1-1-2012

Exploring the influence of the Japanese accreditation system through managerial and institutional lenses

Hirosuke Honda
University at Albany, State University of New York, hirosukehonda@gmail.com

The University at Albany community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/legacy-etd

Part of the Education Policy Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Higher Education Administration Commons

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the The Graduate School at Scholars Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Legacy Theses & Dissertations (2009 - 2024) by an authorized administrator of Scholars Archive.
Please see Terms of Use. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@albany.edu.
EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF THE JAPANESE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM THROUGH MANAGERIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LENSES

By

Hirosuke Honda

A Dissertation
Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York
In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education
Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies
2012
EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF THE JAPANESE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM THROUGH MANAGERIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LENSES

By

Hirosuke Honda

COPY RIGHT 2012
ABSTRACT

In response to the declining quality of Japanese undergraduate education, the Ministry of Education implemented the accreditation system in 2004. As the first cycle of accreditation reviews ended in 2010, the effectiveness of these reviews has been discussed in the policy arena.

This qualitative study examined the influence of accreditation reviews on improvement efforts in undergraduate education relative to other influences from the external and internal environments of colleges and universities.

Over the summer of 2010, the researcher conducted field research interview with provosts, special assistants to presidents, senior administrators, faculty members, and middle management staff at eleven national and private colleges and universities. The findings indicated that the accreditation reviews were the least influential on improvement efforts in undergraduate education, relative to other factors in the external and internal environments. More specifically, student enrollment, competitive funding, faculty autonomy, and organizational culture were more critical for educational improvements. Document analysis of accreditation documents was also conducted to supplement interviewees’ observations.

In previous studies, to examine the effectiveness of accreditation reviews, new public management theory often represented the view of policy makers and accreditation agencies, while new institutionalism theory represented faculty perspectives. As a result, the two theories were often presented as competing and conflicting with one another. Instead, this study applied both theories in the analytical framework for a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of accreditation reviews. The researcher developed a three-pendulum analogy to synthesize the two theories.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Reiko and grandparents, Taeko and Yoshio Honda.

I wish you could see how far I have come.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to so many people during the course of my doctoral study. Dr. Meyer, the chair of my dissertation committee, was instrumental in my transition from student to an independent scholar. I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Szelest for his professional mentoring in my institutional research career and to Dr. Wagner for his support by meeting with my research colleagues visiting from Japan for different research projects. As an external reviewer Dr. Yonezawa provided me with invaluable feedback about the Japanese accreditation system. I am also grateful for Dr. Levy’s guidance as my initial academic advisor.

Without the writing center, I could not complete my dissertation. My tutors Amanda, Evan, Jessica, Jon, Melissa, Rachel, and Zayed helped me significantly with my writing. Revising my English with these tutors has been an intellectually stimulating practice. I am thankful to Jil for directing such talented tutors at the writing center.

My friends in the EAPS program: Ansell, Georgia, Gloria, Gonzalo, Joanna, Layheng, Makoto, Mike, Nina, and Taya have always enriched my program experience. Ruth and Sean greatly helped me shape my research design during our weekly writing circle. Rafael helped me to keep track of my writing progress on a regular basis. On the weekends Darlene and Sanae have been a good company for studying at various cafes in the area.

Finally, Meg, Mr. and Ms. Spearman, and my parents have supported me especially when I was preparing to study in the United States.

Thank you everyone; I have finally completed my dissertation!
Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1

Chapter II: Review of Literature ....................................................................................... 21

Chapter III: Research Design and Method ...................................................................... 120

Chapter IV: Analysis ........................................................................................................ 158

Chapter V: Discussion ...................................................................................................... 239

Chapter VI: Conclusion .................................................................................................... 274
# Detailed Table of Contents

## Chapter I: Introduction ................................................................. 1
  Statement of Problem .................................................................. 2
  Practical Problem .................................................................... 2
  Research Problem ................................................................... 3
  Statement of Purpose ................................................................ 4
  Research Questions ................................................................... 5
  Two Theories: New Public Management and New Institutionalism .... 6
    New Public Management ....................................................... 6
    New Institutionalism ............................................................ 7
  Research Method ...................................................................... 10
  Analytical Approach .................................................................. 12
  Limitations and Delimitations .................................................. 13
  Significance of the Study ......................................................... 14
  Terms ..................................................................................... 16

## Chapter II: Review of Literature .................................................. 21
  Part I: Current State of Japanese Higher Education .................... 21
    External Environment of Colleges and Universities .................. 22
      From Elite to Mass Higher Education in Japan ....................... 22
      Universal Higher Education and the Decline of the College-Age Population ...... 23
      College Admission Reform .................................................. 24
      Academic Preparation of High School Students ....................... 26
    Higher Education Policies and New Public Management ............ 27
      Competitive Funding ............................................................ 33
      Emulation of American Higher Education Model ..................... 36
  Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities .................... 41
    Student Learning Experiences .................................................. 41
    Corporations’ Hiring Practices and Student Career Preparation .... 44
    Questionable Graduation Rate .................................................. 46
    Faculty Interest and Work ....................................................... 47
    Faculty Autonomy .................................................................. 48
    Faculty Term Appointment ..................................................... 48
    Faculty Performance Evaluation .............................................. 50
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College President and the Governance System</th>
<th>52</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part II: Emergence of Quality Assurance Systems</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Institutional and Programmatic Approval System</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of Self-Study</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of Quality Assurance Systems</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Accreditation System</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability through Accreditation System</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Agencies</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Association for University Association (JUAA)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Performance-based Budgeting</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part III: Review of Impact Studies of Quality Assurance Systems</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Review Results</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on Accreditation Review Comments</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Studies on Japanese Accreditation Reviews</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological Studies</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Response to Quality Assurance Systems</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual and Methodological Issues</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Quality</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Methodological Issues</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Problem of Accreditation System</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part IV: Various Factors Influencing the Accreditation System</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Quality Assurance System</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Outcomes Assessment</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter III: Research Design and Method ......................................................... 120
Examination of Research Methods .................................................................. 120
Sampling Framework ....................................................................................... 121
Snowball Sampling .......................................................................................... 122
Representation of Sampled Higher Education Institutions .............................. 123
Interviewees ..................................................................................................... 124
Interview Protocol ............................................................................................. 126
Analytical Framework ....................................................................................... 128
Measurement Approach .................................................................................... 131
Document Analysis of Accreditation Reports .................................................... 132
Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research ................................................ 133
  Description of Data .......................................................................................... 135
  Interpretation of Data ....................................................................................... 136
  Explanation of Data (Theoretical Validity) ....................................................... 136
Generalizability .................................................................................................. 138
Objectivity .......................................................................................................... 140
Triangulation of Two Theories .......................................................................... 141
  New Public Management ............................................................................... 142
  New Institutionalism ....................................................................................... 146
Limitations and Re-examination of New Public Management ........................... 150
Limitations and Re-examination of New Institutionalism .................................... 152
Limitations of the Research Design ................................................................. 156

Chapter IV: Analysis ............................................................................................ 158
External Environment of Colleges and Universities ......................................... 159
  Trend of Student Enrollment .......................................................................... 160
Impact of Higher Education Policies .............................................................. 162
Types of Competitive Funding .......................................................................... 167
Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities .......................................... 170
  Trend of Student Quality over the Last Five Years ...................................... 171
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trend of Educational Quality over the Last Five Years</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Teaching Conditions</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Interest in Research and Teaching</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Performance Evaluation</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential Leadership</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Review Process</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Self-Evaluation on the areas of Improvement</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Site-Visit Review</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Results and Review Comments</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement Efforts in Undergraduate Education</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Institutional Data for Accreditation Review</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys Related to Undergraduate Education</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidents’ Efforts on Educational Improvement</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty’s Efforts on Educational Improvement</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential Factors for Improvement Efforts in Undergraduate Education</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Environment of Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Reviews</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter V: Discussion</strong></td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Findings</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Environment of Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Reviews</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Improvement Efforts in Undergraduate Education</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Study</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Implications</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Limitations through a Single Pendulum Analogy</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Synthesis through a Multiple Pendulum Analogy</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter VI: Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Findings</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Environment of Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accreditation Reviews .................................................................................................................. 278
Educational Improvement Efforts ................................................................................................. 279
Research Limitations and Implications for the Findings ............................................................ 282
Recommendation for Future Research ......................................................................................... 285
Recommendation for Practice ..................................................................................................... 286
Accreditation Agencies .............................................................................................................. 287
College Administration .............................................................................................................. 288

APPENDICIES

Appendix A: Interview Protocol ................................................................................................. 291
Appendix B: Matrix Analysis ....................................................................................................... 298
Appendix C: Researcher’s Background and Reflexivity .............................................................. 300
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Use of Accreditation Review Recommendations ................................................................. 84
Figure 2: Simplistic Liner Relationship between Accreditation Reviews and Quality Improvement ................................................................. 97
Figure 3: Complex Liner Relationships between Accreditation Reviews and Quality Improvement ........................................................................... 98
Figure 4: New Public Management Conceptual Model of Accreditation Review, External and Internal Environments Influencing Quality Improvement ........................................................................... 145
Figure 5: New Institutionalism Conceptual Model of Accreditation, External and Internal Environments Influencing Quality Improvement ........................................................................... 149
Figure 6: A Single Pendulum Analogy: Trend between New Institutionalism and New Public Management ........................................................................... 262
Figure 7: A Multiple Pendulums Analogy: Trend between New Institutionalism and New Public Management ........................................................................... 265
Figure 8: A Multiple Pendulums Analogy: A Point of Alignment ........................................................................... 270
Figure 9: Indirect Impacts of Accreditation Reviews ........................................................................... 284
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Comparison of New Public Management and New Institutionalism ........................................... 10
Table 2: Characteristics of Accreditation Agencies and their Institutional Clientele .................................. 78
Table 3: Accreditation Review Results by the Accreditation Agencies and Years ....................................... 83
Table 4: Mean Scores of the Usefulness of Accreditation Reviews by Accreditation Standard ................................................................. 86
Table 5: Survey Results on the Impacts of Accreditation Reviews ............................................................... 88
Table 6: Overview of Literature Review by New Public Management and New Institutionalism .................................................. 101
Table 7: Institutional Characteristics by Accreditation Agencies ................................................................. 122
Table 8: Number of the Types of Sampled Higher Education Institutions .................................................. 123
Table 9: Types of Sampled Higher Education Institutions by Accreditation Agencies ............................... 124
Table 10: Job Titles and Status of Interviewees by Sample Institutions ....................................................... 126
Table 11: Number of Interview Questions in Each Section ............................................................................ 127
Table 12: Interview Questions by New Public Management and New Institutionalism .............................. 128
Table 13: Example of a comprehensive matrix analysis .............................................................................. 130
Table 14: Example of the frequency table (summative matrix) ................................................................... 131
Table 15: Job Titles and Code Name of Interviewees by Sample Institutions ............................................. 158
Table 16: Has Student Enrollment Declined over the Last Five Years at Your Institution? ..................... 161
Table 17: Have Higher Education Policies Impacted Educational Improvement Efforts at Your Institution? ........................................................................................................................................... 163
Table 18: What Types of External Funding Were Sought at Your Institution? ............................................. 167
Table 19: Has Student Quality Declined over Last Five Years at Your Institution? ................................. 175
Table 20: Has Educational Quality Improved over the Last Five Years at Your Institution? .................. 181
Table 21: Are Faculty Members Interested More in Research or Teaching? .................................................. 188
Table 22: Has a Faculty Performance Evaluation System Been Implemented at Your Institution? ........ 194
Table 23: Does the President Exercise Strong Leadership at Your Institution? ........................................... 199
Table 24: What Is the General Organization Culture, especially regarding the Power Relation between the President and Faculty at Your Institution? ......................................................... 205
Table 25: Did Your Institution Honestly Describe the Areas of Improvement? ........................................ 209
Table 26: Did the External Site-Visit Team Work Effectively in Your Accreditation Review? ..................... 212
Table 27: Were There Any Discrepant Views between the Accreditation Agency and Your Institution regarding the Review Result? ........................................................................................................... 215
Table 28: What Types of Data Did the Administration and Faculty Pay Attention to in Your Accreditation Review? ................................................................................................................................. 219
Table 29: What Types of Surveys Have Been Conducted at Your Institution? ........................................ 221
Table 30: Had the President Utilized Accreditation Results and Review Comments for Improvement Efforts on Undergraduate Education? ................................................................. 224
Table 31: Had Faculty Utilized Accreditation Result and Review Comments for Improvement Efforts on Undergraduate Education? ....................................................................................... 227
Table 32: What Is the Order of Most Influential Factors on Improvement Efforts on Undergraduate Education? .......................................................................................................................... 229
Table 33: Analytical Summary by New Public Management and New Institutionalism Lenses .............. 260
Chapter I: Introduction

The declining quality of Japanese undergraduate education in recent years can be attributed to three phenomena. First, Japanese higher education reached universal access around 2005, resulting in the large attendance of academically underprepared students. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the declining college-age population aggravated this situation as colleges, especially small privates, accepted unqualified students in order to meet enrollment needs. Second, deregulation of the approval system for new academic institutions and programs since the 1990s has not only produced the diversification of academic programs, but also allowed the creation of low-quality educational programs. Third, in 2004, national deregulation policies allowed for the creation of for-profit universities; the educational quality of these institutions has been questioned (Ministry of Education 2008a, Yomiuri Newspaper 2008).

In response to concerns about educational quality, the Ministry of Education gradually introduced different components of accreditation. The early policy discussion traces back to the 1980s in the provisional higher education council under then Prime Minister Tanaka. During the 1990s, scholars of higher education policy studies introduced the American accreditation system, and shortly after this the Japanese Ministry of Education implemented self-study and external evaluations. Numerous Japanese colleges and universities produced self-study reports, although they barely utilized the findings in those reports for continuous improvement. In 2004 the Ministry of Education implemented two accreditation systems. First, institutional accreditation
was created for both the public and private sectors. Second, programmatic accreditation was implemented for selected professional schools such as law, teacher education, and accounting. In addition, institutional performance evaluation was implemented only in the national sector.

This dissertation research focuses on investigating the influence of the Japanese institutional accreditation system over improvement efforts in undergraduate education. The Japanese accreditation is modeled after the American accreditation, and thus similarities exist in terms of the accreditation review process and standards. However, unlike the American accreditation system being tied to the eligibility of student financial aid, the Japanese accreditation system is associated with a legal obligation and no financial incentives are involved. In the American accreditation system institutional membership is divided by region, while Japanese institutional membership is classified by institutional sector.

**Statement of Problem**

**Practical Problem**

The Japanese institutional accreditation system completed its first cycle in 2010, and both policy makers and campus communities have debated its effectiveness. Have accreditation reviews promoted improvement in educational quality on campuses?

On one hand, faculty members often report that accreditation reviews are an

---

1 The public sector in Japanese higher education is composed of national and municipal institutions.
extra burden and they express “evaluation fatigue.” On the other hand, the accreditation agencies often criticize a lack of a “culture of evaluation” on campuses, insisting that colleges and universities should apply Deming’s Plan-Do-Check-Action (PDCA) cycle. Meanwhile, critics are concerned about the different levels of rigor in accreditation reviews across three accreditation agencies, which separately evaluate the three main institutional profiles: national, old private, and new private higher education institutions.

Research Problem

The effectiveness of accreditation reviews is of great importance not just for policy makers and the accreditation agencies, but also for campus administrators and faculty members. Previous studies have produced mixed findings on the effectiveness of the institutional accreditation system. This dissertation research focuses on two main issues: advancing the method of analysis and integrating the theoretical framework for understanding institutional accreditation.

First, in the examinations of the effectiveness of accreditation reviews, stakeholders tend to assume a simplistic linear causal relationship in which accreditation reviews promote improvement in educational quality on campuses. However, in reality, other factors in both external and internal environments of every college and university may also influence the outcomes of their quality improvement efforts. Therefore, to better understand the impact of accreditation reviews, a more comprehensive analytical scope is necessary.

2 Old private institutions were mostly created before WWII, while the new private institutions were established after the war.
Second, two theories compete in apparent conflict with one another in explaining the effectiveness of accreditation reviews. New public management puts forth that market mechanisms promote efficiency and effectiveness within the institutional administration of colleges and universities (Higher Education Council 1998; Hata 2005c; Kawaguchi 2009), which is often represented by policy makers and accreditation agencies, as they assert the positive impact of accreditation reviews (Kawaguchi 2009; Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010a). By contrast, new institutionalism suggests that organizations ceremonially adapt to governmental regulations to gain legitimacy, including accreditation reviews. This theory reveals that an accreditation review is a ritualistic compliance with government regulations (Harvey & Newton 2004; Newton 2002). Prior studies, focusing on either new public management or new institutionalism based on their policy agendas, have produced discrepant findings and explanations. In short, new public management often represents the view of policy makers and accreditation agencies, while new institutionalism represents the view of faculty members (Harvey & Newton, 2004; Kaneko 2007; Newton 2002). This study seeks to address these discrepancies by addressing both theoretical frames within one analysis.

**Statement of Purpose**

The primary purpose of this dissertation research is to explore the influence of accreditation reviews over improvement efforts in undergraduate education. The degree of influence is determined in comparison with other influences from the external and
internal environments of colleges and universities in Japan. In addition, the dissertation applies two theoretical perspectives, new public management and new institutionalism, for a comprehensive analysis, aiming to provide practical recommendations.

Research Questions

One primary research question and five secondary ones were developed in order to accomplish the purpose of the dissertation research and to guide the scope and process of analysis.

Primary Research Question

To what extent is an accreditation review influential over improvement efforts in undergraduate education compared with other influential factors from the external environment and internal environment?

Secondary Research Questions

a. What is the state of the external environment of colleges and universities in terms of student enrollment, higher education policies, and competitive funding?

b. How do colleges and universities respond to the external environment in terms of student enrollment, higher education policies, and competitive funding?

c. What is the state of the internal environment of colleges and universities in terms of student quality, educational efforts, faculty interest in research and teaching, faculty performance evaluation, college presidential leadership, and
organizational culture?

d. What is the experience of an accreditation review of colleges and universities in terms of an internal self-evaluation, external site-visit review, and accreditation result and review comments?

e. What is the progress of educational improvement efforts in colleges and universities as indicated by key institutional data, student surveys, and improvement efforts by college presidents and faculty?

Two Theories: New Public Management and New Institutionalism

New public management and new institutionalism are two predominant theories in the analyses of the effectiveness of accreditation reviews on the quality of higher education. In the examination of the effectiveness, prior research applied either of the theories based on its policy agenda: new public management represented policy makers’ perspective, while new institutionalism represented faculty members’ perspective (Harvey & Newton, 2004; Kaneko 2007; Newton 2002). However, this dissertation research applies both theories for a more comprehensive analysis.

New Public Management

New public management is a public policy practice guided by a management theory that started among industrialized countries in the 1980s as a movement to “re-invent the government” (Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). The basic tenet of new public management is to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector by introducing market
mechanisms and private sector management (Hood 1991; Marginson 2008; Yamamoto 2003). In the case of Japanese higher education, the decline of the traditional college-age population since the mid-1990s created a competitive student market. The Ministry of Education has been deregulating the approval system for new academic institutions and programs with the intent of providing colleges and universities more flexibility in order to respond to market environments. In 2004, the Ministry of Education implemented the quasi-corporatization of national higher education institutions, turning them into independent agencies distantly controlled by the ministry. In the same year, the ministry also permitted the creation of for-profit universities in special economic districts. Additionally, since the 1990s, competitive funding for research and educational programs has been introduced to increase competition among public and private higher education institutions.

These changes in the external environment of colleges and universities necessitated the transformation of their internal environment. For example, college presidents are expected to exercise strong leadership to promote efficient and effective institutional administration by applying corporate management practices. According to new public management, accreditation reviews are supposed to ensure the quality of higher education and also enhance institutional administration through a rational management model of Plan-Do-Check-Action cycle (Hayata & Funato 2007).

**New Institutionalism**

New institutionalism challenges the basic tenets of new public management and indicates that organizations often superficially adapt to regulations and formal structures as myth
and ceremony in order to gain legitimacy and avoid potential risks (DiMaggio & Powell 1991; Meyer & Rowan 2006). Furthermore, social institutions such as education, religion, and public services are more inclined to follow their own conventions and values such as equality and democracy, which are not necessarily aligned with market values (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

In the case of Japanese higher education, the Ministry of Education heavily regulated colleges and universities during the massification era beginning after WWII until the 1980s. In addition, until a few decades ago academics used to view market mechanisms and management as a contamination of academic values, a perception that ran in contrast of the role of market responsiveness encouraged by the government in recent years. Faculty’s strong autonomy and collegiality has been the norm in Japanese higher education, although extreme faculty dominance has often been criticized as maintenance of the status quo, an ivory tower phenomenon. Still new institutionalism offered a different perspective, arguing that the central administration and academic departments were “loosely-coupled.” Although institutional management appears “messy,” the flexibility allows local adaptations to adapt to external changes (Weick 1976).

According to new institutionalism, colleges and universities ceremonially adapt to an accreditation review to gain the legitimacy of being accredited. Internal self-evaluation reports by colleges and universities tend to emphasize the strength of research and education programs rather than critically examine the areas of improvement (i.e. weaknesses) (Sumi 2008). In preparation for an external site-visit review, some colleges and universities conduct a rehearsal with faculties and students for appropriate
responses to the external reviewers. From this lens, colleges and universities “go through the motion” of the accreditation review process and rarely utilize the findings of an accreditation review for continuous improvements.

Summary

Both new public management and new institutionalism present its unique analytical foci in the exploration and explanation of the effectiveness of the accreditation system. Quite naturally, such analytical foci inevitably create some limitations in both theoretical perspectives. In essence, new public management tends to represent the view of policy makers and accreditation agencies, while new institutionalism represents that of faculty members (Newton 2002). Prior studies presented these two theories as competing and conflictive, however, such conventional view is limiting us to better understand the effectiveness of the accreditation system. In order to overcome the limitation, this dissertation research applies both new public management and new institutionalism in the theoretical analysis for a more comprehensive understanding.
Table 1: Comparison of New Public Management and New Institutionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Public Management</th>
<th>New Institutionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic tenet</td>
<td>* Market environments force colleges and universities to increase their competitiveness and also institutional diversity.</td>
<td>* Colleges and universities adopt accreditation superficially to obtain legitimacy, but do not utilize it for quality improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Accreditation creates isomorphism and colleges and universities become homogenous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Environment</td>
<td>* Deregulation of the approval system for new universities and academic programs.</td>
<td>* Colleges and universities ceremonially adapt to government regulations to obtain legitimacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Quasi-Corporatization of national colleges and universities</td>
<td>* Some public expectations and norms in social institutions conflict with market values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Creation of for-profit universities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Competitive funding for teaching and research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Environment</td>
<td>* College presidents have strong leadership in institutional administration</td>
<td>* Faculty have strong autonomy in teaching and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Top-down managerialism</td>
<td>* College presidents and faculty are loosely-coupled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Review</td>
<td>* Try to quantify every campus activities</td>
<td>* Internal self-evaluations tend to be cosmetic and disguise reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Insist a rational management cycle (Plan-Do-Check-Action)</td>
<td>* Faculty considers accreditation as government compliance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Method

The researcher conducted a series of field research interviews with 14 faculty members and administrators who worked on an accreditation review at eleven Japanese colleges and universities in the summer of 2010.

A mix of structured and convenience sampling was applied to select colleges and universities. The first step was to select a group of potential sample colleges and universities based on the accreditation agencies, the sector (i.e. national, old privates, and new privates), and different institutional types (i.e. research university, comprehensive university, and teaching college). A large majority of the colleges and universities in the
sample completed an accreditation review in 2008 or 2009 were selected in order to allow a few years for the implementation of educational improvement efforts by the time the research interviews were conducted. The second step involved a convenience sampling based on the researcher’s professional network in Japan to select a sample of colleges and universities from the structured sample of higher education institutions. A total of eleven colleges and universities were selected: three national research universities, one private research university, two private comprehensive universities, two private institutes of technology, and three private teaching colleges.

Research interviews were conducted confidentially in order to allow interviewees to answer with honest opinions. The interview protocol was composed of a total of seventeen questions, which was developed on the basis of theoretical perspectives from new public management and new institutionalism. Three questions were designed to identify data related to the external environment: Student enrollment, higher education reform policies, and competitive funding for research and education programs. Six questions explored the internal environment: Student quality, educational efforts, faculty interest in research and teaching, faculty performance evaluation, college presidential leadership, and organizational culture. Three questions elicited data on the accreditation review: The self-evaluation report, external site-visit review, and accreditation result and review comments. Five questions were related to educational improvement efforts: Critical institutional data in the accreditation review, student surveys, and improvement efforts by the president and the faculty based on the accreditation review. At the end of the research interview, the researcher asked interviewees to rank the factors of the external environment, internal environment, and
accreditation review in terms of the degree of influence over improvement efforts in undergraduate education. Further details on research methods are described in Chapter III.

**Analytical Approach**

The field research interviews were recorded on a voice recorder and transcribed by the researcher. Matrix analysis was applied to organize interview transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first step was to classify interview responses into a set of categories (i.e. the external environment, internal environment, accreditation review, educational improvement efforts) for each higher education institution in the sample. Once the interview transcripts were organized into the matrices, a text analysis was conducted to identify common or different themes across sampled colleges and universities. The second step was to simplify the matrices into frequency tables: The row showed the coded names of sampled colleges and universities, and the column exhibited simplified interview responses of “Yes,” “No,” or “Mixed/Uncertain” inferred by text analysis to each interview question.

In Chapter IV, the analysis includes numerous direct quotes from interviewees to convey their real words to the readers and also to illustrate the validity of interview transcripts. The aforementioned frequency tables are also shown to provide a distribution of interview responses by colleges and universities. The summary of findings and theoretical implications are described in Chapter V.
Limitations and Delimitations

There were largely two limitations in the dissertation research. First, the number of the sampled colleges and universities was fairly small (n=11). Specifically, the number of private teaching colleges was underrepresented while national research universities were overrepresented in the sample compared to the actual distribution of those types of higher education institutions in Japanese higher education. Second, the data analysis relied heavily on the perceptions of the interviewees, although document analysis of accreditation reports supplemented the interviewees’ observations.

The researcher delimited the analytical scope in two areas. First, the impact of accreditation reviews was explored only through improvement efforts in undergraduate education. In other words, the impact of the accreditation on the other areas such as institutional governance and finance were beyond the focus of this dissertation research. Second, in order to explore the impact of accreditation reviews, the researcher investigated educational improvement efforts. In other words, conceptually, the accreditation review, external environment, and internal environment were “independent variables” and improvement efforts on undergraduate education were the “dependent variable” in this dissertation research. Attention must be brought to the readers that the research did not intend to capture actual improvements with numeric data and “hard evidence” recognizing that such information was difficult to acquire as the Japanese accreditation system was still in the first cycle of reviews. Instead, he tried to gather information about improvement efforts made by the president and faculties with qualitative data. Third, due to the small number of colleges and universities in the sample, the researcher does not analyze interview transcripts by different accreditation
agencies in Chapter IV.

**Significance of the Study**

In general, Japanese academic work written in English is not readily available, especially in the social sciences. As one of the most comprehensive studies on Japanese accreditation system to date, this dissertation research provides further understanding of the Japanese accreditation system for those scholars and policy makers interested in comparative studies. Japanese higher education combines both a German tradition from the late 1880s and an American influence after WWII. Traditionally the central government has had relatively strong control over higher education institutions while the private sector dominates both student enrollment and the number of institutions. Recognizing this condition, Burton Clark labeled the Japanese higher education system a "hybrid model" of the continental European model and American model (1986). The unique history and characteristics of Japanese higher education provide fertile territory for comparative studies on quality assurance systems.

Another contribution of this dissertation research is to the area of higher education policy research and organization studies through a theoretical application of both new public management and new institutionalism. Prior studies on quality assurance systems simply applied either of the theories based on their view or policy agenda. New public management represents the view of policy makers and accreditation agencies, whereas new institutionalism represents the view of faculty members. As a result, each theory produced a different evaluation on the effectiveness
of quality assurance systems; few studies have questioned about the dichotomy of the two theories (Harvey & Newton, 2004; Newton, 2002). This dissertation research applies both new public management and new institutionalism as theory triangulation to reduce the risk of presenting a “one-sided” story (typically, either from the accreditation agencies or the faculties). In addition, when compared with Western research literature, Japanese studies often lack the rigor of theoretical analysis. An explicit and detailed theoretical application of this dissertation research may contribute to organize some policy discussions and advance future research.

The last contribution of this dissertation research is the inclusion of both national and private sectors in the study. Studies on Japanese higher education have been divided into the national and private sectors. Scholars of higher education studies are heavily populated in national universities, and they tend to research the national sector, rarely including the private sector in their investigations. As a result, the private sector had not been studied as much as the national counterparts (Kitamura, 2004).

Furthermore, the sector division appears in the administration of the Japanese accreditation system. National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) reviews only national colleges and universities; The Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA), old private colleges and universities; The Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE), new private colleges and universities. This different institutional "clientele" among the three accreditation agencies raises a question of rigor and fairness of the Japanese accreditation system (Amano 2008). However, exploration of the effectiveness of accreditation is a very sensitive topic because no one wants to reveal any problems within the accreditation
system, which potentially invites additional obligations in the accreditation review process. For campus administrators it is safer to present themselves as a good implementer of accreditation reviews (Stensaker 2003). For these reasons rigorous research has not been conducted across the three accreditation agencies. This dissertation project presents a unique study to cover both the national and private sectors and the three accreditation agencies.

**Terms**

Quality assurance system encompasses both accreditation systems and performance-based institutional evaluation systems.

Accreditation system assures a minimum quality in various aspects of teaching, learning, and institutional administration of colleges and universities. The review process begins with an internal self-evaluation, after which the external evaluators (a team of faculty and administrators) conduct a site-visit review, and the accreditation agencies publish the final report. In Japan, all national, private, and municipal colleges and universities participate in an accreditation system. Accreditation reviews consist of institutional accreditation reviews and program-based accreditation review (e.g. law school and business administration); this dissertation focuses on institutional accreditation.

Institutional performance evaluation applies the basic principles and processes of Management by Objectives, which is different from minimum quality assurance by an
accreditation system. In Japan, the performance funding system is applied only to national colleges and universities. They create a six-year strategic plan and report the progress to the Ministry of Education every year.

Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA) was created after WWII by the U.S. post war settlement agency. JUAA was expected to prevent governmental interventions to academic institutions, but its role was minimal due to the Ministry of Education’s approval system of new academic institutions and programs. JUAA increased its importance as the ministry gradually introduced the self-study and accreditation from the 1990s. JUAA conducts accreditation reviews primarily for “old” private colleges and universities established before WWII. These old privates are more prestigious and selective in terms of student admission than “new” privates.

Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE) was created by the Association of Private Universities of Japan (APUJ), an association of new “new” private colleges established after WWII. JIHEE applies qualitative approach in its accreditation reviews respecting the diverse institutional mission among the new privates. JIHEE conducts accreditation reviews for primarily for “new” private colleges that tend to be smaller and less selective in student admission, and about 40 percent of them are currently facing student enrollment shortfall.

National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) conducts both accreditation reviews and institutional performance evaluations for
national colleges and universities. Many of them are research driven, and conduct about 70% of academic research in science and engineering in the nation. Owing to lower tuition, national colleges and universities have higher student selectivity than most private counterparts.

**External environment of colleges and universities** in this study addresses student enrollment, higher education reform policies, and competitive funding.

**Internal environment of colleges and universities** in this study indicates student quality, educational quality, faculty teaching condition, faculty interest in research and teaching, faculty performance evaluation, college presidential leadership, and organizational culture.

**Improvement efforts** in this dissertation research are loosely defined as any actual improvement activities by college presidents and faculty members after accreditation reviews. Recognizing limited availability of quantitative data, the dissertation heavily relies on the perceptions of interviewees.

**Impact and influence** are used interchangeably to describe the effect of an accreditation review. It is captured by improvement efforts by the president and faculty members on undergraduate education.

**Effectiveness** mainly has two definitions. In academic research, effectiveness tends to
be determined by cost-benefit analysis. By contrast, in policy discussions, effectiveness is often used as a generic term in examining the rigor of accreditation and its effects on colleges and universities. This dissertation uses the term “effectiveness” to describe general policy discussions and “impact” and “influence” to describe the specific analytical discussions.

Colleges and universities are four-year institutions in this study. The equivalent Japanese term “Daigaku” has often been translated as “Universities” in prior studies. However, this study includes Japanese “small universities” that are similar to American “colleges.”

Public higher education consists of “national” and “municipal” colleges and universities. The former are controlled by the Ministry of Education, although its control generally decreased after quasi-corporatization in 2004. The latter are controlled by municipal government. This dissertation did not include municipal colleges and universities due to a small number of institutions and also a different governance system.

Quasi-corporatization is a substitute term for “agentification” of national colleges and universities that used to be brunch agencies of the Ministry of Education. During the new public management reforms, the ministry made national colleges and universities an independent agency in order to downsize the government sector and also provide more institutional autonomy to build their market competitiveness. Although some Japanese studies use “agentification” referring to British model of new public management, since
this dissertation is written for American audience, the researcher chose to use the term “quasi-corporatization.”
Chapter II: Review of Literature

The literature review consists of four parts. The first part is the current state of Japanese higher education. This section describes a broad view of Japanese higher education policy reforms, the student market, and organizational administration. The second part provides a brief history of Japanese quality assurance systems, illustrating an evolution from self-study to the accreditation review for both national and private sectors, and also the institutional performance evaluation implemented only in the national sector due to the quasi-corporatization in 2004. The third part reviews impact studies of quality assurance systems both in Japan and other Western countries. The fourth part examines current policy discussions regarding the accreditation system in Japan, specifically the first cycle of accreditation reviews from 2004 to 2010 (that is this dissertation analyzed). The policy discussions offer implications for future rearrangements in the second cycle of accreditation reviews starting from 2010 to 2017.

Part I: Current State of Japanese Higher Education

In order to provide policy contexts of the implementation of the accreditation system, the current state of Japanese higher education is illustrated in terms of the external and internal environments of colleges and universities.
External Environment of Colleges and Universities

There are various components within the external environment, and this dissertation research particularly describes the expansion of Japanese higher education after the Second World War, the college admission reforms, academic preparations of high school students, the new public management reforms, competitive funding, and the emulations of American higher education. Through a discussion of the aforementioned components, the reader may gain a large picture of the trend of Japanese higher education. Student enrollment reached universal access around 2008, even though the traditional college-age population has been declining since the mid-1990s. The college admission reforms invited underprepared students in higher education, and some private teaching colleges became “open admission.” The Ministry of Education has appeared keen on implementing market mechanisms, mimicking the higher education system in the United States.

From Elite to Mass Higher Education in Japan

Over the last several decades, Japanese higher education had expanded significantly. Before WWII, less than 10% of the 18 year-old population attended higher education (Yamamoto 2004). The old Japanese school system followed continental European models, dividing students into different educational tracks at the secondary level, reserving higher education for a small minority of elite students. After WWII, the Japanese Ministry of Education reformed the entire education system; an aspect of these reforms emphasized a wider access to higher education influenced strongly by the

---

3 Over 50% of 18 year-old population attends to higher education (Trow 1973).
American education system (Kusahara 2008). As a result in the 1960s, Japan’s 18-year-old college attendance rate grew to 9.75%, the second largest in the world next to the United States (Hata 2005b). By the 1970s, this same college attendance rate had grown to 40% (Yamamoto 2004). The expansion of Japanese higher education continued; by 2008 over 55% of 18 year-olds attended a two-year college or four-year university (Yamada 2001). When including vocational and technical schools at the post secondary level, by 2008 this figure had increased to over 75%. According to Martin Trow’s famous classification of access to higher education (1973, 2006), Japan had reached beyond “Mass” to achieve “Universal” higher education.

The expansion of college attendance was absorbed in different forms. Existing four-year colleges and universities temporarily expanded student enrollment during the 1980s, gradually reducing the incoming class-size as the college-age population declined (Kusahara 2008). Junior colleges played a significant role in educating women until the 1980s; however these colleges encountered an enrollment decline as more women started attending to four-year institutions in the early 1990s. To recruit more students, numerous private junior colleges became four-year colleges in the late 1990s (Shinken-ad 2004). As a result, even as the college-age population has been declining, the number of private four-year institutions has been increasing from 425 in 1996 to 599 in 2011 (NTS Educational Research Institute 2011).

**Universal Higher Education and the Decline of the College-Age Population**

Japanese higher education reached the universal access before 2010. However, a cloud hangs over the expansion of Japanese higher education due to a demographic shift in the
traditional college age population. The 18 year-old-population peaked at 2.06 million in 1992, declining steadily to 1.2 million by 2008. Projections predict this population downturn will continue at least to 0.8 million in 2050 (Yamada 2001).

The projection of the college-age population came as no surprise to the Japanese higher education community. In fact, the projection had been available and even debated over the last few decades. In the national sector, the Ministry of Education coordinated university mergers and reduced the number from 98 to 86 during the early 2000s, which were mostly mergers between comprehensive university and medical schools (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010c). In the private sector, newly established small colleges have struggled to meet their enrollment target. In 2011, 39 percent of private four-year institutions could not fulfill their enrollment target (Center for Private School Management Information 2011).

College Admission Reform

College admission had been extremely competitive during the massification era after the WWII until the early 1990s in Japanese higher education. “Exam Hell” was publicized in mass media: High school students were under enormous pressure on admission exam day, given the critical role of this test in determining college admission and, by consequence, potential future career paths (Rohlen 1983). Scholars and the general public criticized the extreme pressure on college admissions as a social disease.

To alleviate the “Exam Hell” phenomena, the Ministry of Education deregulated the mandates on college admission exam subject areas in order to diversify evaluation criteria in 1985. Private colleges and universities took advantage of this deregulation
and reduced the number of academic subject areas on their admission exams, which lead numerous high school students to apply for private colleges and universities.

In a further reform of the conventional Japanese college admission system, the Ministry of Education emulated the American college admission system with primarily two pull factors. First, American college admission process evaluates not just a test score, but also a student essay, high school GPA, and extra-curricular activities. By parallel, the Ministry of Education introduced a “multiple evaluation criteria” for Japanese college admission system. Second, American college admission process was handled by professional non-academic staff. The Ministry of Education rather wanted to train Japanese non-academic staff as a professional administrator because faculty members were already overloaded with other administrative work and their decision-making tended to be slow (Ehara 2010).

The American college admission model was translated as “Student selection by admission’s office” in Japanese, in contrast to the conventional paper-based entrance examinations. The initial implementation was fairly successful since early implementers were prestigious and selective universities that could attract academically competent students. However, late implementers, mostly non-selective private colleges, caused controversies over the student selection by admission’s offices. Some private colleges were “open-admission,” accepting prospective students during campus tours without any academic subject tests. Therefore, some critics perceived the Admission’s Office College Entrance as rather soft, one that accepts academically underprepared students (Nakamura 2008).

In recent years, the Ministry of Education has encouraged each college and
university to create their own admission policies based on their distinct institutional mission (Central Education Council 1999, Higher Education Council 2000). Based on their college admission policies, each college and university were required to design their own admission criteria and student selection process along with designating the different student admission quotas for the conventional paper-based exam and the new Admission’s Office selection. The college admission policies were made publically available especially for high school students (Central Education Council 1999, Higher Education Council 2000).

Over the last couple of decades, college admissions in Japanese higher education have drastically changed from the “Exam Hell” phenomena in the 1980s to “Open-admission” among some small private colleges in the 2000s. The increasing number of four-year institutions and the decline of the 18-year-old population from the mid-1990s are the two environmental factors that have eased the pressure on the college admissions. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Education has been trying to adjust college admissions policies in order to address pressures associated with college enrollment; these college admission reforms have impacted the academic preparation of high school students (Arai 2008).

**Academic Preparation of High School Students**

In order to reduce the pressure on high school students to study for college entrance exams, the Ministry of Education gradually reduced the curriculum contents and school hours beginning in the late 1970s. This series of school curriculum reduction policies is called “Yutori Kyouiku” in Japanese, which means “relaxed” education. One of the
recent changes in 1998 was one of the most controversial reforms because it cut 20 percent of curriculum content and reduced school attendance from six to five days a week. Additionally, the Ministry introduced a new class period called “Comprehensive Learning” to promote critical thinking and problem solving skills. This reform was intended to address perceived deficiencies of conventional rote education and cram schooling (Fujiwara 2002).

There are numerous studies supporting or opposing the curriculum reform in 1998. Results from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) contributed substantively to these discussions. On both tests, Japanese student performance declined comparative to international rankings from the 1990s to the mid-2000s (Oki 2011). Another identified problem consisted of the percentage of Japanese students who answered that they enjoyed studying math and science; Japanese students enjoyed studying for math and science less than students from most participating countries (Oki 2011). In addition, some national surveys also showed that high school students spent less hours at home studying compared to a few decade ago (Fujiwara 2001, Oki 2011). After heated public debates, the Ministry of Education corrected the direction of “Relaxed Education” policy, reinstating the previous curriculum content and increasing school hours back to six days a week in 2002.

Higher Education Policies and New Public Management

Japanese higher education expanded significantly after WWII until the early 1990s. During this massification era, the primary role of the Ministry of Education was to
develop a master plan and regulate the higher education sector (Central Education Council 2005). The Ministry operates the approval system for new higher education institutions and academic programs, regulating the enrollment size, curriculum design, qualifications of faculty, institutional finance, and campus facilities. Designed to function as a quality control mechanism, this strict approval system has at time been criticized as “heavy-handed” (Hata 2007b).

Beginning in the 1980s, the Japanese government started downsizing the public sector as national debt accumulated. The Ministry of Education followed suit by implementing new public management policies in higher education, which coincided with the decline of the college-age population from the early 1990s. This section illustrates a broad stroke of the chronological development of new public management policies in Japanese higher education.

In 1989, the Ministry of Education deregulated the general education curriculum, which became a precedent of new public management reforms. In the past, the Ministry of Education placed a regulation on a clear division between the first two years of general education and the last two years of major studies. Student activists in the 1970s had expressed discontent with the general education curriculum, while some college administrators also complained that these requirements hindered the development of unique academic curriculum. After the curriculum deregulation, colleges and universities put more emphasis on major-level studies, although some critics addressed that the general education now suffered in quality (Terasaki 1999).

In 1998, the Higher Education Council under the Ministry of Education published a report titled A vision of universities in the 21st century and reform measures:
To be distinctive in a competitive environment. The report acknowledged the impending demographic shift and subsequent competitive environment; the report encouraged colleges and universities to develop their own distinctive characteristics for institutional survival. The report also emphasized the importance of an effective institutional administration, the strong leadership of college presidents, and suggested a blue print of an accreditation system.

Quasi-corporatization of National Colleges and Universities
The national colleges and universities used to be a “branch” of the Ministry of Education, and their inefficient institutional administration had long been the subject of policy discussions in the 1980s. The issue of quasi-corporatization became serious under then Prime Minister Koizumi’s initiative of downsizing the government in the late 1990s.

The policy discourse was highly controversial and meandering. Initially, the Ministry opposed the Koizumi Cabinet regarding any idea about losing control over the national universities. At one point in policy debates, some politicians expressed the idea of “privatization” of the national universities. Labor unions at national colleges and universities criticized the reform for merely focusing on the downsizing government sector personnel, which they claimed would jeopardize the quality of research and education. Later in the policy discussions, there was another policy proposal of quasi-corporatization of a limited number of national universities that could seem capable of operating independently (Hata 2005a).

