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**FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE OF SELF-EVALUATION
IN JAPANESE HIGHER EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

The development of the quality assurance system in East Asia is quite different among the countries. Since the late 1980's, the Japanese government has encouraged self-evaluation and self-monitoring activities at the institutional level. In this, Japan should be categorised as a model unique in the world of a highly developed internally oriented and decentralised quality assurance system. Nonetheless, the Japanese government has now decided to establish a new national external quality assessment body following the European quality assurance system. The aim of this paper is to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese system through the discussion of what has been achieved by institution-based self-evaluation. The analysis is based on the results obtained by nation-wide survey on quality assessment and evaluation activities. The author concludes that self-evaluation activities achieved a certain degree of quality improvement, mainly because of their flexibility in adapting to the actual problems.

FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE OF SELF-EVALUATION IN JAPANESE HIGHER EDUCATION

The development of the quality assurance systems in East Asia has been basically under a strong influence of the American accreditation system. However, the actual policies and systems are quite different among those countries. In Japan, the new quality assurance system is to be introduced. The University Council (the official advisory committee of the Ministry of Education for the higher education policies) recommended the early establishment of the National Institute for University Evaluation. This organisation is to be established in April 2000 under the title of the National Institute for University Evaluation and Academic Degrees.

1. BACKGROUND: THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM BEFORE 1990S

(1) The establishment of the JUAA and its failure to achieve popularity

Traditionally, Japanese quality assurance system relied on the system of charters similar to that found in Europe. Before the World War II, the Japanese government set quite strict standards for establishment of the universities. In order to promote the establishment of new public and private universities after the World War II, the government, under American guidance, set new standards for the establishment, that were much less demanding than those they replaced. At the same time, the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) was established, following the model of the accreditation associations in the United States. In a typical American model, the legal standards set by the government for the establishment of the university are less rigorous than the standards set by the accreditation bodies. Therefore, the accreditation system is necessary and meaningful in order to demonstrate the quality of the education and research in universities. However, in Japan, the Japanese government set their own governmental quality standard for the establishment in addition to that of JUAA. Under this system of double standards, most of the universities have not felt it important to be accredited by JUAA: all of the established universities have been chartered by the government, and there has been no legal, economical, or social sanction requiring accreditation by JUAA. As the Japanese higher education has continuously grown through the 20th Century, most of the universities have frequently submitted to the procedures of chartering because the typical management strategy of the universities has been establishing a new faculties and departments. At the same time, the most important issue for Japanese higher education has been the realisation and control of mass higher education. For these reasons, the dual accreditation procedures have not functioned as they were expected to at the outset. The quality issue has been regarded in Japan as comprising the simple numerical matters - the number of the students per faculty staff, building areas or facility, etc.

(2) The deregulation of the standards and introduction of self-monitoring and self-evaluation system

It was in 1980s that the argument of the quality assessment started in Japan. At the beginning of the 1990s, the number of high school graduates reached a peak for the second generation of baby boomers. It was expected that the university market would subsequently shrink. Accordingly, researchers identified the probable emergence of severe survival competition among universities. At the same time, the growing popular belief in market competition also began to influence public debate on education policies. The University Council and the government decided to deregulate the standards for establishment of the Universities. Before this policy change in 1991, the academic structure of the educational curriculum were strictly controlled. This consequent deregulation gave universities much more flexibility in setting their own curriculum. At the same time, the University Council required the university to apply themselves to the processes of self-monitoring and self-evaluation, in order to maintain and improve the quality of university education.

At that time, the university council acknowledged the importance of the quality assurance activity itself. However, they did not support the idea that external evaluation system should be introduced. The model of the Japanese system was still the accreditation system in the United States. Kells (1988)'s argument that stressed the importance of the self-study by the institutions strongly influenced leading Japanese researchers. Based on the argument on academic freedom and autonomy, the University Council advised only need for self-monitoring and self-evaluation, and, at least at that time, did not recommended the immediate introduction of external assessment system. An important reason of this decision was the existence of JUAA. The University Council argued that JUAA should take the role of external assessment in the future.

This self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities has widely spread among the national, local public, and private universities. By 1997, 83.7% of these implemented at least one time, and 56.4% implemented more than once (RIHE, 1998).

