA

ENA was established in 1945 by Charles de Gaulle. ENA's early philosophy

developed by Debre (the School's architect), Racine, and others; the emphasis given to economic and Keynesian ideas during the training; and the competitiveness introduced by the final ranking (Classement) which results in the adoption of a style perceived to be favored by the examiners (Vernardakis, 2013). The purpose of the ENA establishment is to reduce the accentuation of the standard curriculum on one side and, in reverse, is to modernize the education for civil servants by introducing subjects such as sociology, economics, statistics, and public Administration (Safran, 2016).

The curriculum of ENA is a combination of theory and practices in three years duration program. Here are the details of the ENA curriculum in three years: 1) First-year: on the job learning in an administrative office mostly conducted in the province; 2) Second-year: academic study; and 3) Third-year: a further internship in a particular ministry that is following the student's desire to work

However, if we look carefully at the curriculum, we can see that the ENA curriculum puts more weight on practices. It is the cause why *ernaques* have useful competencies in the practice of public administration. They have outstanding field experience that makes them more expert in handling organization and managerial troubles.

ENA is an administrative body attached to the prime minister's Department through the Public Service's General Directorate. The School has a governing body, *Conseil d'administration*, chaired by the Vice President of the Council of State. Attached to the governing body is a committee, *Conseil d'Orientation*, concerned explicitly with curricular affairs. ENA is headed by a director who is assisted by administrative staff and supervised by a secretary-general. Mostly non-permanent workers carry out much of ENA's work. (Vernardakis, 2013).

Professionalism Training and Education

As we know, ENA is a grad school in France that has trained its students very professionally to enter the public organization. The selection process to enter this School is very tight and competitive. Only a 5% high rank can be accepted as a student in ENA from all applicants. We also need to notice that about 70 percent of the successful candidates in the ENA external examination come from the upper and upper-middle classes, with the vast majority of them from the Paris area (Vernardakis, 2013).

Therefore, since the beginning, we know that ENA is only recruited potential applicants as their students. We can imagine that ENA is such a close perfect school. They only accept intelligent and diligent students on the one hand. On the other hand, they have a high standard curriculum to shape their students to become real professionals before entering the public organization. We cannot deny the facts that ENA graduates have provided to the Fifth Republic three presidents, numerous prime ministers, ministers, and junior ministers.

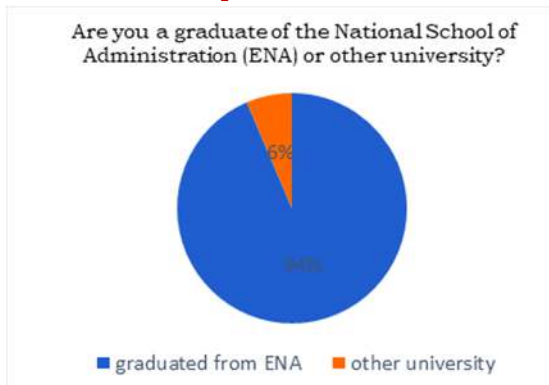
Based on this explanation, we can figure out that ENA has a robust tradition in producing a high quality of practice in the field of Public Administration in terms of training and education. In terms of Professionalism, we have to admit that ENA is the right place for gaining knowledge and experience as a professional Public Administration.

Preserving Organization Power

Maintaining an internal organization means that the organization will preserve its organizational power effectively. ENA is an administrative body attached to the prime minister's Department through the Public Service's General Directorate. If we refer to this situation, it proves that the French Government shows a real step to preserve their executive power. They manage their training according to their own needs of

expected worker's skills. In this way, the contribution of enarques to the Government will suit the organization's demands.