In 2002, the Ministry of Education published a blue print of new national university and college corporations (Taskforce on Agentification of National Higher
The primary goal of quasi-corporatization was to introduce a market environment to increase institutional competitiveness in the national higher education sector. Traditional faculty-driven collegial decision-making had been severely criticized as inefficient and ineffective. In order to address these perceived deficits, the president’s authority was highly strengthened to exercise more leadership over administrative control. In addition, all national colleges and universities were mandated to create an external management advisory board in which the majority of the members represented key stakeholders from corporations and local governments. The application of private sector management, such as the use of the Balanced Score Card, was greatly encouraged to improve the institutional administration.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education made national colleges and universities an independent legal entity, called “national university and college corporations.” While decentralizing management to the institutional level, in order to address quality assurances the Ministry imposed a six-year institutional planning requirement, linked to institutional performance budgeting.

*For-profit Universities*

In 2004, the Ministry of Education allowed for-profit universities to be created in special economic districts. By 2007, there were seven for-profit universities, although some of their operations came under immediate audits (Ministry of Education 2008b). In 2005, LEC University was created by LEC Corporation, a private enterprise that owns and operates post-secondary preparatory schools for vocational qualifications. When the Ministry of Education audited the LEC University, the audits found that the same course
content from the preparatory schools for vocational qualifications was being used in the university. Furthermore, LEC University did not have sufficient school land and facilities as articulated by the institutional approval system. Eventually, the LEC Corporation closed only the four-year undergraduate program in 2009.

Another for-profit university called Cyber University was created in 2007. A distinctive feature of this institution was that students could earn a bachelor’s degree through on-line courses, without any face-to-face schooling on campus. However, the verification of registered students and attending students became a public concern (Yomiuri Newspaper 2008), and the Ministry of Education issued a warning to solve the problem in 2009. One way or another, other for-profit universities also received some warnings on their educational quality from the Ministry of Education.

**Diversification of Institutional Roles and Characteristics**

In 2005, the Ministry of Education published another report entitled *The future of Japanese higher education*. Recognizing the sea change from the massification to the decline of the enrollment size of Japanese higher education, the Ministry of Education changed its policy stance from “regulation and control” to “creation of future visions and policy guidance.”

This report proposed institutional diversification in Japanese higher education. The original idea emerged in 1971, however colleges and universities strongly opposed to the idea arguing that institutional “diversification” could become institutional “segregation.” However, as the student market diminished, the Ministry of Education reintroduced the idea in 1998, and the 2005 report presented concrete seven institutional
categories.

1. Center for world-class research and education
2. Vocational training for highly specialized professions
3. Vocational training for generalist workers
4. Comprehensive liberal education
5. Research and education in special fields (e.g. the arts and physical trainings)
6. Center for lifelong learning in local communities
7. Social contributions (e.g. community partnerships, university-business-government collaborations, and international exchanges)

The report emphasized that the government would not impose any particular actions upon colleges and universities. Rather, the report intended to provide some examples of the institutional diversification, and encouraged colleges and universities to voluntarily select one or more category based on their institutional mission and strategy in order to enhance their institutional distinctiveness. Furthermore, the policy report also proposed the creation of institutional funding schemes in order to further promote institutional diversification.

Quality of Baccalaureate Degree Programs

In 2008, the Ministry of Education published another policy report with a special emphasis on the undergraduate education in Japanese higher education. It recognized that the prior deregulation and diversification policies had produced a wide variety of academic programs. However, this report expressed a concern about a lack of a disciplinary integrity among several of these undergraduate programs.

Therefore, the policy report presented a basic framework of four areas of knowledge and competencies in baccalaureate degree programs.

1) Knowledge and understanding (culture, society, and nature),
2) Generic skills (communication skills, mathematical skills, and problem solving skills),
3) Behavioral development (self-management, team work, ethics, and social responsibility), and
4) Comprehensive learning experience and creative thinking

Based on the above baccalaureate degree competencies, the policy report suggested that college and universities develop three internal policies concerning 1) admission policy, 2) curriculum policy, and 3) diploma policy.

In addition, the report also suggested that an academic subject review should be implemented to assure the quality of undergraduate education. Another critical issue was the validity of credit hours of Japanese college education. According to international studies, Japanese college students studied fewer hours than their American counterparts (Higher Education Administration and Policy Research Center 2008, Yamada 2008). This raised a question about the validity of credit hours in Japanese higher education, which required a certain hours of study inside and outside of classroom. Policy makers attempted to identify ways to ensure sufficient hours of study among Japanese college students.

Competitive Funding

Until the early 2000s, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) research funding provided almost the vast majority of competitive funding for individual faculty members. The other governmental funding came from formula-based institutional subsidiaries (Amano 2006). This situation changed when the Higher Education Council proposed a differential and “fine-tuned” funding mechanism to promote institutional diversification (Tokugawa 2006). Competitive funding is distributed through two streams for research and teaching. The percentage of the total competitive funding in

33
research and education accounted for 15% of the total budget of Japanese higher education in 2001, and the figure grew to 27% in 2007 (Ministry of Education 2012).

In 2002, then Minister of Education Toyama, proposed the “Japanese Top 30 universities” agenda, alongside a new competitive research funding stream called “Center of Excellence” (COE), designed to encourage Japanese universities to compete globally. COE funding began with 18 billion Japanese yen (144 million USD) in 2002, and the amount peaked at 38 billion yen (345 million USD) in 2005, and declined to 23 billion yen (288 million USD) in 2013.

Most recipient institutions of the COE funding were national research universities, especially the former imperial universities. Private research universities lagged their national counterparts in terms of the number and amount of COE funding (Amano 2006). Nishimura (2012) investigated the membership the COE selection committees, and his study revealed that 70% of the membership consisted of faculty members from former imperial universities in the national sector. Although COE funding assisted world-class research in some fields, critics were concerned that basic research would be disadvantaged (Amano 2006).

In 2003, the Ministry of Education created another competitive funding for educational programs called “Educational Good Practice” (EGP) funding. In 2003, 5 billion yen (43 million USD) were allocated to EGP; funding peaked at 15 billion yen (136 million USD) in 2008, and gradually declined to 8 billion yen (84 million USD) in 2009.

The primary purpose of the EGP funding was to financially support unique and innovative educational programs, in order to share good educational practices with other
colleges and universities. Some smaller private colleges thought that advertising EGP funding would be a good way to attract prospective students (Kato & Saito 2009).

Yoshida (2009) analyzed the number of applicants and recipients of EGP funding by sector, and identified that national institutions were much more advantageous than private counterparts. Ninety percent of national institutions applied for EGP funding in 2003; the application rate dropped slightly to 70% in 2008. In contrast, 60% of private institutions applied for EGP funding in 2003, while this application rate dropped significantly to 30% in 2008. The percentage of recipients within the national sector held steady at about 20% every year from 2003 to 2008, while the percentage of recipients within the private sector remained at about 10% during the same period. Furthermore, even within the private sector, the old private universities received more funding than new private colleges. A few members of the selection committees for the educational competitive funding also questioned whether national and private institutions were evaluated fairly (Yamada 2009a, Yoshimoto 2009). Yoshida identified the advantages of national institutions as: 1) a larger institutional size with institutional finance and professional staff, and 2) experienced with presenting their educational programs effectively as national higher education institutions regularly in contact with the Ministry of Education (2009).

EGP competitive funding certainly promoted the development of first-year programs, career development programs, and community partnership programs on campus (Yoshimoto 2009). However, concerns arose regarding the continuity of these educational programs. While EGP funding functioned as a seed grant, the recipient institutions needed to secure an internal budget to continue these educational good
practice programs. However, some of the funded programs were too costly for institutions to retain (Kato & Saito 2009, Yamada 2009a).

Overall, some critics indicated that the amount of EGP funding was far smaller than that of COE research funding. The amount of the competitive educational funding has been smaller than one-third of the competitive research funding. Still, policy makers and campus administrators believed that EGP funding certainly influenced faculty members to pay more attention to their educational practices (Yamada 2009a). Furthermore, the Ministry of Education invested time and effort to disseminate educational good practices through newsletters and educational forums. College administrators valued those efforts as highly informative and stimulating to improve their educational practice on campuses (Yamada 2009a).

**Emulation of American Higher Education Model**

Aside from the new public management reforms, the emulation of Western models has been another distinctive feature of Japanese higher education policies. The tendency is not new to the Japanese government as it borrowed various public administration systems from Western countries during the Meiji Restoration period from the mid to late 1890s (Westney 1987). In the case of higher education, Japan modeled the first national university, the University of Tokyo, after the German Humboldt University in the late 1880s. After WWII, American higher education system became the model of influence. Through the period of massification, Japanese higher education evolved as a hybrid model of American and British higher education systems (Clark 1986). American models were applied to academic operation system across sectors, while British models
were applied to the governance system of national sector in Japanese higher education.

This section illustrates Japanese emulations of the American higher education model, beginning in the early 1990s. The emulations have been “combined efforts” by the Ministry of Education and by scholars of higher education policies. Usually the scholars transport the knowledge of various Western models, and the Ministry subsequently implements them into Japanese higher education. Some emulation have been successful, while others were unsuccessful, or manifested themselves differently during the indigenization process, the translation of the American model into the Japanese context (Arimoto 2004).

In the mid-1990s, the Ministry of Education introduced the semester system in American higher education in order to reform Japanese academic course scheduling system. Japanese academic courses used to be scheduled for once a week over two academic terms, which caused largely three problems. First, this schedule limited Japanese students participation in study abroad, also foreign students found it difficult to study in Japan. Second, a long summer break between the two academic terms hindered the continuity within a course work. Third, once a week of classroom instruction appeared ineffective especially for language and some laboratory courses. Japanese policy makers found the American semester system effective in which courses had different frequencies and classroom hours across a variety of academic courses.

By 2006, 90% of Japanese colleges and universities implemented the American semester system (Ministry of Education 2008a). Nowadays most Japanese academic courses can be completed within one semester, and different schedules are applied based

---

4 Different from Western academic calendar starting in the fall, Japanese academic year begins in the spring.
on course contents. For instance, language courses tend to have a shorter classroom schedules with more frequencies of classes per week, which appears to have improved the student learning experience.

In the mid-1990s the Ministry of Education emulated the American course “syllabus” to improve Japanese course “abstracts.” Compared to typical American syllabi, Japanese course abstracts lacked specificities regarding weekly schedules, reading materials, writing assignments, and grading procedures. However by 2006, 96% of Japanese colleges and universities provided course syllabi in a format somewhat similar to the American syllabus design (Ministry of Education 2008a).

In the late 1990s, Morohoshi, a former president of a branch campus of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system, introduced the American grade point average (GPA) system (1999). In Japanese higher education, an average score of student grades had been calculated to select students for scholarships, school loans, and honors, but was not applied to a graduation standard. In other words, a Japanese student could graduate with earning all D grades (i.e. graduating with a GPA of 1.0). In this sense, the conventional Japanese grading system did not function as a quality monitoring mechanism for students’ academic progress. Furthermore, there was no academic advising for course registration and no probation period for students with a low GPA.

Initially some private colleges and universities started implementing the GPA system, and eventually the Ministry of Education reinforced the implementation to renew the Japanese conventional student grading system that had a defect in terms of quality management of student learning. However, unlike other imported American models such as the semester system and course syllabus, the American GPA system has not been
implemented extensively in Japanese higher education. By 2007, 40% of Japanese colleges and universities implemented the American GPA system. Only 19% utilized the GPA systems for course registration cap or as a standard for graduation (Ministry of Education 2008a).

Beginning in the 1980s, Japanese scholars began researching student course evaluations in the United States in order to enhance faculty teaching in Japan. Typical criticisms of Japanese faculty instruction included: “faculties do not care about teaching at all” and “they use the same old notes over and over for a couple of decades” (Asaba 1996). Initially, the implementation of the student course evaluation was highly controversial on almost every campus. Many faculty members opposed the new evaluations by claiming that students did not have capability to rate faculty expertise, as a consequence their responses would be arbitrary. Faculty members were concerned that the student course evaluation may end up as a popularity contest (Amano & Nanbe 2005).

However, the student course evaluation gradually gained traction from the 1990s as the Ministry of Education promoted the implementation of these evaluations. Through his publication, Kariya, a Ph.D. graduate from Northeastern University, also contributed to the dissemination of the knowledge about American college education system and practices to a wider audience in Japan (1992).

In 1994, only 8.5% of Japanese colleges and universities implemented student course evaluations (Sakamoto 2005). However, by 2006, 76% of Japanese colleges and universities implemented student course evaluations. The survey items included in Japanese course evaluations were very similar to those in American student course
evaluations, including faculty teaching styles, course materials, and use of media and information technologies in the classroom (Ministry of Education 2008a). In numerous Japanese colleges and universities, the results of student course evaluations are shared not only among faculty members and also with students through internal reports and websites, which is advancement from the original American model in which the results of student course evaluations are reported exclusively to individual faculty members and occasionally to department chairs.

Japanese scholars of higher education have been researching teaching development in the United States and the United Kingdom since the 1980s, which led to produce the countless of studies and practices of faculty development in Japan. Around the mid 1990s, the Japanese Ministry of Education gradually required such faculty development as a regular effort for colleges and universities (Arimoto 2004).

American faculty development typically encompasses both research and teaching. However, the American model was transformed during the indigenization process -- Faculty development in Japan is narrowly defined as teaching development. Japanese colleges and universities organize workshops on how to stimulate students’ interests in subject matters, ways to encourage classroom discussions, and the effective uses of information technologies. Faculty development also tackles a better utilization of student course evaluations to enhance faculty teaching efforts. By 2006, 86% of Japanese colleges and universities implemented faculty development (Ministry of Education 2008a). However, some policy makers have continued to voice skepticism about the effectiveness of these efforts (Central Education Council 2008).

The policy emulation of American higher education system has been a strong
influence over the reforms of Japanese higher education system. Some policy transfers seem successful on the surface, although the purposes of the original models were modified, at times diluted during the indigenization into Japanese higher education (Arimoto 2004). A critical limitation to Japanese emulation of Western models is that while scholars and policy makers translate policy reports and guidelines, they rarely research the implementation of the models in their countries of origin. As a result, Japanese policy makers and scholars overly fantasize Western models as a solution to Japanese higher education reform efforts, creating unrealistic expectations and confusions in the indigenization process (Honda 2011).

**Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities**

The previous section described current external environment for colleges and universities to help readers to understand the context of the accreditation system in Japanese higher education. By contrast, this section illustrate the internal environment of colleges and universities, which include student learning experiences, faculty interest and work, the faculty evaluation system, presidents’ leadership, and organizational culture.

As the external environment for Japanese colleges and universities has rapidly changed toward market mechanisms, how has the institutions shifted their organizational conditions (i.e. the internal environment) to respond to external changes?

**Student Learning Experiences**

A strong image of college student life in Japan has been as a “leisure land” after hard
work for the college entrance exam (i.e. Exam Hell) and before a lifetime of overtime work in the corporate world (Asaba 1996; McVeigh 2002). Students’ poor learning attitudes, such as not paying attention to a professor or whispering among themselves in a lecture hall, have long been held as classic classroom management and college learning issues.

Beginning in the late 1990s, national surveys on student learning became popular. Takeuchi conducted student surveys at twelve colleges and universities across the country in 1997 and 2003. A research team at the University of Tokyo conducted a different national student survey in 2007 for freshman, and conducted another followed up survey in 2009, which were one of the largest surveys to date. Yamada imported college student surveys from the University of California, Los Angeles, and has been conducting almost identical freshman and upper division student surveys in Japan since 2004. Based on these survey findings, the following section describes the GPA, class attendance, and study hour outside of classroom among Japanese college students.

Academic course grades are one of the most direct indicators of student learning performance. However, there are few studies on student grade distribution in Japanese higher education, partly because colleges and universities still operate on a different grading system. In addition, data on student grades have been considered confidential and unavailable for research. However, the survey by the University of Tokyo (2008) asked students to report the average score of their course grades (either American GPA or Japanese letter grades); the average was 2.97. The result may appear slightly lower compared to American counterparts due to the grade inflation in the United States (e.g. Johnson 2003). In addition, over the last decade the Japanese Ministry of Education has
recommended that colleges and universities implement a strict and transparent grading policy, which may have affected the lower GPA of Japanese college students.

Class attendance may be an indirect indicator to assess the quality of student learning in Japan. According to the survey at the University of Tokyo, about 90% of college students attended over 70% of their classes (2008). Yamada’s comparative study identified that Japanese college students spend more hours on attending classes than American counterparts (2008). Comparing two surveys conducted in 1997 and in 2007, Takeuchi, Iwata, and Hamashima (2004) identified that the percentage of college students who attended more than 80% of their classes increased in both lower division (from 68.7% in 1997 to 71.4% in 2007) and upper divisions (from 50.9% in 1997 to 57.9% in 2007). In an analysis by different institutional types, students in selective universities reported lower class attendance than those in regional comprehensive universities and less selective small colleges (Takeuchi, Hamashima, & Ito 2005).

Although Japanese student class attendance rates appear high, the reported hours of study outside of the classroom is low. Across different national surveys, Japanese college students studied very little outside the classroom, on average less than 40 minutes per day (Takeuchi, Hamashima, & Ito 2005) and less than 5 hours per week (Kaneko 2008, Yamada 2008). According to the study at the University of Tokyo, almost 60% of Japanese college students studied less than five hours per week (2008). By comparison, 64% of American college students studied more than six hours per week (Yamada 2008). Takeuchi’s research group (2005) further analyzed the hours of study outside the classroom among Japanese college students by institutional types. Students in prestigious universities studied the longest for 34.3 minutes per day, while the least was
only 14.6 minutes in small colleges. These findings questioned the validity of Japanese credit hours because in order to complete one credit hour, students are supposed to study 1.5 hours per week. Obviously, the average study hours outside classroom among Japanese students is significantly insufficient. The Ministry of Education is currently working on the issue to ensure the validity of credit hours among Japanese colleges and universities (Asahi 2011).

**Corporations’ Hiring Practices and Student Career Preparation**

In Japan, some consider that the conventional job recruitment practice of college students has negatively impacted the quality of undergraduate education as many companies start recruiting college students in the second semester of their junior year. As a result, Japanese college students become occupied with job hunting; many are unable to take courses or attend classes especially in their senior year (Iwauchi & Kariya 1995). In order to maintain student participation in their academics through their senior year, higher education institutions and the industries have been negotiating a compromise to a starting date for college student job recruitment since the 1950s, but the results have been inconsistent over the time (Iwauchi & Hirasawa 1998).

Japanese economic trends and the employment system have affected the industry’s expectations toward undergraduate education. When the economy was flourishing through the 1980s, Japanese companies could afford to offer life-time employment. Hiring practices sought to employ college graduates by cohort, replacing the number of retiring employees with recent college graduates. Under this life-time employment scheme, companies provided recent college graduates on-the-job training,
rotated them to different offices within the company and gradually promoted the employees until their retirement. Therefore, companies were looking for college graduates who were flexible and willing to work as a generalist within one company, rather than students with specialized skills that may be reluctant to change their positions. Although, Japanese companies did not expect much from undergraduate education, they competed to recruit college graduates from prestigious and selective universities because those students were believed perform better with on-the-job training. In other words, the companies used the selectivity of colleges and universities as a screening mechanism for employee recruitment (Iwauchi & Kariya 1995).

After the bubble economy burst in the early 1990s, Japanese companies started changing conventional life-time employment and on-the-job training because the systems were costly to maintain in uncertain economic times. Consequently, the companies shifted expectations to colleges and universities to train college students for the labor market, enhancing critical thinking and problem solving (Iwauchi & Hirasawa 1998).

During the last decade, career-oriented education had become popular in higher education, and the Ministry of Education provided special funding for developing career education programs for colleges and universities. However, researchers have completed very few empirical studies on the effectiveness of those career education programs. Through pre and post surveys on students in freshman year, Kuzuki found that career education programs did not support college students to formulate of their future career (2009). Another survey on senior year students found that their “college learning experience” and “the quality of curriculum and instruction” did not really impact the job attainment of sampled students. Rather, the student’s personal ability to follow social
rules appeared statistically related to job attainment (Kuzuki 2007).

Internship programs also become popular starting in the late 1990s. Some internship programs have been integrated with academic curricula, while some companies offer yet other internship programs independently. The latter type of internship programs has been criticized as a means to recruit good students in an early stage of their college education (Central Education Council 2011).

Questionable Graduation Rate

In 2005, the Japanese college student graduation rate was 90%, one of the highest among OCED countries (the OECD average was 69%). Does that necessarily mean that Japanese higher education produces a high quality undergraduate education? An OECD site-visit team to Japan described undergraduate education as efficient but not necessarily effective (OECD 2009).

INTERMISSION:

So far this discussion of internal environment factors has described student learning to provide readers a general picture of undergraduate education in Japanese higher education. Hereafter, the literature review of the internal environment focuses on organizational administration including faculty, college presidents, and organizational culture. These elements describe the responses to the new public management reforms in the external environment.
Faculty Interest and Work

Critics often indicate that Japanese faculty members are more interested in research than teaching; as such it is difficult to involve faculty members in teaching improvements (Arimoto 2011). According to an international faculty survey, 28.3% of Japanese faculty members responded that they were interested in “primarily teaching” or “leaning toward teaching.” This percentage was lower than American counterparts, but comparable to British faculty in the same survey (Arimoto et al 2009). Even though the Ministry of Education have been implementing various reform policies on teaching, the level of Japanese faculty interest in research appeared to have remained consistently high since a survey administered in 1992. However, the percentage of faculty’s interest in teaching varied by institutional types. At national universities, 10.4% of faculty expressed their interest in teaching; this percentage increased to 39.1% at private non-research universities (Daizen & Yamanoi 2008).

When looking at faculty work hours, a different picture emerged on “teaching vs. research.” During a semester, Japanese faculty spent an average of 21.8 hours per week on teaching in 2007, an increase by two hours from 1992. Again, the type of institutions was related to the hours spent on teaching. The faculty in national research universities spent the least amount of time teaching (17.2 hours), and those in private non-research university spent the most (25.5 hours) (Daizen & Yamanoi 2008). Faculty work hours spent on research declined from 21.6 hours per week in 1992 to 17.6 hours in 2007. Still, the figure actually became closer to other international counterparts (Arimoto et. al 2009)
Faculty Autonomy

In general, the faculty has strong autonomy in Japanese higher education as it was modeled after the German Humboldt University. Each faculty member has his or her own academic unit (called “Koza-sei” in Japanese) in which a full-professor serves as the head of a particular academic field and other lower rank faculty members and graduate students work under the full-professor (Kuroha 2001). This tradition is still prevalent especially at national research universities. Japanese faculty members have been more involved with administrative work than Western counterparts, in part due to this tradition of strong faculty autonomy (Arimoto & Ehara 1996).

Faculty Term Appointment

The Japanese faculty appointment system has been criticized as exclusive and not transparent. A large majority of research universities hire doctoral graduates from their own university, and junior faculty members tend to stay in their original institution, slowly moving up the academic ranks. According to an international survey on faculty in the 1990s, Japan demonstrated the least faculty mobility compared to that in other Western countries. The traditional Japanese faculty appointment practice has been criticized as “academic inbreeding” that hinders faculty mobility, conserves seniority and discourages junior faculty members to introduce or develop new ideas (Yamanoi 2005).

A reform of the conventional faculty appointment system has been discussed in the policy arena since the mid 1970s. In 1987, the ad-hoc educational council under then Prime Minister Nakasone proposed term appointment for faculty. In 1994, the Ministry of Education published a report on the improvement of faculty appointment
A term appointment system was proposed, but decisions regarding the actual design and implementation were left for individual colleges and universities. The report proposed open and public faculty job advertisement, (especially for doctoral graduates from different universities, non-academic professionals, and women) and clarification of the selection standards and process. In 1995, another policy report dealt with legal contract for faculty in the national sector, due to their status as public employees. The report also reaffirmed that term appointment should be implemented, primarily for junior professors (Yamanoi 2000).

In 2001, a national survey by the Ministry of Education identified that only two percent of faculty positions in the country implemented a term appointment and the large majority of these term appointments were in the national sector. Regarding academic disciplines, the natural sciences and medicine showed a higher percentage of implementing a faculty term appointment in the national sector, while it was the case in the humanities and social sciences within the private sector. The difference was due to the different distributions of academic disciplines in Japanese higher education. The national sector has more science and engineering schools, whereas the private sector runs “soft” sciences for cost effectiveness. The period of faculty term appointments varied from one year to twelve years, the average being five years. A large majority (68%) of the term appointment allowed unlimited renewal, and only 15% of them were non-renewal. Overall, the term appointments were administered as a “periodic performance appraisal.”

A national survey on deans, department chairs, and faculty members suggested that the purpose of faculty term appointment was to promote self-reflection of the faculty
and stimulate their research and educational activities. In contrast, the concerns were listed as: 1) interference with academic freedom, 2) alternative careers for faculty members who were terminated, and 3) lack-luster performance appraisals “going through the motion.” The deans and department chairs recognized the positive impact of a term appointment on both research and educational activities, whereas the faculty did not necessarily share the same view. This discrepancy led some to question the applied value of the faculty term appointment (Yamanoi, Kuzuki, & Murasawa 2005).

Faculty Performance Evaluation

In general, the promotion and tenure review process in Japanese higher education is more relaxed than that in the American system. Similar to the conventional “life-time” employment system in Japanese industries, if a junior faculty obtains a full-time position, he or she is expected to stay in that institution unless the opportunity to move to a more prestigious institution arises.

A shrinking student market from the early 1990s ignited the discussion of faculty performance evaluation. Later, the accountability pressures from the accreditation system and institutional performance budgeting began to drive the implementation of a faculty performance evaluation.

The latest national survey on the implementation of the faculty performance evaluation presented various findings in both national and private sectors (Shimada, Okui, & Hayashi 2009). A large majority (82%) of national colleges and universities had implemented a faculty performance evaluation, while only about a quarter (26%) of private counterparts did. The purpose of implementing a faculty performance
evaluation was to improve the faculty productivity, and also to encourage change within their status-quo. Surprisingly, a very small number of institutions answered that the performance evaluation was for cost cutting (less than 10%). Additional reasons for implementing a faculty performance evaluation included accountability in the national sector (62%) and equitable treatment of the faculty in the private sector (33%).

There were largely three criteria in a faculty performance evaluation. The first criterion assessed research activities including publications, conferences presentations, awards, external funding, and patents. The second criterion reviewed teaching activities, primarily advising doctoral students at national research universities or teaching seminar classes in the private sector. The third criterion looked at service encompassing internal administrative positions, committee work, extension and outreach, and serving on external committees or with professional associations.

The study (Shimada, Okui, & Hayashi 2009) also addressed three approaches of faculty performance evaluation. The first approach was to calculate the total score of the faculty productivity from the above three criteria. The second approach was to rank the faculty productivity in certain ranges, similar to grading in academic courses (A, B, C, and D). The third approach was Management by Objectives, in which a faculty member sets a goal for him or herself. The first approach was the most commonly implemented in colleges and universities. However, a challenge was how to set weights among different items (e.g. publication and presentation) within a faculty performance evaluation across different disciplines.

The survey also explored the use of faculty performance evaluation across institutions and sectors. About a third (30%) of the institutions that implemented a
faculty performance evaluation linked it with faculty salary and bonus. More than a third (36.3%) of private institutions used faculty performance evaluation for promotion appraisals. By contrast, the percentage of institutions in the national sector that used the reviews for promotion was quite low (only 3.4%). The national institutions conducted faculty performance evaluation independently from their regular promotional appraisals. Still, they utilized faculty performance evaluation to identify poorly performing faculty members and to provide them with personal consultations. One may wonder that the national institutions took the teeth out of faculty performance review. Overall, a serious concern about a faculty performance evaluation involved how to capture unquantifiable efforts and some activities that were not directly related to the performance evaluation indicators (Shimada, Okui, & Hayashi 2009).

College President and the Governance System

Convention

The position of college president used to be a titular position, reserved for a prominent senior scholar prior to his or her retirement. College presidents were expected to serve an honorary and symbolic role, rather than exercise strong leadership for reform strategies on campus.

The conventions of the presidential appointment and tenure are different based on the size and history of higher education institutions in Japan. At national and old private universities, presidential candidates are usually internal faculty members. They are nominated by a group of faculty and the selection is determined by the faculty vote. Most presidencies have a fixed-term of four years, and usually colleges and universities
allow at least one renewal. Although the aforementioned conventions are the mainstream of Japanese college presidency, newly established small private colleges exhibit different practices. Often in such institutions, the presidency is appointed to a member from the founder’s family, and faculty members do not vote, and a fixed-term does not exist.

**Policy Background**

Over the past few decades, the Ministry of Education has been advocating strong presidential leadership. A policy report in 1995 recommended that presidents should be able to exercise leadership through budget distributions. Along this line of reasoning, presidents should present their own special budget aligned with his or her own initiatives and institutional priorities. In addition, the report suggested that presidents should develop a more flexible and strategic internal budget distribution system to promote competitive research and educational programs, rather than holding onto the conventional “equality” budget distribution across academic units. In 1998, another report from the higher education council emphasized the importance of presidents’ strong leadership to conduct effective institutional administration and proactively respond to diverse and evolving social needs. The report also suggested building a support system for the college presidents by appointing special assistants, vice presidents and establishing a presidential cabinet.

What were the impacts of the aforementioned reform policies on campuses? A research team at Hiroshima University conducted a national survey on college presidents, deans, and department chairs regarding the institutional governance (Research Institute of
Higher Education 2007a). Over 80% of the presidents, deans, and department chairs responded that the roles of presidents and vice presidents were strengthened. However, there was a potential internal conflict relating to the power balance between the presidents and the academic units. A survey question inquired about the power relationship in organizational governance. Presidents wanted to further increase their power, while the deans and department chairs wanted to increase their power (Hata 2007a). The aforementioned policy reports in the 1990s addressed the role of the president’s special budget in order to exercise strong leadership. Nearly 80% of the presidents in the national sector increased the amount allocated through these budgets, compared to only 20% of the private counterparts (Tanaka 2007). Nearly 90% of the presidents in both the national and private sectors responded that a faculty hiring plan should be managed and administered at the institutional level and, around 40% the deans and department chairs agreed with this idea (Hata 2007a).

Presidential Leadership

Studies on presidential leadership are underdeveloped in Japanese higher education. Although a few quantitative studies (i.e. national surveys) on college presidents exist, a large majority of the studies on the topic are qualitative studies: Either anecdotal essays by the presidents themselves or a brief episodic case report in higher education magazine articles. In 2006, the Institute for Development of Higher Education (IDHE) published a volume on presidential leadership with a dozen of essays by college presidents in public and private sectors representing various institutional sizes. 5 The volume illustrated

5 IDHE is a monthly journal for policy makers and college administrators, which is similar to the
leadership practices and challenges in different organizational contexts including the quasi-corporatization of national universities.

One president expressed surprise by the sheer number of committees and administrative meetings on campus. To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of these meetings, the president reduced the overall number and introduced a TV conference system to facilitate direct communication with the faculty and staff in order to avoid information distortions from indirect, hierarchical communication through the deans and department chairs (Gou 2006). By contrast, the president at a new private college increased the number of cabinet meetings to accelerate the institutional analysis and decision making processes (Hamana 2006). Another president in a mid-size national university reinvented the university hospital and faculty retirement plans (Kuroki 2006).

Many presidents addressed presidential leadership interaction with strong faculty autonomy. Leadership styles were discussed mostly as a “top-down” or “bottom-up” approach. In the presidents’ view, top-down management was not necessarily functional in Japanese colleges and universities because leadership was still strongly influenced by the Ministry of Education and institutional management was new to both college presidents and faculty members (Ikoma 2006). Therefore, some presidents suggested a balance of top-down and bottom-up approaches (Kuroki 2006, Ikoma 2006). Typically, decisions regarding research and educational matters should be bottom-up, controlled by faculty members, while the overall institutional administration could be more top-down, controlled by college presidents (Kuroki 2006). The core role of a president was to create a long term vision (Hamana 2006, Ikoma 2006, Kiyonari 2006) and stay away from micromanagement (Sato 2006)

____________________________________

publication Change in American higher education.
Changes in the President Appointment System

In addition to strong presidential leadership, the higher education council report also raised concern about the ineffective practices of conventional faculty direct vote selection of senior administrators in Japanese colleges and universities (1998). The report also suggested opening an opportunity for external non-academic executives to serve as president.

Alongside the shift to quasi-corporatization, a number of national colleges and universities had reformed the conventional presidential election process on campus. The new process required a “president selection committee” consisting of the current president, vice presidents, and external executive members from the local government and businesses, in which the number of the external executive members needed to be at least a half of the committee. The faculty “votes” became a faculty “poll” to narrow down the presidential candidates. In other words, faculty votes no longer dictate the final decision presidential selection; instead, the president selection committee “refers” to the results of a faculty poll while the committee members cast the final vote to appoint a president. This represents a significant isolation of the faculty in the presidential selection. Still, some national universities maintain faculty input as some by-laws state that the president selection committee should “respect” the results of a faculty poll (e.g. University of Tokyo).

There have been controversies and even court cases over the process and decision of the presidential selection at several national universities. Yamagata University appointed Yuki, a former senior administrator of the Ministry of Education, as incoming president in 2007. The process began as the medical school approached Yuki
to become a presidential candidate, expecting that he would build strong ties between the university and the Ministry of Education. Other academic units (biology, humanities, and agriculture) opposed the idea, viewing Yuki as a potential threat of political influences from the ministry. Although in the faculty poll he was the second most popular candidate, the presidential selection committee voted for Yuki. Opponents of the decision claimed that the selection process was undemocratic, citing a decline of academic autonomy (Yamagata University Faculty Union 2012). However, after the first couple of months President Yuki gained popularity; his presidential term was renewed in 2011.  

At Toyama University, then president Saito tried to renew his presidency for a sequential term beginning in 2009. In the faculty poll, he was the least popular candidate among the three finalists. However, the presidential selection committee appointed Saito for the next term. Six out of eight academic units opposed the committee’s decision; a group of faculty even appealed to the Ministry of Education for a rejection of the presidential appointment (Toyama University Faculty and Staff Union 2012). However, the ministry did not intervene in the internal matters of the university.

At Kochi University, the incumbent president Sagara applied for a sequential term starting in 2008. He was an unpopular candidate in the faculty poll, and voting fraud occurred in the selection committee. Still, Sagara eventually became the president; some faculty members sued the university. Similar problems occurred at several other national universities, and some of them became court cases and continuing legal battles (Ozawa 2008).

Faculty vote is the predominant practice in the selection process of not just the president, but also deans and department chairs. The aforementioned national survey by

---

6 Yamagata University eliminated faculty votes in the presidential selection process in 2010.
Hiroshima University asked respondents about eliminating the faculty vote in the election of the president, deans, and department chairs. Apparently, less than 20% of the deans and department chairs opposed the idea, while over 30% of the presidents in the national sector, and over 40% of those in the private sector favored omitting faculty vote in selecting senior administrators (Hata 2007a).

Overall, college president is not an established profession in Japanese higher education. The presidents are usually selected from inside the college or university by faculty vote, and they usually return to their own academic department after their presidential tenure. There is a very little professional training for college presidents other than they previously served as a dean or vice president. Japanese presidents historically handle academic affairs, but not necessarily institutional management (Kiyonari 2006, Sato 2006). In the national sector, the reform policies have called for greater authority for college presidents (Ikoma 2006), but implementation has not matched these policy ideas (Kuroki 2006).

_Vice Presidents_

To promote the presidential leadership, the Ministry of Education suggested enhancing the executive support staff, including vice presidents and special assistants to the president (1998). The vice president has been a single position at colleges and universities in both the national and private sectors. However, after quasi-corporatization, national colleges and universities created multiple vice president positions, including for academic affairs, student affairs, and institutional evaluation. Private colleges and universities still keep the single vice president position, but many of
them added special assistants to the president. A president can directly appoint vice presidents without faculty vote; most of them are internal candidates (Furuta 2005).

Vice presidents usually return to their academic department, unless some of them apply for presidency in the same institution.

There is very little research on vice presidents. Natsume (2012) conducted a national survey and research interviews with the vice presidents for academic affairs in the national sector. Many of them had prior administrative experience, serving as a dean or faculty senate member before assuming the vice president position. They found the president’s leadership was critical to success, although the faculty’s status-quo presented a challenge in promoting improvements in education.

*Board of Trustees and Management Senate*

In order to enhance the “top” management, the Ministry of Education implemented governance reform policies for national and private sectors in the early 2000s. Traditionally, the constituents of the board of trustees in Japanese higher education are quite different from that in American higher education. In Japan, the board members are the president, the vice president(s), and the deans. The board membership had been honorary and symbolic, and managerial responsibilities were rarely expected (Kuroda 2006). In the private sector, there are usually one or two “external” board members coming from the corporate world or another higher education institution. Those external board members serve as an advisor, if not merely an observer.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education published a report on improving the mechanisms of the board of trustees in the private sector. Recognizing the challenges of
institutional survival in the decline of the college-age population, the report recommended clarifying the responsibilities and strengthening the roles of 1) the board of trustees, 2) senates, and 3) financial audits. The importance transparency of institutional finance was also addressed. In 2004, the Ministry changed the private educational institution law and enforced the above governance reforms in the private sector.

The governance reforms in the national sector took a different form upon quasi-corporatization. The Ministry of Education obligated national colleges and universities to create a management senate, of which at least half of the members must come from outside the college or university. National colleges and universities invited corporate executives, bureaucrats from the national and local governments, and notable senior administrators from other higher education institutions. Honma, a former vice president for institutional administration at Kyoto University and also the head of University Management Institute, conducted a national survey on management senates and financial audits at national colleges and universities (2009). Over 80% of the external members of the management senates agreed or somewhat agreed that their university or college effectively conduct the institutional administration as the quasi-corporatization policy originally aimed. Furthermore, 90% of them also agreed or somewhat agreed that the central administration seriously listened to the opinions of the external senate members and included them in the institutional administrative agenda. However, there were still 20% of the external senate members who were not actively engaged with the management senate because they were unfamiliar with institutional administration and felt unable provide relevant and responsible feedback to the senior administration. Oda, who served as an external member of the management senate at
Tohoku University, wrote a critical review on the newly formed management senate from 2004. In his observation, the “internal” members of the management senate were the president and vice presidents from the academic senate, which exercised strong influence in decision-making. Thus, the “external” members were unable to raise a strong voice in the management senate meetings. In Oda’s view, the management senate was nothing more than “window dressing” for legitimacy, which as a result underutilized external experts for institutional administration (2005).

Organizational Culture

The conventional organizational culture of Japanese colleges and universities has described faculty members with too much autonomy and academic units which act in self-interest. Consensus is highly valued in the decision making process, resulting in the power of even one academic unit opposed to a college-wide policy to stall implementation by the senior administration (Ehara 2010). Therefore, the presidents usually serve as a mediator to build consensus among the academic units.

Research on the organizational culture of Japanese higher education institutions is scarce (Ohba 2011). Some scholars simply refer to Weick’s “loosely-coupled system” to describe a general notion of the strong faculty autonomy in Japanese higher education (Ehara 2010, Ohba 2011). Organizational culture is also discussed in relation to management and governance (Morozumi 2001). The conflicting terms such as entrepreneurship (Clark 1998, 2004) and academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie 1999, Slaughter & Rhoades 2009) represent mixed pictures of managerial universities (Hata 2004). Japanese studies often introduce Western concepts and theories of organizational
studies in order to describe similarities between Western and Japanese organizational phenomena.

However, one different line of analytical in Japanese studies is a focus on the issues of “top-down” and “bottom-up” in decision making process. The former represents either college presidents or the Ministry of Education, while the latter represents faculty members or academic units.

The issues of “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches invite the question of “centralization” and “decentralization.” By comparing the two national faculty surveys from 1992 to 2007, designed by the international Carnegie studies, Ehara (2010) identified that centralization had progressed in the areas of budget decisions, appointment of senior administrators, and approval of new academic curriculum. The study also explored the different levels of centralization at research and non-research universities in the national and private sectors. National and private research universities were more decentralized than the American counterparts in the areas of the appointment of senior administrators, new faculty hiring, budgetary decisions, and approval of new academic programs. Quite interestingly, Japanese private non-research universities showed comparable levels of centralization to the American public and private institutions.

Ehara (2010) applied McNay’s four conceptual framework of organizational culture (1995) to Japanese higher education. Those frameworks are collegial, bureaucratic, enterprise, and corporate cultures. In Ehara’s observation, the quasi-corporatization of national colleges and universities did not necessarily lead them to enterprise culture because the Ministry of Education still governed from a distance. Therefore, the corporate culture appeared more predominant in the national sector. He
also added that the enterprise culture may emerge only in for-profit universities, which was still a very small subsector in Japanese higher education.
Part II: Emergence of Quality Assurance Systems

This section illustrates the history of the development of the Japanese accreditation system and a brief overview of the three accreditation agencies. There are largely three developmental stages in the history of Japanese accreditation system. The first stage developed after WWII when the Ministry of Education used the approval system for new academic institutions and programs to control the number of higher education institutions and the content of academic degree programs. The second stage occurred during the 1990s when the Ministry of Education emulated American self-study in order to balance deregulation in Japanese higher education policies. The third stage began around 2000 when the ministry implemented the current accreditation system in order to reinforce the rigor of self-study and promote continuous quality improvements.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education created two different accreditation mechanisms: institutional accreditation and programmatic accreditation. Institutional accreditation was required for all Japanese national, private, and municipal colleges and universities, while programmatic accreditations were required only for professional graduate programs such as law, business accounting, and teacher training.

In addition, institutional performance budgeting was implemented at national colleges and universities as they became an agency independent from the Ministry of Education in 2004 (i.e. quasi-corporatization). Similar to American higher education, performance budgeting occurs separately from the accreditation review process. The following sections describe the development of the Japanese institutional accreditation system and a brief overview of the three accreditation agencies.
Academic Institutional and Programmatic Approval System

In 1919, the Ministry of Education established the approval system for new academic institutions and programs to regulate a total number of higher education institutions, their geographical distributions, enrollment size, faculty, curriculum, campus facilities, and finance (Hata 2005b). After WWII, the American General Head Quarter for post-war settlement created an accreditation agency, Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA) to prevent governmental interventions in college and university affairs. However, the accreditation system did not take root simply because the Ministry of Education’s approval system was more influential than the institutional volunteer-based accreditation (Yonezawa 2002). Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, the approval system for new academic institutional and programs controlled the growth of science and engineering programs in order to support national economic growth (Yamamoto 2004).

Implementation of Self-Study

By the early 1960s, Japan’s college attendance rate among 18 year-old population had reached 15 percent, the second highest in the world at the time. The growth in attendance rate heavily relied on the private sector and the quality of college education became a concern. During the 1970s, the Japan Association of Private Universities and Colleges (JAPUC) sought a solution in American higher education and imported self-study to promote quality improvements among private institutions. Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA) also conducted multiple study-visits to American accreditation agencies and established a committee on introducing self-study in
their accreditation review process. In the 1980s, then Prime Minister Nakasone applied neo-liberal policies with the intent of downsizing the government; during this period politicians had a vibrant discussion of privatizing national universities because their institutional administration was perceived ineffective. To prevent complete privatization, the Ministry of Education introduced self-study among colleges and universities to improve their effectiveness. Under governmental pressures, both national and private universities began conducting self-study. In 1991, the Ministry of Education again recommended self-study, this time to supplement the deregulation of the general education curriculum. By the late 1990s, almost 90 percent of Japanese colleges and universities conducted an annual self-study and published the results in a self-study report periodically in every several years. However, research revealed that most colleges and universities did not utilize the self-study for actual quality improvements (Yonezawa 2002). Therefore in 1998, the Ministry of Education required an external peer review component to reinforce the effectiveness of self-study in colleges and universities (Higher Education Council 1998).