Trials of external assessment also started by the voluntary initiative of universities and JUAA. Physics course of the University of Tokyo implemented the external assessment by their own initiative in the beginning of 1990s. Following this, a number of other universities implemented external assessment organised by the universities themselves. JUAA also started the 'mutual evaluation scheme', the external assessment programme based on re-accreditation procedure. However, by 1997, the proportion of the universities that have experienced external assessment was only 15.1%, and very few have experienced more than one (RIHE 1998).

The University Council issued a major new report in 1998, arguing that while self-evaluation and monitoring activities by universities and colleges have certainly played an important role, and that those activities alone are not sufficient to promote the required level of university reform. They

contended the third-party evaluation (external evaluation) is necessary, and advocated the establishment of a national institution for external assessment in Japan.

2. JAPANESE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AS DECENTRALISED AND INTERNAL ORIENTED EVALUATION

As a comparative framework for quality assurance systems, a comparative perspective from a sociological view can be provided by superimposing two kinds of distinction; (1) internal evaluation oriented vs. external assessment oriented; and (2) centralised vs. decentralised. Japan and Germany have similar structures of quality assurance systems, i.e. internal evaluation oriented and decentralised. However, German system is far less developed compared with Japanese system. In this sense, Japan should be categorised as a model unique in the world of a highly developed internally oriented and decentralised quality assurance system. Nonetheless, because of their dissatisfaction with the voluntary self-evaluation, the Japanese government has now decided to establish a new national external quality assessment body following the European quality assurance system. The aim of this paper is to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the Japanese system through the discussion of what has been achieved by institution-based self-evaluation.

The analyses are based on the results obtained by a nation-wide survey on quality assessment and evaluation activities. The Research Institute for Higher Education (RIHE) at Hiroshima University executed a nation-wide survey on the quality assurance system of Japanese universities. Questionnaires were sent in January 1998 to the presidents of all 586 universities in Japan, (i.e. 98 national, 57 local public and 431 private). Replies were received from 418 (82 national, 44 local public and 292 private), giving a response rate of 71.3%. Four main topics were identified in the questionnaire: (1) self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities and organisation; (2) indicators employed in self-monitoring and self-evaluation; (3) involvement into external assessment; (4) comments and opinions.

The questionnaire asked whether and to what degree the universities implemented self-monitoring and self-evaluation in 79 items shown in table 1. The author used those items as quantitative values, putting the weighting score from 0 (not at all) to 6 (highly important). Through the principal components analysis, the items were grouped into six items; (1) feedback by the students, (2) organisational management; (3) educational activities; (4) research activities; and (5) entrant and graduate performance; (5) contribution for the society and student service.

Table 1. Items used in self-monitoring and self-evaluation: principal components analysis (Varimax rotation)