Figure 2 The Composition of the Grands Corps in France



Source: Interpreted from Vernardakis, 2013

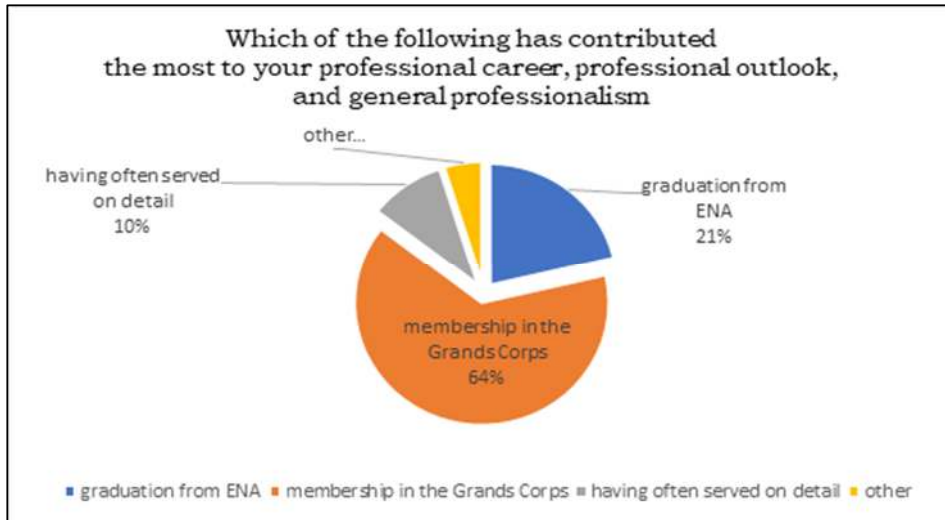
However, one of the enarques is also issued a critique regarding this situation. Bernard Zimmern, an énarque who went on to form the conservative think-tank IFRAP, Institut Francais de Recherche Sur Les Administrations Publiques, says that ENA is a school built for a different era, "an era that needed a strong state at a time when it was necessary to create a state administration" (Otzen, 2003). This notion is entirely rational because, in a democratic country, the state administration is created to serve the people fairly and equally, not to preserve government power. In modern public administration, the public becomes the center of attention to the issue—all resources and attempts created to solve public problems and fulfill public needs. Therefore, government power is not coming from the inside of the organization but from providing high-quality public goods and public services for their people.

For the same purpose, we also need to put our attention to Bruno Le Maire's critique that says we are entering a new world: that of entrepreneurs, of creativity, of innovation". As a result, "the higher administration must return to its proper place" (Otzen, 2003). It means that we

cannot let the French government administration looks like business as usual. The current public Administration needs the spirit of entrepreneurs that stimulate innovation inside of government organizations. We need a creative method from the Government to answer the social change. Even the ENA itself already performed their works by a largely non-permanent staff. We must criticize why ENA is already practicing an innovative method inside their organization, but on the contrary, the French are classically maintaining ENA. A non-discrimination recruitment of public officials will show the degree of meritocracy practice in a country. It means that we will have a clean and accountable activity in the government process. We need such a situation to build our community's confidence in the Government, and this confidence will enable our community to support government policies and enforce them.

However, we might find that in French authority such as the Cabinet of the President, the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, and all the ministerial cabinets have included large numbers of civil servants, largely ENA graduates. We also know that the nature of the Fifth Republic is determined by a constitution that was mostly the work of Michel Debre, ENA's founder, and a team mainly composed of ENA graduates and the facts also provides evidence that every general election since 1958 has seen an increasing number of enarques elected to parliament, predominantly members of parties supporting the governing coalition

Figure 3 Career Development Opportunity



Source: Interpreted from Vernardakis, 2013

Based on the data gathered by Vernardakis that more than 90% of the grands corps are coming from ENA graduates, as we can see in the figure 2 (Vernardakis, 2013). It means that the ENA graduates are dominating the high-rank position in French Public Organization. It is probably not good because the French Government was less involved with other universities' graduates to have the same chance as ENA graduates. The value of equality in this sense is abandoned by the French Government even though we do not know precisely the quality of other university graduates. There is an open possibility that other university graduates have the same level of capacity or even much better competency than ENA graduates.

Therefore, we need to create a more appropriate curriculum for the other universities to enjoy the same treatment as the ENA students have. It will stimulate competition to become more dynamic and exciting. On the other hand, it will also reduce the other universities' envy of ENA and decrease the tension of debates among scholars and politicians in French. Then, ENA can improve international activity by intensifying its international program, such as training and workshop for

professional public administrators from many different countries.

Vernardakis also provides another data that shows as ENA graduates, and they enjoy some privileges to develop their career inside the public organization, as shown in Figure 3 (Vernardakis, 2013).

Table 2 ENA Students Parents Background

Occupation	Percent	No. of answers
Medical doctor	8.7%	(9)
Lawyer	3.8%	(4)
Industry, commerce,	24.0%	(25)
Scientists, engineers	7.7%	(8)
Civil servants	36.5%	(38)
Schoolteacher	5.8%	(6)
University faculty	4.8%	(5)
Military staff	2.9%	(3)
Skilled laborer	3.8%	(4)
Farmer	1.0%	(1)
Retired	1.0%	(1)

Source: Vernardakis, 2013

It is the training imparted by the grands corps and their socializing influences that are the primary factors in the development of careers and Professionalism. The role of ENA here, although it is secondary, it is still substantial (Vernardakis, 2013). This

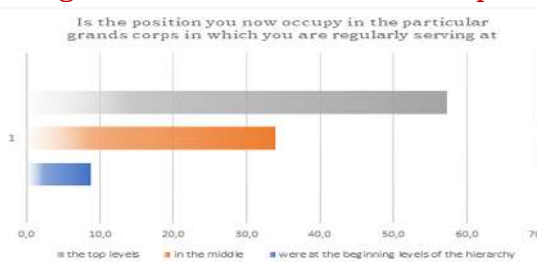
finding is more emphasize that becoming the ENA graduates will bring advantage to your career.