Implementation of Quality Assurance Systems

In the early 2000s, then Prime Minister Koizumi lead the downsizing of the government sector through the new public management approach (Hata 2007b), which advanced deregulations and implemented policy evaluation systems to monitor the effectiveness of policy implementations and the quality of public services. In 2002, a blueprint of the Japanese accreditation system was published, emphasizing that a “third party” (not the
Ministry of Education) would conduct accreditation reviews (Central Education Council 2002). Under the larger national policy scheme, in 2004 the Ministry of Education created two types of quality assurance systems: the accreditation system for both national and private sectors, and the institutional performance evaluation for the national sector.

**Institutional Accreditation System**

As Japan emulated the American accreditation system, many commonalities exist between the two countries. First, Japanese accreditation standards encompass institutional mission, educational programs, student recruitment, faculty, student support services, institutional administration, facilities, and finance, which are almost identical to the standards in the United States. Second, the Japanese accreditation review process is similar to the American model in which the process begins with internal self-study in accordance with the accreditation standards. A team of external reviewers, composed of both faculty members and administrators, analyze a self-evaluation report and prepare for a site-visit review to confirm the validity of the self-evaluation report. After the site-visit, the external review team publishes a draft of a final review report. Colleges and universities are allowed to submit a complaint of results of the external review team before the final review report is published by the accreditation agency. The final review report includes the evaluation of each accreditation standard by three grades: “Meet,” “Does not meet” an accreditation standard, or “Reservation of judgment” for the final

---

7 Different from a self-study in the United States, Japanese self-study requires individual colleges and universities to grade their quality for each accreditation standard. Therefore, this dissertation research call Japanese self-study as “self-evaluation” in a context of accreditation reviews conducted after 2004.
evaluation. The final accreditation review report also addresses good practices, areas of improvement, and recommendations. The entire process takes approximately a year and half. If a college or university fails to meet one accreditation standard, it needs to improve that accreditation standard and retry a partial accreditation review within three years of a probation period. If a college or university fails to meet the same standard in the second review, that college or university becomes unaccredited (Hayata & Funato 2007).

There are a few differences between the American and Japanese accreditation systems. First, unlike the American accreditation system, Japanese accreditation system is not linked to any financial incentives from the government; instead, it is tied with governmental interventions. The Ministry of Education can proceed with interventions for unaccredited colleges and universities, and if they are incapable of following the governmental intervention, the ministry can order an institutional closure. Second, another difference between Japanese and American accreditation systems exists in terms of institutional membership. The American regional accreditation agencies cover both public and private sectors. By contrast, Japanese accreditation agencies cover a particular sector and institutional membership. National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) assesses national higher education institutions. Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) reviews mostly old private universities. Japan Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE) reviews mostly new private colleges.

These differentiated institutional memberships in Japanese institutional accreditation system raise a question about an equivalent rigor across the three
accreditation agencies (Amano 2008). Although the number of institutions and student enrollment size are small, national colleges and universities are generally more research driven with a more selective student admission than private counterparts. On the other hand, private colleges and universities account for over 70% of Japanese higher education institutions and student enrollment. Within the private sector, there are old private colleges and universities established before the Second World War, and new privates that were created after the war. The old privates tend to be larger and more selective than new privates (Yamamoto 2004).

Third, a significant difference in the Japanese accreditation system is the disclosure of review results. A complete report of self-evaluation and accreditation result is made publically available on the accreditation websites, while such information is unavailable from most American accreditation agencies.

Accountability through Accreditation System

Accountability is the obligation to report to others, to explain, to justify, to answer questions about how resources have been used, and to what effect. Accountability to others takes many different forms in different societies, with respect to different actions and different kinds of support. The fundamental questions with respect to accountability are: who is to be held accountable, for what, to whom, through what means, and with what consequences (Trow 1996, p. 2).

The Japanese education law requires that higher education institutions must be accredited every seven year in order to assure and improve the quality of education and research activities. Higher education institutions conduct an internal self-evaluation, external review, and disclose the review results to public (Article 69.3). Based on this
law, the Ministry of Education approves accreditation agencies, which design and operate the accreditation system. This accountability structure mainly serves three types of stakeholders: the Ministry of Education, college students, and international higher education audiences (e.g. OECD, UNESCO, and WTO).

The accreditation system was designed to supplement the deregulation of the approval system of new academic institutions and programs. Due to deregulation, new higher education institutions and academic programs are more diverse while existing colleges and universities gained more flexibility to transform their academic programs. However, deregulation also raised doubts as to the educational quality of certain higher education institutions and academic programs.

Furthermore, the ministerial approval system required annual progress reports of approved academic institutions and programs. For example, if a four-year program is approved, the higher education institution is required to submit an annual progress report until the fourth year after the approval. After the fourth year, the approval system called for no other measures of quality monitoring. To supplement the limitation of the annual progress reporting in the system, the Ministry of Education designed the accreditation system to continuously and periodically monitor the quality of education of colleges and universities, even after the institutional and programmatic approvals.

The Japanese accreditation system is also expected to function as an accountability mechanism for both enrolled and prospective students (Ministry of Education 2003). Obviously colleges and universities need to be accountable to enrolled students, as they pay tuition and fees for their education. The accreditation review reports are also expected to provide prospective students more information for
their college choice. However, in reality accreditation review reports are difficult for high school students, parents, and admission counselors to fully understand or use as a guide to selecting a college (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2009c).

Furthermore, the Japanese accreditation system became a part of an international accountability scheme. As cross-border higher education has evolved, diploma mills and malfunctioning branch campuses have become a concern. Under the development of WTO’s General Agreement on Trades in Service, the OECD called for member countries to establish a legitimate quality assurance system. Within this international policy dialogue, the Japanese Ministry of Education created an accreditation system equivalent to Western countries.

Accreditation Agencies

There are four accreditation agencies in Japanese higher education that administer institutional accreditation: Japanese University Accreditation Association, National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation, Japanese Institution for Higher Education Institution, and Japanese Association for Junior College Accreditation. This section provides a brief history and characteristics of member institutions of the first three aforementioned accreditation agencies that primarily review four-year academic programs.

---

8 Junior colleges were excluded in this dissertation research due to a small number of institutions and they are subject to different policies and regulations from four-year institutions.
Japanese Association for University Association (JUAA)

Japanese Association for University Association (JUAA) was established in 1947 based on a recommendation by the American post war settlement government. The purpose was to prevent governmental interventions to colleges and universities after WWII. However, the influence of JUAA was minimal due to the significant control of the Ministry of Education on the approval system of new academic institutions and programs until the early 1990s (Hata 2005c; Yonezawa 2002).

In addition, JUAA's accreditation review practice was underdeveloped compared to the American accreditation system. Until the early 1990s, the JUAA did not administer site-visit reviews. Member institutions could receive accreditation based only on evidence from a self-study report (Maeda 2007). Moreover, although the scope of accreditation reviews was an entire institution, a self-study of only one school or college was sufficient to apply for a review. Therefore, some campus administrators viewed the JUAA accreditation review process as fairly undemanding.

However, as the Japanese Ministry of Education seriously began to consider importing the American institutional accreditation, JUAA gradually upgraded their accreditation review process in the late 1990s. They published a translation of an accreditation guidebook by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (Kitamura 1992, 1993), incorporating site-visit review in Japan. In 2002, JUAA organized an international accreditation conference with International Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and invited representatives from Hong Kong, India, and the United Kingdom. The results of this conference were published as the Tokyo Declaration (JUAA 2003). These active reforms helped JUAA to administer a
more effective accreditation review, and also raise recognition and legitimacy to become an official accreditation agency under the supervision by the Ministry of Education.

JUAA covers mostly old private colleges and universities that were established before WWII. Back in 1918, the Japanese Ministry of Education approved 22 private universities. Those old private universities were created by the “founding fathers” eagerly imported Western government systems for Japanese modernization during the Meiji restoration in the late 1800s (Westney 1987). Today there are about 120 old private colleges and universities that usually enroll a large student body from 5,000 to 50,000 and large institutions with multi campuses. Old private colleges and universities are often more prestigious and selective. However, in terms of research, even the top private universities have smaller funding and capacity than national research universities (Ministry of Education 2007).

National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)
The National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) is the second oldest accreditation agency, organized and operated as a quasi-governmental entity. Initially NIAD-UE was created to recognize “academic degrees” for adult students who accumulate credit hours through distance and continuing education at various higher education institutions. As the quality assurance policies evolved in the early 2000s, the Ministry of Education added the “university evaluation” function to NIAD-UE to conduct pilot accreditation reviews on national colleges and universities. During the pilot reviews, NIAD-UE assessed various aspects of quality such as undergraduate education, research activities, and community outreach through teaching
and research. The Ministry of Education intended that NIAD-UE’s pilot reviews would become examples for the private sectors to create their own accreditation review mechanism (Kimura 2005).

NIAD-UE has a fairly large research division compared to the other two accreditation agencies for the private sector, through which it has been actively researching Western quality assurance systems. NIAD-UE organized a series of workshops with a dozen of Western policy makers and academics, experts on their quality assurance systems. For example, the beginning of 2000s, NIAD-UE invited Dr. John Brennan, a leading researcher on British quality assurance systems. Dr. Joseph Burke was invited to share his knowledge on performance funding in public higher education in the United States. Furthermore, NIAD-UE also sent its Japanese research staff to Western countries to learn about various quality assurance systems. For example, Dr. Masaaki Ida visited the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) in Washington D.C. around 2005, after which NIAD-UE replicated a Japanese version of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) for the national sector.

NIAD-UE accredits 88 national colleges and universities that collectively enroll approximately 30 percent of the total student body. The national universities are prestigious and research-oriented, due mostly to a long history and governmental support. In 1868, the government created the first national university, the University of Tokyo, to advance Japan’s industrialization and develop national defense. Shortly after establishment, the University of Tokyo emulated the Humboldt model of a German research university in which research was the top priority for faculty and academic departments were highly autonomous (Ushiogi 2008). During the war period from the
late 1800s to 1945, top national research universities were called imperial universities and trained general officers. Even now, national universities undertake approximately 70 percent of science, engineering, and technology research (Ministry of Education 2007). Student selectivity is higher than most private colleges and universities owing to a lower tuition and a higher institutional prestige. Many graduates from the national research universities work for the central government or large Japanese corporations.

NIAD-UE administers two types of quality assurance systems for national colleges and universities. Beginning in 2004, first type is the institutional accreditation that is mandatory for both national and private colleges and universities. The other is institutional performance evaluation that was implemented along with the quasi-corporatization of national colleges and universities in 2004. The institutional performance evaluation follows a six-year cycle and the results reflect small amount of budget distributions. The amount appeared trivial compared with continuous annual budget cuts in operational funding.

Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)
The Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE) was established in 2003 by the Association of Private Universities of Japan (APUJ) whose membership consists of mostly small private colleges created after WWII. JIHEE has imported an American accreditation model. Dr. Kazuyuki Kitamura played a significant role in the creation of JIHEE as his research interest had been American higher education. Kitamura advocated for a voluntary operation of accreditation system in the United States so as to avoid potential governmental interventions through accreditation reviews. In
the beginning of 2000s, APUJ sent two Japanese researchers to participate in an actual site-visit team in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges in order to fully learn about the operation of American accreditation reviews (Kitamura 2002). JIHEE places an emphasis on respecting the diverse institutional characteristics of private colleges and universities; their accreditation reviews employs a qualitative method compared with the other two accreditation agencies.

JIHEE covers mostly new private institutions created after WWII in order to meet the rapidly increasing demand of higher education for the second baby boomers. The number of new private colleges and universities is over 370, and most of them enroll somewhere between 2,000 and 5,000 students. Due to the recent decline of college-age population, approximately 40 percent of the new private colleges are facing financial difficulties (Asahi 2003). Student selectivity is relatively low and some smaller new private colleges are becoming open-admission. Teaching is the primary role of the new privates and they offer remedial education for academically underprepared students. Many graduates of new private universities usually obtain a job at a mid to small size company (Asaba 1996).

**Institutional Performance-based Budgeting**

In 2004, the Japanese Ministry of Education initiated institutional performance-based budgeting along with the quasi-corporatization of national colleges and universities and delegated the development and administration of the institutional performance evaluation to the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation. While institutional accreditation focuses on educational programs, institutional performance
evaluation examines both teaching and research productivity, which was modeled after the British Research Assessment Exercise (Kaneko 2007). While institutional accreditation is not tied to any funding, the institutional performance evaluation is linked to a small amount of budget distributions. The process begins as national colleges and universities submit a six-year strategic plan to the Ministry of Education. Every year national colleges and universities submit an annual progress report, and the final measurement is based on an accomplishment of the six-year strategic planning established by each college and university. The approach is very different from institutional accreditation setting its standards for minimum criteria (Komatsu 2007). The dual burden of the accreditation review and performance-based budgeting is similar to some public higher education systems in the United States where a state-level performance funding or budgeting is implemented on top of regional accreditation.
### Table 2: Characteristics of Accreditation Agencies and their Institutional Clientele

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Accreditation agencies</th>
<th>Characteristics of Institutions</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)** | * Conduct 70% of research in hard sciences  
  * Student enrollment sizes vary from 3,000 to 12,000  
  * Quasi-corporatization in 2004  
  * Became independent from the Ministry of Education  
  * 1% cut for operating budget every year | Government driven |
| * Est. 2001 as pilot study of accreditation reviews  
  * Covers national colleges and universities  
  * Emulated IPEDS from the U.S.  
  * Conducts institutional performance evolution | * 30% of national overall student enrollment | |
| **Japan University Accreditation Associations (JUAA)** | * Established before or right after the WWII  
  * Student enrollment sizes vary from 5,000 to 30,000  
  * Less selective than national institutions but more than new privates  
  * Do not lead in research funding and productivity | Aspiration driven |
| * Est. 1956, but dormant until the 1990s  
  * Covers mostly old private colleges and universities  
  * Emulated U.S. accreditation (North Central) | * 70% of national overall student enrollment | |
| **Japan Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)** | * Established years after WWII  
  * Student enrollment sizes vary from 2,000 to 6,000  
  * 40% of the new privates are facing financial difficulties | Market survival driven |
| * Est. 2004  
  * Covers new private colleges and universities  
  * Emulated U.S. accreditation (New England) | | |
Part III: Review of Impact Studies of Quality Assurance Systems

Policy makers, college administrators, and faculty members, are interested in the impact and effectiveness of accreditation reviews. The discussions are inclined to be heated due to differences of their perceptions and expectations. However, the number of impact studies of accreditation reviews is very limited in Japanese higher education. Instead, prior studies have focused on investigating the implementation of accreditation reviews, as the Japanese accreditation system began in 2004.

The first half of this section analyzes the accreditation results and review comments as well as survey research on the usefulness of accreditation reviews for campus administrators in Japan. The second half expands the scope of impact and effectiveness of quality assurance systems including phenomenological studies and conceptual and methodological issues. Due to the low number of studies on phenomenological and methodological issues that focus on Japan, the researcher reviews other prior studies in Europe and the United States for comparative analyses.

Accreditation Review Results

Accreditation review results are often referred as an indicator of accreditation system effectiveness (Examining Committee on Accreditation Agencies 2009). Japanese accreditation agencies issue three accreditation review results: “Accredited,” “Temporarily Suspended,” and “Unaccredited.” The temporary suspension means that a college or university can reapply for a partial review of failed standards within three years after the full accreditation review. The un-accreditation implies that the Ministry
of Education obtains the authority to intervene and supervise institutional management. The following section depicts the results of accreditation reviews in the first cycle by the three Japanese agencies.

**Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA)**

Between 2004 and 2010, the Japanese University Accreditation Agency (JUAA) reviewed 317 four-year institutions, including a small number of re-evaluations for “Temporarily Suspended” institutions. Twenty-two institutions (7.9%) received “Temporary Suspension” results while one institution failed to achieve accreditation. Those institutions failed to satisfy on average 3.32 out of 15 accreditation standards. The number of “Unsatisfactory” evaluations per institution ranged from seven to two.

Of 15 accreditation standards, the top three standards that received an “Unsatisfactory” were: Student Admission (n=17), Finance (n=15), and Faculty body (n=9). The first two items seemed somewhat related as private colleges and universities largely rely on student enrollment. However, not all the “Unsatisfactory” evaluations were due to an unfilled student enrollment; some institutions exceedingly enrolled students beyond their capacity.⁹

**National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)**

Between 2005 and 2010, National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)...

---

⁹ In Japan, there is a quota of student enrollment based on the size of faculty body and campus facility. If a higher education institution enrolls more than 1.24 times more of the total student enrollment quota or cannot fill the half of it, the institution cannot receive institutional subsidiary from the Ministry of Education.
Evaluation (NIAD-UE) reviewed 126 four-year institutions for accreditation, and only one institution received “Temporary Suspension.” It was a for-profit university that could not meet standards on Faculty Body, Facility, and Finance. 

Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)

From 2005 to 2010, the Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation reviewed 277 four-year institutions, including a small number of re-evaluations for “Temporarily Suspended” institutions. Twenty institutions (7.6%) received “Temporary Suspension” results, and one institution failed to be accredited. Those institutions failed to satisfy on average 2.14 out of 11 accreditation standards. Among the institutions that filed for an accreditation review, the number of “Unsatisfactory” evaluations on accreditation standards varied from eight to one.

Among 11 accreditation standards, the top three standards that received an “Unsatisfactory” were: Institutional Administration (n=13), Faculty Body (n=11), and Finance (n=9). It is interesting to notice that JIHEE issued a smaller number of “Unsatisfactory” evaluations on the student admission standard than JUAA, even though a large majority of JIHEE’s member institutions were newer small private colleges facing student enrollment challenges. Although having satisfied student enrollment, some institutions that failed an accreditation review had a problem with insufficient faculty placements in academic programs. These new private colleges also had problems with the institutional administration standard regarding governance procedures over by-laws and board meetings.

---

10 In the Japanese accreditation system, any colleges and university can apply to one of the three accreditation agencies, and some for-profit universities chose NIAD-UE.
Summary

An analysis of accreditation results raises a fundamental question regarding the impact of accreditation reviews. Did accreditation agencies set a reasonable (if not rigorous) standard of review?

This question is posed, in part, due to the different institutional membership of the three accreditation agencies (i.e. the clientele). Two accreditation agencies reviewed the private sector: JUAA - old privates and JIHEE - new privates. Collectively, they issued “Temporary Suspension” or “Un-accreditation” evaluations to seven percent of their member institutions. Is the figure high or low? Why did JIHEE not issue a larger number of un-accreditations than JUAA, even though most of JIHEE’s member institutions were newly established small colleges that were more vulnerable to the declining student market? NIAD-UE issued only one “Temporary Suspension” to a for-profit university. Did the other institutions, national colleges and universities, have no concerns because they were more selective in terms of student admission? Although this dissertation research does not directly answer to the above questions, it includes colleges and universities under the three different accreditation agencies in the sample for field research interview. Further details are described in Chapter III.
Table 3: Accreditation Review Results by the Accreditation Agencies and Years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation Agency</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japanese University Accreditation Agency (JUAA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited mostly old private colleges and universities</td>
<td>Accredit</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Suspended</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-evaluated and accredited</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-evaluated and failed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited mostly new private colleges and universities</td>
<td>Accredit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Suspended</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not accredited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-evaluated and accredited</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited mostly national colleges and universities</td>
<td>Accredit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporarily Suspended</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Studies on Accreditation Review Comments

On each accreditation standard, Japanese accreditation agencies provide review comments. In order to investigate the effectiveness of accreditation reviews, the Ministry of Education analyzed the distribution of “warning” comments produced by three accreditation agencies in 2004 and 2005. In general, the warning comments appeared in the areas of student enrollment and institutional finance.

The tendency was actually quite similar to accreditation results in some European countries. Wahlen (2004) found that the first cycle of accreditation reviews identified administrative issues more often than academic issues. Then, the second accreditation review cycle shifted attention more to the areas of teaching and learning. The Dutch accreditation system investigates the use of accreditation review recommendations for continuous improvement in the next cycle of accreditation review. Jeliazkova developed a conceptual framework to analyze the use of accreditation review recommendations (2001, cited in Jeliazkova 2002).

Figure 1: Use of Accreditation Review Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPTUAL</th>
<th>SHORT-TERM</th>
<th>LONG-TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▶ Apparent interest in visitation outcomes</td>
<td>▶ Actions taken to immediately improve/adjust/legitimize quality assurance policy</td>
<td>▶ Recommendations directly incorporated in long term decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Discussion</td>
<td>▶ Judgement on:</td>
<td>▶ Structure/indicators/criteria from report adopted for quality monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Dissemination</td>
<td>▶ (purpose of) the visitation procedure/report</td>
<td>▶ Reorganization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▶ Concept/argumentation employed in short term decision making</td>
<td>▶ Quality assurance/quality improvement/aspects of quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Place of education as a component of performance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▶ Concepts/argumentation employed in strategic decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

INSTRUMENTAL

84
Impact Studies on Japanese Accreditation Reviews

From the inauguration of the accreditation system in 2004, Japanese accreditation agencies have been conducting studies on the process and impact of their accreditation reviews. Earlier studies focused more on speculating and anticipating the implementation of accreditation reviews, including the internal self-evaluation by colleges and universities, the procedures of the external site-visit reviews, and the validity of the accreditation review results. In Japan, impact studies are often framed in terms of the “usefulness” of an accreditation review.

Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA)

The Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA) conducted surveys on the usefulness of accreditation reviews in 2004 and 2005. The surveys asked campus administrators to rate each accreditation standard by a five-point Likert scale: “Very Useful=5,” “Useful=4,” “Neutral=3,” “Not Useful=2,” and “Not Very Useful=1.” The top three most useful standards based on mean scores were: Curriculum and Pedagogy (4.26), Self-study (4.17), and Accountability and Disclosure (4.10). On the contrary, the bottom three mean scores were: Finance (3.67), Library (3.70) and Facility (3.71).

Simply put, the usefulness of accreditation reviews can be determined by there are two perspectives: one is the quality of accreditation reviews and the other is the administrative capacity of colleges and universities to utilize accreditation reviews for continuous improvement. Presumably, the accreditation reviews provided an external legitimacy for the senior administration on campuses to check the quality of their academic programs. That can be why campus senior administrators responded
accreditation reviews were useful in academic matters. By contrast, they may not have
found accreditation reviews on institutional finance and facilities as useful mostly
because the Ministry of Education had already placed strict regulations through the
approval system for academic institutions and programs.

Table 4: Mean Scores of the Usefulness of Accreditation Reviews by Accreditation Standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Mission</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Academic Organization</td>
<td>3.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Curriculum &amp; Pedagogy</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Admission</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Student Life</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Research Environment</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Social Contributions</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Faculty Body</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Administration</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Facility</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Library</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Governance</td>
<td>4.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Finance</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Self-study</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Accountability &amp; Disclosure</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To explore these results in further detail, the study analyzed open-ended questions
regarding the usefulness of accreditation reviews. Overall, the majority responded that
accreditation review was helpful in increasing the awareness of institutional issues in the
campus community. Typical comments were as follows.

- “Before the accreditation review, self-studies were conducted at the unit level and
  they were sporadic. But now those unit level self-studies have been integrated at
  the institution level under the president’s leadership.”
- “Overall, the accreditation became an external force to promote internal reforms
  and improvements. Especially the faculty could no longer be merely resistant to
  the senior administration.”
- “We created the quality improvement committee and followed up with academic
departments and administrative units to submit their improvement progress report annually.”

- “My institution established a permanent office that would be in charge of the self-study and improvement.”

There were some limitations with the surveys: a) the sample size was fairly small (37 institutions in 2004, and 12 in 2005); b) the surveys were not anonymous and that may have pressured respondents to provide “politically correct” responses under a concern of any potential inspections; and c) most qualitative comments were regarding awareness among college constituents, and few provided actual evidence of quality improvements.

National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)
The National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) has conducted an annual survey on accreditation reviews since 2004, which has focused on the process and impact of accreditation reviews.

Across different years, the surveys consistently indicated that the accreditation had an impact on “understanding the overall research and education activities on campus” and “identifying future challenges for the institution.” Compared to the above items, accreditation reviews did not have much impact on “motivating individual faculty to improve their teaching and research activities” and “Contributing to the institutional planning”.

Overall, the accreditation reviews had an impact on understanding the current state of research and education activities and future challenges for colleges and universities. However, the accreditation results were not widely shared among faculty members and staff, and thus the impact on promoting improvements, especially among
individual faculty members, has been limited.

Table 5: Survey Results on the Impacts of Accreditation Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact of Accreditation review</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation review facilitated understanding of the overall research and education activities on campus</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation review enabled the identification of future challenges</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The importance of conducting a self-study has been widely shared among faculty and staff</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation review motivated individual faculty to improve their teaching and research activities</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and staff advanced their knowledge and methods for evaluation approach and methods</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation review results were widely shared among faculty and staff</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation review promoted improvements in education and research activities on campus</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation review contributed to institutional planning</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The accreditation review assures the quality of education and research activities</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The survey response was a five-point Likert scale: “Strongly disagree = 1,” “Disagree = 2,” “Neutral = 3,” “Agree = 4,” and “Strongly agree =5.” The percentages are the sum of “Strongly agree” and “Agree.”

Phenomenological Studies

The impact of accreditation reviews can be observed in campus phenomena including faculty responses, teaching and learning, and organizational culture. This section expands the review of literature in American and European studies primarily because Japanese impact studies are still under development. Although an accreditation system is certainly influenced by national policy contexts, the foundational design of quality
assurance systems is comparable among different countries. In addition, many Western countries have longer histories of administering quality assurance systems; as such, their impact studies provide various historical perspectives and implications for this dissertation research.

Faculty Response to Quality Assurance Systems

In general, faculty members tend to respond negatively to quality assurance systems, as they are perceived as an extra task. Various studies shed light on different aspects of faculty responses to an accreditation system based on its developmental stage in the United States, Europe, and Japan.

In the United States, few studies have extensively analyzed faculty response to the accreditation system, presumably because the system has long been implemented over a century. However, the recent trend of assessing student learning outcomes raises the issue of faculty response to the accreditation system. In general, many faculty members perceive student learning outcomes assessment as compliance to external agencies such as accreditation bodies or state government (Banta 2008). Studies suggest that senior administration should not simply impose the learning outcomes assessment on faculty members, but rather they must encourage and nurture faculty involvement with and ownership of the assessment (Hunnicutt 2008).

In Europe, an accreditation system or equivalent quality assurance system is still relatively new to the United States, and thus faculty members express their concerns more frequently. For example, Britain implemented a more potent quality review process, which caused not only political controversies but also produced rigorous
scholarly investigations. Through a focus group with a few dozen British faculty members, Newton identified faculty member coping mechanisms to the quality assurance systems: “intransigent,” “colonized,” “rational adapter,” “skeptic,” “sinking,” and “reconstructing” (2002). In the context of this study, faculty members were inclined to view the academic review as compliance to an extra burden.

The accreditation system is even newer to Japanese higher education than European countries. Prior studies determined that faculty members have been facing “assessment fatigue” from various evaluation policies by the Ministry of Education (Kawaguchi 2007; Maeda 2007). Due to inexperience with an accreditation review, campus administrators and faculty members spend a large amount of time in collecting data in order to meet accreditation standards. Many faculty members felt resentful about the extra burden partially because they did not fully understand the purpose and process of the accreditation system. Especially, faculty members in a self-evaluation committee sacrificed a considerable time of their teaching and research (Sumi 2005). Recognizing these burdens, the general faculty view on the accreditation review was compliance to the government rather than voluntary participation in quality improvement efforts (Komatsu 2005).

Teaching and Learning

Another line of analysis of the impact of quality assurance systems is an exploration of changes in teaching and learning on campus. American studies tend to focus on student learning outcome assessment, while Japanese and European studies on faculty teaching. Both research foci encounter methodological challenges in their studies on teaching and
In the United States, studies on student learning outcomes assessment have been rapidly expanding, and assessment methodologies are more advanced than European and Japanese studies. There are direct and indirect measurements for assessing student learning outcomes. The direct measurements are mostly standardized exams on general education such as Educational Testing Services’ Proficiency Profile test or written exams on critical thinking such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA). Indirect measurements consist of mostly surveys of students, alumni, and employers. The direct measurements capture “actual” student performance, but the administrative cost is relatively expensive, while indirect measurements capture mostly “perceptions” of student performance, although some advantages include an inexpensive administrative cost and availability of benchmarking with peer institutions.

Another recent effort is the value-added assessment by the Voluntary System of Accountability program. Although the idea appears reasonable, there are still methodological challenges. Critics question the fairness of the value-added approach, arguing that less selective colleges and universities have an advantage to exhibit a higher growth on student learning outcomes because their students come in with lower academic achievement. In other words, those students have a more room to grow. In contrast, it may be more difficult for selective colleges and universities to increase their student performance as their students come with a high academic achievement (Volkwein 2008). However, this argument can be reversed, in that less selective colleges may be disadvantaged because their students are less academically prepared for college education, and as such may perform poorly in college.
Compared the United States, European studies are not as advanced in terms of student learning outcomes assessment. Some European studies have analyzed student course evaluations or student satisfaction surveys as an indicator of teaching improvement, although researchers acknowledge the limitations of these measurements (e.g., Carr, Hamilton, & Meade 2005). In Britain, the Higher Education Statistics agency publishes a table of student satisfaction, post-graduate employment rates and set benchmark standards based on different institutional characteristics.

Compared to the American accreditation systems, Japanese accreditation review is lagging behind in terms of learning outcomes assessment. The first cycle of accreditation reviews from 2004 to 2010 did not require an extensive learning outcomes assessment; many colleges and universities typically compiled positive results from student satisfaction surveys, alumni surveys, and employer surveys in their internal self-evaluation report. However, the second cycle of accreditation reviews beginning in 2011 put more emphasis and rigor on student learning outcomes assessment and internal quality assurance system. In addition, the Science Council of Japan has been developing academic subject review standards, and OECD’s Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) is an external pressure for the Ministry of Education to promote a more rigorous student learning outcomes assessment that should appear comparable to Western practices (Kawaguchi 2009).

Instead of student learning outcomes assessment, Japanese studies focus on faculty teaching improvement related to the impact of accreditation reviews. National universities and colleges reorganized the conventional general education department into teaching and learning centers, while private institutions have created institution-wide
committees on faculty members’ instruction improvement. Typically Japanese self-evaluation reports illustrate teaching improvement workshops on campus as an effort to assure the quality of college education. Naturally, there are numerous studies exploring the content and effectiveness of various teaching improvement programs and activities.

Organizational Culture

Aside from faculty responses, previous studies explored leadership and organizational culture as a precondition for the effective implementation of a quality assurance system. Policy makers and accreditation agencies often speak to the importance of leadership and culture, but such advocates often lack rigorous empirical investigation.

American studies often suggest that college presidents need to be supportive of student learning outcomes assessment, but not to the extent that jeopardizes faculty ownership (e.g., Banta 2008). A few studies also have indicated the importance of leadership by the deans and department chairs to promote tangible quality improvements (e.g., Hunnicutte 2008). “Culture of assessment” has become a buzzword as various policies on effective implementation of accreditation reviews increased in frequency on campuses across the country.

European studies have identified that the accreditation review process has impacted the further centralization of college administration. Stensaker conducted a literature review of impact studies of quality assurance systems with a focus on organizational change aspects (2003). He identified that a positive impact of quality assurance systems was the increase of transparency in the decision-making process at
colleges and universities. In contrast, a negative impact appears to be the greater bureaucratization in institutional administration. In addition, Stensker’s research implied that cultural effects have not produced “hard evidence” for a causal link between a change in organizational culture and student learning (2003, p. 155).

Similar to the American situation, Japanese accreditation agencies often criticize colleges and universities for lacking the “culture of evaluation” conducive to bring about a meaningful accreditation review, and thus promote continuous improvements (Ito 2009; Ohtsuka 2002; Sekine 2005). Although this culture is highly advocated in the policy arena, the concept is not concretely defined or empirically studied. Somewhat comparable to Stensker’s study in Europe, Hata identified that the Japanese accreditation system had produced an increased centralization of institutional administration (2007a). College presidents became responsible for the administration of an accreditation review on campus. In response, some faculty members have criticized presidential leadership as top-down managerialism that has diminished faculty autonomy and collegiality (Hata 2007a).

**Conceptual and Methodological Issues**

So far, the researcher has reviewed prior studies on the accreditation review process in Japan and also phenomenological studies including faculty response, teaching and learning, and organizational culture described in Europe, the United States, and Japan. The last part of this section deals with a more technical aspect of the impact studies on quality assurance systems, which are conceptual and methodological issues.
Developing a rigorous research design to understand and measure the impact of an accreditation system is far more difficult than anecdotal policy discussions and studies. The question even extends to whether the challenges of research may be attributed to the system design of the accreditation.

**Definitions of Quality**

Although quality is the core element of an accreditation system, the term is not always well defined in policy discussions. In the United States and Japan, there is an inexplicit consensus that accreditation standards are a minimum requirement. A few European studies have conducted further research on different conceptions of quality within quality assurance systems.

Accreditation standards are minimum criteria, and accreditation agencies assess quality based on the institutional mission (Volkwein 2008). In general, quality is not always articulated in policy discussions or scholarly papers in the United States. Most American studies use the term “quality” with “improvement” - “quality improvement” is a critical element in accreditation reviews. In addition, there is a strong assertion that any college and university, regardless of selectivity and prestige, should have an area of improvements. In the field of assessment, “Closing the Loop” is a buzzword describing the process of institutions’ utilizing assessment results for continuous improvements. However it appears that numerous colleges and universities do not utilize assessment results; rather the assessments are merely compliance for accreditation agencies or state governments (e.g., Fontenot 2012).

Total Quality Management, another approach to tackle “quality,” became
popular in the 1980s, stimulated by Japan’s economic success associated with Deming’s quality management. When applied to higher education, the principle includes the Malcolm Baldrige criteria (2012). Such TQM programs tend to focus on the methods and processes of quality management, rather than a critical examination of the definition of quality.

In Europe, Harvey and Green’s work on the conceptions of quality in higher education has been widely cited in quality discussions. They articulated five kinds of quality conceptions: Quality as exceptional, quality as perfection or consistency, quality as fitness for purpose, quality as value for money, and quality as transformation (1993). In general, quality assurance agencies define quality as “fitness for purpose” (i.e. institutional mission) and newer and less established universities follow the definition. However, the elite universities adopt the notion of “quality as exceptional” (Harvey & Green 1993). The coexistence of these different quality definitions raises the issue of consistency and fairness in quality assurance systems. If elite universities can get away with their “exceptionality,” they do not need be serious about a quality review (Birnbaum 1990).

Japanese studies and policy discussions are similar to those in the United States. Accreditation reviews are based on institutional mission, and the standards are considered minimal (Komatsu 2005). The emphasis on quality improvements is rather broad; improvement efforts can target anything and everything from teaching to research. Unlike European studies, the conceptualization of quality is rarely defined in policy discussions and academic work.
Research Methodological Issues

Positivistic Approach

Harvey and Newton considered an epistemological issue of quality assurance systems: How do accreditation agencies know what they need to know? The authors reflected, “What is surprising is the lack of thought about the appropriateness of the methods of investigation used in external quality evaluation.” (2004, p. 153)

A positivistic perspective condenses numerous elements of campus activities into measurable variables in order to produce “objective” and “comparable” results of quality reviews. However, faculty members tend to oppose the positivistic approach because not all campus activities are quantifiable. A danger is that some critical elements can be left out due to the difficulties of quantification.

Systems Analysis Approach

In a review of European studies, Harvey and Newton (2004) indicated that many “effectiveness” studies were limited in analytical scope due to an assumption of a simplistic liner relationship between the accreditation review and quality improvement in colleges and universities.

Figure 2: Simplistic Liner Relationship between Accreditation Reviews and Quality Improvement

In reality, the relationship is highly complex and involves other intervening variables (Harvey & Newton 2004). For example, external environments such as student market
and other governmental policies affect quality improvement efforts in colleges and universities. Internal environments including senior administrators’ leadership, faculty support, and institutional culture may also influence the progress of quality improvements on campus.

In Japan, Yonezawa, a former faculty at the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation, identified a similar phenomenon in Japanese higher education. He expanded the Harvey and Newton analysis to Japanese faculty members, identifying that faculty responded differently to an accreditation review based on the characteristics of their institutions and the market environments of their academic programs (2002).

*Figure 3: Complex Linear Relationships between Accreditation Reviews and Quality Improvement*

- **External Environment**
  - Student enrollment
  - Students’ individual academic preparations
  - National higher education policies
  - Competitive funding for research and education

- **Accreditation Review**
  - Internal self-evaluations
  - External site-visits
  - Accreditation results and review comments

- **Internal Environment**
  - Faculty interest in research and teaching
  - Faculty performance evaluations
  - Faculty autonomy
  - College presidential leadership
  - Organizational culture

- **Quality Improvement**
  - Improvement efforts by faculty members
  - Improvement efforts by college presidents
Cultural Approach

A cultural approach exists at the opposite end of spectrum of system analysis approach. In another regard, the systems analysis is considered a rational perspective, while the cultural approach is considered an irrational perspective. Cultural theories often applied to quality assurance systems are “Performing” (Gofman cited in Newton 2002), “Ceremony,” “Myth” (Meyer & Rowan 1977), and “Ritualism” (Newton 2002). These cultural theories are inclined to point out the ineffectiveness of accreditation reviews, as faculty members often “go through the motion” of an accreditation review merely to satisfy governmental compliance. Therefore, accreditation reviews impart little or no substance or impact. Still, one can argue that the application of cultural theories itself carries a bias to illustrate the ineffectiveness of quality assurance systems. Further details are expanded in Chapter III as the cultural approach is highly related with new institutionalism.

Organization Change Approach

The organization change approach provides another perspective on analyzing the impact of quality assurance systems. Stensker speculates that the lack of impact of quality assurance systems may be attributed to a misconception of organization change in higher education. This approach indicates that colleges and universities are very different from other corporate organizations. He suggests adjusting our perspectives by identifying the complex characteristics of organizational changes in higher education (2003). Simply put, organizational change in colleges and universities is much slower than that in corporations.
Design Problem of Accreditation System

The purpose of accreditation systems is two-fold: One is related to accountability, and the other to quality improvement. These two purposes often run in conflict of each other.

Most accreditation systems require a self-study, and colleges and universities are supposed to describe the areas of needed improvement (i.e. weaknesses) in order to facilitate these improvements. However, if a college or university reveals too many weaknesses, it may risk accreditation status, and thus only strengths are highlighted in a self-study report (Harvey & Newton 2004). Analogies are: “be honest but not confessional” or “don’t shoot yourself in the foot.”

This accreditation design problem has been reported in Europe, the United States, and Japan either through formal studies or informal conversations among accreditation review staff at colleges and universities. In Japan, Hata argues that if the accreditation system puts emphasis on quality improvements, the concept of “accountability” needs to be re-defined so that the identification of the areas of needed improvement by colleges and universities itself satisfies the accountability in accreditation reviews, rather than the requirement to meet a certain quality standard (2007). In the United States, Dill suggested a comparable idea in his comparative studies on academic audits in Asian and European countries (2000).
### Table 6: Overview of Literature Review by New Public Management and New Institutionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New Public Management</th>
<th>New Institutionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Environment</strong></td>
<td>Market mechanisms&lt;br&gt; * Decline of the traditional college-age population&lt;br&gt; * Deregulations of programmatic approval system&lt;br&gt; * Competitive funding&lt;br&gt; * Quasi-corporatization of national colleges and universities&lt;br&gt; * Approval of for-profit universities</td>
<td>Educational reform policies&lt;br&gt; * Semester system&lt;br&gt; * Student course evaluation&lt;br&gt; * Faculty development&lt;br&gt; * GPA system&lt;br&gt; * Credit hour calculation&lt;br&gt; * Career education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Environment</strong></td>
<td>Strong president’s leadership&lt;br&gt; * Policy support for the presidents’ leadership by the Ministry of Education&lt;br&gt; * Multiple vice-presidents&lt;br&gt; * Management board</td>
<td>Strong faculty autonomy&lt;br&gt; * German Inheritance&lt;br&gt; * Involvement with institutional administration&lt;br&gt; * Faculty interest in research over teaching&lt;br&gt; * Faculty fixed-term appointment&lt;br&gt; * Faculty performance evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accreditation Review</strong></td>
<td>Future policy changes&lt;br&gt; * Learning outcomes assessment&lt;br&gt; * Internal quality assurance</td>
<td>Institutionalization process&lt;br&gt; * Self-study&lt;br&gt; * Institutional accreditation&lt;br&gt; * Programmatic accreditation&lt;br&gt; * Performance budgeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training of external reviewers for a site-visit review&lt;br&gt; Accreditation results</td>
<td>Self-study as cosmetic and self-disguise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improvement efforts</strong></td>
<td>Effectiveness/usefulness studies&lt;br&gt; Surveys</td>
<td>Faculty responses&lt;br&gt; Extra burden on faculty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

101
Part IV: Various Factors Influencing the Accreditation System

The first cycle of accreditation reviews began in 2004; this dissertation analyzes reviews at sampled colleges and universities conducted between 2007 and 2008. Meanwhile, policy discussions progress to prepare for the second cycle of accreditation reviews starting in 2011. This section illustrates various factors from the first cycle of accreditation reviews, which may potentially produce system adjustments for the second cycle of accreditation reviews.

Public Quality Assurance System

Under the new public management policies, the Ministry of Education began deregulating the approval system of new academic institutions and programs in 1989. In the past, the regulations were accused of hindering diversification and competition among colleges and universities. As the Ministry of Education deregulated the approval system, it also implemented the accreditation system to supplement the quality assurance mechanism. However, after completing the first cycle of accreditation reviews, a lack of integration between the two systems was identified (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010a).

Approval System

There were two main concerns about the approval system of new academic institutions and programs. First, the approval system used to be composed of the approval standards and internal guide for the use of approval review committee members. In 2005, the Ministry of Education eliminated the internal guide to provide the opportunity for
institutions to create diverse academic programs. However, the elimination consequently caused confusion for the approval review committees because the approval standards were defined very broadly and impossible to apply without the internal guide. In response, the Ministry of Education currently is re-examining the specifications of the approval standards.

Second, the monitoring of newly approved academic programs was mandatory under the approval system. For example, when a four-year academic program was approved, the institution was obligated to submit an annual progress report to the Ministry of Education for the first four years. In 2003 the Ministry of Education eliminated academic program monitoring for newly approved programs so long as those academic programs were based on an existing program within the same academic discipline. Put another way, program modifications within the same academic discipline did not require the program monitoring obligations. The elimination of the academic program monitoring produced violations of approval standards, and the seven-year cycle of accreditation reviews could not always catch those violations promptly (Higher Education Council 2009). As a result, the Ministry of Education reintroduced the academic program monitoring in the program approval system.

Accreditation

There have been two critical issues with the Japanese accreditation system. The first issue has been the application of different kinds of standards in accreditation reviews. On one hand, some accreditation standards were based on the approval standards. On the other hand, other accreditation standards were independent from the approval
standards. Such discrepancies occurred depending on the specifications of both accreditation review and approval standards. For instance, the number of faculty headcount was already articulated by the approval standard, and it was transferred into a relevant accreditation review standard. By contrast, academic content was broadly defined in the approval standard, and thus a respective accreditation review standard set a slightly different criterion. This dual set of specifications created confusion when a college or university failed to meet an accreditation standard because it was unclear whether the institution failed to meet the accreditation review standard or approval standard. In response to those criticisms, the accreditation agencies realigned the criteria of accreditation standards with approval standards (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010a).