table 1

	factor 1	factor 2	factor 3	factor 4	factor 5	factor 6
	student feedback	organisational management	education	research	enrolment /graduate performance	social service /student welfare
reading assignment, curriculum design	0.945	0.002	0.025	0.093	0.064	0.053
academic level	0.940	-0.004	0.065	0.100	0.076	0.046
usage of OHP, slides, etc	0.937	0.010	0.032	0.092	0.039	0.050
comprehensiveness of the curriculum	0.931	0.003	0.050	0.115	0.054	0.072
voice, usage of blackboard	0.917	-0.024	0.039	0.112	0.080	0.019
mutuality, class discussion	0.873	0.037	0.094	0.168	0.035	0.076
punctuality, attitudes of teachers	0.858	0.113	0.107	0.077	0.126	-0.057
humour/personality	0.857	0.084	0.134	0.111	0.085	0.033
homework assignment	0.857	0.125	0.175	0.098	0.111	0.006
support outside of the class	0.826	0.090	0.175	0.112	0.140	0.006
grading	0.825	0.117	0.181	0.141	0.058	0.026
student feedback	0.720	0.007	0.239	0.084	0.031	0.027
faculty meeting	0.067	0.741	0.229	0.053	0.034	0.351
president	0.056	0.704	0.228	0.086	0.021	0.249
university board	0.127	0.694	0.212	0.096	-0.010	0.240
finance	0.107	0.690	0.196	0.078	-0.002	0.347
young researchers	0.125	0.682	0.201	0.207	0.040	0.213
turnover of faculty members	0.079	0.676	0.104	0.270	0.204	-0.096
non-Japanese faculty	0.010	0.674	0.106	0.224	0.316	0.036
committees	0.065	0.665	0.223	0.058	0.066	0.369
female faculty	-0.015	0.656	0.071	0.211	0.336	-0.031
age pyramid of the faculty	-0.064	0.650	0.087	0.127	0.346	0.144
administration	0.133	0.649	0.196	0.079	0.008	0.415
universities faculty members graduated	0.007	0.639	0.087	0.228	0.191	-0.025
chair	0.045	0.634	0.228	0.119	-0.007	0.217
salary of faculty staff	-0.022	0.623	0.147	0.162	0.303	0.111
discipline/fields	-0.018	0.601	0.191	0.247	0.361	0.130
financial aid/tuition	0.112	0.569	0.157	0.073	0.112	0.424
international exchange by faculty	-0.030	0.520	0.095	0.319	0.245	0.320
core curriculum	0.059	0.111	0.738	0.163	0.082	0.265
concentration/major	0.092	0.094	0.726	0.137	0.112	0.257
applicability for practical work	0.038	0.215	0.724	0.177	0.191	0.058
understanding level of the student	0.257	0.113	0.706	0.185	0.085	0.187
term/year calendar	0.086	0.227	0.699	0.105	0.238	0.007
evaluation of the student performance	0.156	0.191	0.662	0.150	0.053	0.152
proceeding to post-graduate education	0.071	0.258	0.659	0.245	0.217	0.003
class size	0.080	0.200	0.639	0.012	0.219	0.159
selectivity	0.084	0.210	0.628	0.049	0.221	0.161
multimedia facilities	0.228	0.132	0.613	0.055	0.145	0.193
articulation with high school learning	0.212	0.255	0.611	0.232	0.203	0.057
remedial education	0.166	0.185	0.536	0.021	0.306	-0.118
academic awards	0.100	0.103	0.098	0.811	0.115	0.072
research at academic society	0.092	0.125	0.173	0.759	0.122	0.125
position at academic society	0.100	0.087	0.124	0.752	0.140	0.012
refereed articles	0.123	0.199	0.159	0.711	0.091	0.072
contents and meaning of research	0.034	0.161	0.163	0.678	0.084	0.121
publication list	0.034	0.069	0.125	0.668	0.226	0.191
research grant from industry	0.211	0.100	-0.012	0.657	-0.048	0.159
research grant from government	0.097	0.108	0.043	0.652	0.096	0.213
patent	0.227	0.201	0.035	0.589	-0.058	-0.032
contribution to mass media	0.186	0.254	0.133	0.588	0.071	0.028
citation	0.074	0.260	0.184	0.566	0.021	-0.017
entrants	0.094	0.155	0.180	0.075	0.781	0.179
applicants	0.084	0.133	0.154	0.071	0.761	0.255
selectivity	0.086	0.114	0.241	0.128	0.750	0.047
geographical distribution of entrants	0.058	0.087	0.078	0.174	0.695	0.184
types of high school entrants graduate	0.158	0.139	0.180	0.067	0.679	0.001
admission procedure	0.079	0.182	0.252	0.081	0.629	0.311
age of entrants	0.136	0.177	0.148	0.130	0.606	0.011
career expectation of students	0.075	0.212	0.258	0.050	0.577	0.248
career support for students	0.073	0.163	0.228	-0.031	0.527	0.407
companies graduates work	0.090	0.115	0.163	0.064	0.524	0.425
libraries/information facilities	0.006	0.197	0.168	0.085	0.202	0.754
club activities	0.016	0.206	0.094	0.116	0.272	0.740
health care	0.012	0.310	0.136	0.084	0.172	0.720
international exchange by students	0.011	0.264	0.095	0.227	0.177	0.659
student life	0.029	0.253	0.190	0.160	0.168	0.614
restaurants/stores	0.039	0.292	0.207	0.114	0.161	0.556
contribution to local community	0.077	0.337	0.155	0.216	0.140	0.529

In order to know the relationship between self-monitoring/evaluation activities and characteristics of universities, the regression analyses shown in table 2 are used. The dependent variables are the accumulated scores of consisting items of six factors. The independent variables were selected as follows; (1) the founder (dummy variables; a: 'national'=1 and else=0, b: 'local public'=1 and else=0, if both of them=0, 'private'); (2) fields the universities provide (dummy, 'medical and dental sciences', 'education', 'natural sciences, engineering and agriculture', 'health, nursery, social welfare' and 'art and home economics'); (3) the year of the founding; (4) the year they started the self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities; (5) the cycle of the evaluation (year).