Therefore, if we let the situation develop from time to time, the unequal condition will worsen. To prevent that risk, the government institution should reduce the number of ENA graduates recruited by a government organization. Perhaps in several years, around two to three years, the French authority can conduct the moratorium policy to recruit ENA graduates as a high-rank employee. This policy can create a better and equal composition of university graduates in French government institutions' high-rank positions.

Another finding also shows that the enarques are had a special place in government organization positions as displayed in the Figure 4. What seems to emerge here is an inverted hierarchy, massive at the top.

It shows that the concentration of ENA graduates in the top-level position of the public organization. Of course, this situation is not ideal for the French Government. On the other side, the grands corps are small, fast services based on the concept of career, recruiting at an entry-level five to fifteen a year from the top of ENA's graduating class and promoting only from within (Vernardakis, 2013). This closed recruitment is not suitable for the value of non-discrimination. Somehow, it is unavoidable that people in a democratic country demand an open and transparent process of recruiting a high-rank employee.

Figure 4 Positions in Grands Corps



Source: Interpreted from Vernardakis, 2013

They want the Government to guarantee that the process is morally and ethically acceptable for society since there is no question that career development for all civil servants is accomplished by offering equal opportunities (Elfadhila & Kurniawan, 2020).

Vernardakis also provides information about the family background of ENA students. Based on this data, most of the ENA students are the sons of professionals and public employees who live in the Paris area. They grew up in Paris, graduated from the National School of Administration (ENA), where they trained as generalist administrators for over two years.

However, besides the French Government itself has made a real step to reduce the over-concentration of the administrative elite that lives in Paris by moving ENA from Paris to Strassbourg. We need to admit that this policy was part of the deconcentration attempt to create a similar situation and condition among the French regions.

Fair Selection

The concern of proper selection for recruitments of high-rank positions in many organizations is a normal situation. It becomes a standard procedure in a public organization because people demand a transparent and accountable public organization process. Thus, the selection must be based on the ability, knowledge, and expertise through a fair and open competition for all participants to have the same opportunity

Internally in ENA, the final ranking (Classement) after the final exam will determine the selection of one's job preference from the list of available vacancies, with the first on the list choosing his/her position, then the second, and so on. Approximately the first 15 on the final ranking opt to work for one of the grands corps, the Inspectorate of Finance (Inspection des Finances), the Court of Accounts (Cours des Comptes),

the Council of State (Conseil d'Etat), the Ministry of External Affairs, and a few others (Vernardakis, 2013). This situation shows that proper selection is already underway.

On the other hand, the others who graduated ENA join the civil administrators (administrateurs civils). It is of interest that the Inspectorate of Finance considers being *le plus grand des grands corps*. It should note here that, due to the differences in prestige, career development, prospects, remuneration, and perks between the *grands corps* and other government corps as well as among ministries, the final ranking assumes crucial importance. The *grands corps* attract those at the top of the graduating class, contributing to the perpetuation of their competence and prestige (Vernardakis, 2013).

All these situations show that the selection process for the ENA students to enter public organizations is very tight and competitive. It also makes sense that every government institution wants the best graduates to join their organization to make the institution run more smoothly. In this way, the organization can achieve its goal effectively and efficiently.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, we can draw several conclusions from this academic elaboration. First, since ENA is already establishing for 73 years, it is not compulsory to dissolve ENA. However, after the real step of moving ENA to Strassbourg as a method of deconcentration, the idea that put ENA as a superstition attached to the Department of the Prime Minister through the General Directorate of the Public Service should be revisited, reconsidered, and reevaluated. In the future, we can treat ENA as an ordinary school for Public Administrator and reduce the over-concentration of power and authority only on the particular elite group. The French Government also can issue a

moratorium policy for recruiting a high-rank employee from ENA graduates. This moratorium strategy should be extended for two or three years to have a more assertive, fair representation of university graduates for high-ranking employees.

Secondly, the other School's curriculum re-engineered with the same concentration and focuses as ENA is needed. The French Government can open the same opportunities for that kind of School to get the same access as ENA to put their student on an internship in several government bodies and enjoyed the same treatment. It will stimulate the change of *grands corps* composition in the future and open other school graduates' opportunity to have the same access to the high-rank position in a government organization. Hence, not all men and women politics come out of the same School.

The last conclusion is the importance of encouraging innovation by allowing competition inside the government agencies. The French Government should require all graduates of universities to become top-ranking civil servants. It will create more lively competition and increase organizational capacity. In the end, the fair competition inside the organization will lead to more dynamic to find a way out from the social problems and become more creative to fulfill the people's needs. []

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