The second issue was a consequence for colleges and universities that did not complete an accreditation review once every seven years, or failed to be accredited. In either case, the Ministry of Education was supposed to take necessary measures according to the school education law amended in 2004. However, there were no clear procedures on governmental interventions. Since the accreditation system began as a non-governmental operation by accreditation agencies, the topic of governmental interventions was sensitive among policy makers. Because Japanese accreditation system was not tied to financial incentives, some policy makers proposed that at least some form of disincentives should be placed on non-accredited colleges and universities (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010a).
Learning Outcomes Assessment

Recognizing a global trend toward the emphasis on student learning outcomes such as OECD’s Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO), Japanese policymakers have urged colleges and universities to implement learning outcomes assessments. The primary concerns have been to increase the rigor of Japanese accreditation reviews comparable to those of Western quality assurance systems, as well as to ensure the quality of Japanese college graduates.

There are various perspectives and definitions of student learning outcomes. The key element consists of a drastic shift from a teacher-centered paradigm to a learner-centered paradigm. In Japanese higher education, faculty members generally have great control over the curriculum regardless of students’ needs, but this should be re-examined through a student-centered paradigm (Kawaguchi 2009). Kawaguchi, a leading scholar of Japanese quality assurance systems, has been critical of self-studies of Japanese colleges and universities because they simply describe any “outputs” of educational activities. In his argument, outputs could be obtained through any educational activities. The importance was how to articulate outputs into outcomes through the scope of institutional mission (Japanese University Accreditation Association 2010).

Regarding methodological approaches for student learning outcomes, student satisfaction, graduation, and employer surveys are commonly utilized. Yamada translated college student surveys developed at UCLA into Japanese and promoted them as a tool for measuring student learning outcomes (2009b). Other assessment methods

\[11\] Self-study can be descriptive or analytical. For further discussion, please see a website at SUNY-Oneonta (http://www.oneonta.edu/academics/assessment/descr-anal.html).
are still premature in Japanese higher education. Compared to the United States, assessment rubrics are still new, and both subject-based and essay-based tests are underdeveloped (Kawashima 2008). Instead, Japanese higher education policies have been placing an emphasis on establishing a fair and objective grading standard (e.g., Central Education Council 2008). This direction of quality assurance differs from the recent trend in American higher education in which the grade point average (GPA) is questioned as a valid indicator of student learning outcomes due to grade inflation (Suski 2009).

Internal Quality Assurance Mechanism

Another new component for the second cycle of accreditation reviews is the internal quality assurance mechanism. The idea came from the British quality assurance system to audit the internal operation of colleges and universities for continuous quality improvement. By adding an internal quality assurance mechanism as a new accreditation standard, Japanese accreditation agencies hoped to avoid a “compliance mentality” among colleges and universities, aiming to promote continuous improvement based on accreditation review comments (Japanese University Accreditation Association 2008c).

Accreditation agencies insist upon the importance of the Plan-Do-Check-Action cycle for internal quality assurance mechanism on campus. Accreditation agencies plan to investigate 1) the organizational structure of an internal quality assurance mechanism, 2) the use of assessment findings for continuous improvements, and 3) the provision of necessary professional development for faculty and staff (Japanese Consortium of
Although these general objectives are understandable, college administrators are still perplexed about the concrete details of the new internal quality accreditation standard. Japanese research on internal quality assurance systems is still sparse; most researchers explore models in the United Kingdom and Australia (e.g. Hata, Yonezawa, & Sugimoto 2011, Sugimoto 2009). Through this dialogue, a few scholars have begun to recognize a potential conflict between internal improvements and external compliance (Miyaura et.al. 2011).

**Academic Subject Review**

A report published in 2008, *Toward Structuring Baccalaureate Degree Programs*, has raised questions about the coherence and integrity of baccalaureate degree programs as a result of the previous deregulation of academic program approvals.

The government deregulated the approval system of new academic institutions and programs and also implemented diversification policies on social functions of higher education institutions. Those policy changes certainly promoted institutional as well as programmatic diversifications. However, there was little discussion on a need of maintaining a minimum commonality within an academic discipline or even across Baccalaureate degree programs (Central Education Council 2008, p. 10).

Recognizing the importance of the above issue, the Ministry of Education referred the matter to the Science Council of Japan in 2008. After review, the science council issued a critique of a lack of coherence and sequence in academic programs. The situation appeared as an unorganized aggregation of individual faculty expertise. The Japanese science council referenced the Subject Benchmark Statement in the British higher education as a potential example of a relevant best practice. The British statement provided a basic framework of skill sets that students need to acquire within an academic
subject area, while simultaneously respecting the autonomy and freedom required for colleges and universities to design their own academic programs. Still, the Japanese science council acknowledged two main differences between the British and Japanese higher education systems as follows.

- British baccalaureate education focuses on a major level study, while Japanese baccalaureate education provides a mix of liberal education and a major level study.

- The British higher education system is predominantly public institutions, whereas the Japanese higher education consists of a large number of private institutions.

By referring to the British Subject Benchmark Statement, the Japanese Council of Science (2010) created a Referential Standard for Academic Subjects, the purpose of which was to provide a basic framework for colleges and universities to reference when they design their academic programs. In order to avoid a misperception that the science council was about to obligate a standardized curriculum, it emphasized that individual colleges and universities were responsible for designing academic content and setting a level of expectations for their students. The Japanese science council also indicated that the referential standard of academic subjects could become a good resource for prospective students and employers to understand the content of Japanese academic programs, as was the case in the United Kingdom. The Japanese science council aimed to create referential standards for about 30 academic subjects, with the option to amend the categories every five to six years as academic subjects evolved over time. The science council also intended to develop a framework for interdisciplinary programs.

Separate from the efforts made by the Japanese science council, a core
curriculum was already under development for medical, dentistry, pharmacy, and nursing academic programs. In the field of engineering, the Japan Accreditation Board for Engineering Education (JABEE) had already established programmatic accreditation reviews, which were modeled after the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) in the United States. These professional fields are either the graduate level education or the core curriculums are determined to national certificate credential requirements. Therefore, the Japanese science council clarified that the Reference Standard for Academic Subjects was for the baccalaureate level and it would not conflict with the existing process and efforts at the graduate level.

**Disclosure of Educational and Financial Information**

In the era of accountability, the disclosure of educational and financial information of colleges and universities was also incorporated into the overall structure of the quality assurance scheme.

The demand for information disclosure started in the late 1990s. The Japanese higher education council under the Ministry of Education criticized the lack of publicly available data from colleges and universities. Even when institutional data were available, the general public could not easily understand the technicality of some information. The higher education council proposed that colleges and universities disclose information about institutional planning, educational goals, admission data, grade and evaluation standards, graduation, and job placement rates. The council also included the disclosure of financial information. A following report by the higher education council (2005) illustrated concrete items to be disclosed including faculty body
characteristics, course syllabi, internal self-evaluations, and the results of accreditation reviews. In 2008, the Ministry of Education formalized these measures on information disclosure in the national school education law and in the approval standards of new academic institutions and programs of the higher education council.

Policy makers took into consideration the extra burden on colleges and universities to prepare for additional reporting; as such, they proposed the use of the existing data collection mechanism, the national survey of educational institutions (*gakko kihon chyousa*). The Ministry of Education also called upon various national and private higher education associations to promote and support the new information disclosure initiative (Council on Promoting the Disclosure and Use of Educational Information in Higher Education Institutions 2009).

During the formation of the information disclosure policy, the Ministry of Education referenced similar accountability trends in other countries. Examples included the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and College Portrait in the United States, Unistarts in the United Kingdom, U-Map in European Union, and the Korean Council of University Education (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010c). Kimura, a member of the quality assurance system sub-committee, pointed to the UNESCO portal website as a prominent example, encouraging leading Japanese research universities to disclose their institutional data in order to compete with other world-class universities (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2009b).

Both educational information and financial information disclosure presented their own unique set of challenges. Regarding the disclosure of educational information,
the National Institution of University Evaluation launched a working group to create a Japanese version of College Portrait (National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation 2012). Policymakers worried that some small private colleges, without the resources and reputations of the national universities, may be reluctant to disclose educational information about student enrollment, graduation, and job placement rates (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2009a). As for the institutional finance data, another sub-committee of higher education management identified basic items for disclosure including financial statements and audit reports. A challenge for the financial disclosure was to set the same disclosure format across national, municipal, and private sectors (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2009f).

Institutional Diversification

During the massification of the 1980s, many colleges and universities tried to become a “mini” University of Tokyo in order to raise their institutional prestige based on research productivity. The Ministry of Education perceived this phenomenon as unhealthy because newly established colleges and universities prioritized research over teaching. Institutional diversification was proposed by referring to the co-existence of different types of higher education institutions in the United States. Japanese policy makers criticized that colleges and universities competed within narrowly defined institutional hierarchy by research productivity while the general public demanded them to offer better quality education. However, the idea of institutional diversification was not well perceived by colleges and universities as they argued that the diversification policy could turn into institutional “segregation” (Osaki 1999).
Policy change

The discussion of institutional diversification was revived in the late 1990s as the college-age population started declining. A higher education council report emphasized that colleges and universities needed to develop institutional distinctions to survive the competitive era (1998). In 2005, the Ministry of Education issued the *Future of Japanese Higher Education*, re-emphasizing the importance of institutional diversification by illustrating the seven roles of higher education institutions:

1. Center for world-class research and education
2. Vocational training for highly specialized professions
3. Vocational training for generalist workers
4. Comprehensive liberal education
5. Research and education in special fields (e.g. the arts and physical trainings)
6. Center for lifelong learning in local communities
7. Social contributions (e.g. community partnerships, university-business-government collaborations, and international exchanges)

The Ministry of Education emphasized that they would not impose any particular roles upon colleges and universities. Rather, the blueprint provided some examples of institutional diversification. The report encouraged colleges and universities to voluntarily select one or more institutional roles based on their institutional mission. Yet, the Ministry of Education suggested that the selection of institutional roles should be examined under considerations of the geographical distribution of academic institutions and programs at both national and regional levels (2005).

Based on the diversification policy, various competitive funding schemes were introduced such as Center of Excellence for research and Good Practice for education. The Ministry of Education was very attentive to develop equitable conditions for competition regardless of the chosen institutional roles. Put simply, the funding
schemes were designed to be “role neutral,” so as to avoid disadvantaging an emphasis on teaching, which tend to be slighted among faculty members. Another policy consideration was to avoid presenting institutional diversification as an institutional ranking, especially in mass media.

The institutional diversification policies also affected the future direction of the Japanese institutional accreditation system. In the Quality Assurance System Subcommittee, members discussed the need for re-designing the current institutional accreditation to accommodate the institutional diversification policy. They recognized the current limitations of the institutional accreditation system being applied to all colleges and universities regardless of institutional diversification. Therefore, the Quality Assurance System Subcommittee created a prototype of institutional categories as follows:

1. Social contributions through vocational training for generalist workers
2. Comprehensive liberal education
3. Education for a wide range of citizens (i.e. life-long learning)
4. Globalization of college education (2010a)

Although committee members debated whether the evaluation criteria should be differentiated based on the size of the institutions and the composition of academic programs, the ideas were still immature and the concrete design of differentiated accreditation reviews had not been discussed extensively.

Although the promotion of institutional diversification has been infused with competitive funding, the Ministry of Education has also recognized the shortcomings of extreme competition. Colleges and universities ceased to share their facilities and resources with other higher education institutions so as to maintain institutional
In order to correct the negative effect of market mechanisms, the Ministry of Education created a different competitive funding that aimed to promote institutional and programmatic collaborations. The goal was to facilitate collaboration among multiple colleges and universities, so that each would bring in their specializations to create joint research projects and educational programs. Furthermore, the school education law developed a framework for creating collaborative research programs and shared facilities across national, municipal, and private higher education institutions in 2008. The same approach was applied to collaborative educational programs and facilities in 2009 (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010c).

**Corporations’ Hiring Practices and Career Education for Students**

Student transition from college to work in Japan presented two major concerns, which affected the policy discussions on re-examining the accreditation system.

The first issue was related to college student job recruitment practices. Japanese companies have been recruiting college graduates by cohorts, and in recent years they have begun to start the recruitment process earlier than before, around the end of the second semester of the junior year. As a result, during the senior year many students are busy with job hunting and unable to attend classes. The government has been asking business associations agree to a set starting date for job recruitment. However, the agreement does not have a legal penalty; not all companies follow the set date because they are competing with others for talented students.

The second issue was concerning about career education for college students. When the Japanese economy was booming in the 1980s, corporations did not expect
finely skilled entry-level employees, as they provided recent college graduates through “on-the-job” training within the organization. However, as the Japanese economy has suffered since the beginning of the 1990s, companies can no longer afford such internal training, and have started asking colleges and universities to provide more detailed workforce training to their students (Central Education Council 2011). Business associations have published various reports on career education for college students since the early 1990s. A recent survey identified a significant discrepancy between corporations and academics regarding important skills and knowledge for college students. On one hand, companies had higher expectations for teamwork and practical application of knowledge, and on the other hand academics focused on disciplinary knowledge and general education (Quality Assurance Subcommittee 2010a).

In order to bridge the gap between academia and the workplace, the Quality Assurance System Subcommittee invited two business associations to their meetings. The Japanese Association of Corporate Executives (JACE) and Keidanren represented large and global corporations. They argued that the quality of recent college graduates was declining, as they did not acquire even basic knowledge in their academic program. The corporate representatives corrected a deep-rooted stereotype that industries had been seeking college students with applied knowledge, stating rather that industries wanted students with basic knowledge. In addition, the business associations encouraged colleges and universities to produce college students who were competitive in the globalized economy (Quality Assurance Subcommittee 2009c).

The National Federation of Small Business Associations (NFSBA) represented small and midsize businesses in Japan. At a meeting of the Quality Assurance System
Subcommittee, two representatives from NFSBA indicated that 97% of Japanese corporations were small and midsize businesses and they employ 70% of Japanese workforce. However, policymakers tended to neglect the importance of small and midsize businesses, listening to only the voice of large corporations. Small and midsize businesses were also disadvantaged in job recruitment as most college students looked toward large corporations for employment. Therefore, the two representatives requested that colleges and universities provide career education that would open up students’ eyes toward small and midsize businesses as viable career options (Quality Assurance Subcommittee 2009d).

Different conditions existed between the national and private sectors in terms of student job preparation. At national universities individual faculty members provided informal career support for students through their professional network with industries (Quality Assurance Subcommittee 2009d). In contrast, at private colleges and universities faculty members did not have such network and thus, many private institutions offered a more organized career support for students to compensate for the network disadvantage (Quality Assurance Subcommittee 2009e).

Still, there are similar practices of career education between national and private sectors. Career guidance is commonly provided in the junior year, and career office staff instruct students on how to start job hunting. Some colleges and universities offer career orientation in the freshman year, which gradually progresses into career education through the junior year. In addition, beginning in the 1990s internship programs became popular, some of which are administered by higher education institutions, while others are managed independently by corporations and government agencies.
Although the members of Quality Assurance System Subcommittee were aware of the different approaches and practices on career education between Western countries and Japan, they debated over the definitions of career education in the context of the Japanese labor market. Some members suggested that career education should not be narrowly defined as a “short-sighted job preparation” for vocations that could easily become obsolete in a changing workforce landscape. Recognizing the unforeseeable future of the Japanese economy and globalization, career education should entail a broader definition of “employability” for different types of jobs in one’s long-term career (Quality Assurance Subcommittee 2009d).

The subcommittee also discussed the position of career education within academic curricula in reference to various education laws. A member from a private university pointed out that if career education is a part of formal curricula, it should accounted for in government subsidies to higher education institutions. The discussion extended to a concern about the continuity of career education programs funded through the educational Good Practice funding. The policy question was “To what extent should the Ministry of Education support career education activities?” (Quality Assurance Subcommittee 2009e)

Two significant changes were made upon the aforementioned policy discussions. In 2011, the Ministry of Education elaborated a section of career education in the approval standard for academic institutions and programs: higher education institutions provide career support for students to achieve an independent civic life. By leaving the statement fairly broad, the Ministry of Education avoided imposing any specific approaches for career education on which colleges and universities already had made
certain efforts. In response to the change in the approval standard, accreditation agencies also refined accreditation standards to review career education in colleges and universities (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010c).

**International Pressure**

As relates to higher education, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) by the World Trade Organization (WTO) initially raised concerns about the quality of cross-border higher education including diploma mills (Research Group on International Quality Assurance in Higher Education 2004). Later in policy discussions, GATT became an internal pressure for the Japanese government to create the institutional accreditation system in 2004 (Kimura 2005). Since then, Japanese policy makers have been sensitive about the international trend of quality assurance systems, and various international activities affect the design of the Japanese accreditation system.

First, Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has developed the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) to measure student learning outcomes among member countries. AHELO plans to assess generic skills (e.g. critical thinking), and discipline-specific skills (in economics and engineering); Japan has entered a feasibility study for engineering (Working Group on OECD’s AHELO 2008). Although the number of participating Japanese universities was relatively small, the strength of the OECD name recognition associated with the program influenced Japanese policy makers to promote the rigor of student learning outcomes assessment in accreditation reviews (e.g., IDE 2012).

Second, the results of international university rankings are often brought up in
policy discussions. According to Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Japan has been losing ground in recent years. By comparison, China has dramatically increased their number of universities in the ranking. Korea has invested several billion US dollars into the “World-class University Project” with effective results. Even smaller regions including Hong-Kong and Taiwan appear to be maintaining their ranking (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010c). Japanese policymakers carefully analyzed the Times Higher Education ranking mechanisms, and identified that the weaknesses of Japanese universities were the small number of foreign students and foreign professors. If those figures were comparable to other international peers, six Japanese research universities could have been ranked within the top 100 (Higher Education Council 2009).

Third, as the number of international dual degree programs increased, the quality monitoring of those programs became important. The Quality Assurance System Subcommittee discussed various forms of dual and double degree programs. The Ministry of Education launched the Campus Asia project with China and South Korea. Referencing the UNESCO and OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education in 2005, the National Institution for University Evaluation and Academic Degree explored ways to assure the quality of those dual degree programs (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010a).
Chapter III: Research Design and Method

Examination of Research Methods

This dissertation research employed a qualitative research method (i.e. field research interview) over a quantitative method (i.e. survey) based on some logistical and analytical considerations. Initially the researcher intended to conduct an on-line survey, and consulted with a senior scholar of higher education policy in Japan. He was concerned about a possible low response rate because on-line surveys were still underutilized in academic research and survey respondents may feel anxious about the data confidentiality. Furthermore, a face-to-face interview may be more appreciated to build trust with informants particularly in consideration of Japanese communication culture.

With regards to analytical considerations, this dissertation research encompassed a wide range of influences from the external and internal environments of colleges and universities, and accreditation reviews over improvement efforts in undergraduate education at eleven sampled institutions. The research further explored the reasons for the different degree of influences of the three aforementioned factors over the improvement efforts. For this type of study, encompassing a wide range of topics and exploring the “why” question, a qualitative method should be more suitable for analysis (Yin 2002).
Sampling Framework

This dissertation research dealt with the impact of accreditation reviews, and thus covers the three institutional accreditation agencies and different types of colleges and universities.

Two criteria were applied as a sampling framework for selecting colleges and universities. The first selection criterion was the accreditation agencies. The three accreditation agencies cover different institutional clientele:

- Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA) reviews mostly old private colleges and universities;
- National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) covers national colleges and universities; and
- Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE) reviews new private colleges and universities

The second selection criterion considered the types of colleges and universities that were research universities, comprehensive universities, institutes of technology, and teaching colleges. The third selection criterion limited the sample by the year of accreditation review: Colleges and universities that had an accreditation review in 2007 and 2008 were sampled. In order to capture improvement efforts on undergraduate education, the researcher considered that at least a few years must have passed since the accreditation review in order to provide institutions ample time to implement educational improvement efforts.

Institutional size, student selectivity, and geographical location are often associated with the institutional type in Japanese higher education (the second criterion). National and old private research universities are larger in terms of student enrollment (from 10,000 to 50,000 students) and more selective in student admission, and are located
in metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. National and old private comprehensive universities and teaching colleges tend to be smaller institutions (around 5,000 students) with slightly lower student selectivity than national research universities, and are often geographically located in urban areas: either on the outskirts of the aforementioned metropolises or in regional satellite cities. New private colleges and comprehensive universities are teaching intensive and fairly low in terms of student selectivity. Some new private comprehensive universities have large student enrollment (from 5,000 to 10,000 students) located in urban areas, while other new private teaching colleges have smaller student enrollment (less than 5,000), and often are located in small cities.

Table 7: Institutional Characteristics by Accreditation Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sector</td>
<td>National Old Private New Private</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Orientation</td>
<td>Research Teaching Research Comprehensive Comprehensive Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Size</td>
<td>Large Small Large Medium Medium Small</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Selectivity</td>
<td>High Medium High Medium Low Low</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Location</td>
<td>Metropolitan Urban Metropolitan Metropolitan/Urban Metropolitan/Urban Rural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Snowball Sampling

After determining the population of colleges and universities through the structured sampling framework, the researcher conducted snowball sampling to finalize the sample of colleges and universities. Random sampling approach did not work when the researcher attempted to conduct a pilot study. College administrators did not respond to
research inquiries presumably due to the sensitivity of the research topic and the data confidentiality. Therefore, snowball sampling was applied based on the researcher’s professional network with scholars and administrators in Japan.

**Representation of Sampled Higher Education Institutions**

A total of eleven higher education institutions were selected for this dissertation including three national research universities, one private research university, two private comprehensive universities, two institutes of technology, and three private teaching colleges.

*Table 8: Number of the Types of Sampled Higher Education Institutions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research Universities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institutes of Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dissertation analyzes different types of higher education institutions under the three accreditation agencies. Three national universities were reviewed by the National Institution of Academic Degree and University Evaluation. One private research university, two private comprehensive universities, and one private institute of technology were reviewed by Japanese University Accreditation Agency. One private institute of technology and three private teaching colleges were reviewed by the Japanese
Institution for Higher Education Evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accreditation Agency</th>
<th>Sampled Higher Education Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)</td>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese University Accreditation Association (JUAA)</td>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)</td>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dissertation research did not attain a fair representation of institutional distribution in the sample due to snowball sampling. The number of national universities was overrepresented, while the number of national colleges and private teaching colleges were underrepresented. Simply, the researcher had a stronger professional network with scholars of higher education policy studies, working in graduate programs and centers for teaching and learning at national research universities.

**Interviewees**

The researcher determined the number and type of interviewees in examining the scope of this dissertation research and its manageability. In terms of the scope of study, this dissertation was not an in-depth case study in which a researcher conducts multiple filed
interviews with different faculty members and administrators at a small number of sampled institutions (usually somewhere between one and five). On the contrary, this dissertation aimed to cover a slightly larger sample size (n=11) including different types of higher education institutions within a limited time period (about two weeks of visit in Japan). Therefore, the number of interviewees at each sampled institution was fairly small (n=1 or 2), but during the snowball sampling process, the researcher took care to interview those most knowledgeable about the entire process of the accreditation review.

Through snowball sampling, provosts, senior administrators, special assistants to the president, faculty members, and middle management staff were identified. The practical reason was that if the researcher tried to interview a specific personnel (e.g. provosts), it would greatly limit the number of interviewees. The analytical reason was that an inclusion of a wide variety of interviewees should reduce a potential bias detected in prior studies. Researchers often had interviewed either only senior administrators or faculty members, and the results often presented unilateral stories regarding the effectiveness of a quality assurance system.

The researcher conducted confidential in-person interviews recognizing the sensitivity of the research topic. The names of the interviewees and their institutions were anonymous, and detailed information was reserved to ensure the anonymity of interviewees and their institution.

Table 10 illustrates the job titles and status of all interviewees. The academic status indicates that their background is academic, and some of them may go back to a regular faculty position after their administrative position. Contrarily, the administrative status indicates a non-academic track.
Table 10: Job Titles and Status of Interviewees by Sample Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation director</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td>Coordinator for the accreditation review committee</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td>Coordinator for the accreditation review committee</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation director</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional planning assistant director</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PrTechInst1</td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation director</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation coordinator</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PrTechInst2</td>
<td>Professor/Special assistant to the President</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Planning</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td>Director of higher education research center</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td>Associate Professor/Special assistant to the President</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President for Administration</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of interviewees</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interview Protocol**

The confidential in-person interview consisted of 17 questions. There are six large categories of the interview questions that are: (a) the quality of students and of faculty teaching; (b) the external environment; (c) the internal environment; (d) the accreditation review; (e) quality improvement efforts; and (f) rank order of influences from the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation review. In order to make revisions for the final version of the interview protocol, the researcher conducted two pilot research
interviews with a faculty member in a national research university and another faculty member in a private teaching college outside of the sample. Please see Appendix A for the research interview questions.

Table 11: Number of Interview Questions in Each Section

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Number of Questions</th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of students and of faculty teaching</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>General trend of student quality and faculty teaching quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External environment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Student admissions, student surveys, higher education policies, and competitive funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal environment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Faculty interest, faculty development, faculty evaluation, president's leadership, and organizational culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation review</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Internal self-evaluation, external site-visit review, and accreditation review results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality improvement efforts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Important data for the accreditation review, improvement efforts by the president and by faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank order of influences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rank the influences of the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation review over improvement efforts on undergraduate education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Questions</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interview questions were designed according to the two theoretical perspectives: new public management and new institutionalism. The summary is shown in Table 12.
Table 12: Interview Questions by New Public Management and New Institutionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Environment</th>
<th>New Public Management</th>
<th>New Institutionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were the impacts of the market environments?</td>
<td>What were the impacts of governmental regulations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Student Admission</td>
<td>* Educational reform policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Competitive funding on research and education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Environment</td>
<td>To what extent did college presidents exercise strong leadership?</td>
<td>To what extent did the faculty maintain strong autonomy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were the appointment and conditions of college presidents?</td>
<td>What were the conditions of the faculty autonomy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Faculty vote</td>
<td>* Faculty interests in research and teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* Presidential term</td>
<td>* Faculty performance evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What was the leadership style of the college presidents?</td>
<td>What was the organizational culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Review</td>
<td>External Site-visit Review</td>
<td>Internal self-evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did the external reviewers conduct a site visit review?</td>
<td>How did colleges and universities address the areas of improvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accreditation Result and Review Comments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are the accreditation result and review comments valid?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement efforts</td>
<td>How did college presidents use the accreditation result and review comments for improvements?</td>
<td>How did the faculty use the accreditation result and review comments for improvements?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analytical Framework**

This dissertation research applied matrix analysis to explore interview transcriptions.

Matrix analysis is “essentially the ‘crossing’ of two lists, set up as rows and columns” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 3).

There are various forms of matrix analysis as researchers can apply multiple concepts and standards for both rows and columns based on the purpose of a study (Nadin and Cassell 2004). Miles and Huberman suggested largely two approaches of matrix analyses: Descriptive and explanatory. The descriptive approach uses matrices in
order to compress data into basic components to allow researchers to analyze data. On the other hand, the explanatory approach uses matrices as criteria defined in rows and columns in order to develop the explanations of research topics (Nadin and Cassell 2004). Both types are not mutually exclusive because descriptive matrices allow researchers to generate or test some theories. Although there is no clear boundary, a distinction should be placed on the primary purpose of each matrix analysis.

This dissertation research employed a descriptive matrix analysis. For each interview question, a matrix was created. The sample institutions were listed in the columns and the rows consisted of three response categories of “Yes,” “No,” and “Mixed/uncertain” regarding a certain situation, activity, or implementation. In most of the interview questions, the criterion for “Yes” or “No” was whether a certain phenomenon, action, or implementation appeared institution-wide. The category of “Mixed/Uncertain” was a placeholder for an answer from the interviewees that does not clearly qualify as “Yes” or “No.” This was mostly the case when an implementation or phenomenon was sporadic within a sampled college or university. The researcher considered that the narrow response categories would increase clarity in the analysis and identify some response patterns even within the small set of sampled institutions (n=11).

The matrix analysis consisted of two steps in this dissertation research. The first step was to create descriptive matrices so that each cell had a brief summary of responses from interviewees. The example of the descriptive matrix is shown in Table 13.
Table 13: Example of a comprehensive matrix analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question 1-a: Has student quality been improving over last five years?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed/Uncertain</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, the university is research intensive and selective in admission. However, in the hard sciences there is mismatch between the students’ academic…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td>Although our college is not selective, the quality of top level students has remained steady. Student quality at the lower end has become problematic. Juniors and seniors are the new generation that went through the reformed high school curriculum.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>As for student quality, due to the decline of the college-age population and the expansion of college enrollments nation-wide, the quality has been declining.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second step was to create frequency tables of the descriptive matrices based on the descriptive matrix analyses. Basically, texts in the descriptive (original) matrices were replaced by a check mark “X” under each response category of “Yes,” “No,” or “Mixed/Uncertain” on a certain issue. In essence, the summative tables look like a frequency table to show a distribution of various responses from sampled colleges and universities.
Table 14: Example of the frequency table (summative matrix)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question 1-a: Has student quality been improving over last five years?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed/Uncertain</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the three accreditation agencies are considered as a criterion for sampling approach, the researcher did not analyze the interview protocol by the agencies due to the small number of sampled institutions in this dissertation. Instead, interview transcripts were analyzed by institutional type (e.g. research universities and teaching colleges).

**Measurement Approach**

Prior studies have faced a challenge in measuring the effectiveness of accreditation systems. Some have relied on qualitative data that were mostly interviewees’ perceptions and related documents including self-study reports and accreditation review results (Harvey & Newton 2004), while others explored quantitative data such as student survey, student course evaluation, and GPA (e.g. Carr, Hamilton, & Meade 2005). The former is limited in presenting a measurement of effectiveness, and the latter is limited in capturing unquantifiable information (Harvey & Newton 2004).

This dissertation does not attempt to create a global measurement scale and standard to evaluate the degree of influence of the accreditation review over improvement efforts on undergraduate education across different sampled colleges and universities. Instead, the researcher measured the degree of influence of the accreditation review as compared to the influence of the external environment or the internal environment. To
do this, the researcher asked interviewees to rank the degree of influences from the three aforementioned factors from the most to least. For example, a sampled national research university may rank the external environment as the most influential, the internal environment as the second, and the accreditation review as the third. Another private teaching college may rank the accreditation review as the most influential factor, the external environment as the second, and the internal environment as the third.

A limitation to the ranking approach is that a comparison across different sampled institutions is impossible. For example, the degree of the least influential factor for the national research university could have the same degree of the most influence for the private teaching college. Still, the dissertation research intends to find an overall pattern by aggregating ranking orders from the different sample institutions.

**Document Analysis of Accreditation Reports**

In order to supplement the perceptual information provided by the interviewees the researcher also conducted document analysis of accreditation reports. In Japanese higher education the internal self-evaluation reports are publically available on college websites. The reports are usually around 200 pages, with the longest report containing more than 300 pages. However, a limitation should be noted. Some colleges and universities refer to appendices in their self-evaluation reports, but do not provide them in the reports or on their websites. Unlike American higher education, Japanese accreditation agencies disclose external review reports on their websites. The length of each report varies from 15 pages to more than 60 pages depending on the size of a higher
education institution. These accreditation documents offer rich information to understand both perspectives of higher education institutions and accreditation agencies on the same accreditation standards.

In Chapter IV, the researcher embedded the document analysis of accreditation reports within the analysis of field research interviews. This way, readers can observe some consistence or discrepancy between the official documents and informal observations by the interviewees gathered from confidential research interviews. Recognizing the research design of this dissertation, document analyses were conducted on the following topics: student quality, educational quality, faculty teaching conditions, faculty performance evaluation, presidential leadership, and continuous improvement.

**Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research**

Social science researchers and methodologist have long debated the validity and reliability of qualitative research. This section focuses on the validity issues because 1) it has been the center of discussions among research methodologists, and 2) reliability in essence is a pre-condition for validity (Guba 1981, Maxwell 1992). Furthermore, the researcher examined the reliability issue of this dissertation by addressing the limitation of his measurement approach in the previous section. Typically critics suggest that findings of qualitative research are subjective and biased by a researcher’s own interests and agendas.

In response to those criticisms, qualitative researchers have been developing various arguments of validity and reliability suitable to qualitative methods. Most
studies point out that qualitative and quantitative research methods are based on different philosophical viewpoints. Numbers of scholars have argued the irrelevance of quantitative paradigm and defended the stance of qualitative methods. Some have focused on developing validity criteria unique to qualitative research (e.g. Guba 1981; Maxwell 1992), while others focused on developing strategies to increase validity in the process of qualitative research (e.g. Johnson 1997; Shenton 2004). However, there are “diverse perspectives of validity … [and] novice researchers, in particular, can become increasingly perplexed in attempting to understand the notion of validity in qualitative inquiry” (Creswell & Miller 2000, p. 124). Therefore, in this dissertation, the author covers only basic elements mostly from two prominent scholars in this area of research. In the 1980s, Gupa developed one of the most comprehensive studies on validity in qualitative research (1981; Lincoln & Guba 1985). The significance of his study was the translation of validity and reliability in quantitative research into those in qualitative research by recognizing different ontological and epistemological differences between the two paradigms. He also developed strategies to increase respective validities for qualitative research. In the 1990s, Maxwell argued that the quantitative paradigm was inappropriately applied to qualitative studies, and he developed a different set of validity conceptions that are unique or authentic to only qualitative research (1992).

Still, the aforementioned studies held a strong assumption in their arguments of validity in qualitative research. Implicitly or explicitly, their arguments were based on a certain type of qualitative research, mostly anthropology and ethnography. They neglected the fact that there are different types of qualitative research depending on the field or analytical approach; the difference may require various conceptions and
arguments of validity in qualitative research. In anthropology and ethnography, a researcher may continuously change data collection approaches during fieldwork, and often conduct an inductive approach in data analysis to explore key findings. In that case, the increased freedom a researcher has in data collection and interpretation requires more rigorous validity strategies. In contrast, as a policy study the analytical theories of this dissertation research were already designed before data collection or analysis (i.e. new public management and new institutionalism). Therefore, the research design did not allow for the inductive theoretical leeway permitted by anthropological and ethnographic studies. Therefore, the more structured research design of this dissertation already factored in as a validity strategy.

**Description of Data**

Data description is fundamental and critical for both qualitative and quantitative methods because it affects the later analytical steps of data interpretation and explanation. Maxwell defined descriptive validity as “the factual accuracy of their [qualitative researchers’] account that they are not making up or distorting the things that they saw and heard” (1992, p.285). In Guba’s term, validity of the data description is “credibility” in reference to “internal validity” in a quantitative method (1981). The core element of descriptive validity is a “true value” of participants’ accounts. Guba proposed that the criterion for the validity of data description be how the close the description is to reality (1981).

One of the strategies suggested to ensure descriptive validity is member checking. Prior research suggests that member checking can be conducted by people in
related fields of research regardless of if they are academic researchers, participants, or practitioners (Guba 1981; Shenton 2004). Unfortunately, the Japanese-speaking interviewees themselves cannot validate the data transcribed into English due to the language barrier. Still, an external reader of this dissertation committee is a Japanese senior scholar who has frequently published and presented in English. As such, he fulfills the role of member checking for the credibility of interview transcriptions.

**Interpretation of Data**

Interpretation of data can be influenced by the biases of researchers. Interpretive validity is defined as the meaning of the described behaviors, events, and objects to research participants, which include intention, cognition, affect, belief, evaluation or perspectives of the participants (Maxwell 1992). The issue of interpretation occurs mostly in research observations and is heightened with unclear or ambiguous terminology which many be interpreted differently by the researchers and participants (Kirk & Miller 1986; Maxwell 1992).

The characteristics of the research design of this dissertation have minimized the issue of interpretive validity. Unlike an inductive analysis of qualitative data (e.g. grounded-theory), this dissertation conducts a deductive analysis of qualitative data by applying the analytical concepts from prior studies. Therefore, the degree of interpretation by the researcher is very limited in this dissertation research.

**Explanation of Data (Theoretical Validity)**

Explanation of data entails a greater intellectual capacity than the description and
interpretation of data. Explanation requires that researchers organize described data and data interpretations, and then develop relationships between descriptions and interpretations, which eventually form a theory. “Theory usually refers to discussions of how a phenomenon operates and why it operates as it does. Theory is usually more abstract and less concrete than description and interpretation” (Johnson 1997, p.286). Maxwell identified two aspects of theoretical validity.

Any theory has two components: the concepts or categories that the theory employs, and the relationships that are thought to exist among those concepts (1992, p. 291)

Maxwell’s explanation of the theoretical validity mostly focused on the difference between the descriptive and interpretive validities, although he did admit the distinction was not absolute, and the definition was not necessarily as clear. Later, Johnson succinctly defined theoretical validity as “the degree that a theoretical explanation developed from a research study fits the data and, therefore, is credible and defensible” (1997, p. 286). By and large, both Maxwell and Johnson had an assumption in their conception of theoretical validity: qualitative research was supposed to develop a theory, and use existing theories for validity test.

The researcher approached theoretical validity from a different perspective. To guide the analysis he used existing theories to design the analytical framework, and then also developed a theoretical triangulation by applying two competing theories (i.e. new public management and new institutionalism).

There is another subcomponent of theoretical validity called “causal validity,” which examines causal relationships between certain incidences or actions. The
question of causal validity seems self-evident for this dissertation research because a line of analysis was whether the accreditation review causes improvement efforts on undergraduate education. This causal relationship has been supported by prior studies, especially the theoretical constructs of new public management and new institutionalism.

**Generalizability**

In quantitative methods, generalizability asks whether the findings in a sample population can be extended to a larger population, which requires applying random sampling to test statistical representativeness (Freidson, 1975 in Maxwell 1992). Some scholars argue that generalizability in quantitative methods is inapplicable and even pointless for qualitative research because these methods do not aim for generalizability from the beginning (Guba 1981). Qualitative methods usually target a special population for study through purposeful sampling (Maxwell 1992). Guba translated “generalizability” from quantitative research to “transferability” in qualitative research by pointing out that the essence of the two constructs was “applicability of research findings.” He argued that some of the findings in qualitative research could be applicable to other settings when their contexts contained similarities to the context of original research. It is a judgment call by readers, and thus a researcher should provide as much contextual information as possible to increase transferability (1981).

Maxwell took a different approach to examine generalizability in qualitative research. He identified two types of generalizability: internal generalizability and external generalizability. In his view, the latter was the same concept as the external validity in quantitative method, and thus less important given the different purpose of
qualitative research (i.e. a more specific and in-depth analysis). Then Maxwell focused on examining internal generalizability, primarily concerned with the consistency of an interviewee’s perception during and outside of a research interview. In other words, an interviewee might say one thing during a research interview, and say something different outside of that interview. From a different perspective, a researcher can capture only what was expressed by an informant at a research interview or at research observations (Maxwell 1992). Although the argument of the internal validity is reasonable, the issue applies not only to qualitative methods but also to quantitative methods: A survey respondent may answer one way to a question, but still hold a different view outside of the survey.

The responses of the researcher to the two qualitative generalizability concerns are as follows. Regarding “transferability,” the dissertation research explores the external environment and internal environments of sampled institutions, which should provide contextual information for readers to examine the applicability of some findings in the research to their own research or administrative setting (i.e. transferability). As for “internal generalizability,” the confidential research interviews should provide a reason for consistency between the respondent’s perceptions during and outside of the interview because the anonymity should reduce a risk for informant to reveal their honest opinions. In other words, if the interview were not confidential, the interviewee may feel insecure about revealing some of the negative aspects of the accreditation review, and instead provide an appropriate or safe answer to interview questions. By conducting confidential interviews, the researcher attempted to increase internal generalizability.
Objectivity

In an extreme sense, there seems a misperception that any findings from quantitative methods are objective and factual, while those from qualitative methods are biased. One of the most common arguments is that qualitative methods gather “perceptions” from interviewees, and that notion of “perception” rather than “fact” often discredits the findings of qualitative research. However, surveys responses are also based on the perceptions from respondents (Fielding & Fielding 1986, p12 cited in Silverman 2001, p 232), not to mention that a survey can be biased in its design such as I.Q. test (e.g. Reschly, 1984).

Another concern with objectivity from the quantitative paradigm is that contact and interactions between researchers and participants may skew responses. In contrast with qualitative methods, it is normal to see a researcher at a research site, interacting with the community he is studying. Although the researcher’s presence and interactions may influence responses from informants, in some settings, informants may not necessarily provide “true” information to the researcher without this investment of time and trust (Maxwell 1992). The idea may appear counter intuitive to the driving notion of objectivity in quantitative research methods, which requires the separation of a researcher from informants.

Recognizing the impact of direct interactions between researchers and informants, scholars of qualitative methodology present different strategies for retaining objectivity in qualitative research. The first strategy is a disclosure of qualitative research methods so that the other researchers can examine the data analysis. A second strategy is “member checking” in which other researchers who are familiar with a
research topic verify the method and analysis of the study. A third strategy for promoting objectivity is reflexivity (Johnson 1997; Shenton 2004). Reflexivity is to “intentionally reveal to his [or her] audience the underlying epistemological assumptions which cause him [or her] to formulate a set of questions in a particular way, and finally present his [or her] findings in a particular way” (Ruby, 1980 cited in Guba 1981). Although there is not a universally acknowledged standard for reflexivity, common topics are a researcher’s beliefs, assumptions, limitations and changes in methods (Guba 1981; Johnson 1997). The researcher provided his reflexivity in appendix C.

**Triangulation of Two Theories**

One of the most significant features of this dissertation research is the application of two theoretical perspectives from new public management and new institutionalism.

There are numerous studies of both new public management and new institutionalism in various fields of social sciences, and it would be unrealistic for the researcher to review all the prior research. Therefore, this section covers only “foundational” research of both new public management and new institutionalism to compare and contrast the two theories. In other words, the researcher intentionally limits the review of other “applied” research 12 of new public management and new institutionalism because it may rather complicate and obscure the analytical scope.

Both theories have different tenets, assumptions, and analytical foci, ----- and

---

12 Not all the “applied” research explicitly stated its theoretical application in terms of new public management and new institutionalism. However, the researcher grouped the applied research based on its analytical scope.
prior studies have applied one or the other theory based on their interests and political agenda. New public management often has represented the view of policy makers and accreditation agencies, while new institutionalism is inclined to represent the view of faculty members. The goal of the dissertation is not theory testing, but going beyond the limitations of current understanding by applying both theoretical perspectives.

**New Public Management**

New public management emerged to reform public sector administration through market mechanisms and corporate management practices. It originated with the Thatcher government of the 1980s in the U.K., and later New Zealand and Australia became leading countries in implementing new public management (Christensen & Laegreid, 2007). In the U.S. Osborne and Gaebler provided much inspiration in *Re-inventing the Government* (1992), and Vice President Al Gore developed the “National Performance Review” agenda in 1993. Since then, new public management has gained popularity and spread across OECD countries. There are various ways to organize the principles and concepts of new public management, but Hood’s definition is frequently cited in prior studies.

1. An emphasis on hands-on professional management skills for active, visible, discretionary control of organizations (freedom to manage);
2. Explicit standards and measures of performance through clarification of goals, targets, and indicators of success;
3. A shift from the input controls and bureaucratic procedures to rules relying on output controls measured by quantitative performance indicators;
4. A shift from a unified management system to disaggregation or decentralization of units in the public sector;
5. An introduction of greater competition in the public sector so as to lower costs and achievement of higher standards through term contracts, etc.;
6. A stress on private-sector-style management practices, such as use of short-term labor contracts, the development of corporate plans, performance agreements, and mission statements;
7. A stress on cost-cutting, efficiency, parsimony in resource use, and “doing more with less.” (Emphasis as in original by Hood, 1991, pp. 4-5)

In Japanese higher education, the Ministry of Education has implemented several new public management reforms. The approval system for academic institutions and programs was deregulated in the early 1990s and as a complement the accreditation system was implemented in 2004, which was a significant shift from bureaucratic input controls to measurement-based output control. National colleges and universities became independent agents from the Ministry of Education in 2004 (i.e. quasi-corporatization). In a positive light, these reforms meant greater institutional autonomy and potential for efficient institutional administration. With increased autonomy however, the Ministry of Education implemented institutional performance evaluations, and cut the operating budget of national higher education institutions every year (i.e. doing more with less). Furthermore, about a dozen of for-profit universities were created in several special economic districts as a part of the national deregulation and economic revitalization movement. Beginning in the early 2000s, the Ministry also implemented competitive funding for research and educational programs, designed to promote greater competition between private and public colleges and universities.