TABLE 2. FACTORS OF THE SELF-MONITORING AND SELF-EVALUATION: REGRESSION ANALYSES

	student feedback			research			enrolment/graduate		
	B	•		B	•		B	•	
(constant)	140.14 1			-0.262			94.802		
national	-1.819	-0.037		2.606	0.102		-6.762	-0.267	* *
local public	-9.419	-0.131	*	-0.115	-0.003		-4.100	-0.099	
year of foundation	0.001	0.001		0.071	0.096		0.012	0.016	
medical/dental sciences	5.213	0.111	+	3.129	0.123	*	-3.376	-0.134	*
education	-0.819	-0.014		-2.628	-0.086		4.758	0.157	*
natural sciences/engineering/agriculture	7.423	0.172	* *	4.441	0.190	* *	-0.039	-0.002	
home economics/arts/others	-3.124	-0.062		1.037	0.037		-1.942	-0.070	
humanities	-1.866	-0.046		-2.132	-0.096		-0.488	-0.022	
social sciences	-5.760	-0.139	*	0.801	0.036		-0.193	-0.009	
health/nursery/social welfare	6.528	0.079		-1.432	-0.028		-4.559	-0.105	+
year self-evaluation started	-1.270	-0.115	+	-1.159	-0.192	* *	-0.916	-0.153	*
cycle of self-evaluation	0.127	0.008		0.257	0.030		-0.100	-0.012	
R	0.109 *			0.140 *			0.102 *		
adj. R ²	0.074			0.104			0.063		
B=bata, •=standardised Bata value									
+ p<0.1, * p<0.05 ** p<0.01									

The three factors show the stable results. The universities that have natural science, engineering or agriculture faculty tend to put importance on the feedback by the students, and the universities with social science faculty tend not to do so. Those universities that were early in starting evaluation activities tend to place importance on research: and in particular, the universities with medical and dental sciences, natural sciences, engineering and agriculture are positive for evaluation of research activities. Even before the governmental recommendation, quite a few universities mainly in the field of natural science and engineering had already implemented the programmes of research evaluation. This seems to provide one of the important origins of current self-monitoring and self-evaluation

activities in Japan. Regarding the enrolment/graduate factor, the national universities are not active, and local public institutions are also negative although it is not statistically significant. This means that the private universities that face severe market competition for the recruitment and placement of the students put their importance on the evaluation of those related items. The universities which have medical schools do not put it importance because their labour market is limited in their specialised market: conversely, the universities with faculty of education are highly interested because, these days, the labour market of teachers is over-supplied and those graduates have to find other jobs than teaching.

One of the common features of those three factors is that it is relatively easy to identify objective indicators, such as numbers of publications, successful rate of placement, number of applicants, enrolments, scores of student feedback based on questionnaire surveys. Moreover, enrolment/graduate factor for private universities, and research performance for national universities are the essential factors related to their finance.

On the contrary, the results on 'education', 'organisational management' and 'service for the society and student welfare' are not statistically significant. This implies the possibility that those variables prepared might not properly represent the self-monitoring behaviour of the universities. As the result of the intensive case study, it appears that there is a big variation of the patterns of evaluation of each institution, even in the universities with similar characteristics. The characteristics of institutions patterns of evaluation activities are not always directly related to those of the responsible persons who design and implement evaluation of those universities do not always represent the characteristics of the university. Adding to that, Japanese evaluation activities are still at the stage of development, therefore, no accepted pattern of evaluation activities has yet be established among the universities.

3. THE IMPACT OF SELF-MONITORING AND SELF-EVALUATION SYSTEM

What kind of impact do the results of self-monitoring and self-evaluation have on the university reform and university management? What are the differences between those universities whose self-evaluation activities are connected to the reform and those not? The questionnaire asked eight areas of those categories, and the responses were analysed by logistic-regression.

Independent factors are; (1) the founder; (2) size (number of faculty members, number of student per faculty); (3) fields; (4) year of the foundation; (5) starting year and cycle of evaluation; (6) the self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities; (7) the place that investigate the result (dummy, president office, faculty meeting, committee for self-monitoring and self-evaluation)

All models are statistically significant. From the result of the analysis, as follows can be pointed out. First, whether the results of the self-evaluation link to the practice of the reform or not cannot be explained enough from organisational attributes. Only quite limited linkage of specific reform and fields, such as research activities in natural sciences, engineering and medical sciences, are found.

Second, the relationship between the areas that self-monitoring and self-evaluation are implemented and the aspects the reforms are realised. For example, reform of research activities and the implementation of self-evaluation is positively related. The similar relations can be found in education, and other categories except for the input-output model.

The most positive interpretation of those results will be that the implementation of the self-monitoring and self-evaluation supports the reform of the university. However, there are two other possibilities; (a) the self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities are implemented in the fields that universities are planning to make reforms; (b) These results are based on the subjective self-evaluation by the respondents. Therefore, there is no objective evidence that the self-monitoring and self-evaluation really inspired the reforms. However, it is still important to clarify that, at least in their subjective evaluation, the respondents think the self-monitoring and self-evaluation activities somehow promote the reform of their institutions.

	enrolment			curriculum			methods of teaching			graduates			research	
	B	Wald	Exp(B)	B	Wald	Exp(B)	B	Wald	Exp(B)	B	Wald	Exp(B)	B	Wald
national	-0.137	0.094	0.872	-1.517	5.437	0.220 *	0.433	0.718	1.543	-0.127	0.058	0.881	-0.160	0.126
local public	-0.149	0.083	0.862	-1.089	2.915	0.337 +	-1.020	2.849	0.361 +	0.340	0.318	1.405	-0.519	0.941
year of foundation	0.010	1.052	1.010	0.029	3.534	1.029 +	0.000	0.001	1.000	0.009	0.610	1.009	-0.008	0.678
medical/dental sciences	0.400	1.558	1.492	0.821	3.089	2.272 +	0.164	0.204	1.178	-0.196	0.290	0.822	0.617	3.673
education	0.455	0.832	1.576	0.547	0.613	1.729	0.151	0.067	1.163	0.778	1.854	2.177	0.721	2.016
natural sciences/engineering/agriculture	-0.262	0.669	0.770	0.231	0.237	1.260	-0.058	0.026	0.944	-0.370	1.012	0.691	-0.767	5.308
home economics/art/others	-0.055	0.025	0.947	-0.142	0.079	0.868	0.007	0.000	1.007	-0.329	0.706	0.720	0.137	0.165
humanities	-0.225	0.659	0.799	0.592	2.167	1.807	-0.098	0.101	0.907	0.148	0.231	1.159	0.006	0.001
social sciences	0.129	0.206	1.138	-0.403	0.911	0.668	0.179	0.315	1.196	-0.152	0.232	0.859	0.401	1.993
health/nursery/social welfare	-0.512	0.832	0.599	0.008	0.000	1.009	0.964	2.384	2.623	-0.490	0.558	0.613	-0.724	1.337
year self evaluation started	-0.040	0.261	0.960	-0.188	2.297	0.829	-0.158	3.151	0.854 +	-0.004	0.002	0.996	-0.035	0.187
cycle of self-evaluation	-0.001	0.000	0.999	0.410	4.577	1.508 *	0.081	0.437	1.085	-0.026	0.055	0.975	0.105	1.058
factors of self-evaluation														
student feedback				0.005	0.187	1.005	0.035	18.954	1.035 **					
organisational management														
education				0.063	21.587	1.065 **	0.031	6.640	1.032 **					
research													0.049	15.546
input-output	0.048	18.405	1.049 **							0.050	12.409	1.051 **		
student welfare/service for society														
where self-evaluation report read														
president/president office	-0.226	0.622	0.798	0.266	1.775	1.305	0.183	1.301	1.201	0.301	3.156	1.352 +	-0.216	0.472
faculty meeting	0.789	4.279	2.201 *	0.470	0.908	1.600	-0.001	0.000	0.999	1.255	5.597	3.506 *	0.215	0.333
self-evaluation committee	0.534	1.093	1.705	1.458	6.147	4.296 *	0.987	3.609	2.684 +	1.169	1.905	3.220	0.575	1.381
Constant	-18.675	0.774		-42.538	1.743		10.975	0.232		-21.513	0.830		17.189	0.653
chi square	43.0 **			62.7 **			71.9 **			40.4 **			44.8 **	
-2 log likelihood	353.4			191.9			295.5			292.8			347.5	
Cox and Shell R2	0.140			0.209			0.236			0.132			0.147	
Nagelkerke R2	0.186			0.341			0.316			0.191			0.195	
successive rate	64.3%			85.8%			71.5%			75.5%			64.7%	
df	16			17			17			16			16	
n	286			267			267			267			283	

Table 3. Factors for reform: logistic regression

4. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF JAPANESE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

The current internal-oriented decentralised quality assessment system produced a big variation among universities.