Prior studies on the Japanese accreditation system through the new public management perspective often represented the view of policy makers and accreditation agencies. Such studies frequently begin with addressing the competitive environment in
Japanese higher education. The discussion of higher education reform is framed by the following arguments. Over last couple of decades the traditional college-age population has been shrinking and the trend will continue further into the future. Nearly 40% of small private colleges are currently unable to meet their enrollment target (Center for Management Information in Private Schools 2011). Beyond the domestic student market, national research universities are expected to compete with other world-class universities on international college rankings (Quality Assurance System Subcommittee 2010c). Higher education is critical for nation building in the knowledge society and globalization. Especially because Japan has few natural resources, her intellectual capital is vital (Higher Education Committee 2005).

Upon addressing the competitive environment for Japanese colleges and universities, the new public management studies present the accreditation system as a rational management model by typically illustrating the Plan-Do-Check-Action cycle in an accreditation review. First, colleges and universities conduct an internal self-evaluation to identify the areas of improvement. Second, an external site-visit review ensures the validity of the internal self-evaluation. Third, if a college or university is unsatisfied with its external review, that college or university can submit a request for re-examination. Fourth, the accreditation agencies provide the final result and review comments. Lastly, based on the accreditation result, colleges and universities make continuous improvements.

In order to effectively implement the entire process of an accreditation review, college presidents are expected to exercise strong leadership in the accreditation review process, because academic departments are often perceived as slowing reform by
maintaining the status-quo (National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation 2010b).

Among various new public management principles and practices, this dissertation research focuses on 1) student enrollment and competitive funding as market mechanisms, 2) president’s leadership as strong executive management, and 3) data-driven decision making partly as a rational management model.

Figure 4: New Public Management Conceptual Model of Accreditation Review, External and Internal Environments Influencing Quality Improvement

- **External Environment**
  - Market mechanisms such as deregulation and competitive funding promote institutional competitiveness and diversification of colleges and universities

- **Accreditation Review**
  - Internal self-evaluations and external site-visits are conducted effectively to ensure quality and promote improvement

- **Internal Environment**
  - College presidents exercise strong leadership over institutional administration (e.g. top-down, entrepreneurship, and managerialism

- **Quality Improvement**
  - Continuous improvement through a rational management approach (e.g. Plan-Do-Check-Action cycle)
New Institutionalism

New institutionalism explains that organizations ceremonially adapt to regulations and formal structures to gain legitimacy, which is independent from increasing efficiency (Meyer & Rowan 1977). Unlike new public management, which is a theory of governance practice, new institutionalism is an academic theory, which began to evolve in the 1970s. Scholars of organization studies questioned the Weberian notion of bureaucracy: In essence, the formal organizational structures and procedures produce a certain level of consistency, rationality, and efficiency in bureaucracies (Weber 1958). Meyer and Rowan (1977) developed six propositions to explain how institutionalized organizations (e.g. educational organization) adapt to formal structure as myth and ceremony.

1. As rationalized institutional rules arise in given domains of work activity, formal organizations form and expand by incorporating these rules as structural elements.
2. The more modernized the society, the more extended the rationalized institutional structure in given domains and the greater the number of domains containing rationalized institutions.
3. Organizations that incorporate societally legitimated rationalized elements in their formal structures maximize their legitimacy and increase their resources and survival capabilities.
4. Because attempts to control and coordinate activities in institutionalized organizations lead to conflicts and loss of legitimacy, elements of structure are decoupled from activities and from each other. Integration is avoided, program implementation is neglected, and inspection and evaluation is ceremonialized.
5. The more an organization's structure is derived from institutionalized myths, the more it maintains elaborate displays of confidence, satisfaction, and good faith, internally and externally.
6. Institutionalized organizations seek to minimize inspection and evaluation by both internal managers and external constituents (Meyer & Rowan 1977, pp. 345-359).
Other institutional scholars advanced additional components of new institutionalism. Scott elaborated on the distinction between technical environments and institutional environments. In a simplified definition, the former is market, and the latter is governmental regulations (2007).

Weick explained educational organization as a “loosely-coupled system.” The elements of couplings can vary from technology, task, and role (i.e. technical coupling) to positions, offices, rewards, and sanctions (i.e. task-induced and authority couplings). Although loosely-coupled organizations may appear to lack coordination, there are some advantageous functions. In a loosely-coupled system there is more room available for self-determination by actors (e.g. teachers and classes)” (Weick 1976, pp. 7-8). In the same vein, local units have the control to continuously adapt to changes in the external environment, and they are “less affected by a breakdown in part of the system” (Babson College 2012). In a loosely-coupled system, leadership tends to be diffused and unfocused, yet it is effective if a leader articulates direction and vision through culture and symbols (Weick 1982).

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) further advanced the analysis of isomorphism. As new regulations are institutionalized, organizational forms become homogenous. In summation, when organizational environment is ambiguous, an organization tends to rely on governmental standards, professional norms, and social expectations, and/or mimic other successful organizations. Consequently, institutionalized organizations become homogenous.

Applied in prior research on quality assurance systems in higher education, new institutionalism studies frequently revealed the ineffectiveness of the accreditation system.
It appears to be yet another government regulation among the rest in the institutional environment. The Japanese accreditation system was implemented to complement the extensive deregulation on the approval system for academic institutions and programs in the 1990s. Unlike the American accreditation system being tied with the eligibility of student aid, the Japanese accreditation has no such financial incentive. A potential disincentive is that if a Japanese college or university fails to be accredited, the Ministry of Education will provide regulatory interventions. In order to avoid a loss of autonomy, colleges and universities are better off maintaining accreditation and securing their legitimacy.

There are a couple of ways for colleges and universities to ceremonially adapt to the formal structures and rules of an accreditation review. Internal self-evaluation is the foundation of the accreditation review, and colleges and universities often produce a cosmetic (Newton 2002) or self-disguised report by highlighting strengths and confining weaknesses. The role of an external site-visit review as a check mechanism to the self-reports can be undermined if institutions rehearse a site-visit review with their students and faculty, preparing “appropriate” answers for external reviewers (Stensaker 2003).

Even though the accreditation review process is ceremonial, colleges and universities become isomorphic due to the standard format of accreditation reviews. Faculty members often perceive the accreditation review as a source of standardization that erodes their academic freedom.

The faculty and the president are “loosely-coupled” in Japanese colleges and universities. As Japanese universities retain characteristics of the Humboldtian model,
the faculty has a greater autonomy over institutional decision making than college presidents (Ehara 2010). Even though accreditation reviews attempt to assure the quality of education, the curriculum is a faculty matter within academic freedom over which a college president has little control. Overall, colleges and universities hardly run like a business corporation, and the accreditation review is an extra burden for government compliance.

Among various propositions, theories, and concepts of new institutionalism, this dissertation research focuses on 1) higher education reform policies as part of the institutional environment (Scott 2007), 2) faculty autonomy and organizational culture as a loosely-coupled system (Weick 1976), and 3) internal self-evaluation as ceremonial adaptation (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

*Figure 5: New Institutionalism Conceptual Model of Accreditation, External and Internal Environments Influencing Quality Improvement*
Limitations and Re-examination of New Public Management

In the field of public administration research, scholars started re-examining new public management beginning from the 2000s. As an extreme criticism, Dunlevy et.al (2006) stated that *new public management is dead*, and suggested “digital-era governance … to create self-sustaining change, in a broad range of closely connected technological, organizational, cultural, and social effects (p. 467). Christensen and Laegreid advanced studies on post-new public management, exploring how the early implementers of new public management including Australia, New Zealand and other European countries were re-shaping their public management (2007). Overall, critics of new public management often suggest that it jeopardized public values (e.g. Benington & Moor, 2011).

In research on higher education, new public management is taken either favorably or unfavorably. Proponents often associate new public management with entrepreneurism (Clark, 1998, 2004) and market responsiveness (Tierney 1997, 1999). These studies are usually a collection of case studies of successful higher education institutions in which a college president triumphed with strong leadership and faculty were innovative and proactively exploit competitive environment. Opponents of new public management tend to view it as “managerialism” (e.g. Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem, Hillyard & Reed 2007; Trow & Clark, 1994). Such studies claim that new public management reforms endanger the faculty tenure appointment (Santiago & Carvalho, 2008), faculty autonomy (Meyer, 2002), self-regulation (Schimank, 2005), and even academic creativity (Marginson, 2008).

In research on quality assurance systems in higher education, how has new public management been perceived? It is often addressed as an “evaluative state”
(Bleiklie, 1998) or a “remote control” from the government through a market mechanism (Marginson, 1997). The rational model management of Plan-Do-Check-Action is often fragmented (Burke 2007). If the rational model of improvements based on an accreditation review fails, the agencies are inclined to claim (if not blame) that colleges and universities are lacking a “culture of evaluation/assessment” (Ito 2009; Ohtsuka 2002; Sekine 2005), instead of critically examining a potential system design issue of accreditation. This in fact leads to an analysis of new institutionalism.

In addition to conceptual re-examinations, there are some methodological limitations in new public management studies. The first methodological concern is related to the extreme attention placed on “hard evidence.” Researchers are eager to explore numeric data to prove or examine the impact of the new public management practices. Typically such studies of quality assurance systems in higher education investigate changes in GPA, student satisfaction, and any other quantified data related with student learning (e.g. Carr, Hamilton, & Meade 2005). As a result, extreme attention to quantified data sometimes causes a neglect of qualitative data or other college activities that are unquantifiable (Harvey & Newton 2004).

The second methodological limitation is related to a matter of research subjects. New public management research often asks college presidents to respond their view on the effectiveness of accreditation reviews. The survey is a popular method of data collection, and survey items are often vague such as “Was the accreditation review useful?” The item does not specify in what sense the accreditation review was useful, and the room of interpretation may lure survey respondents toward favorable answers. Moreover, as Stensaker put forth, college presidents obviously want to present
themselves as good implementers of the accreditation system. Therefore, they tend to provide a positive response to such studies (2003).

Limitations and Re-examination of New Institutionalism

The recent reforms derived from new public management challenges the theories and concepts of new institutionalism. Leading scholars such as Meyer and Rowan advocate a re-examination of the conventional notions of new institutionalism (2002, 2006).

Reflecting on the past institutional studies, one of the founders of institutional analysis, Brian Rowan, proposed “many education theorists have tended to treat institutional theory as if the theoretical models and predictions that emerged out of work by John W. Meyer, W. Richard Scott, Brian Rowan, and others during the late 1970s and early 1980s represented its final form (e.g., Meyer and Rowan 1977, 1978; Meyer and Scott 1983)” (2006, p. 2). As a result, “The idea of myths has experienced no empirical or theoretical development since it was raised to pivotal status in 1977” (Meyer, 2006, p. 52).

Limitations of new institutionalism studies mirror those in new public management research. In summation, analytical attention is focused upon irrational elements such as organizational cultures and symbols, but very little on the rational elements including formal structures and institutional procedures in organizations. In terms of the changes in organizational environments, the technical environment (i.e. market) has become more influential for educational organizations since the 1970s when the original new institutionalism theories were developed (Meyer & Rowan, 2006).

Quite interestingly, the history of new institutionalism studies parallels the
history of Japanese higher education. Between the end of WWII and the early 1990s, the student market was growing, and the Ministry of Education exercised high regulation to control the massification of Japanese higher education. However, beginning in the mid-1990s, the decline of the traditional college-age population triggered a more competitive student market, so the Ministry of Education deregulated the approval system and introduced competitive funding.

The infusion of market mechanisms by the government (e.g. competitive funding) has also raised questions about the organizational environment described in new institutionalism studies. Numerous studies have confirmed that acquisition and maintenance of legitimacy supported organizational survival. However, the debate still remains controversial whether organizations can maintain their survival just by maintaining the legitimacy, without increasing efficiency (Rowan & Miskel, 1999).

Perrow (1986) argues that “efficiency and legitimacy are closely intertwined and that inefficient organizations have a difficult time maintaining legitimacy, especially in societies that highly prize rationality and efficiency” (cited in Rowan & Miskel, 1999, p 364).

Furthermore, recent policy reforms deriving from new public management challenges the conventional distinctions between technical environment (i.e. market) and institutional environment (i.e. regulations) in new institutionalism studies. Rowan submits that “the dichotomy between technical and institutional environments is difficult to maintain analytically, especially because governance and conformity turn out to be central in the construction of technical environments” (2006, p.21).

The conversion of market mechanisms and institutional legitimacy suggested by
Perrow and Rowan applies to Japanese higher education policy. As an example, the Ministry of Education has introduced and expanded competitive funding for research and educational programs. Colleges and universities have begun to use the acquisition of competitive funding as an evidence of their competitiveness and legitimacy in their self-evaluation report.

Under the pressure from market mechanisms and performance-based evaluations, the conventional notion of loosely-coupled system may be shifting into a tightly-coupled system. For example, in the U.S., teachers are held accountable for students’ performance under No Child Left Behind Act. Similarly in Japanese higher education, individual faculty members at national colleges and universities need to report their research performance as part of the institutional performance budgeting what was implemented along with the quasi-corporatization. Such market-oriented and performance-based mechanisms potentially increase a tight-coupling between the president and faculty in organizational administration. The recent reform policies put more responsibilities on college presidents to exercise stronger leadership. In Japan, some critics state that faculty members feel their autonomy has been diminishing under the new public management reforms.

Beyond the conceptual re-consideration, there are methodological limitations in new institutionalism studies. As the new public management studies often illustrate a view from the top (i.e. policy makers and accreditation agencies), new institutionalism studies present a view from the bottom (i.e. faculty members). As a result, prior new institutionalism studies dispute the notion of rationality or the effectiveness of accreditation reviews by presenting a ceremonial adaptation at the individual faculty level
(Newton 2002). However, accreditation reviews may still have some impact at the departmental or executive level on campus. There is another methodological concern: While new public management studies tend to collect quantitative data, new institutionalism studies acquire qualitative data. A heavy reliance on qualitative data could be viewed as a collection of anecdotes (Harvey & Newton 2004).

Summary

In prior studies new public management and new institutionalism are often presented as competing and conflicting with one another. Both have different interests, foci, and methodological approaches to explore and examine the impact of quality assurance systems. In short, new public management studies proffer the accreditation system as effective by presenting a view from the top: Policy makers and accreditation agencies which advocate rational management models through accreditation reviews. By contrast, the new institutionalism studies dispute the accreditation system as ineffective by presenting a view from the bottom: Faculty members who adapt to an accreditation review as myth and ceremony. The current dichotomy between new public management and new institutionalism creates mixed views on the impact of the accreditation system and, as a result, our understanding of it remains incoherent. In fact, both theoretical perspectives have some limitations, and leading scholars call for a re-examination of the conventional notions in each theory. Recognizing the recent policy changes and scholarly discussions, the dissertation research applies both theoretical perspectives in order to expand our understanding of the impact of the Japanese institutional accreditation system.
Limitations of the Research Design

Relating to the discussion of validity and reliability in the earlier section of this chapter, this dissertation contains largely three limitations.

The first limitation relates to the generalizability (i.e. external validity in quantitative inquiry term) of the findings due to the small sample size of colleges and universities (n= 11) in this dissertation research, which is less than 2 percent of the total number of colleges and universities in Japan. In addition, national research universities were over-represented in this dissertation. In Japan, private higher education institutions constitute nearly 90 percent of the total number of colleges and universities (Program for Research on Private Higher Education 2011). Therefore, some of the research findings may be more associated with national research universities than private colleges.

The second limitation relates to the nature of perceptions on which this dissertation relied heavily as a major data source. Human perceptions are often limited and unstable (Maxwell 1992). These limitations may affect the interviewee’s evaluation of the impact of the accreditation review. In addition, the interviewees’ amount of knowledge of quality improvement activities in academic departments may be limited because interviewees work at the institution level. In contrast, the deans and department chairs should be more knowledgeable about the improvement efforts at their unit level than the interviewees. However, due to the manageability of the field interview, the researcher decided to prioritize interviewing campus administrators and faculty members who were highly involved with the accreditation review over other deans or department chairs. This issue is related with internal generalizability, as reviewed in the earlier section on validity in this chapter.
The interviewee’s level of expectations of the accreditation review may also affect their evaluation of the impact of an accreditation review. For example, an interviewee with high expectations on accreditation reviews may evaluate its impact as low because they tend are disappointed with the gap between the ideal picture presented by the accreditation agencies and the actual improvements on campus. Vice versa, another interviewee with low expectations toward the accreditation review process may evaluate its impact higher than the previous interviewee for the opposite reason. This issue relates to internal generalizability at two levels: One is within a sample institution, and the other is across sample institutions. This limitation persists in both qualitative and quantitative methods attributed to the sampling framework and response rate (Silverman 2001).

The third limitation relates to the measurement of the impact of the accreditation review on improvement efforts in undergraduate education. As explained in the analytical framework section, this dissertation does not intend to create a global measurement to evaluate the impact of an accreditation review across the different types of sampled institutions. Instead, the impact of an accreditation review was ranked in comparison to the external environment and internal environment of a sampled college or university. Although this approach is somewhat limited, it still provided a general phenomenon of the impact of accreditation reviews.
Chapter IV: Analysis

This chapter describes the analyses of research interview transcripts. The researcher visited a total of 11 sample colleges and universities that were:

Table 15: Job Titles and Code Name of Interviewees by Sample Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Job Title</th>
<th>Code Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation director</td>
<td>Faculty Member A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td>Coordinator for the accreditation review committee</td>
<td>Faculty Member B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td>Coordinator for the accreditation review committee</td>
<td>Senior Administrator A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation director</td>
<td>Middle Management Staff A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional planning assistant director</td>
<td>Middle Management Staff B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Provost A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Provost B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PrTechInst1</td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation director</td>
<td>Senior Administrator B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation coordinator</td>
<td>Middle Management Staff C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PrTechInst2</td>
<td>Professor/Special assistant to the President</td>
<td>Special Assistant to the President A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional Planning</td>
<td>Senior Administrator C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td>Director of higher education research center</td>
<td>Faculty C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td>Associate Professor/Special assistant to the President</td>
<td>Special Assistant to the President B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td>Provost</td>
<td>Provost C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vice President for Administration</td>
<td>Senior Administrator D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of interviewees: 15
There were one or two interviewees at each sample institution. Interviewee profiles consisted of a faculty member, administrative staff, and vice president who worked on the first cycle of accreditation review.

The primary purpose of the research interviews was to explore the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation review, and examine to what extent those three factors influenced the quality improvement efforts of undergraduate education.

In accordance with the analytical framework, Chapter IV is divided into four sections, and each has subsidiary components. First, the external environment encompasses student enrollment, higher education policies, and competitive funding. Second, the internal environment consists of student quality, educational quality, faculty interest and personnel evaluation, president’s leadership, and organizational culture. Third, the accreditation review is a construct of internal self-evaluations, external site-visit reviews, and accreditation review results. Fourth, the quality improvement efforts include data and surveys, efforts by college presidents and by faculty members.

All the four factors and the subcomponents are designed according to the two competing theories of new public management and new institutionalism in explaining the impact of the accreditation system. The theoretical discussions are described in Chapter III.

**External Environment of Colleges and Universities**

Colleges and universities interface with various external environments. This
dissertation research particularly focuses on the trends of student admission and enrollment, the impact of national higher education policies, and of competitive funding. On surface, the aforementioned components are often associated with new public management. However, every college and university presents different circumstances with each component. For instance, private teaching colleges may be more vulnerable to changes in the student market, while national research universities may be more susceptible to changes in competitive funding.

New public management contends that colleges and universities respond to market mechanisms as rational actors in order to perform more efficiently and effectively, while new institutionalism illustrates how they ceremonially adapt to those reform policies to merely gain legitimacy. How do these two theoretical explanations apply to sampled colleges and universities?

Trend of Student Enrollment
The college-age population in Japan has been declining since the early 1990s, and in recent years nearly 40% of small private colleges cannot fill their target enrollment (Center for Management Information in Private Schools 2011). In general, research universities are more selective in student admission than teaching colleges in Japanese higher education. Also national colleges and universities are more selective than private counterparts, due to lower tuition and higher institutional prestige. Obviously, less prestigious institutions encounter a more serious challenge with student enrollment. Did the sampled colleges and universities appear consistent with these phenomena?

---

13 Enrollment targets are articulated by the number of faculty members and size of campus facilities articulated in the approval standards for academic institutions and programs.
Table 16: Has Student Enrollment Declined over the Last Five Years at Your Institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Partially/Temporarily</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student enrollment can be analyzed at the institution- and department-level. At the institutional level, eight out of eleven sample institutions did not face serious enrollment shortfalls over the last several years. In fact, Private Comprehensive University 1 and Private Institute of Technology 2 enrolled more students than the student enrollment size articulated by the approval standards for academic institutions and programs in the Ministry of Education, and those institutions reduced their student enrollment into an appropriate size.

At the department level, three private teaching colleges encountered an enrollment drop in a few academic programs, but this did not critically impact the overall college enrollment. Those teaching colleges downsized unpopular programs and either moved that enrollment quota to other popular programs or created a new academic program.

Overall, the sample colleges and universities did not experience a severe decline of enrollment at the institution level.
Impact of Higher Education Policies

Ministry of Education initiated deregulation policies in the late 1980s. The first reform was the deregulation of the general education curriculum in 1989. Thereafter, the Ministry of Education has been implementing reform policies based on new public management principles (Hata 2007b). Another feature of Japanese higher education policies has been the emulation of American higher education systems. However, the transfers from the American system into the Japanese context have sometimes been unsuccessful, and critics have suggested that American models were either implemented superficially or were indigenized into a completely different model (Arimoto 2005).

What were the impacts of higher education reform policies at sample colleges and universities? Studies of new institutionalism often depict ceremonial implementations of governmental policies at colleges and universities. Contrarily, new public management studies assume that colleges and universities are “rationally” responsive to competitive environments. This interview question explores the policy influence over the sample colleges and universities to examine these contradictory claims from the two lines of analysis.
Table 17: Have Higher Education Policies Impacted Educational Improvement Efforts at Your Institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed or uncertain</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only three sampled institutions (two national research universities, and one private teaching college) responded that higher education policies had an impact on campus. For the majority (n=8), the impact of higher education reform policies on campus was mixed and it depended on the organizational communication between the senior administration and the academic units. Individual faculty members were generally unaware of national level higher education policies, especially at research universities (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, and Private Research University 1). Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 addressed a general phenomenon:

> Our faculty are just too busy with their own research and cannot be bothered by higher education policies. Regular faculty members do not follow higher education policies on a regular basis. It is the president and other senior administrators who are in charge of implementing the national policies on campus. So no matter whether the faculty are aware of higher education policies or not, the policies have a certain impact on our academic system and operations (National Research University 2).
Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 echoed a similar response, “To me it seems normal that the regular faculty are unaware of higher education policies because national policies are not directly pointed at the individual faculty level, but rather the institution level. Thus, the responsibility for policy implementations lies on the shoulder of senior administrators.”

However, not all the senior administration necessarily implemented national higher education policies on their campus effectively. “As the vice president, I try my best to communicate with the deans about policy changes from the Ministry of Education. However, I cannot always know how effectively each dean communicates with his faculty. In addition, each of our schools has high autonomy and they have a great deal of control over how to implement policies,” explained Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1. Ineffective organizational communication also appeared at other sample institutions. “The senior administration sometimes simply disseminated policy documents to academic departments, and did not follow-up or really integrate a new policy into the existing system,” confessed Provost C at Private Teaching College 3, “It is a shame to say, but we are just too busy dealing with daily operations.”

Another approach for implementing national policies on campus involved creating a new academic department (National Research University 1 and Private Comprehensive University 1). Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 stated, “The existing schools are often resistant to any changes. So it is much quicker to create a new academic department and that will become a model for the other existing schools [in the university]” (National Research University 1). However, this approach was not always successful. Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1 confessed,
“When the president proposed the creation of a new graduate program, the existing faculty strongly opposed the proposal at the senate. So we missed a critical opportunity for using the new graduate program as a driver to reform the conventional academic departments.”

Aside from the general phenomena of policy implementation, there were some concrete examples of reform policies having impact on campus. For example, an adjustment to the academic calendar to satisfy enough credit hours was implemented institution-wide at three sample institutions (National Research University 2, National Research University 3, and Private Teaching College 2). Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3 explained, “We used to count the final exam week as one of the 15 weeks of instruction. So actually the faculty taught 14 weeks in a semester. The Ministry of Education said that it was insufficient for three credit hours in a semester. So we changed the academic calendar and added one more week for instruction and pushed the final exam to the following week.” When the interviewer further inquired of Senior Administrator A as to whether the change of the academic calendar raised an issue of faculty workload, the interviewee responded, “No. Not really. The faculty took it as a national policy and the implementation went smoothly without any resistance” (National Research University 3).

A second example was the electronic syllabus system (National Research University 2, Private Comprehensive University 2, Private Institute of Technology 2, and Private Teaching College 2). The Ministry of Education has been promoting improvements of the Japanese course “abstract” into something more like the American course “syllabus.” In response, two sample institutions developed an electronic course
sylabus system that already embeds the basic format of American course syllabus. A national research university successfully implemented the electronic syllabus system and the faculty was utilizing the system. Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 answered with pleasure, “In our internal academic system, faculty can do many things such as creating a course syllabus, entering grades for students, and reviewing the results of student course evaluation. The faculty appears to like the system and uses it very well.” By contrast, Private Institute of Technology 2 was struggling to utilize its electronic course syllabus system. “Even though we provided the electronic syllabus system, the faculty has not fully utilized it as we can see many empty fields in the system. Moreover, it is disappointing to mention, but not many of our students really take advantage of the electronic course syllabus system,” reluctantly admitted Senior Administrator C.

Faculty instructional development provides another opportunity to examine policy impact, but it was implemented sporadically within the sampled institutions. Senior Administrator at Private Institute of Technology 1 acknowledged, “Teaching is a faculty matter so instructional development is implemented differently at academic departments in our university.” Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 simply mentioned, “Some departments are serious about the instructional development, and others are not.” Similarly, Provost B at Private Comprehensive University 2 stressed, “We have been organizing institution-wide forums on instructional development. But faculty attendance is sporadic.”

Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3 reflected on the general tendency among various policy implementations, “In my view, reform policies
that are more structure-oriented such as the adjustment of academic calendar are accepted by the faculty fairly easily. Contrarily, any reform policies related with academic contents such as pedagogical development are not well perceived by the faculty.”

**Types of Competitive Funding**

Competitive funding constitutes a key driver to promote competition under the new public management policies by the Ministry of Education. Traditionally, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) research has provided research funding for individuals as well as groups of faculty members. Beginning in the late 1990s, the Ministry of Education began introducing various types of competitive funding for both research and teaching. How have colleges and universities responded to these competitive funding programs? More specifically, has this funding contributed to educational improvement efforts on campus?

**Table 18: What Types of External Funding Were Sought at Your Institution?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Mostly Education</th>
<th>Both Research &amp; Education</th>
<th>Mostly Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was a distinct difference between national research universities and other private colleges and universities in the sample. At three national research universities, faculty members pursued mostly research funding. Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 reflected upon the impact of competitive funding, “Our faculty are practical when they apply for various grants. They prioritize the grant applications by comparing the amount of money they can get. So naturally, the education grants cannot really be a priority because of the small amount.”

Furthermore, as doctoral institutions, the faculty at the national research universities was more interested in graduate education than undergraduate education (National Research University 2 and National Research University 3). Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3 stated with a slight sigh, “When faculty talks about education in our university, it means graduate education. Our faculty members are serious about educating future researchers, not necessarily undergraduate students.”

As compared to the national research universities, private teaching colleges and comprehensive universities were generally more enthusiastic about obtaining the Good Practice education grant, which is considered a good advertisement for student recruitment. In the preparation of grant application, the senior administration solicited their academic departments to develop a project proposal and formed a campus-wide committee, which selected a few strong proposals to apply for the Educational Good Practice funding. Regarding the institutional support for grant applications, sampled teaching colleges did not provide any special support for their faculty (Private Teaching College 1, Private Teaching College 2, and Private Teaching College 3), while a
comprehensive private university provided internal funding to support academic departments for grant applications (Private Comprehensive University 1).

Although a large majority of the sample institutions had already received one or more Good Practice educational grants, these grants did not necessarily become a driver for institution-wide educational reform. “The Good Practice education grants we received were for the school-based programs [at the university]. So the grant program did not really have an impact on the entire university,” confessed Provost B at Private Comprehensive University 2. Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 revealed another example, “One of our university-wide programs received the Good Practice education grant, and it was highly regarded in our accreditation review report. But, to tell you the truth, the number of students who are participating in that program is fairly small.”

The research grants from Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) were highly desired across different types of sample colleges and universities. At the three national research universities the faculty in hard science was especially keen on obtaining any JSPS research grants. By comparison, the faculty in the humanities and social science departments were less enthusiastic about research grants, mostly due to a limited availability in the field.

Although not as much research-oriented as the national research universities, sampled private institutions also actively applied to the JSPS research grants. At two private comprehensive universities, the senior administration supported faculty applications to JSPS research grants. Surprisingly, even at two teaching colleges, the senior administration encouraged their faculty to apply for the JSPS research grants, even
though in reality the research capabilities at these types of colleges is low (Private Teaching College 1 and Private Teaching College 2). Apparently the senior administration wanted to increase their institutional prestige by obtaining more JSPS research grants. However, in reality Provost C at Private Teaching College 3 estimated, “Roughly speaking maybe only 10% of our faculty has received a JSPS grant.” At Private Teaching College 1, “Even if a few faculty members receive a JSPS grant, the amount may be small. And the college cannot afford a research support office as other big research universities,” pointed out Faculty Member C who previously worked at a national research university but now at Private Teaching College 1.

**Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities**

Colleges and universities have different constituents, organizational structures, and culture. This section explores various components of the internal environment including student quality, educational quality, faculty interest in research and teaching, their personnel evaluation, president’s leadership, and organizational culture.

Educational quality improvement efforts are often determined by the dynamics of the various internal environments. For instance, are faculty members really interested in teaching? Can a college president exert strong leadership over the faculty? What are the values and beliefs that faculty members and the president share as an organizational culture? Certainly, the answers to those questions may vary across sampled colleges and universities.

New public management often emphasizes the importance of president’s strong
leadership, using market-driving tools to accomplish various reform policies (Higher Education Council 1998). On the contrary, new institutionalism illustrates the power of strong faculty autonomy (Terasaki 1999, 2000). What were the conditions of the internal environment at sampled colleges and universities?

**Trend of Student Quality over the Last Five Years**

As reviewed in Chapter II, the quality of students is declining due to the shrinking college-age population while the number of higher education institutions remains consistent. Especially private teaching colleges need to accept unqualified students. From a new public management perspective, the competition in the student market should facilitate educational improvements. However, if a college is already “open admission” and the student quality is dismal; could a college realistically be able to improve educational quality? Previous studies identified difficulties in defining the “quality” of student learning; this section tackles the topic through the two analytical approaches: first the analysis on accreditation documents explores learning outcomes based on student demographic data and survey results, and second research interviews further explore interviewees’ observations of student quality in terms of their learning attitudes and career aspirations.

**Analysis of Accreditation Documents**

The three accreditation agencies generally examine student learning outcomes in terms of student persistence, drop-out rate, graduation rate as well as job and graduate school placement. In the self-evaluation reports, the sampled colleges and universities
provided a variety of student demographic data. Regarding the persistence rate, most sampled institutions had a rate higher than 80%. As an exception, one academic department at National Research University 3 (2007) had a lower rate as 70%.  

Drop-out rates at the institution level varied from 1% to less than 3% and graduation rates were more than 80% among the sampled colleges and universities. These rates were not necessarily determined by the admission selectivity or types of higher education institutions (e.g. research or teaching intensive), but rather by the types of academic departments. In general, hard sciences had lower student persistence and graduation rates.

Job and graduate school placement showed a notable difference between the national research universities and private institutions within the sample. At national research universities a large number of students continue to graduate schools right after the completion of undergraduate degrees. At National Research University 1 (2007), approximately 25% of undergraduate students in humanities and social sciences and 60% of them in science and engineering students continued to a master’s degree. Similarly, at National Research University 3 (2007), about 30% of college graduates in social sciences and 80% of them in hard sciences proceeded to a master’s degree. These national research universities claimed that the large placement of their students in graduate programs indicated the accomplishment of institutional mission as a research-intensive university. By contrast, a large majority of undergraduate students in the sampled private institutions sought employment, and the self-evaluations reports produced the job placement rates by industry. In reporting the student job placement

\[ \text{Japanese higher education institutions usually provide “non-persistence” student rates, by dividing the number of students who could not proceed to an advanced academic year (e.g., to sophomore, junior, and senior) by the number of a respective student cohort (e.g. class of 2012).} \]
rate, the two different denominators applied. The first denominator was the entire student headcount in senior year and the second denominator was the limited student headcount who searched for a job. Obviously the latter with a smaller denominator produced a better student job rate. Not all the sampled colleges and universities explained their calculations for the student job placement rate, and various academic departments applied the different denominators even within the higher education institution (e.g. Private Comprehensive University 2, 2010). Among the sampled private institutions, Private Research University 1 (2008) attributed a more than 90% student job placement rate owing to its institutional prestige and student selectivity. Engineering schools had a similar job placement rate (i.e. Private Institute of Technology 1, 2010 and Private Institute of Technology 2, 2008). The rate somewhat maintained among the private teaching colleges in the sample because they applied the second definition of the denominator to calculate a student job placement rate. However, in the self-evaluation report Private Teaching College 1 (2008) revealed the “real” job placement rate by applying the first definition of the denominator (i.e. the entire senior year student headcount), which was about 65%. In other words, the figure implied that more than one-thirds of their students were apathetic about their job search. However, none of the accreditation agencies examined whether the student job placement rate was high or low in the evaluation reports.

Relating to job placement rates, almost all self-evaluation reports by the sampled colleges and universities produced the number of students who acquired a national occupational credential such as school teacher certificate, social work qualification, business accounting certificate, and medical treatment credential. However, there was
no benchmark analysis with peer institutions, and few reports conducted a longitudinal analysis on the number of students who acquired any occupational certificates.

Up to this point, student learning outcomes are identified by student demographic data. Another common approach to demonstrate them was by the results of student course evaluations and other surveys. Almost all the colleges and universities in the sample exhibited favorable responses, describing more than 70% of students either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they acquired a wide range of knowledge. However, a shortcoming of these survey responses was that most survey items were defined generically such as “level of understanding” and “usefulness of learning for career development.” With a five-point Likert scale, any generically defined survey items would produce a high percentage of student satisfaction, and certainly all the self-evaluation reports presented the positive responses as an evidence for student learning outcomes. In fact, none of the reports identified areas of improvement based on the survey results.

Analysis of Research Interviews
As shown above the accreditation documents provided various quantitative data on student learning outcomes, still the document analysis could not provide student behavioral aspects related to their learning outcomes. In order for a more comprehensive understanding the researcher further inquired interviewees about their observations of three basic components of student quality: Academic preparation in high school, learning attitudes in college, and motivations toward career development.
Table 19: Has Student Quality Declined over Last Five Years at Your Institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed or uncertain</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five private colleges and universities answered that their student quality was declining over the last five years. Six other sample institutions, including national research universities, responded with a mixed view. Different issues of student quality were identified between selective and less selective sample institutions. At less selective private institutions, the quality of students appears to be steadily declining (Private Comprehensive University 1, Private Comprehensive University 2, Private Institute of Technology 2, Private Teaching College 1, and Private Teaching College 3). With a hint of disappointment and frustration, Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 commented, “The problem is that those academically unprepared students often lack social skills including basic communication with professors. Therefore, such students are hesitant or even unable to express what they do not understand within a subject matter.” Provost C at Private Teaching College 3 alleged, “There seems a correlation between students’ academic capability and their attitude toward learning and career. Our college has become open access, and some of our entering students did not study
seriously in high school. So it is very difficult to change those apathetic or indifferent students to study hard and prepare for a career during college.”

There was another issue at two private institutions: The quality of their top tier had remained high, but the quality of middle to bottom tier students appeared to erode rapidly (Private Institute of Technology 2 and Private Teaching College 1). “The gap between the top tier students and the bottom tier students is increasing year by year,” pointed Special Assistant to the President B at Private Institute of Technology 2, “That in turn challenges our faculty to set an appropriate level of study within a course because there is a wide range of students in terms of academic preparation.”

Overall, most interviewees claimed that the decline of the student quality was mostly attributed to the shrinking college age population in Japan. In order to meet enrollment targets, colleges and universities need to accept underprepared students who may not have met minimum admission standards a few decades ago.

At more selective sample institutions, the overall quality of students was somewhat steady over the last five years. Few interviewees expressed concern about incoming students’ academic preparation who studied under a reduced high school curriculum due to the reforms of the 1990s. Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 explained:

Compared with students who entered before the reduction of high school curriculum, new students are not necessarily lacking their academic preparation. Well, let me put it this way. I don’t really hear that the decline of student quality particularly is attributed to the high school curriculum reduction. The new students actually have a different type of academic preparation from the conventional rote learning. For instance, they are well prepared for critical thinking (Private Research University 1).

Still, a partial decline of student quality in the area of hard sciences appears
related to the entrance examination system (National Research University 1 and National Research University 3). Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 elaborated:

For example, some students did not take the physics exam for college admission, but they were still accepted in an engineering program. Such students tend to lag behind the other students, and the faculty needs to provide remedial education for them. You (the interviewer) may be surprised by this problem happening in a prestigious research university like as ours. But this is the reality due to the deregulation of college entrance exam policies (National Research University 1).

With regards to the quality of students, interviewees at national research universities often commented that students’ learning attitude was changing (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, and National Research University 3). Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 commented, “Although recent students have earnestly attended classes, taken notes and exams, they have not proactively participated in class discussions. That seems a common phenomenon I hear from other faculty as well.” Senior Administrator at National Research University 3 also addressed the same problem with an interesting insight, “In the past, students used to study independently even when they did not attend every single class. However, under the recent higher education reform policies, the faculty began to put more effort on developing course materials for students. Then, ironically students became accustomed to being ‘spoon-fed’ learning.”

There were different student attitudes toward career development between selective and less selective sample institutions. At National Research University 2 Faculty Member B stated a general phenomenon in Japanese higher education, “When students enter their junior year, they start job hunting and obviously prioritize it over
college education.” By contrast, students at less selective institutions appeared slow to begin the job search, without a clear career direction (Private Teaching College 1 and Private Teaching College 3). Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 reservedly commented, “This is just my observation, but our students do not seem to seriously think about their future. I don’t know whether they are apathetic or have no aspirations.”

Trend of Educational Quality over the Last Five Years
The previous section identified that the overall student quality was declining at a different rate among the sampled colleges and universities over the last five years. This section explores how the colleges and universities enhanced educational quality in response to the declining student quality. Educational quality is defined as faculty instructional development and curriculum designs in this dissertation research. Firstly the analysis on accreditation documents explored a wide range of curriculum and pedagogical matters in the sampled colleges and university. Secondly, the analysis on field research interviews focused on probing the substance of faculty instructional development efforts observed by the interviewees.

Analysis of Accreditation Documents
All the three accreditation agencies set a standard on “curriculum and pedagogy.” The former category reviews curriculum designs in general education and undergraduate majors, including remedial education. The latter category checks mainly syllabi, grading standards, graduation standards, and faculty development on teaching.
Regarding curriculum designs, the sampled colleges and universities listed general education and undergraduate major courses as well as the distributions of the number of credits for requirements and electives in the self-evaluation reports. On general education, the national universities established an education center in order to organize and operate general education courses. This was a pushback trend from the deregulation of strict general education requirements in the late 1980s, which devalued general education and jeopardized its structure over the last few decades. At a few private institutions in the sample the same general education courses were offered by different academic departments, thereby confusing students during their course registrations. At the undergraduate major level, the evaluation of the curriculum design was based on an appropriate alignment between educational objectives and curriculum designs. In accreditation review reports the evaluation standard on this matter was rather unclear and presumably based on peer reviews by respective academic disciplines.

Regarding remedial education, the national research universities provided them once students enter the university, while some private universities and colleges provided even before the student enrollment for freshman year. Such private institutions incorporated placement tests for some courses including foreign language and mathematics in the “pre-enrollment” remedial education (Private Comprehensive University 1, 2007 and Private Institute of Technology 2, 2008).

Different from the accreditation review on curriculum, the review on pedagogy was fairly concrete in terms of its criteria. Regarding the quality of syllabi, the self-evaluation reports by the sampled colleges and universities described the common syllabus designs including the course title, learning objectives, reading assignments,
weekly schedules, and evaluation standards. External reviewers checked the substance of syllabi across various academic departments and identified a few weak departments at Private Research University 1 (Japanese University Accreditation Agency 2009b) and Private Institute of Technology 2 (Japanese University Accreditation Agency 2009a). Setting transparent grading standards was another criterion for the review of pedagogy, and all the sampled institutions illustrated a scoring table for respective letter grades. The sampled institutions were also expected to articulate graduation requirements and administer faculty review for student graduation. External reviewers primarily checked whether the grading standards and graduation requirements were clearly explained to students at orientation and in other publications such as the college websites.

A concern about the Japanese GPA system was a maximum number of credit hours per semester. For instance, a couple of sampled colleges and universities allowed students to register from 25 to 30 credit hours per semester depending on academic departments at Private Research University 1 and Private Institute of Technology 2 (Japanese University Accreditation Agency 2009a, 2009b). The problem was that these students often took many courses between the freshman and junior years so that they could focus on just job hunting in the senior year without registering for courses. This student course registration behavior may dilute the quality of their learning experience because they tend to take courses that do not check student attendance or provide an easy grade. External reviewers recommended implementing a cap on student course registration per semester in those sampled institutions.

Other than the aforementioned curriculum designs and pedagogical systems, the sampled colleges and universities illustrated student course evaluation, office hour,
faculty advisors, and student peer support as strengths of their educational quality.

**Analysis of Research Interviews**

While the above analysis on accreditation documents described structural designs and quantitative data of curriculum and pedagogy (official information) the research interviews further explored the topic of faculty instructional development efforts and curriculum redesigns from a qualitative standpoint (unofficial information). The Ministry of Education required colleges and universities to implement faculty instructional development in the early 2000s, and it has become ubiquitous in Japanese higher education. Have interviewees observed the effectiveness of such efforts over the last five years?

**Table 20: Has Educational Quality Improved over the Last Five Years at Your Institution?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed or uncertain</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In spite of the decline of student quality at some sampled colleges and universities, a
majority (n=7) of sample institutions responded that educational quality had been improving over the last five years. Educational improvement appeared to happen at individual, departmental, and institutional levels. At the individual level, even faculty at research universities have started paying more attention to teaching (National Research University 2, Private Research University 1, and Private Institute of Technology 1).

“Compared to some years ago, our faculty members no longer cancel classes. If they need to, they make sure to provide a complement class. In addition, faculty put more effort into developing learning materials,” told Faculty Member B at National Research University 2. Senior administrator at Private Institute of Technology 1 also stressed, “As for instruction quality, the faculty has definitely advanced their effectiveness. The faculty now sees teaching as their professional duty, and also makes efforts on curriculum development.”