Several indicators show major differences among founders and academic fields. The most important ones are that the national universities tend to put importance on research activities and that the private universities tend to put importance on enrolment/graduate performance. At the national universities, the performance on student recruitment is not directly related to university revenue, while research performance is quite important as the means of acquiring additional revenue other than the basic funding from the government. At the private universities, the performance on enrolment and graduation of the students is quite important in order to survive the market competition.

At the same time, it appears that, within the same university, the difference of the academic fields can determine a difference of the attitude towards the evaluation. A typical example is given by evaluation of the research activities. This indicates that some fields of assessment should be implemented at the faculty or department level, not the level of the whole institution.

On the other hands, it has to be noted that most part of the variation cannot be explained by those factors raised. This suggests that the difference of the self-evaluation and self-monitoring is not attributable to the characteristics of the institutions, but to the personal preference of the responsible persons.

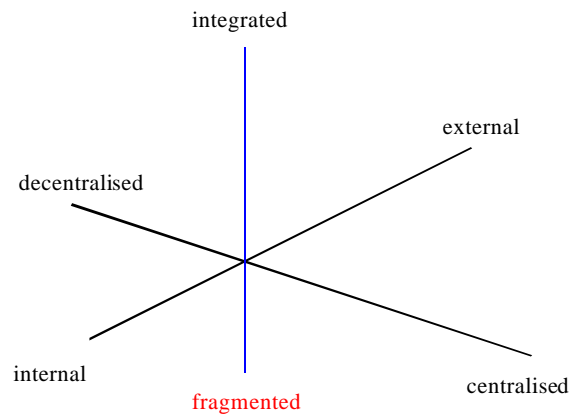
As to the impact of the self-monitoring and self-evaluation, the more the university implement those evaluation activities, the more they tend to respond that the evaluation activities led to the reform. Therefore, at least subjectively, we can conclude that the self-monitoring and self-evaluation has a positive impact on the university reform.

Japanese system has a dual sector structure ---national and local public, and private. The issue of the evaluation of Japan contains the European-like structure in the public sector, and the more American structure in the private sector. In Japan, the centralised quality assurance organisation has not realised before 2000, probably because of the existence of large private sector. On the other hand, the American accreditation system that is widely spread in East Asia, has not functioned well, because of the existence of many universities who do not wish to be accredited. Under those circumstances, the de facto solution was the introduction of self-monitoring and self-evaluation. This system has highly developed based on the strong initiative by the central government.

In order to explain this rather complex arrangement, we should discuss on the fragmented structure of the Japanese quality assurance system. The rigid chartering process when the universities establish a new faculty or department has been functioned as a de facto 'external assessment' procedure. Adding to that, the negotiation process for the financial allocation within the national and local public sector, and the performance based financial aid system for the private institutions have also functioned as a part of governmental quality assessment.

Moreover, in the national universities, more than half of the research funds are allocated through project based competitive funding, and the basic funding based on the number of faculty consists only 41% of those research revenues in 1998.

FIGURE 1: A MODEL OF THE STRUCTURE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEMS



As to the fragmented structure of quality assessment system, Van. Bruggen et. al. (1998) argued that this will weaken the efficiency of the quality assessment system. He argues the necessity of the integrated system. However, as Baba and Hayata (1998) argue, given the current status of the JUAA, the parallel structure makes the quality assurance function of each system might 'purify' its function, and might make those system more meaningful.

In Japan, the development of the decentralised and internal oriented quality assurance system has been always under severe suspicion concerning the meaning and effectiveness, because of its fragmented structure.

In fact, as the decentralised and voluntary based system reveals big variation among universities, the activities has become reduced to merely a nominal operation in a number of universities. However, it is not valid to conclude that self-monitoring and self-evaluation are valueless. In one regard, this system gives a kind of flexibility allowing each university design the quality assurance system suitable for its own needs. At the outset of the development of quality assessment, the system itself has to have a flexible and formative structure, in order to stimulate the improvement and development of system itself. At the very latest, the Japanese system has succeeded in generating a competitive environment among internal evaluations undertaken by and within institutions.

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