Beyond the improvement efforts at the individual faculty level, five sample institutions conducted faculty instructional development at the department level, a common practice especially at large research universities with diverse academic departments (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, National Research University 3, Private Research University 1, Private Institute of Technology 1, and Private Teaching College 1). Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 recounted with a sense of accomplishment, “In the past, only a few departments used to organize professional development for faculty teaching, but nowadays most departments conduct this type of instructional workshops.” Still, there were different levels of seriousness across departments within the national research university. Later, Faculty Member A elaborated upon the topic, “Compared with other schools, the school of
economics is very serious about their education because the school faced a shortfall of college applications a few years ago. Unless such an emergency happens, other schools may not necessarily become serious about educational improvements” (National Research University 1). Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3 offered a different perspective, “The School of Biology and other hard sciences are more serious about educational improvement. It may be because their curriculum is designed for cumulative learning, unlike the humanities.”

At the institutional level, only Private Teaching College 2 appeared to make an organized effort on educational improvements. Special Assistant to the President B explained the detail:

Our college has implemented a college-wide benchmark on student learning outcomes. Students periodically take surveys on their progress toward achieving college-wide learning goals. The results are used for pedagogical as well as curriculum development. We also implement new pedagogies such as service-learning and active learning. The faculty shares their knowledge and experiences with those new pedagogies each other. But, in my view it is still difficult to bridge pedagogical improvements at the individual faculty level to curriculum reform at the program level (Private Teaching College 2).

Special Assistant to the President B at this college commented that all these educational reforms were possible due to the small size of the institution and the president’s strong leadership.

Four sample institutions indicated a mixed answer on educational quality improvement efforts mostly because they had both successful and unsuccessful examples. Private Institute of Technology 2 conducted an institution-wide curriculum development in response to the decline of student enrollment a few years ago. As a result, student applications went up and the institution met the enrollment target. The institute also
implemented an electronic syllabus system, but many faculty members were not utilizing
the system. “The problem may be attributed to faculty’s unfamiliarity with the
electronic syllabus system, or they were reluctant to share their syllabi in the system due
to concerns about the quality of their syllabi,” explained Senior Administrator B at
Private Institute of Technology 2. Private Comprehensive University 2 had organized a
few institution-wide faculty forums on institution development to increase the faculty’s
awareness on teaching improvements. However, Provost B confessed that the
college-wide forums were not as well received on campus as he wished:

A majority of our faculty members still hold on to an old mind-set from a decade
ago when our university was still fairly selective and students were academically
prepared. But now, as student selectivity has rapidly declined, unfortunately
some faculty members blame students for their lack of academic preparations
before improving faculty’s own pedagogy. Ideally, the faculty needs to adjust
their level of expectation for newer students and redesign course materials
(Private Comprehensive University 2).

Faculty Teaching Conditions

The last section analyzed different degree of faculty’s engagement with instructional
development activities across the sampled colleges and universities. In order to
supplement the behavioral and phenomenological findings, this section analyzes faculty
teaching conditions such as faculty-to-student ratios and faculty teaching load, and the
ratios of full-time and part-time faculty. These numbers often affect faculty’s
instructional ability and should reveal how educational quality is shaped from a different
perspective.
Analysis of Accreditation Documents

Three accreditation agencies set a standard on faculty in order to check faculty demographic data and the operation of their personnel review process. The former component is analyzed regarding the number of full-time faculty members, their age distribution, percentage of female and foreign faculty, and number of other instructional support staff and teaching assistants. Among the listed data, this section analyzes particular faculty teaching conditions related to undergraduate education.

Although the faculty and student ratio is a common indicator for the quality of education in American higher education, it was difficult to analyze the ratios among the sampled Japanese colleges and universities. Many of the self-evaluation reports simply addressed placing the sufficient number of faculty members articulated by the Ministry of Education’s academic program approval system, and thus did not provide a faculty and student ratio. Some colleges and universities referred to an appendix for the faculty and student ratio in the self-evaluation report, but the appendix was publically unavailable. However several sampled colleges and universities at least provided faculty and student headcount data that allowed the researcher to calculate the ratio.

Faculty and student ratios were calculated differently by various colleges and universities in the sample. For instance, National Research University 1 included the number of adjunct faculty members so that the ratio appears smaller and favorable. Similarly, Private Teaching College 2 claimed in their self-evaluation report that they hire a large number of adjunct faculty members in order to accomplish a small class size. A few institutions (e.g. National Research University 1 and Private Comprehensive University 1) provided the faculty and student ratio at the institution level, but it was
misleading because the ratio was highly affected based on the academic departmental structure within a college or university. For instance, if a university has more and larger departments in social sciences, the faculty and student ratio tends to be larger than that in engineering schools. Therefore, the researcher analyzed the faculty and student ratios at the departmental level, which was calculated based on the number of undergraduate enrollment divided by full-time faculty members excluding dual appointment and adjunct faculty.

In general, the faculty-to-student ratio is smaller in national research universities than private institutions. Since the faculty-to-student ratios are regulated by the institutional and programmatic approval system by the Ministry of Education, a small sample of institutions is indicative of the whole. Between 2007 and 2009, engineering departments tended to have a relatively small faculty-to-student ratio of 1:7; the ratio increased to 1:20 in economics departments (National Research University 1 and National Research University 2). By contrast, among the sampled private institutions the faculty-to-student ratio was around 1:30 in engineering departments (Private Research University 1, Private Institute of Technology 1, and Private Institute of Technology 2). In one case the ratio increased to 1:46 in an undergraduate economics department at Private Research University 1. Albeit a rare example, one academic department had the ratio of 1:70 at Private Comprehensive University 1.

Although faculty’s teaching load would be another commonly referenced indicator related to educational quality, it was rarely analyzed in a large majority of the internal self-evaluation and external accreditation review reports. Only two private teaching colleges identified teaching load in their self-evaluation reports. At Private
Teaching College 1, on average full professors taught 8.5 hours, associate professors did 9.6 hours, and lecturers did 10.8 hours per week. However, there was a wide discrepancy between the maximum and minimum teaching load within a faculty status. For instance, among full professors, the maximum teaching load was 13.2 hours while the minimum was 3 hours. At Private Teaching College 2, teaching load was capped to 9 hours per week regardless of faculty status. 15

Instead of being concerned about the faculty-to-student ratio and teaching load, Japanese accreditation reviews put more emphasis on the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty members. For instance, the percentage tends to be smaller in general education courses partially because adjunct faculty members teach most of them. In most sampled colleges and universities, more than 70% of major level courses were taught by full-time faculty members. At Private Teaching College 2, 100% of advanced studies were taught by full-time professors and the college presented this high figure as evidence of the quality of their education in their self-evaluation report.

Faculty Interest in Research and Teaching

So far the analysis on educational quality was at the organizational level by exploring faculty engagement with instructional development activities and faculty teaching conditions such as faculty-to-student ratios and teaching loads. In contrast, this section changes the focus of analysis at the individual faculty level by considering their interest in research and teaching, which may affect the quality of undergraduate education.

15 Japanese colleges and universities calculate teaching load by applying different definitions of “class instruction hours.” Therefore, the researcher re-calculated the original teaching load in the self-evaluation reports into “actual hours” in this dissertation.
According to international studies on academic professions, a larger percentage of professors are interested in research in Japan than in the United States and other countries (Arimoto & Ehara 1996). In other words, Japanese professors lack an interest in teaching. This phenomenon appears to have been profound across different types of colleges and universities, especially during the massification era of the 1990s. Critics purported that professors at small colleges put more energy toward research as if their college tried to become a “mini” University of Tokyo (Sakakibara 1981). In the field research interviews, the researcher further investigated qualitative information about faculty interest in research and teaching, which may affect the quality of undergraduate education.

**Table 21: Are Faculty Members Interested More in Research or Teaching?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The faculty preferred research to teaching at half of sample colleges and universities (n=5). This tendency was particularly significant at the three national research universities. Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3 stressed, “If a faculty member cannot produce research, that faculty cannot survive at our university.
And again, ‘education’ means graduate education in our university.” At National Research University 2, “The faculty are definitely devoted to research, and not necessarily to teaching,” emphasized, Faculty Member B, and he also confessed, “Fortunately, our university is selective on student admission and students can follow faculty instructions quite well even if pedagogy is not that sophisticated.” At National Research University 1, Faculty Member A analyzed, “According to our faculty survey, the faculty spent 70% of their time on their research. That amount seems normal to me.”

Different from those national universities, at Private Research University 1, “Our faculty put efforts on both research and teaching as fifty-fifty. You (the interviewer) seem surprised by that because our university is quite research-oriented. But still, faculty members do care about the quality of undergraduate education,” Middle Management Staff B offered passionately.

At three less research-intensive private colleges and universities, faculty and senior administration had different views on faculty interest (Private Institute of Technology 2, Private Teaching College 1, and Private Teaching College 3). The first perspective viewed that in general faculty members were fundamentally interested in research either at research universities or teaching colleges. “Because the faculty members are trained as researchers, they still believe that their job performance is evaluated by research productivity,” pointed out Special Assistant to the President A at Private Institute of Technology 2. Provost B at Private Comprehensive University 2 disappointedly confessed, “I am ashamed to say this, but some of our faculty members avoid teaching responsibility by saying ‘I am busy with my research.’ That is very irresponsible of them when our admission selectivity has been declining.”
On the contrary, the second perspective was that the senior administration was making an effort to re-direct faculty interest to teaching through a job interview section dedicated to teaching. Three sample institutions asked faculty candidates to conduct a mock classroom during the selection process (Private Teaching College 1, Private Teaching College 2, and Private Institute of Technology 2). Even the fairly research-oriented private institute of technology has put more emphasis on teaching during the faculty appointment process. Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology explained the detail, “Many candidates see us as a research university, and tend to assume that high research productivity is expected at our institution. However, we clarify with faculty candidates that the institutional priority is teaching, because we want a faculty member who can really be responsible for quality teaching. We are better off clarifying our institutional expectation for teaching during a job interview to avoid misunderstandings with faculty candidates” (Private Institute of Technology 1). Faculty Member C shared an informal practice in the search for qualified candidates at Private Teaching College 1, “Actually, we try to avoid hiring a faculty candidate who has a record of significant research productivity because we know that this type of candidate may stay here only a few years and move on to a larger research university. Realistically speaking, our college wants good faculty retention.”

So far, the line of analysis has been based on the institutional type. However, faculty interest cannot always be predicted by institutional characteristics given that faculty members move to different types of higher education institutions. At national universities and colleges, the faculty retirement age is earlier than in private institutions. Therefore, many retired professors at national institutions often transfer to private
colleges and universities. Obviously, faculty members from national universities often maintain a higher aspiration for research, even when they are newly appointed at a private teaching institution.

In fact, two interviewees at two private institutions came from a nearby national research university. Formerly a professor at a national university, Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1 admitted, “There are quite a number of senior faculty members who came to our institution after their retirement from a national university. So it is not easy to re-direct their interest from research to teaching” (Private Comprehensive University 1). Coming from a national research university, Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 still maintained a classic relationship research and teaching, “I strongly believe that faculty members must teach what they are researching on. Therefore, if a faculty member cannot conduct decent research, that faculty is probably a weak teacher.”

Although research and teaching are often viewed as conflicting, some faculty members could handle both fairly well. Middle Management Staff A at Private Research University B indicated, “Faculty members who are excellent in research are often excellent in teaching as well. Those faculty members are just purely capable in doing anything.” At Private Institute of Technology 1 Senior Administrator C also echoed, “Quite interestingly, faculty members who are strong in research can also teach really well. Good faculty members are fine. The problem is how to improve poorly performing faculty members.”
Faculty Performance Evaluation

Up to this point it has become apparent that even though the sampled institutions tried to coordinate organizational efforts to improve educational quality, individual faculty members clung to the convention of privileging research activities. The faculty personnel review should shape the alignment between the organizational efforts and individual faculty interest. To understand the disconnection between the organizational efforts and individual faculty interests, the current study investigates faculty personnel evaluation as a key to mediate the discrepancy.

Questions of faculty performance have been discussed for a long time. Mass media often criticizes professors as stagnant, with no rigorous evaluation system compared to the corporate world. The conventional faculty promotion and tenure review process occurs at the departmental-level, owned and operated by individual academic departments, exclusive and often political. However, due to new public management policy reforms and accountability pressure, faculty performance evaluation has gradually been implemented in colleges and universities (Shimada, Okui, & Hayashi 2009). Have the sampled institutions implemented such an evaluation? If so, is it really rigorous?

Analysis of Accreditation Documents

The three accreditation agencies investigate the integrity of the faculty promotion and tenure review process. In the self-evaluation reports, all the sampled colleges and universities explained the faculty personnel review policies and procedures, commonly evaluating faculty performance in research, teaching, internal college service, and
external service. The external accreditation review reports primarily checked the transparency and appropriate operation in the faculty personnel review process, and simply ratified what was described in the self-evaluation reports.

Faculty performance evaluation is considered more rigorous than the conventional faculty promotion and tenure review in Japanese higher education. Put another way, the Japanese faculty performance evaluation can be considered somewhat equivalent to “post-tenure review” in American higher education.

Although the external accreditation review reports did not pay attention to faculty performance evaluation, several universities in the sample described their efforts in the self-evaluation reports. National Research University 1 (2007) was piloting a faculty performance evaluation system. National Research University 2 (2009) developed the institution-wide policy on faculty performance evaluation and was about to proceed toward departmental implementations. Although the deans and department chairs were expected to use faculty performance evaluation results to be reflected on faculty salary and other benefits, the department heads used the performance results to provide faculty awards. This was presumably in response to their sensitivity to faculty resistance against the performance evaluation. Private Research University 1 (2008) created a faculty research performance database, but it was used primarily for accountability purposes, although the implementation of a faculty performance evaluation was under consideration by the cabinet according to their internal self-evaluation report. Private Institute of Technology 1 (2010) had implemented post-tenure reviews on a five-year cycle, but the self-evaluation did not describe any tangible impact. The institute also created a faculty research outcome database, but used it for grant
applications, not necessarily for their faculty performance review.

**Analysis of Research Interviews**

In the accreditation documents, details regarding the implementation and rigor of faculty performance evaluation at the sampled colleges and universities remained unclear. Therefore, the researcher continued to investigate the topic with the interviewees.

**Table 22: Has a Faculty Performance Evaluation System Been Implemented at Your Institution?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Conventional Tenure Review</th>
<th>Sporadic implementation</th>
<th>Performance-based faculty evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were different forms of faculty review and evaluation at the institution level and the department level among sample colleges and universities. Only one college had implemented a college-wide performance-based faculty evaluation system (Private Teaching College 2). “In our college, the president develops annual goals for the entire college, and he evaluates the deans based on their accomplishment of the annual goals. In the same way the deans evaluate their faculty performance based on student
achievement on learning outcomes. It is like a Management by Objectives approach,” explained Special Assistant to the President B at Private Teaching College 2, and he continued:

By the way, student learning outcomes are set at the institution level and some are translated into the program level. Results of student surveys on learning outcomes are one of the most substantive indicators for the performance-based faculty evaluation. The result can be reflected on the faculty salary and bonus. As you may know, our faculty evaluation here is a rare case compared to other places, which still maintain a seniority-based faculty pay scale. In my view, our college has been able to implement the radical faculty performance evaluation system mostly due to the strong leadership of our college president. Also, our college is small and so the president can influence a lot of things (Private Teaching College 2).

The rest of the sample institutions maintained conventional faculty tenure review that evaluated faculty activities on research, teaching, and service. It was not necessarily as rigorous as the performance-based faculty evaluation system at the aforementioned private teaching college. Middle Management Staff B at Private Research University confessed, “Realistically speaking, we don’t know whether our university can implement a performance-based faculty evaluation system. It would be very controversial.”

All the sample institutions were conducting a student course evaluation, but it was not linked to faculty tenure review (National Research University 3, Private Comprehensive University 1, Private Comprehensive University 2, Private Institute of Technology 2, and Private Teaching College 1). Provost B at Private Comprehensive University 2 explained the reason, “When the university was implementing the student course evaluation, the faculty was very resistant and skeptical about the use of the student course evaluation results. Therefore, the previous president promised the faculty that
the results for faculty personnel evaluation would not be used. So course evaluation results are only for instructional improvements; the responsibility really rests on the individual faculty member.”

Although the student course evaluation was not for faculty tenure review, it was used for faculty teaching awards (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, Private Institute of Technology 1, and Private Teaching College 3). Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 claimed, “Using the student course evaluation for faculty personnel evaluation is controversial. But giving teaching awards is more acceptable among our faculty. We would like to provide an incentive for the faculty to put more efforts into teaching.” The Provost C at Private Teaching College recounted a similar practice. “We give teaching awards for faculty members who had a high score on the student course evaluation. Then, we ask those distinguished teaching professors to demonstrate their classroom instruction to the other faculty members at an instructional improvement forum.” At two national research universities, some academic departments use the evaluations to provide feedback to faculty members on their teaching. Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 explained the approach, “Student course evaluation is not for a faculty personnel evaluation per say. We provide an analysis report of the student course evaluation. It summarizes scores for each faculty member and also provides mean scores to compare their results with the institutional average. Many departments ask individual faculty members to submit an improvement plan based on their result.” Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 also responded, “The student course evaluation for the faculty personnel evaluation is for program level improvements. In some academic departments, when a faculty member
receives unfavorable results, the chair asks that faculty to submit a plan for their instructional improvements. And, I know that another department reflects the result of student course evaluation on faculty bonus.”

Presidential Leadership

In addition to faculty efforts, in recent policy discussions presidential leadership is often identified as a critical factor to improve educational quality at colleges and universities. However, traditionally the president at a college or a university has been an honorary position, which means a scholarly renowned senior professor becomes the president before his or her retirement. At most national and private universities, presidential candidates are usually internal, and elected by faculty vote at numerous colleges and universities. Usually, presidents have a fixed term of four years and the term can be renewed once or twice. After presidency, the president either retires or returns to his or her academic department. Expectations for presidential leadership are limited to “good communication skills” with academic departments to build consensus on various decision making. As an exception, at one small private college the presidency is a family inheritance without faculty vote and a term limit. In this case, the president tends to have more power over faculty. Still in either case, the presidency has not evolved as a professional career in Japanese higher education.

New public management reforms have been pushing around the idea of strong presidential leadership for institutional survival and increased efficiency (Higher Education Council 1998). The corporatization of national colleges and universities in 2004 provides an example of giving more power to the presidents. It also created
multiple vice president positions as leverage to presidential leadership against faculty resistance (Ministry of Education 2003). How have those new public management reforms been effective at sample colleges and universities?

Analysis of Accreditation Documents

Accreditation agencies set a review standard on institutional administration in order to investigate the policy and procedures on institutional administration, appointment procedures for the president, vice president(s), and deans, articulation of responsibility and authority of senior administrators, institutional audit structure, and training for management and administrative staff.

External review reports primarily checked whether the sampled institutions established the policies and procedures on institutional administration and shared them with institutional constituents. On the topic of presidential leadership and the decision-making process, a review criterion was placing support staff for the president such as multiple vice presidents (e.g. National Research University 1, National Research University 2, National Research University 3, and Comprehensive Private University 1), special assistants to the president (e.g. Private Institute of Technology 2 and Private Teaching College 2), or creating the presidential cabinet (e.g. Private Teaching College 1).

By contrast the internal self-evaluation reports by the sampled institutions provided more substantial information on presidential leadership and organizational decision-making process. The reports illustrated the creation of institutional vision (e.g. National Research University 2, 2009 and Private Institute of Technology 1, 2010) and
strategic plan (Private Comprehensive University 1, 2007) as evidence for strong presidential leadership and effective institutional administration. In self-evaluation National Research University 1 (2007) and National Research University 3 (2007) utilized the existing annual institutional goals and review process under the institutional performance budgeting process implemented after the quasi-corporatization in 2004.

**Analysis of Research Interviews**

The above analysis of accreditation documents provided mostly structural matters in presidential leadership. In order to gather substantive information on presidential leadership, the researcher inquired interviewees about their observation on the topic.

*Table 23: Does the President Exercise Strong Leadership at Your Institution?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Partially</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before discussing presidential leadership, the conditions of presidential appointment and terms at sample institutions were explored. A majority of presidents (n=10) were internal candidates and they were selected by faculty vote. The term of presidency was
fixed to four years, and even though renewal(s) were possible, many presidents ended with one term.

However, there were a few exceptions. National Research University 2 changed its presidential term in response to quasi-corporatization, and Senior Administrator A explained:

Along with the corporatization, the Ministry of Education implemented the six-year-cycle institutional performance budgeting. Back then, the presidential term of our university was four years. So what happened was that the second president after the corporatization became responsible for the remaining two years of the institutional plan that was developed by the previous president. Senior administration and faculty representatives discussed, and we concluded that the two-year gap was unreasonable. So we changed the presidential term to six years to match the institutional planning cycle (National Research University 3).

Most presidents (n=9) were recruited from within, a predominant practice in Japanese higher education. Only two institutions appointed the current president from outside. Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 explained, “Our college has been appointing the presidents from outside, especially from a local national research university. To my knowledge, historically our president tends to be a dean or vice president from that university.” Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology 1 told a unique case, “Our current president came from the corporate world. That is a rare case for our institution, and it only happened because the previous president left during his presidency. And in fact, our current president back then served as a member of the board of trustees. So he had some knowledge about the administration of our institution.”

Even before discussing the leadership of their president, most interviewees pointed out that faculty autonomy was very strong at their institution. Consensus
building between the senior administration and the faculty was particularly critical. Middle Management Staff A at Private Research University 1 represented a general phenomenon in Japanese higher education, “Our president communicates with the deans to build consensus within their school. When there is opposition from a school, the president gathers the deans and he modifies the original plan.” At National Research University 3, “Our president forms various committees and delegates supervision to the vice presidents whom then establish consensus with faculties,” pointed out Senior Administrator A. Such extreme attention to consensus building in the decision making process was common at other sample colleges and universities.

A few interviewees shared their observation on the effect of presidential turnovers on their leadership style (National Research University 1, Private Comprehensive University 1, and Private Institute of Technology 2). Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 explained, “The leadership of our current president is extremely consensus-based. It is a rebound from the previous president who exercised a fairly strong leadership over the faculty. In my view, such a strong leadership was necessary in the transitional period of the corporatization. But the faculty could not put up with the strong president’s leadership any longer, so they then voted for a ‘moderate’ candidate as the next president.” A similar leadership change occurred at Private Institute of Technology 2 as Senior Administrator C elaborated:

The last president exercised a fairly strong leadership to redesign an institution-wide curriculum. His style was to form his plan first, and then implemented it even in light of some faculty opposition. Such strong leadership was necessary during the student enrollment shortfall crisis back then. But, as a result, the faculty became cautious and skeptical about the senior administration. So now the current president takes a more democratic leadership approach to amend the relationship between the senior administration and faculty (Private Institute of Technology 2).
The president’s professional background also affected his leadership style. Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 commented, “Our current president is a psychologist. So in my observation, he is so attentive to the details in the organization. Well, I must confess my own bias as a sociologist. I tend to look at a large picture.” A different case was reported by Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology 1, “In general, our current president is quick to respond to issues and make decisions. I think it is because he has a corporate management background, but that does not necessarily mean he exercises strong leadership over the faculty. Simply putting it, our current president is more responsive compared to previous presidents with an academic background.”

Presidential leadership approaches differed between small teaching colleges and other large universities. Private Teaching College 2 implemented a performance-based faculty evaluation; here the president’s leadership was fairly extensive over a wide range of organizational decision making. Special Assistant to the President B addressed:

Our president exercises a very strong leadership, and he can do so because he is one of the family members owning this private college. He intervenes in curriculum matters, and the bottom line is to fill the enrollment seats. He has initiated many educational programs for example, service-learning. His leadership approach is to create a short-term taskforce with several faculty members and make sure to include one administrative staff for each taskforce, because the faculty often goes off on tangents in discussions (Private Teaching College 2).

At other two other private teaching colleges, a different approach for strong presidential leadership emerged through building his cabinet team. Provost C at Private Teaching College 3 carefully stated:

Conventionally, the senior administration used to ask for faculty input first, and then create an institutional plan. But now our current president has established
his own cabinet, develops his plan first, and then asks the faculty for feedback. We try to make this leadership approach happen slowly and gently because it is a very sensitive topic for the faculty. But my observation is that the faculty will begin accepting a stronger leadership by the president as the institutional survival becomes critical (Private Teaching College 3).

Different from the three private teaching colleges, at larger sampled universities, a planning process was already established, which the president utilized in order to exercise his leadership. “We created an institutional strategic plan, and having that official document allows the president to exercise his leadership in the implementation process,” Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1 pointed out. Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 explained, “In our university, the president exercises his leadership through institutional mid-term planning. During the formation and implementation of the plan, the president works closely with the deans.” Symbolic leadership was addressed at National Research University 2 as Faculty Member B illustrated:

Naturally, our president’s leadership is limited in this big research university. But, our president exercises his leadership in a different way by incorporating his institutional vision at various occasions. This is not the stereotypical management leadership that people often imagine, but more like a symbolic leadership. As the president expresses his institutional vision at school events and ceremonies, the deans began to interpret the president’s vision and gradually apply that into their educational curriculum (National Research University 2).

Organizational Culture

In Japanese higher education faculty members have strong autonomy over institutional administration, owing to the inheritance of the German University model. Critics view faculty autonomy as a function of the ivory tower and status-quo, which fails to meet ever evolving social needs. In the context of the quality assurance systems, accreditation
agencies often blame the organizational culture of colleges: The faculty does not care about accreditation, and/or the president does not exercise strong leadership (Kawaguchi 2009). Organizational culture is the area of studies often identifies the limits of new public management (i.e. rational rules and market competitions) and illustrates the influence of new institutionalism (i.e. informal behaviors and institutional legitimacy).

**Analysis of Accreditation Documents**

The accreditation standard on institutional administration includes a subsidiary criterion on the institutional decision making process, some of which has determining effects on organizational culture.

Regarding the organizational decision making process, in the self-evaluation reports most sampled colleges and universities addressed the structure and make-up of the board, faculty senate, and external advisory board and the frequency at which each governance group meets. The narratives from these reports briefly described a good balance between “top-down” by senior administration and “bottom-up” by academic departments to reach consensus in the decision making process. In general the external review reports simply utilized the descriptions in the internal self-evaluation reports, partly due to the difficulty in conducting detailed analysis. Still, Japanese University Accreditation Association provided a few critical feedback such as “having too many meetings became a significant burden for the president and vice president” to Private Comprehensive University 2 (2011a) and “consensus building within the institution seemed a challenge due to a lack of organizational coordination” to Private Teaching College 3 (2008b).

204
Analysis of Research Interviews

Related to organizational culture the previous field research interviews confirmed that faculty had strong autonomy and presidential leadership was limited across most colleges and universities in the sample with an exception of Private Teaching College 2. Aside from these aspects, this section attempted to gather more information on organizational culture through the institutional decision making process.

Table 24: What Is the General Organization Culture, especially regarding the Power Relation between the President and Faculty at Your Institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Strong Faculty Autonomy</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Strong President leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most sample institutions emphasized that faculty autonomy was prominent in their organization culture. Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology 1 stressed, “Our organizational culture is very democratic. The faculty senate can influence board member decisions. Everyone seems being able to participate in decision making in some way, and that delays the process. Many faculty members usually look for individual interests over institutional wellness.” At Private Research University 1 Middle Management Staff B revealed a little frustration, “If there is a small
opposition from the faculty, the senior administration tries to explain every single detail about their plan until reaching a full consensus. This takes a lot of time, and depending on the issue, students suffer from the slow decision making process.”

Why did many sample colleges and universities almost obsessively insist upon the importance of consensus building? Provost B at Private Comprehensive University 2 represented a basic reason, “Of course, building a consensus across the university is time consuming. But, we need to invest the time because otherwise, a plan could fail in the implementation process.”

Bureaucracy was another element of organizational culture as Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1 explained, “Overall, the organization culture of our university is very bureaucratic. If you skip a process, you get lots of criticism, and that hinders the president’s leadership.” In essence, consensus building boils down to the interactions between goals and means (Private Teaching College 2 and Private Institute of Technology 1). “In my view, both senior administration and faculty have the same goals, but they sometimes have different means,” summarized Special Assistant to the President B at Private Teaching College 2.

There was some indication that the conventional consensus-based organizational culture was gradually changing at some sample institutions. Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 explained, “Through the corporatization [of national colleges and universities] our president gained his own special budget to implement his own initiatives. That lured some academic departments to follow the president’s plan.” Senior Administrator B at National Research University 3 also reported a similar trend, “In my observation, responsibility for educational quality is shifting from academic
departments to the president. I mean, the departments are still responsible for their own curriculum and instruction. However, the accreditation system and institutional performance evaluation [for national institutions] prescribe that the president is to bear the ultimate responsibility for overall educational quality at our university” (National Research University 3).

At Private Teaching College 1, “Beginning in 2009, the president organized a strategic council consisting of a dozen of division heads. The council does not wait for the faculty to reach full consensus, but carefully asks the deans to establish a baseline for consensus among their faculty,” illustrated Faculty Member C. Organizational dynamics between the president and faculty changed at Private Institute of Technology 2 as the faculty began to notice their limitations on decision making. Senior Administrator C expressed a mixed feeling:

Our institution is highly decentralized across three campuses. There are some similar academic programs and some of them seem duplicated. Therefore, the senior administration has been encouraging those departments to make more distinctions among those programs. But, the faculty members are scattered across the different campuses and none of the departments have an institutional perspective. So those departments are now expecting the senior administration to provide a direction for them (Private Institute of Technology 2).

**Accreditation Review Process**

The impact of accreditation has been examined in terms of the following two aspects. Policy makers tend to critique the impact of accreditation by looking at the number of institutions failed to gain accreditation. They question particularly some small private teaching colleges gaining accreditation while becoming open admission or even losing student enrollment. Accreditation agencies put a significant attention on the utilization
of accreditation results and review comments. However, accreditation documents tend to languish until the next round of accreditation reviews at a large majority of colleges and universities.

Apart from the narrow attention indicated above, the impact of accreditation reviews should be examined more comprehensively. The researcher conducted field research interviews to explore the quality of internal self-evaluation and external site-visit review at the sampled colleges and universities in addition to the validity of the accreditation results and review comments perceived by the interviews.

Internal Self-Evaluation on the areas of Improvement

Accreditation agencies often allege that the effectiveness of accreditation reviews depends on the quality of an internal self-evaluation conducted by a college or university. The agencies particularly emphasize the importance of addressing both strengths and weaknesses in a self-evaluation report. However, it is uncomfortable for colleges and universities to address areas of improvement (i.e. weaknesses), while trying to pass an accreditation review. This is a common problem with many accreditation systems in Western countries (Harvey & Newton 2004). New institutionalism studies often identify that colleges and universities conduct self-study with cosmetic intentions (Newton 2002). How have the sample colleges and universities handled describing the areas of improvement in their internal self-evaluation?
Table 25: Did Your Institution Honestly Describe the Areas of Improvement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A majority of sample institutions (n=8) were inclined to put more emphasis on their areas of strength than weakness. Some interviewees emphasized that the balance between the two was important in writing their self-evaluation report. Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 summed, “It is not necessarily hiding weaknesses, but not revealing everything. It is a balance.” Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 estimated, “Roughly speaking, in terms of the volume, we identified strengths and areas of improvement with a ratio of 3:1 in our self-evaluation report.”

Another issue involved how to present the areas of improvement by addressing “solvable problems” with improvement plans (National Research University 2, Private Research University 1, and Private Institute of Technology 1). Middle Management Staff A at Private Research University 1 explained, “When we described the areas of improvement, we also explained our improvement plans. This way we can keep track of the progress of improvements and collect evidence for a future accreditation review.”

Sample institutions demonstrated different approaches in describing the areas of
improvement in their self-evaluation report. A couple of institutions proactively worked on their self-evaluation. “Our college genuinely took the self-evaluation as an opportunity for us to explore the areas of improvement,” told Provost C at Private Teaching College 3. Similarly, the senior administration at two private universities proactively took advantage of describing areas of weaknesses as a driver to break the status-quo within academic departments (Private Research University 1 and Private Comprehensive University 1). Private Research University 1 was particularly remarkable as Middle Management Staff B explained, “Unlike other universities, we conduct a self-evaluation every year, not just for the big accreditation review every seven years. Therefore, many administrators and faculty members are aware of the evaluation and improvement process.”

By contrast, National Research University 3 worked on their self-evaluation reactively. “Our senior administrators reacted to the accreditation review as if it was an individual performance evaluation. Therefore, they became sensitive in describing the areas of improvement,” reluctantly confessed Senior Administrator A.

Two other institutions created two self-evaluation reports: One for the accreditation review agency, and the other for internal use. “This [publishing the two reports] may sound like a dual standard. But, simply we include more data analysis in our own internal report. That is all. You know that there is a page limit for the self-evaluation report for the accreditation agency,” specified Faculty at National Research University 1. At Private Institute of Technology 1, Senior Administrator B elaborated, “We cannot fail the accreditation review, and that is why we are selective about what we write in our self-evaluation report for an external use. But, we are more
tolerant with addressing the areas of improvement more extensively in our internal report.

The purpose is to promote improvements.” Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 provided an acute insight:

In the self-evaluation it was important to address solvable problems for our university and also obvious problems for external reviewers. Especially, the latter type of problems is critical because if our senior administration missed catching such problems obvious even for the external reviewers, it implies the incompetency of our senior administration. Furthermore, there are no specific guidelines for describing the areas of improvement in the accreditation review guidebook. Thus, the interpretation of the areas of improvement is wide open to individual colleges and universities (National Research University 2).

External Site-Visit Review

External site-visits are to ensure the validity of internal self-evaluations for accreditation reviews. However, some critics question whether external reviewers receive sufficient training because the accreditation review was established fairly recently, in 2004 (Ehara 2009). Furthermore, new institutionalism studies suggest that colleges and universities conduct “rehearsals” on how to appropriately correspond to external reviewers, a practice which may skew the results (Newton 2002). How have sample colleges and universities viewed the effectiveness of their external review?
Table 26: Did the External Site-Visit Team Work Effectively in Your Accreditation Review?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, there were two opposite responses regarding the effectiveness of external reviews. Half of the sample institutions (n=5) found that their external review was superficial and unprepared (National Research University 1, National Research University 3, Private Research University 1, Private Teaching College 1, and Private Teaching College 3). Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3 expressed his frustration, “The external reviewers did not read our self-evaluation report fully and asked questions irrelevant to the scope of the institutional accreditation review. It was troublesome for us to answer such arbitrary questions.” At Research University 1 Faculty Member A revealed a lack of in-depth review, “I understand that the external reviewers were keen on looking for evidence during the site-visit. They found one of our admission programs to be a good practice and proved that our university meets that standard. But, quite honestly, when you carefully look at that program, only a small number of students were involved. I cannot help but questioning about the rigor of the external reviewers.”
External reviewers are supposed to have read the self-evaluation report and have provided questions to the institution prior to the visit. However, Middle Management Staff B at Private Research University resentfully explained, “The external review team provided us over 200 questions. Not all of them were quite relevant to the accreditation review, and many questions could be answered if they had really read our self-evaluation report. Believe or not, there were also so many typos in their questions. This raises a concern about the quality control of the external review by the accreditation agency.”

Opposite to the aforementioned ineffective practices, four sample institutions found that their site-visit was fairly substantial and meaningful (National Research University 2, Private Comprehensive University 1, Private Institute of Technology 2, and Private Teaching College 2). In those cases, external reviewers carefully read the self-evaluation reports and asked relevant questions to clarify issues during their visit. “The site-visit members carefully read our self-evaluation report and asked over 150 questions that were mostly about students. During the site-visit, they covered relevant issues addressed in our self-evaluation report,” responded Special Assistant to the President B at Private Teaching College 2. Similarly, Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1 was impressed, “Site-visit members did a thorough review. They carefully read our self-evaluation report and provided relevant questions before their visit. During the visit, the members looked into even exam questions in some academic courses. They also paid careful attention to the areas of improvement we described.”

Aside from a dichotomous analysis of whether the external review was “superficial” or “thorough,” there were a few other practical issues. First, a two-
three-day visit was insufficient to review a large research university with multiple campuses (National Research University 2 and Private Research University 1). Second, the type of data in the self-evaluation report influenced the extent and quality of the external review. “The site-visit team could easily confirm quantitative data, but not qualitative data such as quality of learning or campus culture. So on these points, their feedback were not really useful,” criticized Provost C at Private Teaching College 3. Third, external reviewers’ biases jeopardized the quality of the site-visit review. “Through the external reviewers’ questions and comments, we could see their biases. Most of the comments were based on the reviewer's expertise and judgment. The accreditation agency better train external reviewers more seriously,” critiqued Middle Management Staff B at Private Research University 1.

Accreditation Results and Review Comments

The validity of accreditation results is a critical factor because colleges and universities build their continuous improvement plans upon the results. From a theoretical perspective new public management studies advocate continuous improvement based on the accreditation result and review comments. However, if colleges and universities do not see their accreditation result as valid and reasonable, would that really happen? In the first cycle of Japanese accreditation reviews, more than several colleges and universities submitted a request for re-evaluation of their initial accreditation review result. It occurred mostly because of a different understanding or interpretation of accreditation standards and governmental regulations. However, according to accreditation review documents, none of the sample colleges and universities submitted a
re-evaluation request. Although this implies that they did not have a serious problem with their accreditation results. Still, how did they perceive the validity and meaningfulness of their accreditation results?

Table 27: Were There Any Discrepant Views between the Accreditation Agency and Your Institution regarding the Review Result?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A large majority of the sample colleges and universities (n=8) had no complaints with their accreditation review result. In fact, many interviewees confessed that the result was predictable. “The reviewers cannot say anything beyond what is described in our self-evaluation report, because they do not really want to take the risk of making a sensitive judgment,” explained Faculty Member A at National Research University 1.

However, there was a misunderstanding between a private teaching college and its accreditation agency. Special Assistant B to the President at Private Teaching College 2 addressed, “We set the early admission enrollment quota based on the regulation from the Ministry of Education, while the accreditation agency applied a different standard to the early admission quota.”
The interviewer asked for more detail about how internal constituents at the sampled colleges viewed their accreditation result. Almost all interviewees responded that the senior administration and faculty did not have different or conflicting views on the accreditation result at their institution. However, this was mostly because a large majority of faculty members were unaware of the accreditation review itself. “Well, if we received an unanticipated negative result, there may have been some arguments between the senior administration and the faculty. But, fortunately we did not have negative feedback from the accreditation agency,” expressed a mixed feeling Provost C at Private Teaching College 3.

Continuous Improvement Efforts in Undergraduate Education

Controversial debates over the effectiveness of accreditation have taken place. In order for a comprehensive analysis, this section begins with the analysis of accreditation documents in order to provide an overview of organizational structure and process of continuous quality improvement at the sampled colleges and universities. The analysis of field research interviews identified more concrete issues including key institutional data for accreditation reviews, improvement efforts by the president and faculty.

Analysis of Accreditation Documents

Continuous quality improvement is a subsidiary criterion under the institutional administration, and accreditation agencies review the organizational structure and procedures for self-evaluation, internal data management system, disclosure of the reports,
external reviews especially for the programmatic self-evaluation, and use of the self-evaluation and accreditation review for continuous improvement.

Establishing an internal data management system to support self-evaluation was a condition for continuous improvement, however the external review reports did not necessarily expected colleges and universities to invest on developing a “state of the art” data management system. In fact, only the research universities in the sample had established a fairly extended data management system, and institutional data were accessible via websites (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, National Research University 3, and Private Research University 1). As an advanced example, Private Research University 1 (2008) developed the institutional key performance indicators and applied a Balanced-Score Card approach in their divisional self-evaluation. The rest of the private colleges and universities in the sample did not have an advanced data management system, but regularly published reports related to accreditation reviews. That was sufficient to pass the external review so long as they managed institutional data in an organized manner.

In the self-evaluation reports all the sampled colleges and universities described that they utilized self-evaluation for next year’s institutional planning, but did not provide substantial explanation other than illustrating a generic organizational planning process. Still, two sampled institutions provided examples of the utility of their self-evaluation for continuous improvement in an anecdotal manner by pointing “the enhancement of the teaching and learning center” (National Research University 1, 2007) and “the improvement of public relations with foreign scholars and students (National Research University 2, 2009). Most of the national research universities and private teaching
colleges in the sample could not illustrate the examples of continuous improvement based on accreditation reviews because they went through the accreditation review for the first time administered by the National Institution for Academic Degree and University Evaluation and the Japanese Institution for Higher Education Evaluation beginning from 2004.

By contrast, the Japanese University Accreditation Agency has been conducting institutional peer reviews (i.e. a prototype of the current Japanese accreditation system) since the 1990s. Therefore, most of the sampled private institutions reviewed under the accreditation agency illustrated improvements made based on the previous institutional peer review. Although each institution received multiple improvement recommendations, common problems were related to the readjustments of the student enrollment size (Private Research University 1, Private Comprehensive University 1, Private Institute of Technology 1, and Private Teaching College 3), academic program closures (Private Comprehensive University 1 and Private Teaching College 3), and campus facilities (Private Comprehensive University 2).

Key Institutional Data for Accreditation Review

Accreditation agencies have been encouraging colleges and universities to collect evidence for accreditation reviews and to make improvements based on numeric data. This rational model has been idealized by new public management policies and studies. Some critics warn that such type of reliance on numeric data potentially dismisses immeasurable activities on campus. Recognizing such challenges, through the research interviews the researcher explored what types of institutional data were important for the
accreditation review at sample colleges and universities.

Table 28: What Types of Data Did the Administration and Faculty Pay Attention to in Your Accreditation Review?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of data that the sample institutions paid attention to:</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Admission</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Placement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-out Rate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Admission</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Age Distribution</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty-student ratio</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most interviewees reported that the senior administration and faculty paid attention to various data within their institution. Data on undergraduate admission and job placement rates were commonly indicated across different sample institutions (Private Research University 1, Private Comprehensive University 1, Private Comprehensive University 2, Private Institute of Technology 1, Private Institute of Technology 2, Private Teaching College 1, Private Teaching College 2, and PreTeCol3). Provost A at Private Comprehensive University responded, “In the past, our university enrolled more students than the appropriate size regulated by the Ministry of Education. Since then, we have been carefully watching our enrollment size.” At Private Comprehensive University 2, Provost B admitted, “The job placement rate is crucial for student recruitment because parents and high school students look at the job placement rate very carefully and decide which institution to attend.”

One-third of the sample institutions (n=4) indicated that the student dropout rate
was also critical during their accreditation review. Provost C at Private Teaching College 3 simply said, “We are a highly tuition-dependent institution.” At Private Comprehensive University 2 Provost B explained, “People tend to misunderstand the impact of the student drop-out rate. When we say the dropout rate for the entire incoming class is 3%, it may not necessarily sound so bad. But, when you calculate it into the actual number, it is almost equivalent to the size of our economics department. Then, our senior administration and faculty realize the severity of the issue.”

Although fewer sample institutions pay attention to these data, there were other kinds of data pertinent to organizational context. Two national research universities paid more attention to graduate enrollment (National Research University 1 and National Research University 2), as the Ministry of Education had expanded graduate programs at national universities over the last few decades. Senior Administrator at National Research University 2 expressed his concern, “There are many master's students but not enough doctoral students. The graduate enrollments also affect research money and faculty appointments.” At two sample institutions, faculty age distribution was critical for their accreditation review (Private Comprehensive University 1 and Private Teaching College 3). “We have a large proportion of old faculty members, and the accreditation agency checked whether we have a reasonable faculty appointment plan,” explained Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1. Compared to the aforementioned student and faculty data, a very few institutions indicated that college constituents paid attention to institutional finance data (Private Research University 1 and Private Teaching College 3).
Surveys Related to Undergraduate Education

Under new public management reforms evidence-based improvement and data driven decision-making have been promoted. The accreditation agencies incorporate these management principles into their accreditation review. In response to those external demands, colleges and universities need to build capacity for organizing internal data systems and conducting different types of surveys. However, Japanese colleges and universities have just started modeling “institutional research” from American higher education institutions in the last several years (Honda 2011). A Japanese version of American institutional research exists within the “internal evaluation” office, the development of which varies among colleges and universities. What different kinds of surveys did sample colleges and universities conduct to enhance data-driven decision making for educational improvement?

Table 29: What Types of Surveys Have Been Conducted at Your Institution?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of survey</th>
<th>Number of Sample Institutions that conducted a listed survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student course evaluation survey</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student survey on learning experience and satisfaction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni survey</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer survey</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman survey</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission survey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman and sophomore survey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent survey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student learning outcomes survey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sampled colleges and universities conducted various types of surveys. A student course evaluation was the most common survey implemented at all the sample institutions (n=11), although the level of implementation varied from institution-wide to
A student survey on learning experience and satisfaction was also popular at the majority of sample institutions (n=6). Due to a governmental requirement, national universities have been conducting a fairly comprehensive student survey encompassing student learning experience and their college life issues on a regular basis. Private institutions also administer a similar student survey often with more emphasis on exploring student satisfactions.

Four sample institutions administered an alumni survey and an employer survey (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, National Research University 3, and Private Institute of Technology 2). Two private institutions conducted a freshman survey to explore their learning experiences (Private Comprehensive University 2 and Private Institute of Technology 2). One of them administered a student learning outcomes survey based on students’ self-reporting (Private Teaching College 2).

Although most sample institutions conducted various surveys, they did not seem to fully utilize the results for decision making or continuous improvement. At National Research University 1 Faculty Member A explained, “I know that the student affairs office conducts the student survey, but I do not really get to see the results. National universities and colleges conduct a similar student survey, but the survey design is slightly different and the results are not collected across different national institutions. So it is impossible to do benchmarking, unlike some national student surveys in the United States.” Senior Administrator C at Private Institute of Technology 2 confessed, “Well, we do conduct many surveys, but we could not really obtain some useful information out of them. I sometimes wonder whether our senior administration and
faculty really care about the survey results.” Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology 1 responded, flustered, “Let me think. Have we finished the analysis of that survey? Sorry, we are not sure.”

Still, there were a few examples of making use of different surveys. Middle Management Staff A at Private Research University 1 said, “We conducted an admission survey on newly accepted students to improve our student recruitment. I understand that many universities conduct an admission survey, but they do not make as good use of it as we do.” At National Research University 1, Faculty Member A addressed, “I know that some schools in my university conduct a student course evaluation and if a faculty member has unfavorable results, the department chair consults with that professor. However, I must emphasize that this is not the case for the rest of our schools.” At Private Teaching College 2 where the president exceptionally had strong leadership, the Special Assistant to the President B described a more consistent use of survey results across the college, “As students are assessed periodically with various surveys, faculty members cannot help but paying attention to the results. We (faculty) are evaluated by the level of student achievement on their learning outcomes.”

**Presidents’ Efforts on Educational Improvement**

According to new public management studies, college presidents are supposed to exercise leadership to promote continuous improvement based on accreditation results and review comments (National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation 2009). However, early analysis of research interviews has indicated that Japanese faculties had strong autonomy. How have the presidents at the sample colleges and universities
promoted improvements based on their accreditation result and review comments?

Accreditation reviews focused on checking the committees and other organizational structures as well as policy and procedures for the internal self-evaluation and use of the results. In the internal self-evaluation reports, the sampled colleges and universities claimed that they utilized such results in their institutional planning processes. Furthermore, research interviews explored the details about presidential efforts on educational improvement.

Table 30: Had the President Utilized Accreditation Results and Review Comments for Improvement Efforts on Undergraduate Education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Type</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost all the presidents (n=9) at sample colleges and universities made efforts on improvements based on their accreditation review results. In general, the presidents distributed improvement work through the vice presidents and deans. At four sample institutions, the president formed a committee to follow-up with academic departments over issues raised in their accreditation review comments (National Research University 1, National Research University 3, Private Research University 1, Private Comprehensive
One of the most integrated improvement processes was conducted at Private Research University 1 where the self-evaluation had been conducted annually, not just for the year of accreditation review. Middle Management Staff B explained, “The president utilizes the entire accreditation process as an improvement process. After receiving the accreditation results, the president held meetings with the deans to prioritize improvement proposals submitted by the academic units. Then, they gradually form action plans that will be incorporated in the next year’s strategic plan.”

Financial incentive was another driver to promote improvement, although rarely utilized. “Compared to other universities, our president has a fairly substantial amount in his own budget. Furthermore, the president serves as the chair of the evaluation committee in the university so at least he has a say in departmental policies and procedures. That allows the president to initiate his improvement plans based on the accreditation review results,” responded Faculty Member A at National Research University 1. However, other sample institutions used accreditation results in a more modest manner, as such the impact may not be visible in the short run. Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 commented, “Our president utilizes the accreditation result for college’s planning process. The effect of the utilization should become apparent in the mid-term progress report to the accreditation agency, if not at the next round of institutional accreditation.”

There were two sample institutions where the president did not utilize the accreditation result to develop educational improvements. Provost C at Private Teaching College 3 stated with a straight face, “Our president, and also I myself, could
not really find new or meaningful feedback from the accreditation review result.” At National Research University 2, accreditation review comments were very positive, and thus the president did not need to develop a particular improvement plan. Faculty Member B described:

> Our president did not act specifically on the accreditation result and review comments. In my view, it would be late for the president to fix issues after the accreditation review. The president actually promoted improvements while people were working on our self-evaluation. In other words, we prepared our self-evaluation report to make sure that we would not receive any critical comments from the accreditation agency. So we received a very positive review, and that is why we cannot really make use of the accreditation result for further improvements (National Research University 2).

**Faculty's Efforts on Educational Improvement**

New institutionalism studies purport that faculty ceremonially comply with accreditation reviews, which contradicts the continuous improvements through presidential strong leadership approach that new public management studies advocate. Have the faculty made any efforts on improvements at sample colleges and universities?

In the internal self-evaluation reports, the sampled colleges and universities illustrated faculty efforts on educational improvement with examples of implementing student course evaluation and promoting faculty instructional development. In the external review reports the primary focus was whether academic departments conducted internal-self evaluation and utilized their findings. By and large, the external review reports simply utilized the descriptions in the internal self-evaluation reports. In contrast, field research interviews explored how faculty members utilized the accreditation results and the review comments for educational improvement.
Faculty efforts on educational improvements based on the accreditation result and review comments were few compared with the improvement efforts made by the president at the sample institutions. A few interviewees stated that it was difficult to see improvements at the individual faculty level (National Research University 1 and Private Teaching College 2). Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 explained, “The institutional accreditation does not intend to assess the individual faculty, but rather to check whether colleges and universities comply with the institutional and programmatic approval system.”

Still, there were some examples of faculty effort at the department level (National Research University 3, Private Research University 1, and Private Comprehensive University 1). At Private Research University 1 (which conducts an annual self-study), Middle Management Staff B explained, “After the accreditation review, we asked faculty to develop and submit improvement action plans. Those

Table 31: Had Faculty Utilized Accreditation Result and Review Comments for Improvement Efforts on Undergraduate Education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>No change at the individual faculty level</th>
<th>Some changes at the departmental or other organizational level</th>
<th>Changes at the individual faculty level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
departmental plans were fed into the university-wide plan.” This represents a conventional planning approach in organizational management, but departmental efforts varied based on what kinds of accreditation review comments each department received. At National Research University 3, “Some academic departments which received comments by the accreditation review did make some changes in undergraduate education. Other than that, there may not be much of utilization of the accreditation review at the department level,” confessed Senior Administrator A. Private Institute of Technology 2 facilitated the use of the accreditation review comments through various committee works. Senior Administrator C explained:

Basically we do not see or expect individual faculty members to utilize accreditation review comments. However, we do encourage the faculty to make improvements at the school level. Also, we create various committees across our institution such as the educational improvement committee, self-evaluation committee, and university evaluation committee. Those committees are created at both institution and department levels based on a scope of the projects (Private Institute of Technology 2).

Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1 shared his insight on working with the faculty toward educational improvement, “In our university, faculty autonomy is still very strong. In order to use the accreditation for improvement, the key is how to engage faculty with improvement activities in a way that they voluntarily initiate the effort, instead of the senior administration imposing any orders.”

**Influential Factors for Improvement Efforts in Undergraduate Education**

So far the analysis of field research interviews has been conducted in terms of the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation review of each sample institution. At the end of each research interview, the researcher asked interviewees to
rank the impact of the aforementioned three factors over educational improvement efforts at their campus from the most impactful to the least. To what extent have the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation review impacted improvement efforts in undergraduate education?

**Table 32: What Is the Order of Most Influential Factors on Improvement Efforts on Undergraduate Education?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internal environment</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
<th>External environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Research University 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Comprehensive University 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Institute of Technology 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Teaching College 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: 3 = the most influential factor, 2 = the secondly most influential factor, and 1 = the least influential factor*

**External Environment of Colleges and Universities**

The external environment was the most influential factor for improvement efforts on undergraduate education at the sample colleges and universities. In this dissertation research, the external environment encompassed the components of (a) college admission and student quality, (b) competitive funding, and (c) higher education policies.

Interviewees at the three national research universities ranked the external environment as the most influential factor (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, and National Research University 3). “After the corporatization
of national universities and colleges, the budget regulation had become very strict. I am afraid that drastic and rapid budget cuts will be inevitable in the future due to the shrinking budget of the national government,” expressed Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3. Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 stated, “External funding has been guiding the direction of our internal reform policies at the university. Different from private institutions, national universities are regulated by various policies from the Ministry of Education. Any policies are tied to funding. So our administration, especially the academic affairs, pays close attention to various governmental policies.”

Four sample private institutions also ranked the external environment as the most influential factor (Private Comprehensive University 1, Private Comprehensive University 2, Private Institute of Technology 2, and Private Teaching College 3). However, their reason was quite different from the three national research universities. A large majority of interviewees at private institutions explained that they could not really predict or control the external environment (Private Research University 1, Private Comprehensive University 1, Private Comprehensive University 2, Private Institute of Technology 2, Private Teaching College 1, Private Teaching College 2, and Private Teaching College 3). Provost B at Private Comprehensive University 2 stated, “There are many factors in the external environment that we cannot control, such as the trend of the college-age population.” Quite interestingly, for the very same reason, Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology 1 ranked the external environment was the least influential factor, “We cannot control the external environment. So we have to control ourselves, the internal environment.”
Higher education policies on faculty instruction development and other academic system reforms constituted influential elements to three sample institutions (Private Comprehensive University 2, Private Institute of Technology 2, and Private Teaching College 2). Special Assistant to the President A at Private Teaching College 2 expressed:

Higher education policies become an external force for us to promote improvements within our institution. Recent policies emphasize the quality of education. As our institution is losing ground in terms of student recruitment and admission selectivity, we acknowledge that our institution really needs to prioritize teaching. So student quality is also a very influential factor on the quality of our undergraduate education (Private Institute of Technology 2).

Regarding higher education policies on governance and presidential leadership, Provost A at Private Comprehensive University A shared his wishful thoughts:

Higher education policies have a strong influence on organizational management at colleges and universities. So I wish that the Ministry of Education would implement radical reform policies such as changing the appointment system of senior administrators. Currently, the deans are selected by faculty vote at many universities. This is why the departmental and faculty autonomy is still very strong. The conventional appointment system should be replaced, and the president should appoint the deans in order to exercise more leadership (Private Comprehensive University 2).

Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities

The internal environment was the second most influential factor for the quality improvements of undergraduate education at the sample colleges and universities. The components of the internal environment of this research were (a) student quality, (b) educational quality, (c) faculty teaching conditions, (e) faculty interests in research and teaching, (f) faculty performance evaluation, (g) presidential leadership, and (h) organizational culture.
Three private institutions ranked the internal environment as the most influential factor for improvement efforts on undergraduate education (Private Research University 1, Private Institute of Technology 1, and Private Teaching College 2). At Private Teaching College 2, the president’s strong leadership appeared to be the driver of educational reform. Special Assistant to the President B Private Teaching College 2 illustrated, “Our president exercises his strong leadership in many areas. He created a college-wide student learning outcomes measurement that had significant influence over the faculty. Student achievement impacts faculty performance evaluation, and so the faculty cannot help but paying attention to student learning.”

Other than the president’s leadership, student enrollment and the quality of students were also influential in improvement efforts on undergraduate education at two private institutions (Private Research University 1 and Private Institute of Technology 1). Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology 1 responded, “Our institution can decide what type of students we educate, and this has the most impact on the quality of undergraduate education.” Middle Management Staff B at a private research university passionately described:

Through student surveys we try to identify different types of students as accurately as possible, and then try to develop effective educational programs for them. In addition, internal discussions between the faculty and administrative staff are highly influential in implementing any reforms. We acknowledge that the faculty discussions sometimes get idealistic and not really practical. But we still like to see our university proactively responding to external changes, instead of being reactive to them (Private Research University 1).

The acquisition of external funds and internal budget distributions represented other key reasons for two national research universities to rank the internal environment as the second most influential factor (National Research University 1 and National
Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 described, “The entire campus community is very concerned about budget cuts, and the president can exercise his leadership by obtaining external funds. Not like an autocratic leadership, but the president can influence decision processes through budget distributions among our academic departments and other administrative divisions. That certainly influences the quality of our various programs.” On the contrary, National Research University 3 was struggling with the same issue of the budget cuts. “Due to a shrinking institutional budget, there is a limit for our university to work on quality improvements,” told Senior Administrator A.

Faculty interests were another reason why the internal environment was ranked as the second most influential factor. Faculty Member B was aware that the faculty was very serious about obtaining external funding, and summarized a general phenomenon of the internal environment at National Research University 2, “Our faculty has a wide variety of interests, and the success of any reform really depends on their interests. Even if our senior administration proposes a good improvement plan, if faculty members are not interested, that plan does not fly.” At Private Institute of Technology 2, “Teaching improvement all depends on individual faculty interests, that are different even within an academic department,” explained Special Assistant to the President A.

So far, interviewees provided various reasons for the internal environment being an influential factor over improvement efforts on undergraduate education. Those were: the president’s leadership, faculty interests, student selectivity, and budgeting under the internal environment. In addition, a few interviewees addressed the attitudes of the

---

16 Although this dissertation research viewed competitive funding as a “push” factor in the external environment as a, a couple of interviewees interpreted the funding as a “pull” factor in the internal environment.
senior administration – how they responded to the external environment. Provost A at Private Comprehensive University 1 told, “In my opinion, first of all, our university needs to develop strategies. And then, we can finally determine how to respond to the external environment and utilize the accreditation review. So, the internal environment is the foundation for our university reforms.” Provost B at Private Comprehensive University 2 also made a similar comment, “The influence of the accreditation review really depends on us, the internal factor. It is a matter of how we utilize the review process. For that we should reach a consensus on educational goals among the faculty, create a more effective educational system, and also improve the decision making process.”

As compared to the aforementioned “proactive” attitudes, there were some passive responses at other few private institutions. Senior Administrator B at Private Institute of Technology 2 confessed, “As I mentioned earlier, the president’s leadership is very minimal. I mean, he cannot fully communicate with deans and the entire faculty regarding educational improvements, because a “top-down” approach is not an appropriate style for our institution.” Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1 described, “I rank the internal environment as the least influential factor. Because our college just follows the reform policies from the Ministry of Education, we never go ahead of the policy trend. Basically the college follows an average pace to minimize risks. We do not take risks because we cannot afford the cost of failure.”

Accreditation Reviews

Accreditation review was the least influential factor for improvement efforts on
undergraduate education across most sample colleges and universities. This dissertation research explored the three components of accreditation reviews including (a) internal self-evaluation, (b) external site-visit, and (c) accreditation review result and comments.

Only Private Teaching College 1 ranked accreditation as the most influential factor for improvement efforts on undergraduate education. “Because the accreditation review directly impacts the college administration by producing concrete recommendations on specific standards,” explained Faculty Member C at Private Teaching College 1. Private Institute of Technology 1 ranked accreditation as the second most influential factor. Senior Administrator B admitted, “We begin to see the importance of accreditation because it functions as a reinforcement of various reform policies by the Ministry of Education.”

The other nine sample institutions ranked the accreditation review as the least influential factor for improvements of undergraduate education. Three of them even opined that the level of influence of the accreditation review was far lower than the external and internal environments (National Research University 1, Private Institute of Technology 2, and Private Teaching College 3).

There were largely four reasons why the accreditation review was the least influential factor. The first reason relates to the relative impact of the accreditation review compared with that of the external environment (National Research University 2 and Private Teaching College 3). Faculty Member B at National Research University said, “Again, competitive funding is far more critical than the accreditation review to our institution” (National Research University 2). Provost C at Private Teaching College 3 repeated, “As I have been stated in my earlier comments, student recruitment and the
declining quality of our incoming students are the driver for us to improve the quality of undergraduate education. The accreditation review is merely compliance to the government and has no impact on us.”

The second issue was the relative youth of the accreditation review: All the colleges and universities went through the first cycle that started in 2004. The accreditation review was not widely recognized within the college community at three sample institutions (National Research University 1, National Research University 2, and PrtechInst2). Only a limited number of administrators and faculty members worked on the self-evaluation report. At National Research University 1, Faculty Member A described, “Generally speaking, not many people really know about the accreditation system. So I would say it had a certain impact for those who were involved with the accreditation review.” Senior Administrator A at National Research University 3 also pointed out, “The accreditation review was new to us, and we have not figured how to use the accreditation review as leverage for institutional improvements. To my knowledge, many universities are not using the accreditation review as a consideration for any internal budget distributions.”

These aforementioned answers suggest that the more college constituents know about the accreditation review, the more they become involved. However, there is a different perspective on faculty involvement with the accreditation review. Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 responded:

Realistically speaking, I think it is plausible that only a limited number of faculty member are involved with the accreditation review. Think about it, if everyone became involved with the accreditation review, it would get very costly for our institution. We have world-class professors, especially in hard sciences, and they should concentrate on their research rather than administrative matters such as the accreditation review. I am fine with working on the accreditation review
because my research field (education) does not have much competitive funding. So my contribution to the university is more for administrative work (National Research University 2).

The third reason was the system design of the accreditation review. Special Assistant to the President B at Private Teaching College 2 pointed out the level of standards in the accreditation review, “It is just checking the minimum quality standard drawn from the Ministry’s institutional and programmatic approval system” (Private Teaching College 2). As often criticized, the accreditation review appears to be designed merely as compliance to the government to compensate for the deregulation of the institutional and programmatic approval system. Moreover, four interviewees in both national and private institutions reported that the accreditation review did not really examine the quality of education (National Research University 2, Private Research University 1, Private Comprehensive University 1, and Private Teaching College 2). Again, Special Assistant to the President B at Private Teaching College 2 said, “Although the accreditation review covers the basic quantitative data on education and institutional infrastructures, and it does not really get into the real quality of education.” Faculty Member B at National Research University 2 also echoed a similar observation, “Although the accreditation review does provide a framework to review our internal and external environments, it does not really reach the heart of educational curriculum and quality.” Middle Management Staff B at Private Research University 1 provided a realistic answer, “We carefully examine some of the limitations of the accreditation system. It evolved from the deregulation of the institutional and programmatic approval system. So, it does not really check the actual content of educational quality. Although the accreditation may promote improvements, it has its own limitations. The
accreditation review is only one element among other elements affecting our university.”

The last reason for the small impact of the accreditation review appeared to be related to the limitations of research design. Faculty Member A at National Research University 1 explained, “The accreditation review is the least influential. It is because we cannot really proof its effectiveness in an empirical manner. For improvement, there are much more complex intertwined issues. So it is difficult to separate accreditation out of those relationships. But, aside from the research limitations, it is still difficult for us to make improvements according to the accreditation review.”
Chapter V: Discussion

Summary of Findings

Recognizing that the accreditation review is one of the various factors influencing colleges and universities’ improvement efforts in undergraduate education, the dissertation research examined the degree of influence of accreditation reviews compared with other influential factors of the external and internal environments of colleges and universities. Among these three factors, the external environment was the most influential, the internal environment was the second, and the accreditation review was the least influential factor. Each factor included multiple components, and this section summarizes findings from Chapter IV.

External Environment of Colleges and Universities

The external environment in this dissertation research was composed of (a) student enrollment, (b) higher education reform policies, and (c) competitive funding.

Student Enrollment

As the traditional college-age population has been declining since the mid-1990s, student enrollment targets contribute to a critical market environment in Japan. Since 2005, none of the sampled colleges and universities has presented an enrollment shortfall at the institutional level. However, a couple of private teaching colleges temporarily faced an
enrollment dip at the departmental level from which they recovered by redesigning academic programs.

Higher Education Reform Policies

Overall, national higher education policies exerted a limited influence over the improvement efforts in undergraduate education across the different types of colleges and universities in the sample. This limited influence is due mostly to information: Faculty members were unaware of higher education reform policies in most colleges and universities, which was partially caused by ineffective organizational communication by the senior administration.

However, not all higher education policies were completely rejected on campuses. For instance, reform policies on academic structures such as the academic calendar and credit hour calculation were implemented fairly immediately without much faculty resistance. By contrast, reform policies on academic matters including faculty pedagogical development did not gain much traction. The aforementioned findings echo a basic tenet of new institutionalism: colleges and universities ceremonially adapt these policies merely to gain legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Meyer & Rowan 2006).

Competitive Funding

In general, the amount of competitive research funding was larger than that of education funding. As a result, at the sampled national research universities, faculty members prioritized competitive research funding over education funding. Moreover, in these research universities, education tends to refer to “graduate education.”
The competitive education funding was perceived as a good marketing tool for student recruitment (Yamada 2009a). Although the sampled teaching-oriented institutions applied for education funding, the senior administrators did not provide faculty members with support for their grant applications. Instead, the senior administration supported applications for research funding. It was presumably because the senior administration wanted to increase their institutional prestige through the number of acquired research grants.

Overall, the competitive education funding was not as impactful as the competitive research funding for the sampled colleges and universities. New public management often claims that competitive environment should increase the effectiveness of colleges and universities (Higher Education Council 1998). However, the above findings of this dissertation research reveal a limitation to competitive funding, especially in the area of educational programs.

Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities

The internal environment in the dissertation research encompassed the components of (a) student quality, (b) educational quality, (c) faculty teaching conditions, (d) faculty interests in research and teaching, (e) faculty performance evaluation, (f) college presidential leadership, and (g) organization culture.

Student Quality

The quality of students was investigated through the document analysis and field research interviews. The analysis of accreditation documents revealed that student drop-out rates
were between 1% and 3%, and their persistence rates and four-year graduation rates were more than 80% at the sampled institutions. In terms of graduate school and job placement rates, the national research universities exhibited high graduate school placement rates as an evidence of their student outcome, around 50% of their students continued to master’s programs. By contrast, private institutions produced high job placement rates, although about one-thirds of the students did not even search for a job (presumably as a sign of student apathy) at Private Teaching College 1.

Although these aforementioned demographic figures imply fairly high student quality, recognizing the complexity of defining the term “quality” in higher education (Harvey & Greeen 1993), field research interviews further analyzed student quality in terms of academic preparations, student learning attitude, and their career preparations. Noticeable differences on these student quality components arose between selective and less selective institutions in the sample.

Regardless of the student admission selectivity, the academic preparation of incoming students across the sampled colleges and universities declined to different extents. Private teaching colleges inevitably needed to enroll academically underprepared students in order to meet enrollment targets. A provost at a sampled private teaching college clearly stated that the concern for student enrollment was the very driver for the senior administrators to promote educational improvements. Compared to a decade ago, national research universities also accepted academically less-prepared students particularly in hard sciences, caused by the deregulation of the college entrance exam. As a result, the national research universities provided remedial education for students in hard sciences.
Regarding student learning attitudes, students were lacking academic skills in less selective private institutions. At a private teaching college, a faculty member reported that their students were lacking even basic social skills. At the national research universities, which were highly selective, students appeared more earnest in attending classes and taking notes than those in the past. However, a few interviewees articulated that current students had become passive and accustomed to being “spoon-fed” learning.

Students’ career preparation was a concern at less selective private institutions. At a teaching college, students seemed apathetic or indifferent about their future career. By contrast, students in selective research universities did not have that problem. Still, they started looking for work in the second semester of their junior year, and as such rarely attend classes in senior year. In fact, this student job search practice is widely recognized in Japanese higher education.

*Educational Quality*

In terms of educational quality, the accreditation agencies review curriculum and pedagogy. Regarding the curriculum design, the sampled institution did not have any critical review comments. As of pedagogy, external reviewers checked whether the sampled colleges and universities provided rigorous syllabi as well as established transparent grading standards and graduation policies. Although grading standards and graduation policies had no problems, the quality of syllabi was mixed across different academic departments. The course registration cap was problematic. Several universities allowed students to register 25 to 30 credit hours per semester. This
allowed students to complete their course work within the first three years, and devote their senior year for job search with a small credit load. This caused a rather hasty or diluted educational experience.

The field research interviews identified that educational quality had improved over the last five years at all the sampled colleges and universities. At the individual faculty level, professors reduced the amount of class cancelation and increased the number alternatives, such as complement classes. Faculty members began to recognize teaching as a part of their professional obligations and put more efforts into developing course materials. At the department level, some colleges and universities in the sample implemented faculty development on educational improvements sporadically. Academic departments that had an admission dip or received critical feedback from external reviewers were more serious about their improvement efforts. At the institutional level, one private teaching college implemented college-wide indicators for student learning outcomes, although this particular case seems rare. Several institutions held institution-wide forums on teaching development, although faculty attendance was not as high as the interviewees hoped. An electronic course syllabus system was implemented at two sampled institutions. A national research university successfully implemented the electronic system as their faculty members used it as an academic record management tool. By contrast, faculty members in a private institute of technology underutilized a similar electronic syllabus system, presumably because they were concerned about the rigor of their syllabus designs.
Faculty Teaching Condition

Although faculty-to-student ratios and teaching loads are common indicators for faculty teaching conditions in American higher education, these figures were not easily available in the self-evaluation reports in Japan. The researcher calculated the ratios by dividing the number of student enrollment with the number of full-time faculty members excluding the number of dual-appointment faculty.

There were two trends in faculty-to-student ratios in the sample. First, national research universities had smaller faculty-to-student ratios than private institutions. For example, the ratio at engineering departments in the national research universities was 1:7, while the figure in the same department in the private universities was around 1:30. Second, hard science departments had smaller faculty-to-student ratios than humanities and social sciences departments. For instance, the ratio at an economic department in the sampled national research university was 1:20, while the figure increased to 1:46 at the private counterpart. Neither the majority of the self-evaluation reports nor the external review reports critically analyzed faculty teaching loads. Only two private teaching colleges provided such data in their self-evaluation reports. On average, faculty taught between 8 to 11 hours per week.

Faculty Interests in Research and Teaching

New institutionalism studies frequently address the influence of strong faculty autonomy, as such this dissertation investigated faculty interests in research and teaching as a manifestation of their autonomy. Inheriting the German Humboldtian model, Japanese faculty members have historically been more interested generally in research than
teaching (Arimoto & Ehara 1996; Ehara 2010). Across research universities and teaching colleges, interviewees answered that their faculty members were very research-oriented because they were trained to become a researcher but an educator, and research was highly valued regardless of the institutional mission.

**Faculty Performance Evaluation**

The faculty performance evaluation is another element that affects faculty autonomy. Even though the idea of faculty performance evaluation has been discussed in Japanese higher education since the 1990s, it has not yet been implemented at a large majority of the sampled colleges and universities. Although the four research universities in the sample developed faculty research productivity databases, they used them for grant applications and accountability purposes, and not for performance evaluation. Accreditation reviews only checked whether the sampled colleges and universities established clear policies and procedures on the conventional promotion and tenure review, and did not critically evaluate faculty performance evaluation. Several interviewees admitted that faculty performance evaluation was highly controversial and that resistance would be enormous. However, as an alternative approach, three sample institutions placed more effort on carefully hiring new faculty members who appeared highly motivated and capable of teaching. Only one private teaching college designed a faculty performance evaluation to include student achievement on learning outcomes assessment as a metric of faculty success.

Although all the sampled colleges and universities conducted student course evaluations in order to review faculty teaching, the results were not used for faculty
promotion and tenure reviews due to the initial agreement between the senior administration and faculty upon implementing the student course evaluation. Instead, individual faculty members were expected to improve their teaching based on the results of these evaluations. When a faculty member receives a poor review from students, his or her department chair consults with the faculty member. Otherwise, the responsibility for improvement rested completely upon individual faculty members. Despite this limitation, a majority of sample institutions provided teaching awards based on the results of student course evaluations. Through a theoretical perspective, faculty performance evaluation can be considered as a coupling mechanism between the senior administration and faculty at the sampled colleges and universities. The research findings of strong faculty autonomy and lack of their personnel evaluation indicated a “loosely-coupled” relationship (Weick 1976).

Presidential Leadership

Even though the Ministry of Education tried to promote strong college presidential leadership, the conditions of the president appointment system and the presidential term remained unchanged. The president appointment was conducted by faculty vote, and the presidential term remained fixed at four years in most sampled institutions, although a renewal was possible at some places.

Under the institutional administration accreditation standard, primary review criteria were the establishment of policies and procedures for the appointment of senior administrators and define their job authority and responsibility. In the self-evaluation reports, the sampled colleges and universities illustrated the establishment of strategic
plans and the process as evidence of strong presidential leadership, and the external review reports simply acknowledged such efforts. External reviews also investigated the placement of support staff for the presidents such as vice presidents and special assistants to the presidents as a key element to support strong presidential leadership. The national research universities created multiple vice president positions and even the small private teaching colleges developed the presidential cabinet to enhance institutional planning.

According to the document analysis of accreditation reports the organizational structures for presidential leadership have been enhanced. In contrast, the field research interviews revealed a different reality; college presidential leadership was limited in almost all the sample colleges and universities. In general, the presidents were heavily focusing on consensus building with their faculty, often through the deans. In only one particular case, the president exercised strong leadership in a private teaching college. This leadership style appears possible because he was an heir of the college, and as a member of the owners’ family faculty could not really oppose the president.

Different leadership styles were not only attributed to presidential leadership styles but also to presidential turnover. Two interviewees explained that their previous president was rather “autocratic” and this leadership style created distrust between the senior administration and faculty. The current president was trying to re-build a good relationship with the faculty through “moderate” leadership.

There were different approaches for promoting presidential leadership between large universities and small colleges. At two private teaching colleges, the president only recently began to formulate his cabinet taskforce to develop and promote strategic
planning. At large universities, the process of institutional planning was already established and the presidents utilized it to exercise leadership.

New public management often emphasizes strong leadership by college presidents and the rational management models for effective institutional administration. However, the appointment mechanism of college president had not changed even after the reform policies by the Ministry of Education. This refutes a basic tenet of new public management.

Organization Culture

In general, the dissertation findings indicated that faculty autonomy was still strong, and college presidential leadership was secondary. The predominant organizational culture was consensus-based decision making in which the president proposed a plan, placed it up for faculty review and then modified the original plan according to faculty input. This cyclical decision-making process between the senior administration and faculty appears to be a commonplace technique for reaching broad consensus in institutional planning. A senior administrator at a private technology institute confessed that their faculty was self-interested and did not consider the overall benefit of the entire institution.

However, after quasi-corporatization, the responsibility of educational quality assurance shifted from academic departments to the president, according to an interviewee at a national research university. As another example at another private technology institute, a few academic departments could not resolve program reorganization by themselves; they asked the president to provide direction for program reform.
Accreditation Reviews

In the analysis of the accreditation review process, this dissertation research analyzed the following elements: (a) internal self-evaluation, (b) external site-visit review, and (c) accreditation results and review comments.

Internal Self-Evaluation

A majority of the sampled colleges and universities carefully addressed the areas of improvement by including future action plans in their internal self-evaluation report. In other words, they addressed issues that were fairly solvable in the short term. A few interviewees insisted that it was not necessarily “hiding” problems, but rather skillfully presenting the areas of improvement. In this regard, one interviewee pointed out that the accreditation agency did not concretely guide how to address the area of improvements in the self-evaluation, and that was why colleges and universities had a certain leeway to develop their own approach in describing the areas of improvement.

However, not all the sampled institutions approached their self-evaluation in a “cosmetic” manner. At two private teaching colleges, the presidents initiated a genuine exploration of critical issues on campus. Similarly, two provosts at private comprehensive universities directly addressed core areas of improvement in their self-evaluation report, keeping in mind that they could use accreditation review comments as an external force to promote future improvement efforts.

New public management tends to assume that colleges and universities accurately illustrate areas of improvement in their internal self-evaluation reports. By contrast, new institutionalism reveals that internal self-evaluation tends to be cosmetic,
used instead as a self-disguise, as colleges and universities place more emphases on addressing their strengths (Newton 2002). The findings of the dissertation suggest support for the basic tenet of new institutionalism. However, it should be noted that a few administrators intended to use the self-evaluation as a driver to promote improvement on their campus.

*External Site-Visit Review*

Regarding the rigor of the external site-visit review, the responses were divided into two. Half of sampled colleges and universities described ineffective external reviewers who were unprepared for their site-visit and asked irrelevant questions. This was mostly attributed to the inexperience of external reviewers, as the first cycle of Japanese accreditation review only recently began in 2004. On the contrary, the other half of sampled institutions described effective external site-visit practices, reviewers who carefully read the internal self-evaluation report and asked pertinent questions.

In addition to the concerns about external reviewers, the limited time period of external site-visit reviews proved insufficient for a detailed assessment, especially for large research universities operating with multiple campuses. Some interviewees opined that a two to three day site-visit was insufficient to cover all the topics in a self-evaluation report at multiple campuses.

New public management often insists that external site-visit reviews ensure the rigor of internal self-evaluation by colleges and universities (Hayata & Funato 2007). The findings were split in terms of the rigor of external reviews, partially due to the fact that accreditation reviews were the first cycle in Japan. Unlike other elements in the
analysis, the research finding was not a clear cut in support of new public management. New institutionalism contests that some institutions gather faculty members and students to rehearse “appropriate” responses (Newton 2002). However, none of the sampled higher education institutions in the dissertation research conducted such rehearsals. Yet, one interviewee confessed that he heard of such practice with a very limited number.

Accreditation Results and Review Comments

Overall, the sampled colleges and universities did not encounter any issues with their accreditation result. Many interviewees stated that the results and comments were “expected” as external reviewers did not go beyond what was already written in the internal self-evaluation report. In addition, no discrepant views over accreditation results occurred between the senior administration and faculty, mostly because faculty was unaware of the accreditation review.

New public management assumes that accreditation results and review comments are valid, and thus promote continuous improvement on campus. However, the research findings contradicted this assumption as interviewees did not gain valuable feedback from their accreditation result and review comments.

Continuous Improvement Efforts in Undergraduate Education

Up to this point, this section has summarized the external and internal environments, and accreditation reviews as independent variables. By contrast, the continuous improvement efforts in undergraduate education within colleges and universities were treated as the dependent variable in the research diagrams in Chapter III (see Figure 4 and
Accreditation review reports acknowledged only the organizational structures, policies, and procedures such as committees and planning processes for self-evaluation at the sampled colleges and universities and did not fully inspect the content and substance of continuous improvement activities. In a similar vein, the self-evaluation reports by the colleges and universities simply emphasized the utility of the findings for continuous improvement with a few anecdotal examples.

The field research interviews supplemented some of the limits of document analysis by exploring the following issues: (a) key institutional data for accreditation reviews, (b) different types of surveys related to undergraduate education, (c) improvement efforts by the presidents, and (d) the improvement efforts by the faculty. The field research interviews were conducted a few years after the accreditation reviews at the sampled institutions in order to investigate how the colleges and universities have utilized the accreditation results and review comments.

*Key Institutional Data for Accreditation Review*

What type of institutional data caught the attention of the president and faculty during their accreditation review? To what extent did the sample colleges and universities practice “data-driven” management as described by new public management?

The most commonly addressed key institutional data were the student enrollment and job placement rate. The former was both an increase and decrease of student enrollment based on enrollment capacity, as regulated by the Ministry of Education.

---

17 By inquiring key institutional data for accreditation reviews, the researcher also intended to verify previous answers from interviewees regarding the areas of improvement.
The latter was critical for college admission as high school students and their parents pay attention to job placement rates when they decide which college or university to attend.

Surveys Related to Undergraduate Education

All sampled colleges and universities conducted a student course evaluation. National research universities were obligated to conduct a student survey by the Ministry of Education. Private institutions also conducted a student survey with a focus more toward student satisfaction. About half of sampled institutions conducted an employer survey and alumni survey.

The use of survey results was unclear. The results of student course evaluations were not linked to faculty promotion and tenure review. Student survey forms were different, and thus the results were incomparable across colleges and universities. In fact, some interviewees were unaware of survey results. A senior administrator explained that they could not obtain useful data for improvements from the aforementioned surveys.

New public management advocates evidence-based accreditation reviews (Hood 1991), and the sampled colleges and universities conducted various student surveys. However, the majority of data from these surveys was not effectively used for continuous improvement.

Presidential Efforts on Educational Improvement

A majority of college presidents in the sample utilized accreditation results and review comments in the institutional planning process. They encouraged academic departments
to incorporate accreditation review comments when faculty members develop their departmental plan. However, most presidents did not have their own budget to lure academic departments to presidential initiatives.

Since presidential efforts were at an early stage, it was impractical to gather “hard evidence” on actual improvements. A faculty member in a private teaching college indicated that it might take a few years or until the next cycle of accreditation reviews to see the results of presidential efforts. Two college presidents did not particularly make an effort on educational improvements based on accreditation results and review comments. When a national research university received a positive review, the president simply ended the accreditation review by celebrating the result. For the provost in a private teaching college their accreditation result was expected, so review comments appeared superficial.

Still, there was an exception. The private research university in the sample conducted an internal self-evaluation every year, and the president and faculty were accustomed to using this evaluation in the planning and improvement process.

New public management encourages college presidents to utilize accreditation results and review comments for continuous improvements. The dissertation findings aligned with the claim that college presidents utilize accreditation review comments in institutional planning. However, institutional planning outcomes have not yet materialized as policy makers may wish.

Faculty Efforts on Educational Improvement

Overall, faculty members did not use accreditation results and review comments for
educational improvements. A few interviewees believed that the scope of institutional accreditation review was not necessarily applicable to the individual faculty level. However, at several sample institutions, the faculty’s improvement efforts were organized at the department level and were integrated into the institutional planning process. Usually, the presidents did not impose an agenda, but rather guided faculty members to develop their own departmental action plan. In addition to institutional planning, one private institute of technology created various committees at both institution and departmental levels to support continuous improvement.

New institutionalism often supposes that faculty members ceremonially adapt to the form of accreditation reviews to gain legitimacy without using the results to affect institutional function. The research finding of this dissertation provided two insights. First, faculty members did not utilize accreditation review comments at the individual level, because the scope of accreditation review was at institution level. Second, faculty members utilized accreditation review comments through institutional planning, initiated by their president. In order to more accurately understand faculty responses to accreditation, future research should take these two levels of analysis into consideration.

Impact Study

At the end of the research interviews, the researcher asked interviewees to rank the influence of the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation review on improvement efforts in undergraduate education.

This measurement approach was designed to illuminate the impact of the accreditation review compared with that of the external environment and internal
environment for a particular sample institution. In other words, the measurement of impact was not a universal scale that could be applied across different sampled colleges and universities.

External Environment of Colleges and Universities

The external environment was identified as the most influential factor on improvement efforts in undergraduate education at a majority of the sampled colleges and universities. Concerns about student recruitment were the driver for improvement efforts at one private teaching college. Under the continuing budget cuts by the Ministry of Education, two national research universities identified competitive research funding as the most critical factor.

Higher education reform policies were also increasing in influence over institutional administration on campuses. A couple of interviewees commented that the Ministry of Education had been increasing pressures for quality assurance of student learning and institutional information disclosure. Several interviewees indicated that the external environment was beyond their control, this was why they ranked it as the most influential factor.

Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities

The internal environment was listed as the second most influential factor on improvement efforts in undergraduate education. Faculty autonomy appeared to be predominantly strong across the sampled institutions; the key was to guide faculty interest from research to teaching. Most college presidents could not exercise strong leadership; as such
building consensus with faculty was critical. One private teaching college presented an exception in which the president could exercise strong leadership mostly because he was a member of the family that owned and operated that campus.

In the view of interviewees, unlike the external environment, they could control the internal environment to impact areas of improvement. Two provosts at different private comprehensive universities addressed the importance of establishing a solid plan and strategies for educational improvements. Still, one provost wished that the Ministry of Education would further support reform policies to strengthen the authority of the senior administration on campuses.

Accreditation Review

The accreditation review was the least influential factor on improvement efforts in undergraduate education. Interviewees provided largely two reasons why the accreditation review was the least influential at their institution.

First, only a small number of administrators and faculty were involved in the accreditation review process, and thus the majority of faculty members were unaware of the review. This was mostly because accreditation reviews were still in the first cycle for colleges and universities.

A faculty member at a national research university commented that it would be inefficient and impractical if all the faculty members become involved with the accreditation review process. In a way, this process was better handled by a small group of administrators and faculty so that the rest of the faculty members could focus on research. Although that comment seemed insightful and somewhat reasonable for a
research university, for other sample institutions low recognition of the accreditation review presented a challenge to faculty involvement based on information derived from the accreditation review.

Second, four sample colleges and universities viewed the accreditation review as compliance to government regulations. From this point of view, the accreditation system simply existed to complement deregulation policies. A couple of interviewees commented that the accreditation review covered basic educational indicators such as the student-faculty ratio, but it did not investigate the heart of educational quality. They cynically viewed that the accreditation merely set the minimum quality standard for low quality higher education institutions created by the recent deregulation policies.
Table 33: Analytical Summary by New Public Management and New Institutionalism Lenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External Environment</th>
<th>New Public Management</th>
<th>New Institutionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Enrollment</td>
<td>Student market drove quality improvements at small new private colleges.</td>
<td>Regulations Educational reform policies were implemented mostly on academic structures that did not reach to the level of individual faculty members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitve Funding * Competitive funding increased competition mostly among research universities. * Competitive research funding had a larger impact than competitive education funding because the faculty was research-driven and the amount of research funding was greater than that available for education.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty Autonomy * The faculty was more interested in research than teaching, and they still had strong autonomy in decision-making. * Faculty performance evaluations were not fully implemented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization Culture * Decision-making was highly consensus-based between the president and faculty. * The presidents revised their proposals and spent much time to reach a consensus, reflecting the Japanese culture in organizational decision-making.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidential appointment and term Although the Ministry of Education promoted governance changes, the faculty vote and a fixed term (usually four years) remained in colleges and universities.</td>
<td>Accreditation Review External Site-visit Review * External reviewers were poorly trained. * External reviewers simply followed what was written in the self-evaluations and did not conduct a more critical review.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accreditation result and review comments Accreditation results were expected by college constituents (nothing new for them).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Self-evaluation Colleges and universities skillfully crafted (if not disguised) their description of the area of improvements (i.e. weaknesses) in the self-evaluation for their benefit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compliance Accreditation represented a minimum standard; the review was a regulatory obligation without a financial incentive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improvement efforts The presidents were trying to incorporate the accreditation review comments into the institutional planning process. But the actual improvement was still too early to capture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The faculty was not affected by the accreditation review. Institutional accreditation did not reach the faculty level for improvement efforts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical Implications

Previous studies typically selected either new public management or a new institutionalism analytical framework depending on their political agendas: The former have tended to represent the view of policy makers and the latter of faculty members (Harvey & Newton 2004; Kaneko 2007; Newton 2002). The two theoretical perspectives were often described as competing and conflicting with one another, and the dichotomous explanations presented only one side of the story regarding the impact of accreditation reviews (further details addressed in Chapter I and III). In order to overcome these analytical limitations, this dissertation research applied both theories in order to accomplish a more comprehensive analysis. This section illustrates theoretical implications based on research findings in Chapter IV.

Theoretical Limitations through a Single Pendulum Analogy

To put the two theoretical trends into one perspective, one can think of a pendulum analogy shown below in Figure 4. In the examinations of new public management and new institutionalism, some leading scholars have viewed the two theories as a social trend. For example, in the field of educational research, authors such as Bernasconi, Meyer, and Rowan in The New Institutionalism in Education (2006) postulated that new institutionalism has been challenged by the recent trend of new public management policies. This analysis implied that the trend was moving from new institutionalism toward new public management. By contrast, in the field of public policy research, Christensen and Laegreid explored the “post-New Public Management” phenomena in Western countries in Transcending New Public Management, (2007). In this field, new
public management is often associated explicitly or inexplicitly with neo-liberalism, and market-driven public policies have been accused of hindering democratic values (e.g. Duggan, 2004; MacEwan, 1999). This analysis implied a push back from new public management toward new institutionalism by re-introducing regulations to amend unintended consequences of market mechanisms. Does this imply that the research and practice in the field of public policy moves faster than those in the field of education? Does the former trend offer any future implications for the latter trend? At what point might the education field encounter a push back of the trend toward new public management?

*Figure 6: A Single Pendulum Analogy: Trend between New Institutionalism and New Public Management*

My analysis focuses solely on the field of education. Previous studies in the field of education have often focused on describing changes in the external environment of new public management (i.e. market mechanisms) and analyzing how the internal
environment of new institutionalism (i.e. faculty autonomy) respond to the external market environment. The findings have varied based on a case-by-case basis. In the analysis of Chilean higher education, Bernasconi identified that senior administration and faculty had become more responsive to market opportunities. Similar findings have been offered in case studies in Australia (Marginson & Considine 2000), Europe (Clark 1998, 2004), and the United States (Tierney 1997, 1999). However, contradictory cases of internal concerns and resistance toward market environment have been reported in Germany (Schimarnk 2005), South Korea (Byun 2008), and other places. Even within one country, mixed findings can be observed depending on the analytical perspectives and research samples.

Mixed findings can be attributed to two reasons when previous studies applied either new public management or new institutionalism. The first issue concerns an ambiguity in the analytical approach. As pointed earlier, most previous studies looked at only the changes in the external environment in new public management (i.e. market mechanisms) and the responses within the internal environment of new institutionalism (i.e. faculty autonomy) toward the external market environment. Other factors, such as the internal environment in the scope of new public management (i.e. college presidential leadership) and external environment of new institutionalism (i.e. policy regulations) were not necessarily neglected, but anecdotally incorporated in the analyses.

The second issue focuses on an assumption or rigidity of analytical scope in both theories. Either new public management or new institutionalism tends to group its analytical factors (i.e. the external and internal environments and accreditation reviews) into one package of analytical scope rather than treating them separately. Put
specifically, new public management tends to assume that college presidents would take control from faculty autonomy over institutional administration in order to exploit market opportunities (e.g., Higher Education Council 1998). In this situation, accreditation reviews are supposed to promote continuous improvement based on rational management models (e.g., Kawaguchi 2009). In a similar way, new institutionalism is inclined to focus on illustrating faculty members ceremonially adopting rules and regulations to merely gain legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan 1977: Meyer & Rowan 2006). The situation inevitably indicates the ineffectiveness of accreditation reviews (e.g., Newton 2002).

One task of academic research is to build a theory that depicts key elements in social phenomena and to provide a succinct logic among them. Oversimplification or a secured perspective hurts our analytical scope and leads to a deficit in understanding. The package-deal perspective within both theories created rigidity in theoretical explanations, which turned into limitations in prior studies.

**Theoretical Synthesis through a Multiple Pendulum Analogy**

Previous studies presented limitations in terms of theoretical applications. The researcher proposes that single pendulum analogy be amended. In addition, through the analysis of interview transcripts in Chapter IV, the researcher identified that the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation reviews indicate different trends from new institutionalism to new public management. In general, the changes in the external environment tend to move faster than those in the accreditation system. The trend of the internal environment often lags behind changes in the external environment and the accreditation system. That observation led the researcher think that each of the
The first bob represents the external environment that moves between one end of “rules and regulations” in new institutionalism and the other end of “market mechanisms” in new public management. The bob has the longest string that allows the largest movement between regulations and market mechanisms. One full sway represents

Figure 7: A Multiple Pendulums Analogy: Trend between New Institutionalism and New Public Management
transformations in a time span of 10 to 20 years. For example, the Ministry of Education gradually has shifted its policies from heavy regulation in new institutionalism to deregulation in new public management since the late 1980s. The ministry also introduced market mechanisms including competitive funding around the mid-1990s.

The second bob represents the accreditation system that moves between one end of “ceremonial adaptation and compliance” in new institutionalism and “rigorous analysis and continuous improvement” in new public management. The second bob has a shorter string than that of the first bob, which indicates a smaller movement between ceremonial adaptation and rigorous analysis. One full sway takes seven years in accordance with the Japanese accreditation cycle. For example, the implementation of accreditation appeared less rigorous, if not ceremonial, in this dissertation research partially due to the insufficient experience of both accreditation agencies and higher education institutions in the first cycle of accreditation reviews. The finding indicated that the second bob still remained in the realm of new institutionalism. However, in the second cycle of accreditation the accreditation agencies will implement a more rigorous student learning outcomes assessment and internal quality assurance standards, which moves the second bob toward the new public management realm.

The third bob represents the internal environment that moves from one end of the “faculty autonomy” in new institutionalism and the other end of “college presidential leadership” in new public management. The bob has the shortest length of the string illustrating the smallest movement between the two ends. One sway takes four to six years, aligned with the presidential appointment terms. For instance, after a strong college president who exercised leadership over faculty autonomy, successors tended to
be more moderate to rebuild a better relationship between the senior administration and faculty. This trend implies that the third bob was still in the realm of new public management, but encountered a pushback.

What does the three pendulum analogy tell us about “making sense” of new public management and new institutionalism (Meyer 2002a)? The researcher integrates the findings of the dissertation research in Chapter IV into the three pendulum analogy to synthesize the two theories.

In Figure 7, the three pendulums are at different places between the spectrum of new public management and new institutionalism. The three bobs are not aligned and that implies a misalignment of key factors in the implementation of accreditation reviews, producing unfruitful results. The situation applies to nine out of eleven sampled institutions under the study.

The first bob represents the external environment of colleges and universities and is located in the new public management realm since the market mechanisms have developed within Japanese higher education. Regarding student market the 18-year-old population has been declining since the early 1990s and student recruitment has become critical for institutional survival; this was especially true for the three private teaching colleges in the sample. In terms of higher education policy over the last two decades the Ministry of Education deregulated the institutional and programmatic approval system for colleges and universities to develop institutional diversification in a competitive environment. Another example of the new public management reform policy applied to national higher education institutions that were partially corporatized in 2004 in order for a greater institutional efficiency and effectiveness. Under the continuing budget cut in
the national sector, a senior administrator and two faculty members at the three sampled national research universities reported that competitive funding became very important.

The second bob represents accreditation and is positioned in the middle in-between “superficial review,” a characteristic of new institutionalism, and “rigorous review,” a characteristic of new public management. The position is determined by the analysis of three subsidiary elements of accreditation; internal self-evaluation, external site-visit review, and accreditation results and review comments. In the internal self-evaluation reports a majority of the sampled colleges and universities identified only the areas of improvement that appeared solvable. Regardless of the type of college or university sampled the effectiveness of the external reviewers was equally divided between effective and ineffective. The final accreditation results and review comments did not provide new findings and repeated what was already described in the internal self-evaluation reports. Although these findings indicated “ritualism and compliance” relating to accreditation reviews, the accreditation agencies would implement a more rigorous student learning outcomes assessment and internal quality assurance standards in the second accreditation review cycle. This should move the second bob, accreditation, toward “evidence-based review process” in the new public management realm.

The third bob represents the internal environment of colleges and universities and it remains in the realm of new institutionalism because faculty autonomy was fairly strong at a large majority of the sampled colleges and universities. Occasionally a president exercised strong leadership over institutional administration at a national research university and a private institute of technology. However, both cases created conflicts with faculty and thus the successor presidents were trying to rebuild trust with
their faculty. As an exception, one president at Private Teaching College 2 could exercise strong leadership mostly because he was a family member of the founder who created the college. Although strong faculty autonomy was a distinctive organizational culture in the sampled colleges and universities, a sign of change was also observed. For example, the presidents at Private Teaching College 1 and Private Teaching College 2 have formed a cabinet to strengthen the leadership at the top management level. Overall, nine out of eleven sampled colleges and universities resembled to the situation illustrated in Figure 7. In short, most institutions were struggling to keep up with the degree as well as speed of change in the external environment such as the declining traditional college-age population, higher education reform policies, and competitive funding.

By contrast to the misalignment of the three bobs in Figure 7, Figure 8 below illustrates a different hypothetical example in which the three bobs align at the same point in the realm of new public management.
Figure 8: A Multiple Pendulums Analogy: A Point of Alignment

**Internal Environment:** College presidents exercise strong leadership and the formal institutional planning is established.

**Accreditation Review:** Review method and process are more rigorous and colleges and universities utilize accreditation.

**External Environment:** Pushback from extreme marketization and re-introduce regulations.

**New Institutionalism Realm**
- Strong faculty autonomy

**New Public Management Realm**
- Strong college presidential leadership

**Internal Environment:**
- Superficial review process
- Ritualism and compliance

**Accreditation Review:**
- Evidence-based review process
- Continuous improvement

**External Environment:**
- Regulations
- Market mechanisms
The first bob of the external environment of colleges and universities in Figure 8 is positioned lesser toward the end of the new public management realm compared to the position indicated in Figure 7. This implies that the development of market mechanisms in the external environment slowed down or encountered pushback because policy makers and/or campus constituents begin to recognize limitations or even negative effects of extreme marketization in higher education. In fact, the Higher Education Committee under the Ministry of Education recognized the extreme deregulation allowed to produce less rigorous academic programs (Central Education Council 2008). Another example of a pushback against market mechanisms relates to the introduction of the competitive funding on research and educational programs, which caused isolation among competing colleges and universities in order to secure their competitiveness within the institution. To remedy the negative effect of competitive funding, the Ministry of Education has introduced a different type of competitive funding that promotes cross-institutional collaborations.

The second bob of accreditation review is also located in the new public management realm, aligned with the external environment bob. As an example, Private Research University 1 conducted self-evaluation annually and the senior administration utilized the results in working with academic departments through the institutional planning process. This allowed a more “evidence-based review process” and “continuous improvement.” The third bob of the internal environment of colleges and universities is also situated in the new public management realm in alignment with the other two bobs. This happened at a private teaching college where the president exercised a strong leadership over institutional administration and faculty members were
evaluated based on the level of student learning outcomes. Although this was rather an exception, the two other private teaching colleges also formed the president’s cabinet to promote his strategic planning. The second bob of accreditation reviews and the third bob of the internal environment of colleges and universities are located in the area of new public management.

Two sampled higher education institutions represent Figure 8 in which a more coordinated and fairly rigorous implementation of accreditation reviews was conducted. For example, Private Research University 1 conducted self-evaluations every year and utilized the findings in their institutional planning process. The academic departments were accustomed to the process, a substantive difference from the other sampled colleges and universities where faculty seemed unaware of accreditation reviews. Private Teaching College 2 was the other example in which the president exercised strong leadership and had already implemented college-wide student learning outcomes indicators that reflected on faculty performance evaluation. The accreditation review comments were woven into institutional planning process as well.

A few final thoughts are offered regarding the two different depictions of the three-pendulum analogies. Quite obviously, both depictions present a static snapshot when the analogy provides that the three bobs continue moving from one end toward the other. As a result, the majority of unsuccessful implementers of accreditation reviews in Figure 5 may eventually reach to the aligned point illustrated in Figure 6. In the same way, the two successful cases in Figure 6 may fall into a state of Figure 5 as their internal leadership and self-evaluation practices may change in the future.

The pendulum analogies were based on Scott’s (2007) basic analytical
framework in which theoretical constructs of new public management and new institutionalism were divided them into “pillars.” However, as Rowan argued the division between conceptual pillars was complex and burly (2002, 2006). This critique applies to the external environment in Japanese higher education. As the Ministry of Education promoted competitive funding, the acquisition became “new legitimacy” for colleges and universities to illustrate their effectiveness. However, since the primary purpose of this dissertation research was to examine the synthesis of the two theories, the researcher developed the initial design of theoretical analysis by applying Scott’s dichotomous framework. Future research is encouraged to explore the conversion of market mechanisms and governmental regulations.
Chapter VI: Conclusion

Summary of Research

The purpose of this dissertation research was to investigate the impact of accreditation reviews on improvement efforts in undergraduate education within Japanese colleges and universities.

The degree of influence of accreditation reviews was measured in comparison with the external environment and internal environment of the sampled colleges and universities.

These factors composed of subsidiary elements are listed below:

- External Environment: student enrollment, higher education policy, and competitive funding
- Internal Environment: faculty interest in teaching, faculty performance evaluation, college presidential leadership, and organization culture
- Accreditation Review: internal self-evaluation, external site-visit review, and accreditation result and review comment
- Educational Improvement Efforts: key institutional data in accreditation reviews, student surveys, and improvement efforts by college presidents and by faculty members

The researcher selected a qualitative research method and visited a total of eleven colleges and universities in Japan during the summer of 2010. In terms of the demographics of sampled colleges and universities by sector, there were three national universities and eight private colleges and universities. In regards to the institutional types, there were four research universities, two comprehensive universities, two institutes of technology, and three teaching colleges.

The researcher conducted the field research interviews with a total of twelve
interviewees of which three were provosts, two were special assistants to the president, three were senior administrators, three were faculty members, and two were middle management staff who were highly involved with the accreditation review process at sample colleges and universities. The research interviews were conducted confidentially, and the interview protocol included 17 open-ended questions encompassing the subsidiary elements of the above listed factors. Each interview took from 90 to 120 minutes.

In order to prepare for the field research interviews, the researcher conducted document analysis of the various accreditation reports. In Japan, not only the internal self-evaluation reports, but also the external review reports are open to the public, although some appendices and institutional data are unavailable. The results of the document analysis were incorporated in Chapter IV, the analysis of research interviews, to supplement and occasionally verify the interviewees’ observations.

After the field research interviews, the researcher transcribed the recorded audio interviews and applied a template analysis. In addition, the researcher applied a theoretical triangulation of new public management and new institutionalism perspectives for a more comprehensive analysis. This distinctive feature of this dissertation research builds upon and goes beyond prior studies, which often took only one perspective to examine the impact of a quality assurance system in higher education. As a result, the two theoretical perspectives were often presented as competing and conflicting with one another. The researcher illustrated the theoretical limitation with a single pendulum analogy, and offered a different conceptual model to synthesize new public management and new institutionalism with a three-pendulum analogy.
Key Findings

The dissertation explored the degree of the influence of the accreditation reviews on improvement efforts in undergraduate education relative to the other influential factors of the external and internal environments of colleges and universities. Among the three factors, the external environment was the most influential, the internal environment was the second most influential, and the accreditation review was the least influential factors. This section summarizes key findings in order to describe the implications of these results and recommendations for future research, educational reform policy and administrative practices.

External Environment of Colleges and Universities

The external environment was the most influential factor on improvement efforts in undergraduate education. Within the realm of external environments, this dissertation analyzed student enrollment, national higher education reform policies, and competitive funding. The sampled colleges and universities did not face an enrollment shortfall at the institution level. However, a few private teaching colleges encountered an enrollment dip in some academic departments, which was recovered by program reorganizations. Higher education reform policies had a limited impact partially due to ineffective organizational communication between senior administration and faculty. In general, higher educational reform policies on a structural issue (e.g., credit hour calculation) were more accepted by faculty than those on educational content and pedagogy mostly because curricular decisions were in the hands of faculty. Competitive research funding was influential for national research universities, and competitive
educational funding for private colleges and universities. The senior administration and faculty valued research funding over educational funding because the latter carries a substantial amount of money and prestige. Overall, the external environment was the most influential factor on improvement efforts in undergraduate education at the sampled colleges and universities. A few interviewees also considered the external environment the most influential factor because they could not control the changes in the shrinking student population and national higher education policies.

In comparing and contrasting new public management and new institutionalism, both phenomena coexisted in this research. The sampled colleges and universities were influenced by student enrollment and competitive funding, while faculty members ritualistically adapted to higher education reform policies from the Ministry of Education.

**Internal Environment of Colleges and Universities**

The internal environment was the second most influential factor on improvement efforts in undergraduate education within the sampled colleges and universities. With regard to the internal environment, the dissertation research explored student quality, educational efforts, faculty interest in research and teaching, their personnel evaluation, college presidential leadership, and organizational culture. Student quality was declining among less selective private colleges and universities, but not as notably in national research universities. Educational efforts at the individual faculty, departmental, and institutional levels were increasing across all the sampled institutions. However, the faculty members were still predominantly interested in research over teaching regardless of whether they worked at a sampled research university or teaching college. This is
due mostly to the fact that Japanese universities were modeled after German research universities, and faculty members were trained to become researchers, not educators. The faculty performance evaluation was not implemented in almost any of the sampled colleges and universities. Presidential leadership was limited due to strong faculty autonomy, and consensus building was the most important element in organizational culture. Several interviewees indicated that the internal environment was under their control, unlike the external environment. Especially, it was crucial to guide faculty attention to teaching through institutional planning.

Relating to the theoretical analyses, the aforementioned research findings supported basic tenets of new institutionalism. Even though the Ministry of Education advocated strong college presidential leadership as a part of the new public management reforms, college presidents were appointed by faculty votes and they returned to a faculty position after their presidency. Those practices limited college presidents exercise of strong leadership in matters of institutional administration.

**Accreditation Reviews**

Overall, accreditation reviews were the least influential factor for a majority of the sampled colleges and universities. In terms of accreditation reviews, the dissertation research explored internal self-evaluation reports, external site-visit reviews, and accreditation results and review comments. In their internal self-evaluation reports, sampled colleges and universities presented the areas of improvement with improvement plans. This act did not necessarily hide weaknesses, but strategically described “solvable problems.” The interviewees’ evaluation of external site-visit reviews was
divided. Half of the sampled colleges and universities considered their external review ineffective. This was caused by the fact that external reviewers did not read their internal self-evaluation report thoroughly and asked irrelevant questions during their site-visit. However, the other half reported the opposite experience. Accreditation results and review comments were expected for most sampled colleges and universities because the results did not go beyond what was already described in an internal self-evaluation report.

The aforementioned findings refuted the rational and effective process of the accreditation review process that new public management often claims. Instead, the ineffective review practices revealed in this dissertation support the ritualistic implementation of accreditation reviews often described by new institutionalism.

**Educational Improvement Efforts**

In the analytical design, the educational improvement efforts were considered as “dependent variable” influenced by the three factors: the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation reviews. With regards to educational improvement efforts in colleges and universities, the dissertation research investigated key institutional data for accreditation reviews, student surveys, and improvement efforts by college presidents and by faculty. Interviewees considered that key institutional data during accreditation reviews were student enrollment and job placement rates in the sampled colleges and universities. Although institutions conducted various student surveys, the results were not used for improvement efforts. Most college presidents utilized accreditation results and review comments in the institutional planning process.
However, one college president did not do so because the accreditation result affirmed existing institutional actions and did not suggest any improvement; another college president did not take the results into consideration because he could not gain any valuable feedback in the accreditation review comments. A large majority of faculty members were unaware of the accreditation review. However, in response to presidential efforts through institutional planning at some sampled institution, the faculty utilized accreditation results and review comments in their departmental planning. Overall, educational improvement efforts based on accreditation results and review comments were at an early stage in Japanese higher education, although the dissertation research attempted to capture these efforts as an dependent variable of the accreditation reviews, external environment, and internal environment.

Conclusion

On improvement efforts in undergraduate education, the external environment was the most influential factor for a majority of the sampled colleges and universities. The internal environment was the second most, and the accreditation review was the least influential factor. With regard to theoretical analyses, new public management explained the external environment in terms of student market and competitive funding. However, its explanatory power diminished in the internal environment especially with regards to college presidential leadership. New institutionalism offered a counter argument indicating that the strong faculty autonomy prevented college presidential leadership. Regarding the accreditation review process, colleges and universities ritualistically conducted their internal self-evaluation as addressed in prior Western
studies. The research findings did not necessarily support the notion that Japanese faculty intentionally attempted to take advantage of the accreditation review process. Rather, a large majority of the faculty was unaware of the accreditation review. The effectiveness of external site-visit reviews was questionable partly because this was the first accreditation review cycle in Japanese higher education.

On theoretical implications, the dissertation research pointed out the limitations in prior studies that 1) presented new public management and new institutionalism as competing and conflicting with one another, and 2) applied either new public management or new institutionalism and retained its own distinctive set of theoretical assumptions and tenets in terms of the external and internal environments and accreditation reviews. In order to overcome the analytical limitations, the researcher developed a three-pendulum analogy in which each of the three factors, the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation reviews, was designated to an independent pendulum. Each of the three bobs represented the aforementioned three factors, swaying with different speeds between the two realms of new public management and new institutionalism. With this analogy, a successful case is depicted when the three bobs are lined up in the realm of new public management (see Figure 8). By contrast, an unsuccessful case is illustrated when the three bobs are misaligned; each bob separately locates somewhere between the two realms of new public management and new institutionalism (see Figure 7). In this dissertation, only two higher education institutions showed with the successful case in accordance with the three-pendulum analogy. According to the three-pendulum analogy, only two institutions out of eleven sampled colleges and universities were presented as a successful case in utilizing
accreditation results and review comments for improvement efforts in undergraduate education.

Research Limitations and Implications for the Findings

In addition to the limitations addressed in Chapter III, other analytical limitations were revealed during the research interviews and the analysis of interview transcripts. This section explains how these limitations affect some research findings and discusses research implications.

The first limitation relates to snowball sampling to recruit research interviewees, which led to an oversampling of research universities compared to the actual institutional demography of Japanese higher education. This implies that some characteristics of research universities are overly emphasized in the findings, such as 1) faculty members were more interested in research than teaching, and 2) they had strong autonomy over institutional decision making than college presidents.

The second limitation concerns the perceptions of the interviewees. In order to overcome the limitation of prior studies focused on either the perspectives of policy makers or faculty, this dissertation research attempted to gather more holistic information by interviewing various college constituents: Provosts, special assistants to the president, senior administrators, faculty members, and middle management staff. However, the dissertation still fell short of including deans and department chairs that were working more closely with faculty members than the aforementioned interviewees. This implies that the research findings underestimate educational improvement efforts by faculty.
The third limitation is related to the definition and focus of the impact of accreditation reviews. The researcher was focused on identifying whether colleges and universities utilized accreditation results and review comments for any improvement efforts on undergraduate education. Put another way, the attention was to capture educational improvement efforts after accreditation reviews. However, in Chapter IV, an interviewee addressed that his research university made most improvement efforts during the accreditation review preparation. Although other interviewees did not specifically address this point, presumably some other sampled institutions may have made a similar effort. In this sense, the original definition and focus of this dissertation may be insufficient to holistically capture educational improvement efforts through the entire accreditation review process.

The fourth limitation concerns the conceptual operationalization of the impact of accreditation reviews. Prior research has established that separating the impact of accreditation reviews from other factors presents numerous challenges (Harvey & Newton 2004; Stensaker 2003). Still, this dissertation attempted to separate the influence of accreditation reviews from other factors by establishing an analytical framework of the external and internal environments of colleges and universities. However, a few interviewees reaffirmed the difficulty of separating the impact of accreditation from higher education reform policies because the former often functioned as an enforcer (or reinforcement) of the latter. The limitation of this conceptual operationalization implies some omissions of indirect impacts of accreditation reviews on the internal environments, which ultimately affect the outcome of improvement efforts on undergraduate education in the sampled colleges and universities. Simultaneously, the
indirect impacts potentially occur between accreditation reviews and the internal environment. For instance, the sentiment of “extra burden” of accreditation reviews on faculty members may push back a more rigorous student learning outcomes assessment to be implemented in the second cycle of accreditation reviews.

*Figure 9: Indirect Impacts of Accreditation Reviews*

The fifth limitation relates to the measurement approach of the impact of accreditation reviews. As explained in Chapter III, the dissertation research attempted to measure the degree of the influence of accreditation review in comparison with other influential factors in the external and internal environments of a specific college or university. As a concrete example, the degree of the most influential factor of a sampled college could be the equivalent degree of influence of the second most influential factor for another
sampled research university. Put another way, the dissertation did not attempt to create a universal measurement to evaluate the impact of accreditation reviews across colleges and universities, and readers need to be reminded about the measurement limitation of this dissertation.

The last limitation concerns interviewees’ reasoning when they ranked the influences from the accreditation review, external environment, and internal environment. For example, four interviewees ranked the external environment as the most influential factor because they could not really control the declining Japanese college-age population or also higher education reform policies. This reasoning was quite different from an assumption of this dissertation research ---- interviewees were expected to rank the three factors, the accreditation review, external environment, and internal environment, merely based on the/its degrees of influences. This implies that the influence of the external environment may have been inflated due to the aforementioned reasoning of some interviewees. However, that does not necessarily seem to affect the position of accreditation reviews within the rank order. Hence, more than a few interviewees also responded that the accreditation review was far less influential compared to the external and internal environment.

**Recommendation for Future Research**

Based on the research limitations and implications in the previous section, seven recommendations for future research are listed below.
1. Increase the number of sampled higher education institutions, especially private teaching colleges to achieve a proportionate sample of Japanese higher education institutions

2. Include deans and department chairs in field research interviews to further understand improvement efforts in undergraduate education

3. Collect a variety of information other than interviewees’ perceptions to capture concrete examples of improvement efforts in undergraduate education

4. Analyze improvement efforts made during the preparation of accreditation reviews to illustrate a holistic impact of accreditation reviews

5. Analyze an indirect impact of accreditation reviews on the external and internal environments to further understand the complexity of the impact of accreditation reviews

6. Apply the contingency theory (e.g. Donaldson 2001) in organizational studies to identify specific conditions in which accreditation reviews are effective

7. Apply the sense-making theory (e.g. Weick 1995, 2012) in policy implementation studies to explore a conjunction or attempts a synthesis between new public management and new institutionalism

**Recommendation for Practice**

This dissertation research found that accreditation reviews did not substantively impact improvement efforts in undergraduate education at a large majority of the sampled colleges and universities in the study. Based on the key findings addressed in the
beginning of this chapter, the researcher provides recommendations for practice.

Accreditation Agencies

Based on research findings, three recommendations are made for accreditation agencies to conduct more effective accreditation reviews.

The first recommendation is to enhance training for external reviewers. Three sample institutions revealed that their external reviewers were unprepared and ineffective during the site-visit review. Most of the external reviewers did not go deeper than what was already described in an internal self-evaluation at the sampled colleges and universities. The issue is understandable given that accreditation reviews were the first cycle in Japanese higher education. For the second cycle of accreditation reviews, the accreditation agencies are highly recommended to equip their external reviewers with analytical frameworks and approaches to further explore critical issues and key institutional data beyond what is described in an internal self-evaluation report of a college or university.

The second recommendation is related to the system design issue of accreditation already addressed in Western countries (Harvey & Newton 2004). The Japanese accreditation system is no exception to having a system design issue. On one hand, the accreditation agencies encourage colleges and universities to identify areas of improvement. On the other hand, colleges and universities are afraid to highlight too many issues due to a concern about failing accreditation if they reveal their weaknesses (Newton 2002). In this dissertation, several sampled colleges and universities often identified only solvable problems with improvement plans, leaving critical issues behind
In the self-evaluation report.

In order to solve this systematic defect, accreditation agencies are recommended to provide more precise guidelines for colleges and universities regarding what and how to describe areas of improvement. Another approach to solve the system design issue is to separate areas of improvement from the judgment of accreditation review results. This way colleges and universities do not need to be concerned with being penalized by revealing “too many” weaknesses as long as they meet accreditation standards. As an example, the North Central Accreditation agency launched a model project called “Academic Quality Improvement Program” with this type of design (The Higher Learning Commission 2012).

The last recommendation for the accreditation agencies is to develop a complex conceptual model of the effect of accreditation reviews. The purpose is to overcome simplistic tenets of new public management and to tackle issues addressed by new institutionalism. For instance, this dissertation is a small example of developing such conceptual model. By developing a conceptual model of the effects of accreditation reviews, the accreditation agencies will be able to develop a dialogue with colleges and universities to identify issues related to the system design and implementation of accreditation. That is more productive than the current inclination of policy makers to simply advocate a “culture of evaluation” when accreditation reviews were conducted ineffectively on campuses (Ito 2009; Ohtsuka 2002; Sekine 2005).

College Administration

Based on some findings from this dissertation research, three recommendations are made
for college administration when they work on accreditation reviews.

The findings of this dissertation indicate that a majority of college presidents did not strategically use the accreditation review to promote educational improvement efforts on campus. Therefore, the first recommendation is for college presidents to take advantage of the accreditation review as an external pressure to enhance their initiatives. This does not necessarily require a top-down approach, recognizing strong faculty autonomy. College presidents are encouraged to promote a bottom-up approach by forming a committee or taskforce at both institution and department levels.

The second recommendation for college administration is to increase the capacity of institutional data management and analysis for educational improvement. This dissertation research found that many sampled colleges and universities underutilized the results of student surveys. In the second cycle of accreditation reviews the accreditation agencies placed more requirements on student learning outcomes assessment and the disclosure of institutional information. Japanese colleges and universities started modeling institutional research from American higher education, although the emulation process is still at an early stage. Japanese colleges and universities are recommended to critically examine adjustments of the American model in order to meet the need and conditions and need of Japanese college administration (Honda 2011).

The last recommendation for college administration is to redesign faculty evaluation system. Regardless of the types of colleges and universities, a majority of the faculty members were more interested in research than teaching. By contrast, the senior administration in every sampled institution was trying to involve faculty members
with teaching improvements. In order to amend the misalignment between the two parties, colleges and universities need to redesign a reasonable faculty evaluation system. Faculty supports such as training, release time, and teaching grants are also crucial to increase faculty engagement with teaching.
Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Inquiry of Research Interview

The Effectiveness of the Japanese Accreditation System: Quality Improvement in Undergraduate Education

My name is Hirosuke Honda. I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Policy program at the University at Albany, State University of New York. I am writing you to inquire about your participation in an in-person research interview regarding the effectiveness of the Japanese accreditation system on quality improvement in undergraduate education.

The effectiveness of accreditation has been discussed in the policy arena and on campus. The core question is whether the accreditation review is actually contributing to quality improvements in undergraduate education. My dissertation research assumes that the effectiveness of the accreditation reviews varies depending on the external environment and internal environment of different types of colleges and universities. The research synthesizes two dominant theories that had been presented as competing and conflicting one another in prior research (please see following abstract).

The in-person interview will be conducted confidentially. The names of interviewees and the college or university will not appear in the analysis. The interview includes 17 questions and it should take approximately 45 minutes. In return to your participation, the researcher will provide you a brief analysis report of this study.

You also should know that participation in research is entirely voluntary. Even after you agree to participate in the research, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise have been entitled. You should also be aware that the investigator may withdraw you from participation at his professional discretion.

Should you have further questions regarding the telephone interview, please feel free to contact me. Thank you so much for your time to consideration.

With best wishes,
Hirosuke Honda

Should you have any questions on this research, please feel free to contact:
Hirosuke Honda, hirosukehonda@gmail.com, 518-330-0736
Dr. Heinz-Dieter Meyer, hmeyer@albany.edu, Dissertation Committee Chair

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University at Albany’s Office of Regulatory Research Compliance at 800-365-9139 or orrc@uamail.albany.edu.
Abstract

Since the implementation in 2004, the effectiveness of the Japanese accreditation has been discussed in various places. The Ministry of Education launched the councils on examining the implementation and effectiveness of the accreditation system since 2005. Accreditation agencies also have been researching on the same issues to refine the accreditation systems.

This dissertation research analyzes two problems. The first problem is an extreme and liner expectation on the accreditation system for promoting quality improvements on campuses. In reality, not only the accreditation review but also the other external and internal environments influence the quality of undergraduate education in different types of colleges and universities. However, numerous policy discussions are inclined to believe that the implementation of accreditation reviews is the single cause for promoting quality improvements on any campus, and they often oversee the other environmental factors (Harvey & Newton 2004).

The second problem is that the two dominant theories are conflicting in examining the effectiveness of the Japanese accreditation system. The first theory, New Public Management, insists that the accreditation system functions to hold accountability as well as promote continuous quality improvement. In contrast, the second theory, new institutionalism, identifies that the implementation of the accreditation system becomes ceremonial on campuses and it does not influence faculty teaching. The conflict of these two theories can be considered that New Public Management is a view from the policy makers and campus senior administrators, while new institutionalism is perspective of faculty (Harvey & Newton 2004).

The purposes of this dissertation research are (1) to analyze how the external and internal environments influence the quality improvement in undergraduate education, along with the influence of the accreditation review, and (2) to explore the effectiveness of the accreditation system more holistically by synthesizing new public management and new institutionalism.

The researcher conducts confidential telephone interviews with the vice president and two faculty members who had worked on the internal self-evaluation in a college or university. Six sample institutions are drawn from national and private sectors that vary from teaching colleges to research universities reviewed under the three accreditation agencies. The total number of the telephone interviews conducted will be 18 and all the institution names and interviewees will be kept confidential in the analysis of findings.

Research Interview Protocol

Undergraduate Education

Quality of Undergraduate Education

This dissertation research explores the quality improvement in undergraduate education at your university/college. As you may be aware, the term “quality” has a broad connotation, and thus firstly I would like to develop a common understanding of quality in undergraduate education in order to prepare for subsequent interview questions. This research attempts to capture the quality of undergraduate education, composed of:

A. Student quality such as their academic preparations, learning attitude, and career development, and
B. Educational quality including academic curriculum and individual faculty instruction.

1. In your observation, has the quality of undergraduate education been improved, declined, or remained over the last five years in terms of the above item A and B?

External Environment

College Application and Student Enrollment

2. Over the last five years what are the college application and student enrollment trends in undergraduate programs? In your view, compared to the present students, how please describe any student learning characteristic of students who went through the reduced high school curriculum?
Student Characteristics

3. What types of student surveys do you regularly conduct in your college/university? Could you share any significant findings that describe student characteristics?

Competitive Funding

4. According to the self-evaluation report, your college/university received XX funding in teaching and YY funding for research. Could you describe how these competitive funding have helped your institution improve the quality of undergraduate education?

National Higher Education Policies

5. The Ministry of Education has been implementing higher education policies on the quality of undergraduate education. In your observation, please describe the impact of these national policies on curriculum development and faculty instruction in undergraduate education?

Internal Environment

Faculty Interest in Research and Teaching

6. In your view, are faculty members more interested in research or teaching? Could you also provide the reasons?

Faculty Performance Evaluation

18 The names of the competitive funding were inserted in the actual interviews.
7. Does your college/university administer faculty performance evaluation? In your view, how does the faculty performance evaluation influence faculty interest?

**Presidential Leadership**

8. Please explain the appointment process and term contract of the president. In your observation, what do you think about the presidential leadership style and capacity?

**Organizational Culture**

9. How do you describe the overall organizational culture of your college/university?

**Accreditation Review**

**Internal Self-evaluation**

10. Prior studies identified that internal self-evaluations tended to put more emphasis on strengths than weaknesses. How did your institution approach this issue?

**External Site-Visit Review**

11. Prior studies identified that external reviewers were sometimes unprepared and the site-visit was superficial. In your observation, was your external site-visit rigorous or superficial?

**Accreditation Result and Review Comment**

12. In the past, disputes over accreditation results occurred between accreditation
agencies and higher education institutions. In your view, had the final accreditation result and review comments reflected on the reality of your college/university? Were there any discrepant views between the accreditation agency and your institution? Otherwise, did any disagreement between the senior administration and faculty over the accreditation result?

13. Please indicate any other challenges that took place during the accreditation review process, which were not examined in the previous questions.

**Quality Improvement**

**Quality Improvement and Evidence**

14. There are numerous institutional data and indicators to satisfy accreditation standards. To your knowledge, what kinds of institutional data caught the attention of institutional constituents during the accreditation process at your college/university?

15. Prior studies identify that some colleges and universities are facing challenges to utilize the accreditation results and review comments. In your observation, how have faculty utilized accreditation results and review comments in order to improve the quality of the undergraduate education?

16. In your observation, how has the president utilized accreditation results and review comments in order to improve the quality of the undergraduate education?
Ranking of the Three Influences

17. So far, we have discussed influences of the external environment, internal environment, and accreditation review on the quality improvement in undergraduate education. Please order these three factors from the most influential to the least. ----- Also, please provide any reasons for your answer.
Appendix B: Matrix Analysis

Note: Due to the extensive volume of the entire matrix analysis, a part of the matrix analysis is exhibited in this appendix. For the entire matrix analysis, please contact the author at hirosukehonda@gmail.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1-a. Student quality is improving?</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>mixed</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Research University 1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, the university is research intensive and selective in admission. However, in hard sciences there are mismatch between the students' academic preparation and the university curriculum. This is mostly due to the admission process. Overall, the deregulation of high school curriculum does not necessarily seem to influence the level of academic preparation. However, the nature of academic preparation changed from the conventional memorization of knowledge to critical thinking ability. Regarding the attitudinal aspect, students attend classes and take exams seriously, but they are not proactive in class discussions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Private Teaching College 1       | X  |        |       |     |        |
|                                   |    | Although our college is not selective, the quality of top level students has been maintaining. The quality at the lower end has become problematic. Juniors and seniors are the new generation that went through the reduced high school curriculum. One thing noticeable about them is that they are slow to start job hunting. |
Private Teaching College 2

X

As of the student quality, it varies year by year. I mean that one year there are more students who are active and they influence classroom dynamics in a positive way.

National Research University 2

X

As of student quality, the academic preparation for students in hard sciences is declining. Especially science and medical programs. Students are earnest (XX majime in another word), which means they do attend classes and complete assignments. Overall, we do not see much difference about the motivational aspect of students toward learning and job hunting. When students get junior, they start doing job search, and obviously the prioritize the job hunting over academic programs.

National Research University 3

X

As of the student quality, our students are academically well-prepared without a doubt, but recently they seem that students become more passive. Especially that type of attitude cannot be evaluated by paper-based exams.

In terms of admission process, most of the applicants are from this region. The number of applicants from other prefectures is declining. Also, the top-class students are going to the University of Tokyo or other medical schools instead of our university. There is still a strong image that our university does not teach students. (hh. in terms of the admission, the university is slipping in terms of the selectivity with other competing unis.)
Appendix C: Researcher’s Background and Reflexivity

This document was prepared as a part of validity strategy for this qualitative research (e.g., Guba 1981). The first section provides the researcher’s professional background and qualification for conducting the dissertation research, and the second section offers his self-reflection on data collection and analysis. The information may allow the readers of this dissertation to examine any potential biases in analysis and the validity of research findings.

Researcher’s Professional Background

Prior to his doctoral study at University at Albany, the researcher earned a Master’s degree in higher education management in Japan. As a graduate assistant he worked for the Vice President for Academic Affairs at J.F. Oberlin University, which was a medium size private teaching college (that time/back then enrolled about 5,000 student headcount). Upon completion of the Master’s degree, he worked on a full-time basis as planning assistant to the president at Daito Bunka University which is a larger comprehensive private university (that time/back then enrolled about 12,000 student headcount).

The researcher did not have direct work experiences with an accreditation review at the two private institutions. However, on a part-time basis he worked as a collaborative researcher at the National Institute for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation that is one of the three accreditation agencies in this dissertation research. There he studied national policies in the development of Japanese accreditation and also other quality assurance systems in Europe and the United States.

The researcher had fairly substantial work experiences and academic knowledge
of organizational culture of colleges and universities. During the course of his master’s program, the researcher conducted a three-month field research in the United States, visiting Oberlin College (OH), St. Cloud State University (MN), the University of Michigan, and Stanford University. He conducted research interviews with more than 50 campus administrators in academic, student, administrative affairs. After that, from Birnbaum’s *How Colleges Work* (1988) he learned about the organizational theories pertinent to different institutional types. The book described the researcher’s observations from the field research interviews in the United States. Moreover, as the researcher advanced his early professional career working with the senior administration in two private institutions, and actively participating in professional development, he confirmed that Birnbaum’s analytical scope was highly relevant to understand different organizational cultures among Japanese colleges and universities. In fact, the book was already translated in Japanese (published in 1992).

During the course of doctoral program at University at Albany, the researcher studied new public management and new institutionalism. While continuing his doctoral study, as a graduate assistant he supported the accreditation review for Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Currently he is working on a full-time basis at Empire State College, and his primary responsibility is learning outcomes assessment. In the meantime, the researcher hosted Japanese scholars for different research projects regarding institutional research in American higher education. He also works as a consultant to develop a professional association of institutional research in Japanese higher education. Through the consultation he engages with contemporary issues of the Japanese accreditation system. In his self-reflection, the researcher has a relevant
academic and professional background to analyze the two competing theories in explaining the impact of accreditation reviews.

**Reflexivity**

This section offers self-reflection and analytical changes during the data collection and analysis process of this dissertation.

During the interviews, the researcher started with a general interview question and proceeded with more specific ones. However, in the analysis the two general questions were moved to the section of the internal environment. This resulted in more elements within the internal environment than those in the external environment than originally designed.

During the field research interviews, many interviewees encountered difficulties answering the question on organization culture because the concept was too general to describe. Therefore, the researcher clarified the question by asking them to illustrate cultural issues around institutional decision-making.

Another consideration to be noted was the different responses between interviewees with administrative background and those with academic background. In general the former tended to answer interview questions more straightforwardly. By contrast, in the latter group, a few of them could not shift their own perspective, which required extra facilitation to proceed with the interview protocol.

As the researcher proceeded with matrix analysis of interview transcriptions, he developed to simplified way to present of the analysis of interview transcripts in Chapter IV. Therefore, the researcher re-framed the original interview questions differently as table titles.
Reference


Council on Promoting the Disclosure and Use of Educational Information in Higher Education Institutions (2009) A mid-term report on the disclosure and use of


study on quality assurance systems in higher education. COE report 16. RIHE. Hiroshima University. [in Japanese 第2章 日本：日本の高等教育における質保証の歴史と課題]


Higher Education Administration and Policy Research Center (2009) National college student survey: The follow-up report. The University of Tokyo. Retrieved from http://ump.p.u-tokyo.ac.jp/crump/resource/21%E5%B9%B4%E5%BA%A6%E8%AA%BF%E6%9F%BB%E5%A0%B1%E5%91%8A%E6%9B%B8%EF%BC%88Web%E7%94%A8%EF%BC%88.pdf


Japanese University Accreditation Association (2011a). *Accreditation review report:
Private Comprehensive University 2. JUAA.

310


National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (2009). *The analysis report of accreditation reviews that were conducted in 2007*. Tokyo, NIAD-UE.

http://www.niad.ac.jp/n_hyouka/jouhou/1180841_989.html


National Research University 1 (2007). *Self-evaluation report*. NRU 1


NTS Educational Research Institute (2011) The number of four-year institutions from

OECD (2012). Testing student and university performance globally: OECD’s AHELO http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3746,en_2649_39263238_40624662_1_1_1_1,00.html


Higher Education. (Ed.). Study on organizational transformations of Japanese higher education institutions. COE research series, 27, 93–102. [in Japanese:財源と資源配分の動向：第7章 大学内傾斜配分を中心に (大学の組織変容に関する調査研究)]


UNESCO & OECD (2005) guidelines for quality provision in cross-border higher education http://www.oecd.org/document/11/0,2340, en_2649_201185_35793227_1_1_1_1,00.html


Yamagata University Faculty Union (2012). The process of the presidential selection in


